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Reading Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs in <i>Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Other Poems: a study in context and textuality</i>
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Reading Julia Margaret Cameron's Photographs in *Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Other Poems*: A Study in Context and Textuality.

A PhD Thesis by

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To all women, muses and heroines in Art.
To my mum, especially, and to the memory of her mum, nanny Demetria,
a woman whose energy and generosity
reminds me of Mrs. Cameron.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much like Mrs. Cameron's *oeuvre*, my thesis has been an assignment of surmounting and learning on the spot, and it would not have been possible without the help of many people.

My first and greatest debt is to the Chairman of the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust in the Isle of Wight, Dr. Brian Hinton. In the summer of 2015, he welcomed me into their house in Freshwater, Dimbola, where Cameron had lived and work for 15 years. During my week-long residency there, he made me feel privileged at all times allowing me to research in the Trust's library and to walk around the rooms of the house, and on my last day showing me the Trust's photo archives.

He sat with me for tea and cake at the Trust's café on the first day, and made me understand the importance of Cameron and the "Freshwater circle," and how learning about this episode during Cameron's and Tennyson's time in the island would bestow my thesis with complete sense. His tip was invaluable, and I cannot thank him enough for it here. As the President of the Farringford Tennyson Society as well, Dr. Hinton's publications on this literary circle are filled with testimonies and anecdotes from the time, which along with his facsimile scholar edition of Cameron's photobook, have been great guiding companions during this thesis.

Dr. Hinton let me record two conversations of the few we had during my time in Dimbola, which are transcribed in Appendix II. Its reader will be able to enjoy his contagious enthusiasm and full dedication in the honouring and work of "Mrs. Cameron," as he always called her.

I should also thank the altruistic work of the Trustees and volunteer researchers in the Trust, founded as Hinton narrated in our interview, in 1993 to save Dimbola from demolition. They made it into *the* only museum in the world to hold a permanent exhibition on Cameron, and welcome each year hundreds of visitors and photography enthusiasts who, like me, travel all over the world to visit this place. Annie Leibovitz was there not long ago, and in 2011 she published a stunning photobook with still portraits from the homes and lives of her personal heroes – a list she once made with Susan Sontag when alive. Amongst her imagery are stills from Cameron's belongings and photographic equipment at Dimbola. She entitled the book *Pilgrimage*, and I would not have chosen a better word to describe how this trip to Freshwater felt that summer for me.

I would also like to sincerely thank the Curator of Photographs of the Word & Image Department in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Marta Weiss. She gave me the opportunity to

interview her in London, even when she was exceptionally busy during the months of her touring show, *Julia Margaret Cameron*. Our talk is transcribed in Appendix III. In addition, she arranged for me to view at the museum's Print Room every single one of the prints from the long list I had requested from her by email. During our contacting afterwards, she was always very helpful with me, and answered all my emails and hesitations, even when she was on her maternity leave.

This endeavour would not have been possible without the director of this thesis María Jesús Hernández Lerena from the Department of Modern Philology in La Universidad de La Rioja. I am especially grateful for her hard work, guidance and encouragement during the making of this thesis. These have been extremely valuable to me, and will be long treasured, along with her good advice, cherished for life. I will always be in debt with her for having faith in me and putting her trust on this subject from the start. Her constant motivation and positive welcoming of ideas and opinions during my research and studying was extremely decisive for this piece. She read my work carefully at every stage and brought it to a more comprehending and, no doubt, superior level.

I would also like to generally thank the assistant curators at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and both the curator and the documentation assistant at the Julia Margaret Cameron Museum who helped me making this thesis as illustrative as I had intended, providing me with many of the file images for it. A large thank you goes too to all the great scholars on Cameron, whose work has been a huge point of reference for me. It is impossible to name all of them here, and I have acknowledged many of them in the bibliographic references in the pages that follow.

Finally, my most loving and heartfelt thank you needs to go to my young little family. They originally gave me the purpose and motivation to take this path, during which my husband's devotion and my children's patience when their mummy spent long hours on her computer, were very soothing and uplifting.

To all of you, for all your support, I am immensely grateful.

“What is focus - & who has a right to say what focus is the legitimate focus – My aspirations are to ennoble Photography and to secure for it the character and uses of High Art by combining the real & Ideal & sacrificing nothing of Truth by all possible devotions to Poetry & beauty.”

Letter from Julia Margaret Cameron to John F. W. Herschel, December 31, 1864.
Currently at the National Museum of Photography, Film & Television, Bradford.

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PROLOGUE

This thesis grew out from an admiration for the work of this pioneer photographer and from a little fixation with the Victorian era, where Cameron artistically thrived. During the course of its writing, there have been two decisive moments that I believe justify the way I have conducted my study of her work.

The first one dates back to the moment I first came across her *Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Other Poems* – or *Illustrations* as I will often refer to from now on in this thesis. I remember clearly that day when searching specifically for topics for this assignment. I found her pocket-size edition, known as the “Miniature edition,” and thought it was overwhelming, embodying a particular artistic vision and personal touch in her photography, and of course such an intriguing and detailed imagery within it.

Few years before this, I had worked in the fields of media and marketing in London and my day-to-day had been dealing with page layouts, copywriting, photo editing and client's deadlines, and to think that Cameron had done all of these herself in *Illustrations* was highly commendable. She made a great job of it all in her photobook, at the same time as providing it with an enchanting DIY feel and enclosing the history of a place and the people who participated in it. Her dear poet friend, the great Sir Alfred Tennyson had provided her with the inspiration, the idea and his Victorian take on the legend of King Arthur and other stories.

It was a fascinating experience to come across both artists and their circle of friends, and the atmosphere they created in their little corner of the Isle of Wight in Freshwater was all in all enthralling. This idyllic location had not only provided Tennyson with the perfect scenery to finish and complete his successful *Idylls of the King* – or *Idylls* – and few other well-known poems, but had become the stage for Cameron to shoot her *Illustrations*. So, I began to harbour a personal necessity to go there and see for myself that part of the world. In August 2015, I was able to get there and part-holidayed with my family and part-researched for this thesis.

To be able to walk around the grounds of what had been Cameron's house, to see the stunning state of Farringford, where Tennyson lived, and to stroll along the Freshwater Bay and its spectacular cliffs was exceptionally inspiring and like I had never imagined. I began to think that Freshwater was another character in *Illustrations*, and this had to be manifested in my study.

One grey rainy afternoon in the Dimbola house, Dr. Hinton showed me two original editions of Cameron's photobooks, volume one of *Illustrations* and its miniature edition. This, inevitably, became my second and best decisive moment in the thesis. Upon its wonder, I

noticed then that each image contained a narrative in itself and within the photobook, as well as outside it, and therefore my analysis should make the most to reflect all of this.

Finally, this thesis has been extremely lucky to enjoy a bit of a revival of Cameron's work during the time of its writing. This was purely accidental. That year of 2015 was the commemorative year of Cameron's birth and her bicentenary coincided with a 150th anniversary of her first exhibition in the South Kensington museum. This institution, nowadays the Victorian and Albert Museum, put together a magnificent and very current exhibition on Cameron with some new findings. It was thanks to this event that I was able to meet its curator for an interview and view the volume of *Illustrations* that I had not yet seen in paper; volume two.

I am fully aware that this PhD has benefited immeasurably from these two lifetime research experiences in England. To be able to visualise Cameron's actual photobooks in real life, for instance seeing Cameron's prints pasted onto it, her handwriting, its blue paper mount, etc. has been crucial, has meant everything for this thesis. This once in a lifetime opportunity did not only bring me closer to her images, but also to Cameron herself and her vision in *Illustrations*. It certainly provided me with the perfect context within which to read the images in it.

Her personal story is captivating and documenting it with the photobook was a must, as well as my pleasure, in this thesis. While viewing Cameron's photobooks I began to unveil certain aspects of her personality. She was actually the perfectionist type, rather than the slovenly artist and technically-relaxed photographer I had thought her to be. She was full of aspirations and her practice and work, and *Illustrations* reflect all of these.

I am also aware that when covering much of these in my thesis, I made it quite factual and technical at times. This is because during my research I acquired an important and abundant baggage of knowledge and documentation on this artist, and the period she lived in, full of innovations and cultural data, that proved so very relevant for a study about her. I hope I have succeeded in weaving it all in a comprehensive piece of work which required, at the same time a fair amount of referencing and comparative in my analysis and narrative of the photobooks. I felt it was only fair to the extraordinary life and work of this photographer.

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INTRODUCTION

Like a wood fire in a room, photographs – especially those of people, of distant landscapes and faraway cities, of the vanished past – are incitements to reverie.¹

Susan Sontag, 1977

In the era of the *Sister Arts* tradition and the interrelations of the different artistic forms, the advent of photography in the first half of the twentieth century triggered off a delicate confrontation with conventional art, and complicated the division between illusion and truth. The newcomer was seen as a scientific discipline, and “enter[ed] the scene as an upstart activity, which seemed to encroach on and diminish an accredited art: painting” (Sontag 144). As this rivalry intensified, photography drew closer to the youngest of the *Sisters*, Literature, and found a special collaborator with whom to form a unique bond. Chapter one of this thesis will have a look at their first encounters during Victorian England that led to the booming of the illustrative and photobooks, as a key mean to understand Cameron’s vision in *Illustrations*.

In this itinerary, William Henry Fox Talbot’s book *Pencil of Nature* (1844) will be examined. As the precursor of photography and the text *inter-art-ion*,² this publication caused the new artistic medium to become the ideal vehicle for book illustration. It laid the format for the *reading* of the juxtaposed photographic and textual discourses, and opened a *Pandora’s box* of the photobook editions and the booming of the illustrative book publications. This first chapter will touch upon some of the better known illustrative anthologies and gift books.

This thesis focuses on a prime example of how photography’s rhetoric and discourse were capable of providing a first-rate narrative tool in poetry which, together with the imagination and literary sensitivity of pioneer British photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, produced the perfect photographic *Ut pictoria poesis*,³ her own book with *Illustrations to Tennyson’s Idylls of the King and Other Poems* (1874-1875). In this publication, Cameron artistically illustrated Tennyson’s poems with “genre portrait photography” as never before seen in a photobook. Lynne Vallone, who uses this term to describe Cameron’s photography, outlines its definition when “the photographer uses light and shadow in conjunction with the subject’s face and figure, expression and pose, attitude and costume, to create metaphor and atmosphere and to elicit emotion from the viewer” (193).

¹ *On Photography* 16.

² In this term, I combine ‘interarts’ and ‘interaction.’

³ Term used by Horace in *Ars Poetica* (The Art of Poetry) c. 19 BC, meaning “as painting, so also a poem.” For W. J. T. Mitchell, it is “The art of imitation” and mutual collaboration between two Sister Arts, poetry and painting, living in the field of the aesthetics (*The Picture Theory*). For Isabelle Gadoin “Poetry is like painting.”



Fig. 1 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Rosebud Garden of Girls*,⁴ 1868.

PHOTOGRAPHIC SUBJECT MATTERS

The photographer was thought to be an acute but non-interfering observer – a scribe, not a poet.⁵

Susan Sontag, 1977

Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Other Poems was, to my knowledge, the first – if not one of the first, as of this I have no absolute proof – photobook ever using portrait photography to illustrate lyrical text. It was certainly the first one to illustrate Tennyson's epic work with photography.

Published in two separate volumes half a century after the birth of photography, in this photobook art photographer Julia Margaret Cameron set to illuminate a selection of poems by poet friend Lord Alfred Tennyson. The body of work she achieved here was a set of allegoric and beautiful images portraying mostly female characters from Tennyson's *Idylls of a King*, on the legend of Arthur, and from a hand-picked selection of his poems. Chapter four of this thesis will analyse this photographic body of work and will get down to the specifics of this fascinating publication that included pages with Cameron's original prints next to Tennyson's extracted poems. These were handwritten and sometimes underlined by Cameron herself.

⁴ Title taken from section 22 of Tennyson's 'Maud' (1855). From the stanza that reads; "Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls, / Come hither, the dances are done, / In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls, / Queen lily and rose in one; / Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls, / To the flowers, and be their sun." (11. Verses 902-7, qtd. in Hill *Tennyson's Poetry* 237).

⁵ *On Photography* 88.

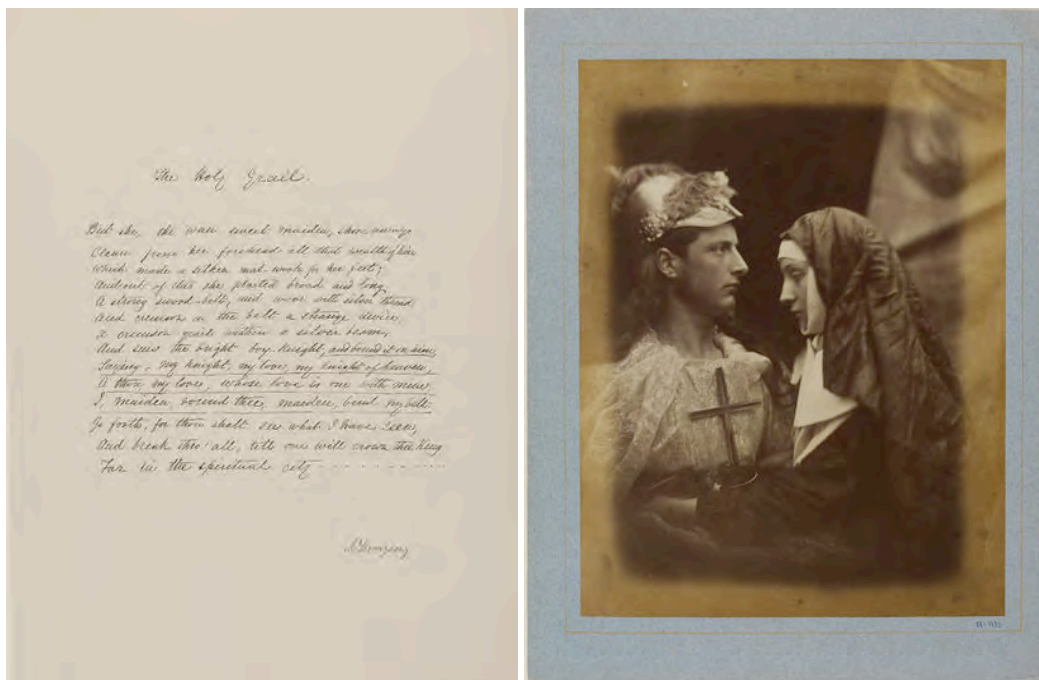


Fig. 2 Consecutive *recto* pages for 'The Holy Grail,' from Vol. I of *Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of a King and Other Poems*. Left: Printed page of poem text, underlined. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Sir Galahad and the Pale Nun*, 1874 (photographed).

Illustrations represents the summit of the interplay between photography and poetry as understood by Cameron. As she worked on it, it became impregnated by her era, her exuberant personality, her trace marks, her signature style and her personal story, remaining a fascinating reflection of her artistic vision in multiple aspects too: her development as an artist, a businesswoman and a literary photo-illustrator.

In this thesis, I take upon the task to analyse every image that Cameron included in all three volumes of *Illustrations*, at the same time I study their format, story and origins and follow W. J. T. Mitchell's model of interdisciplinarity, attempting to conduct comparative studies among various disciplines. In particular those within the frameworks of History of Art, Photography and some of the Word and Image studies. In doing so, I intend to read each of the illustrative works photographically "decoding", "translating and describing" (Mitchell "Interdisciplinary" 540) Cameron's representations, using the tools of analysis provided by Photographic Design, Visual Rhetoric, Iconography and the History and Literary Arts, among others.

Amid the reasons that drove me to study the work of this photographer and, in particular *Illustrations* are, aside from the profound regard that I have of both, the innovative and fascinating calibre of the latter, as well as the possibility of a multilayer examination and the different points for discussion this photo publication is able to offer. Cameron's work here was truthful, accurate and beautiful, and questioned then more than a few aspects in the art and photography fields. When put in the contexts of her career, namely Tennyson's *Idylls*, his

poetry and other illustrations and publications at the time, *Illustrations* remained a subject of its own.

Cameron turned her everyday life into Art and the relationship she offered between photography and literature culture is present in her narratives, plot and characters. Her way of working was, as we will see in chapter three, most of all unique, and *Illustrations* represents this with excellence, generating a dialogue about her persona, her way of doing things and her personal aspirations, all elements that I found very refreshing. Nowadays, the work of this artist is well known amongst photography and fine art students in general. Her evocative and personal style allowing traces of herself to be seen all over her images. The fact that she produced hundreds of images, along with different versions and studies for each has contributed to the enchantment of her audience. Her photographic legacy has been simply immense, and her popularity has grown during recent years, deserving it all. She had many detractors during her time who rejected her technically relaxed style and did not welcome her into the then elitist male-dominated photographic societies. After her death and the publication of her first monograph; *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men & Fair Women* by Julia Margaret Cameron in 1926 by her great niece Virginia Woolf and art critic Roger Fry, she began to become known as the quintessential Victorian portraitist and artist.⁶ Woolf and Fry set “the tone for the way we have long looked Cameron’s photographs,” (Higgins) since claiming her photography as visual art.

After World War II, art historian and curator Helmut Gernsheim rediscovered Cameron for us, when he began to gather her work and assemble it in one of – if not *the* – biggest collections on Cameron, currently residing in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center in the University of Texas at Austin. He described her portraits as “the best expressions of her own personality,” showing “her remarkable ability to gain the co-operation of her sitters.” He called her work of famous men and fair women portraits “magnificent large heads” and “revolutionary at the time”, containing “a dynamic power which few portrait photographers have since achieved” (*Pioneer of Photography* 52). This remains to date her best known and most proficient work.

Woolf and Gernsheim began a prevalent interest in Cameron’s work, which excluded *Illustrations*. This photobook encountered a different shoot to fame. As we will see in chapter four, *Illustrations* was a commercial failure since the start (Weaver “Stamp of Divinity” 151-6 *passim*), and has often been overlooked. Fry described her illustrative work as simple “attempts”⁷, and Gernsheim harshly referred to it as “her worst” (*Pioneer of Photography* 60), and “elaborate group compositions” that lacked “in decorative effect” (52).

Fortunately, thanks to innovative museum exhibitions and university theses in recent years, and the efforts of some feminist and Arthurian scholars, Cameron’s contribution in

⁶ “Surely the most fascinating record of a period” (Woolf and Fry 23).

⁷ “The albums which Mrs. Cameron has left contain many attempts to rival the poetical and allegorical compositions that were then in vogue” (*Ibid.* 25).

Illustrations is slowly starting to get a speck more of merits. Still a diminutive spot, miles away in fact, not reaching yet the status of the rest of her work. Personally, *Illustrations* is one of Cameron's hidden treasures, and for the reasons cited above in this section, I believe it should be looked at in its entire complexity, not only from a strictly photographic point of view. Even though it is here where Cameron's captivating intensity lies.

RELECTIONS ON THEORY AND METHODOLOGY⁸

It is rather as if I had to read the Photographer's myths in the Photograph.⁹
Roland Barthes, 1981

To give explanation of my methodology I have grouped in topic sections the different points for discussion that have inspired my analysis of *Illustrations*. In each of them, I wrote about the reflections, ideas and impressions that had sparked when reading the main theories on photography, comparative studies and text and image. This exercise proved to be somewhat beneficial, as it provided me with a self-assessment theoretical basis to guide my studying on *Illustrations*. Thus, the following section has been arranged by themes that assemble the reflection of the critics on them and the conclusions I finally took from them to put to use in my analysis.

On Interdisciplinary

My reading of *Illustrations* in chapter four, which forms the *corpus* of this PhD, will commence by looking at the publication as a whole; its story and Cameron's general working method throughout. Then it will systematically complete a visual analysis of each of Cameron's photographs, reading each one of them within the frameworks of history of art and photography, looking at the techniques used by the photographer, possible inspirations and other studies made by the artist. Then, aided by Cameron's excerpts from *Idylls*, I will draw further conclusions for each image. This subsequent aspect of the analysis is therefore based on her textual evidence, and focuses on what Mieke Bal calls the *pre-text* when analysing Rembrandt's *Danae*; "literally a pretext: Its anteriority allows the painting's appeal to the general understanding of the story as a frame for its reversal" (20). This term referring to pre-existing narrative text that foretells the story being told in image is very appropriate in *Illustrations'* case study, as text precedes each of the photographs in *time* in different forms. First in the form of a chronicled legend or folk tale being recorded years before Tennyson's poems, and then being published by the poet in his book of poems, a few years before Cameron's photographic interpretation.

It also precedes image within *Illustrations* in *space*, being physically placed by Cameron in the previous page before her image. In addition, when doing so, she intervened

⁸ Inspired by the title "Relections on Theory and Methodology," chapter one in the book by Heusser, Martin, *et al.*

⁹ *Camera Lucida* 28.

on it by editing it out from an entire poem, occasionally underlined it or partly-used it as an image caption in order to validate her interpretation and to provide her source of inspiration.

This means of intersection of the visual and textual discourses in *Illustrations* feels crucial in my analysis and reading of images. As I look for the resemblances and disparities that may connect the two dialogues, I seek the support of comparative studies, such as those of word and image, iconography and women's studies and attempt to complete an *interdisciplinary* analysis of these images on the basis of W. J. T. Mitchell's renowned article in *Art Bulletin*: "Interdisciplinarity and Visual Culture." Here the author describes that in new "hybrid" interdisciplinary Visual Culture, converges and converses different lines of studies and when looking at it, the critic has to be more "adventurous" and "transgressive," even chaotic, by welcoming the aid of other disciplines and studies, outside their own specialised one (540-4).

And as such, it is said that in interdisciplinarity, "a student of the sister arts learns to work twice as hard" (Lipking 4, qtd. in Hill and Helmers 2) and following this, I have strived for a balanced two-part analysis of *Illustrations* that unavoidably crosses boundaries between them and which has always been led by a solid reading of the image. When looking at this, I felt it was necessary to refer to the rest of Cameron's photographic body of work, reading her renowned biographers and Victorian specialists, such as Gernsheim, Lukitsch, Olsen and Weaver, with the hope of penetrating, as Mitchell says, "so deeply into the practices of a discipline [Cameron's photography], to cause an implosion of its boundaries" and hope to send out "shock waves into other disciplines and even into various forms of public life" ("Interdisciplinarity" 541).

Thus, in the thick of the visual analysis, when applying tools from Photographic Design and Visual Studies to images, I was discovering points that required the aid of Literature, History of Art and Word and Image, as mentioned, in order to complete my reading, which was becoming more textual. For instance, it proved very fruitful to study the transformation that the Arthurian characters had undergone from Tennyson's *Idylls* – covered in chapter two – to Cameron's representation in *Illustrations*, and to compare these too with previous or contemporary depictions in fine and illustrative art. I have, at all times aimed to present all my study in an ordered and chapter manner, by era, author, character and image, with a tolerable amount of juxtaposition of ideas as I image-analyse, which represents this interdisciplinary working method.

With it, I consider to have come closer to Mitchell's academic model on Cultural Studies, described as a "bottom-up model" of interdisciplinarity; requiring incursions into other disciplines while a specific problem arises. For instance, as I faced the above-mentioned character differences between Cameron, Tennyson and other artists of their time, certain themes began to emerge from my readings, such as the photographic treatment that most female characters had undergone in *Illustrations* and how they were being represented and placed within the story by the image-maker. Their physicality and general appearance seemed unique and special, and made me have to deal in my analysis with the themes of femininity and aesthetics.

To conclude this section, and as a summary of how interdisciplinarity is understood in the thesis, I need to quote Mitchell once more when saying that he sees “Visual Culture” as the “visual front” of Cultural Studies, enabling us to think about “sensation, perception, feeling and affect” when converging the two groups of disciplines; social and theoretical.¹⁰ This allows us viewers to look at the “sayable and the seeable”, the “telling and the showing”, “the articulable and the visible,” where no boundaries exist. On that basis, Cameron’s photographic work in *Illustrations* certainly say, tell and articulate her maker’s own unique story, and a big part of it is done through the collective of people being portrayed. To study all of these requires interdisciplinarity.

On Text and Image

There are three basic components in *Illustrations*. The first of them is image that is embodied in Cameron’s photography, then there is text, which is signified by her poem extracts and her image captions. Text in *Illustrations*, therefore, rarely dwells on whole poems from Tennyson. Finally, there is some pre-text narrative, as seen before, existing in the viewer’s mind through chronicle folk and classical stories prior to Tennyson’s poems.

During her seminar at the University of La Rioja: “Text & Image Studies: Theory and Practice,” Professor Isabelle Gadoin said that it is possible to compare text and image but only “up to a certain point,” and that “what really matters is the interference between these two types of expressions.”

In *Illustrations*, two means of expression, photography and poetry, intersect in key literary moments during the King Arthur’s legend and the stories of other Tennysonian heroines. These events are entirely engineered by Cameron’s own narrative of the story, resulting in a complex illustrative relationship between the two. As she analyses *Danae*, Bal explains that “the purely textual, verbal pre-text and the story of the purely visual present collude and collide in the work’s textuality,” producing a new story that the viewer will process on his or her own (20). This happens in *Illustrations’* idylls for instance, when the viewer witnesses Cameron’s reinterpretation of the story of King Arthur, which is alternative to Tennyson’s and everything written before him. This is the reason why I have structured my analysis around Cameron’s sequence of *Idylls* and choice of characters, and not Tennyson’s, trying to remain faithful to her vision. In general, there was not much variation between Cameron and Tennyson’s order of *Idylls* although quite a few omissions. The photographer edited out some idylls she considered irrelevant to her *Illustrations*.

To be in a better position to discuss the illustrative relationship between text and image in *Illustrations*, I felt I needed to reflect next upon the nature and genre of illustration

¹⁰ Mitchell lists group of disciplines such as feminism, gender and ethnic studies, critical theory, and cultural studies, all organised around social movements; and another group of disciplines such as psychoanalysis, semiotics, linguistics, literary theory, phenomenology, aesthetics, anthropology, art history, and film studies organised around theoretical objects (“Interdisciplinarity” 542).

itself, and to look at some of the theory. Also, I needed to review some of the previous and contemporary illustrative work published on Tennyson's poetry; *Idylls and Other Poems*. Thus, a section in chapter three has been dedicated to Tennyson's illustrators, to have them present in the image analysis later on.

Roland Barthes's essay *Rhetoric of the Image* (1977) – about finding an analytical system to read today's advertising images – helped me establish part of the illustrative relationship between text and image in Cameron's photobook. When reading a photographic image, Barthes identifies within it three different messages; the linguistic message, a coded iconic message and a non-coded iconic message ("Rhetoric of the Image" 154), but "it is simply the linguistic message that counts, for neither its position nor its presence nor its length seems to be pertinent." And by "linguistic message" he means any kind of text accompanying image; titles, image captions, complementary press articles, etc., as long as it "helps to identify purely and simply the elements of the scene and the scene itself; it is a matter of a denoted description of the image, a description which is often incomplete" (155-6). His point of view is that the meaning of images with accompanying text is always related to, and dependent on it, and to fully understand them text is going to have something to do with it. They complete each other's meanings, even when often having different discourses. He calls this relationship "anchorage," and the best representation of it takes place in press photography and advertising.

Anchorage will be discussed further down within this chapter in its specific section on the genre of illustration. For now, it becomes obvious that *Illustrations* does not make the typical illustrative book of poems where narrative is imposed by text and organised within by poems with some image inclusions in them. Instead, it is a book of illustrations from a book of poems, where the photographic images are clearly dominant and are presented to the viewer around fragmented pieces of text organised by idyll or poem-chapters and sequenced by the illustrator (a.k.a. photographer). Her sole aim is to support and aid the significance of her images, which basically set the pace of her story. In them, she will pause on details or the aesthetic aspects in Tennyson's poetry at her wish, necessary to tell her story.

In *Poetics of the Iconotext* (1996), Liliane Louvel also talks about two models of images conforming to text; the "paternal model," where images are purely referential to establish a space of the real and "to authori[s]e its documentary character," and the "maternal model," which takes place when images are in service "to the plot or characterisation", or simply "as a gateway to the imaginary and artistic" vision (7). There is no doubt that *Illustrations* suits better the latter, as Cameron's images serve to constructively build the plot as seen in her imagination, and her choice of characters from Tennyson's King Arthur or *Poems*. And with her work in *Illustrations*, she makes a clear artistic statement in her photographic adaptation of the original story.

This seems to be an unavoidable thing to do in photography, as John Berger says in *Another Way of Telling* (1982):

In the relation between a photograph and words, the photograph begs for an interpretation, and the words usually supply it. The photograph, irrefutable as evidence but weak in meaning, is given a meaning by the words. And the words, which by themselves remain at the level of generalisation, are given specific authenticity by the irrefutability of the photograph. Together the two then become very powerful; an open question appears to have been fully answered. (92)

With this in mind, we will be able to understand in the image analysis of *Illustrations* how Cameron would not have been able to tell or to represent her narrative of King Arthur and the rest of the poems without Tennyson's words. As she went about to illustrate these by choosing here and there, pinpointing details in verses that best represented her view, she used poems, mainly extracted but some in full, to fill gaps of her representations with meaning, in a maternal and caring mode of illustration so as to portray what she considered the *real* women in the story.

On Photography

As discussed earlier, the start of my image analysis in *Illustrations* always began as a photographic journey, pondering on the design and photographic elements in it. Beginning by describing what I saw – as both the beholder and a keen photographer –, never forgetting the *Could see*, and the actual *Seeing*. I am referring with these to the three means of looking at an image by William DuBois and Barbara Hodik, who titled their chapters in *A Guide to Photographic Design* (1983); “You Can See”, “You Can See” and “You Can See.” From this handbook, I followed some of the terminology in photo designing too, and studied, as they recommended doing, Cameron's subject matters, technical aspects and everything that might be key to the creation of her final composition. Furthermore, I used DuBois's and Hodik's photographic guidelines on the principles and components of photography design, and valued their encouragement to describe personal impressions, and what these might have been for Cameron too; corresponding with it Mitchell's “seeable”, “showing” and “visible” key elements of Visual Culture. As spectator, these always lead to feelings, and ultimately, correspond to some of the issues Cameron was proposing with her images and style; such as the issue on femininity and the role of women in *Illustrations*, which will be certainly discussed in more detail in the final analysis. The majority of these visual and photographic elements was comprised in Kris Coppieters's checklist, found online.¹¹ Its obliging format brought much needed order to my image analysis, leading each time to a visual emphasis on the image and what ultimately Cameron had meant to represent in it.

In the following stage of this purely pictorial analysis, I embraced some of the modern terminology included in *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (1996) by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, which provided relevant resources to interpret the different

¹¹ pages.uoregon.edu/jlesage/Juliafolder/PHOTOANALYSIS.HTML Accessed 14 Oct. 2016.

narratives and representations of the actions and reactions to Cameron's images. Furthermore, it helped me to identify their participants, known as "Interactors" – the "Actor" or "the most salient participant in pictures," the "Goal" at whom the action is aimed, or the "Reactor" as "the participant who does the looking," and the "Phenomena" "the participant at whom/which the Reactor is looking" (119-30). This was key in Cameron's images, which here have to do with eye lines and glances, and not so many actions.



Fig. 3 Jan van Eyck, *Man in a Red Turban*, 1433.

In the *Man in a Red Turban* figure, for instance, all the action is done through the gazing. Here, both "Actor" and "Reactor" aim his grave look directly at the viewer, who receives the role of "Goal," and therefore "Phenomena."

Another element that seemed recurrent in many of Cameron's *Illustrations* is what Kress and van Leeuwen call the "Symbolic Attribute," which occurs when an object being represented as prominent and salient in the image is being pointed to the viewer by means of gesture of one of the participants, or through composition and other photographic techniques. These can be, for instance, the angle of view, size of frame, choice of distance and perspective, which help to understand the participants' interactions in the final representation, and other tools for analysis such as depth of field, illumination and brightness (130-48).

In this next painting from van Eyck, the objects being placed on the desk by the artist play an important representation of this Renaissance man. They are the symbolic attributes of the image, being prominently presented by means of gesture of the main actor, and by the lighting coming from above.



Fig. 4 Jan van Eyck, detail from *St Jerome in his Study* 1434.

The interaction between photographer and image viewer should not be ignored in visual communication either. Barthes, who calls these “Operator” and “Spectator” in his *Camera Lucida*, says that the analysis should neither forget the relationship between the “Spectrum,” nor things/people represented, and the viewer (4).

The photographic essay, *Camera Lucida* has been a real inspiration to this thesis, in particular in connection with its image analysis. His author provided an essential groundwork with his approach to the “studium and punctum” elements existing in all photographs (26-7). Barthes’s encouragement to participate from the studium, or “rational” things that the beholder *likes* – rather than *loves* – in images inspired my analysis to pay the necessary attention to Cameron’s models’ expressions, period clothing, flowing hair and their gestures and posture; and naturally, to the technical aspects that enhanced these, such as soft lighting and composition. All of these form part of Cameron’s studium generally.

On the other hand, the “punctum,” or the thing that becomes poignant and more “subjective” in images is, in essence, the *loving* and protruding element that stands out, and that only *some* of the images are able to possess. In *Illustrations*’ image analysis, punctums will occur, which – in opposition to Barthes’s pronounced theory of uniqueness – will be doing so more often than expected; bad backdrops, blurred faces, overly staged poses, cracks in images, and so on. Barthes’s explanation for the *je ne sais quoi* of the photographic punctums answered once and for all our attraction of the countless images by Cameron, in which she presents us with visual treats; “mistakes” that become “successes,”¹² a relaxed style and other photographic accidents.

¹² Here I am referring to Coventry Patmore’s use of words in her review of Cameron’s work in 1866, also employed by Marta Weiss to title a chapter in her book, “Her Mistakes were her Successes” (31-40).



Fig. 5 James Van der Zee, *Family Portrait*, 1926.
Barthes entitled it, "The strapped pumps."

With the example above of "The strapped pumps" image, Barthes ponders on his obsession on the detail offered by the shoes of the daughter in the image, and illustrates this with his idea of punctum.

On the other hand, Barthes also says that in the analysis:

To recognise the *studium* is inevitably to encounter the photographer's intentions, to enter into harmony with them, to approve or disapprove of them, but always to understand them.

The *studium* is a kind of education (knowledge and civility, 'politeness') which always allows me to discover the *Operator*, to experience the intention which establishes and animates his practices, but to experience them 'in reverse', according to my will as a Spectator. It is rather as if I had to read the Photographer's myths in the Photograph. (27-8)

This quote reflects perfectly one of the aims when conducting my analysis of *Illustrations*, which was to try and understand Cameron's point of view; her reasons for and means of working in the way she did, and the punctums with which she attributed her images. Barthes's concept of studium brought me, however, closer to Cameron, her work and the era and surroundings where she lived, discussed in chapters three and four of this thesis.

Other times, punctums in *Illustrations* held the visual emphasis of the image in particular, making the beholder return again and again to that aspect of the image. On other occasions, punctums made the analysis develop further, towards external topics such as those of femininity or aesthetics, which as we will see keep cropping up throughout the photobook. Barthes's paradox of punctum and its "power of expansion" (*Camera Lucida* 45) was clearly present at this point, while remaining a small detail in Cameron's image, it filled it fully, giving, somehow the entire *Illustrations* its full meaning, sense and impeccable flow.

To end, other images were unable to encounter their punctum, but were equally besotting. They still had that *je ne sais quoi*, but Barthes, once more, dispelled my despair

with his definition of the “unlocatable punctum”, as the inexplicable something that punctures the viewer and does not let him go off the image; the “subtle beyond – as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see” (*op. cit.* 59).

On the Art of Illustration

Illustration *n.* A drawing or picture illustrating a book, a magazine, article, etc.¹³

ORIGIN:

Late Middle English (in the sense ‘illumination; spiritual or intellectual enlightenment’): via Old French from Latin illustration(n-), from the verb illustrate (see illustrate).¹⁴

Cameron used actual prints, rare and expensive at the time, to illustrate Tennyson’s text. In doing so, her genre portrait photography was very allegoric and imaginative, undoubtedly illuminating the Poet’s words, being original and innovative with a photobook.

This section is dedicated to discuss the model of the genre of illustration, or the art of juxtaposing text and image in an illustrative manner. In her lecture, Gadoin includes this genre within the “Text > Image” category – meaning text dictates image –, and asks questions such as: “Do illustrations add to text? Do they subtract from it? Or can they be considered as works in their own right?” We will see next how in *Illustrations*, Cameron’s photographs *do* all of these.

After a first reading, one cannot help by feeling a little thrown by *Illustrations*. There, by visualising Cameron’s work next to Tennyson’s extracts, the reader is likely to sense an alternative narrative from *Idylls* or the original King Arthur legend. *Illustrations* is a story told by women, literally, with key representations of their most important and feminine moments in Tennyson’s story. The reader learns of their accounts, their feelings and experiences first hand.

Furthermore, the woman who chose to represent them did that photographically by interpreting them *close to text*, carefully selecting from it, partly underlining it and placing it prior to her image. In my opinion, this act is a crucial element in *Illustrations*. By doing this, Cameron was introducing herself as a photographic illustrator but positioned herself and her work close to the words of the world’s most famous poet, at the same time as his much-needed endorsement. And yet, Cameron’s final images could actually stand alone, text-unaccompanied for the viewer, as idiosyncratic portraits of her own Arthurian legends and interpretations of the most famous Tennysonian heroines.

It is perhaps anecdotic to mention at this point that few of the original volumes of *Illustrations* have arrived into the hands of museum archivists as loose pages, with the idea that volume owners had unbound these in order to keep just the photograph pages. Additionally, most of Cameron scholars agree that the pages of *Illustrations*’ short version, the Miniature edition, were never bound, and “it might well have been first issued in a loose-leaf

¹³ From *the Oxford English Reference Dictionary*.

¹⁴ From the online Oxford Dictionaries en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/illustration Accessed 6 Dec. 2016.

form, like that of the portfolios presented by many graphic designers,” says Dr. Brian Hinton from the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust in the Isle of Wight (*Illustrations* 3). This is living proof that Cameron’s pictures give the possibility of being looked at unaided by their supporting text.

The overall format and production of *Illustrations* has also played an important part in my analysis, as a way of understanding Cameron’s vision in the publication. To be able to look at the original editions in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust in the Isle of Wight felt crucial from a research point of view. It helped me to visualise the photobook and to understand some of Cameron’s choices of style, sequence selection of text and images, and the reasons behind the different versions and editions that she produced. In her lecture, Gadoin discussed the “Material Culture”, another interdisciplinary study looking at people and the things left behind that are material evidence from the past, and that represent today something culturally for the viewer.¹⁵ *Illustrations’* manuscripts and outstanding copies are Cameron’s legacy filled with personal evidence and embodying many aspects of her artistic expression within it. Their study was a crucial part in this thesis.

At this point, it was necessary to look for alternative models of the image-text illustrative relation. Since Cameron’s photobook did not correspond exactly with the “Text > Image” model discussed previously, I considered Gadoin’s alternative option of “Text + Image 50/50 type of illustration”, a more even relation between the two discourses. In her lecture, Gadoin mentioned this 50/50 category closely corresponded with Barthes’s “Anchorage” model, previously mentioned. Anchorage refers to the situation where text helps to choose the correct level of perception of image, providing a necessary focus to the reader’s view and understanding of the image, guiding his/her interpretation of the required reading. Their reading is therefore chosen in advance by the text (*Rhetoric of the Image* 156-7).

The Anchorage model is perfectly illustrated in Mitchell’s *Picture Theory* book with the example of the Photographic Essay (281-322). Through it, he defines illustrations as image-interpolators of text that are regarded as supplementary and even inessential. Their interpretation is done through a verbal discourse, almost saying that the image or photograph is ‘interpreting text’ in a too generic and creative sense, differently from its disciplinary meaning (209). In other words, traditional illustrations are read thanks to the text and do not stand alone as narrative images. This is what, to a certain extent, takes place in *Illustrations*, where Cameron’s images are somehow subjected to and read, aided by Tennyson’s text. For instance, images follow the overall narrative and sequence of text, they refer to details found and underlined in it and they are being represented right after text. But on the other hand, by presenting them in a more autonomous and independent manner – i.e.: separate pages, more prominently, alternative photographic narrative – their maker did not understand images as less significant to text, but more equal instead.

¹⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Material_culture Accessed 14 Nov. 2016.

When referring more specifically to the illustrative relationship between photography and text in media nowadays, Mitchell talks about a power struggle between them: “words and images find and lose their conscience, aesthetic and ethical identities” (*Picture Theory* 281), and goes on to illustrate this competition with four different types of Photographic Essays,¹⁶ where photos do not act as just mere visual proof of text, but rather question, interrupt and substantiate it with political, ethical and economic photographic evidence. This is a more evened-out and democratic relationship between the two elements, where the role of photography is upgraded from its simple illustrative role to one where it can cause “resistance” and “tension.” These perceptions form the basis of photography’s visual rhetoric and discourse, as we will see further down.

In the introduction of *Poetics of the Iconotext*, Karen Jacobs also refers to this conflict and describes it as a “fusion which conveys the desire to merge two distinctive objects into a new object, in a fruitful tension in which each term maintains its difference in the text’s pictorial subconscious” (5). One cannot help but notice certain *image-text* discord in *Illustrations* too. When it comes to the actual role of Cameron’s photographs, they stand out from their message, medium – at the time unusual, nowadays too! – and tone. This argument between the two discourses will be taken up more individually and image by image when examining them each in my analysis.

With the intention of somehow concluding this open-ended debate on the model of illustration which categorise Cameron’s *Illustrations*, it is constructive to add that the obvious tension between her photographs and Tennyson’s own discourses proves, however, a very fruitful one for the edition. Even in their non-submissive, non-strictly dependent and non-straightforward illustrative relationship, theirs is a relation of “equality”, quasi “independence” and collaborative, as in Mitchell’s examples of photographic essays. *Illustrations’* images and text were conceived and produced separately too, being photographed and written by two different artists, who also worked in different moments and under different visions, also seeking the purity of their own media. And here is where relies precisely the beauty of this *text-image* intersection in *Illustrations*, in its disparity and occasional lack of coherence between the two, as this thesis will demonstrate.

On Spectatorship

The general circumstances of the spectator of *Illustrations* also need to be reflected upon. As he or she experiences reading and viewing in two artistic media – the spectator is required to “attend twice at once” (Ryle 158, qtd. in Benton 367) in each of the scenes being represented from *Idylls* and *Other Poems*. These works proposed to him/her are neither random nor loose, but follow a series of chronicled events using one medium of representation – a.k.a. photography –, to which the other medium finds itself attached to –

¹⁶ Jacob Riis’ photo-essay *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), James Agee’s and Walker Evans’ *Let us Now Praise Famous Men* (1939), Malek Alloula’s *The Colonial Harem* (1986) and Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida* (1981).

a.k.a. Tennyson's verses. Thus, Cameron's photographs are representing Tennyson's text and story in the shape of illustration, and Tennyson's is in itself re-telling Mallory's original story. As a whole, this is a complex exercise of information processing to attain simultaneously by the spectator, who is, incidentally, first reader of the verbal and then beholder of the visual.

To get some clarity and inspiration on this subject, I looked at Michael Benton's article "Anyone for Ekphrasis?" about the ordinary spectator of this rhetoric tool used traditionally only when describing real or imagined artwork, normally a classical painting or sculpture. To think at first that *Illustrations* is a kind of photographic *ekphrasis* in reverse, might feel too excessive, but need never to forget that Cameron is visually representing Tennyson's written *Idylls* metaphorically and in a moody photographic style, not simply illustrating it but pouring her emotions onto the viewer. Perhaps *ekphrasis* and *Illustrations* are able to share certain components, and there is, after all, a common point for discussion.

Benton says that in *ekphrasis* "the poem is always dependent and thus the spectator's role has a disconcerting asymmetry in the sight-lines that connect it with the words on the page and the sculpture or painting to which they refer" (368). In *Illustrations*, word and photograph are not *on* the same page, but on separate ones, to handle each medium separately too. As we also know, some of the extracts in *Illustrations* are directly offered to the reader/viewer with text underlining, image captioning and selective editing; but for a few others, she has included Tennyson's poem whole or unreferenced, freeing up the spectator's interpretation. This happens towards the end of *Illustrations*, by which time, through practice and routine, Cameron has already trained him/her to do so. In all cases, like in a true *ekphrasistic* situation, the spectator of *Illustrations* is asked to cope simultaneously with the experience of a double representation in two different media. Benton, specifically referring to *ekphrasis*, describes the aesthetic experience of such a role by saying that he/she falls:

[N]aturally into story-making to resolve this sense of ambiguity and to construct a 'reading' that does justice to both the visual and verbal elements. Interdependence is in the nature of narrative; stories spawn, and are spawn[ed] by, other stories. It is unsurprising that here, as elsewhere, narrative is used to make sense of experience. Yet, as indicated above, the story-making capacity can lead to aesthetic conflict: the potential competition between the reader's story and the poet's 'story' may mean that the poem becomes marginalised. The fact that, when reading an ekphrasis, the reader starts in an unusually well-informed position, maybe with a view of the art work as considered and sophisticated as that of the poet, places a greater risk of rejection upon the poets' interpretation. (368)

I agree with Benson that the viewer of *Illustrators* is resolving the differences and gaps between both textual and visual experiences through the means of story-telling and narrative, and I believe that Cameron gently and successfully achieved that and directed him/her towards her representation and viewpoint of the story. And while doing so, in some parts of it, there might have been unavoidably some kind of rejection towards this novel narrative, as Benton mentions in his article. The viewer of *Illustrations*, as a poem reader

might have had a visual representation in his/her mind already of that particular moment, this discrepant from the given one photographically by Cameron. Adding to this mix is the fact that photography was a very innovative medium in the exercise of illustration, and we might have some answers as to why *Illustrations* was being misunderstood and unsuccessful at the time, as we will see in chapter four, leading to its shelving in the years to follow when compared to the rest of Cameron's work.

Ekphrasis does not seem, after all, such an alien idea to *Illustrations*. To support this view is Vallone's article on young girl subjects in Victorian Photography, more specifically comparing Charles L. Dodgson's – a.k.a. Lewis Carroll – and Julia Margaret Cameron's different approach of girl portraiture. There, she concludes that the style and literary themes latent in the photography of these two image-makers, where the visual and the verbal clearly merge, come to expose an "ekphrastic significance." She finds fascinating their "combination of looking at images and reading poems that illustrated specific photographs or illuminated the subject and style of the photographer's artistic vision" (207). This, in essence, defines Cameron's working method in her literary photography, as we will see in chapter three, and certainly her work in *Illustrations*.



Fig. 6 Charles L. Dodgson, *Beatrice Henley*, 1864.

To conclude with a prime example of literary photography, Vallone discusses this portrait by Dodgson of little girl Beatrice Henley in 1864, a subject on which Gernsheim thinks he had written a poem two years earlier (196-7). His first stanza read:

In her eyes is the living light
Of a wanderer to earth
From a far celestial height:
Summers five are all the span –
Summers five since Time began

To veil in mists of human night
A shining angel-birth¹⁷

Further down in the poem, Dodgson refers to the two renowned Beatrices in literature, as a form of comparison between their feminine virtues and the child innocence of little Beatrice. One is Dantes's example of Renaissance beauty Beatrice Portinari, describing her in his fourth stanza:

Of a sainted, ethereal maid,
Whose blue eyes are deep fountains of light,
Cheering the poet that broodeth apart...¹⁸

And the other one is sixteenth-century heroine Beatrice Cenci, who had captivated the Victorians – and amongst her inspired portraitists was also Cameron, as we will later see –, the poet's writing of Cenci:

Of a Beatrice pale and stern,
With the lips of a dumb despair,
With the innocent eyes that yearn...¹⁹

After all, the notion of *ekphrasis* helps us, as spectators to understand the narrative of Cameron's literary images and those included in *Illustrations*. It hints at the cognitive process undergone by their beholder while reading them.

On Visual Rhetorics

The methodology of this interdisciplinary combination of verbal rhetoric and the study of the visual material examines – following Charles Hill's and Marguerite Helmers's outline in *Defining Visual Rhetorics* – “the process of looking”, and “*the gaze*, with all the psychological and cultural implications that have become wrapped within that term,” as well as focusing on the image itself as a “carrier of meaning” (64). This book validates how both methodologies work together in the production of, reception and response to persuasive images, providing a good frame of analysis to look and read the images in *Illustrations*. It deals with elements such as the visual rethor (a.k.a. Cameron) and her “space of viewing,” the viewer and the need to understand how Cameron's representational images and their rhetoric might act upon him/her, and finally, the object that is being viewed on them. The “meaning” of images, Hill and Helmers say, will derive “from the interplay of all these elements.”

A useful definition of “representational images” is provided too in the book; as “visual[s] that are clearly designed to represent a recognisable person, object, or situation” (25), which seems a more than suitable description for Cameron's literary photographs in and out *Illustrations*, as they represent familiar and traditionally-celebrated characters from literature, history, King Arthur's legend and the traditional folklore.

Defining Visual Rhetorics then goes on to define the concept of “persuasion,” vital in visual rhetoric, representing the power of all things visual to shape our attitudes, beliefs and

¹⁷ From *Complete Works of Lewis Carrol*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

actions. Thus, visual rhetoric is the equivalent of visual persuasion, and when talking of the conventional advertising image, as Barthes does in *The Rhetoric of Image* essay, it makes sense to state that an image is *selling* something to the spectator.

When this concept of persuasion is applied to *Illustrations*, we need to think of it carefully and perhaps more substantially. Firstly, the goal of this photobook is to prove that photography is an ideal medium to illustrate text. Secondly, it introduces the work of a female photographer attempting to achieve both commercial and artistic success. And finally, it admits to providing a different and non-conforming reading of Tennyson's renowned *Idylls*, which is based on femininity and beauty and not the traditional and virile chivalry. So, as a whole, this is a lot to *sell* and persuade and to offer as new.

From this important concept of persuasion derives, say Hill and Helmers, the key terms of "presence", "evidence" and "vividness of information" given by visual rhetorics, as the how this persuasion is done. Out of the three, "vividness of information" is perhaps the one in most need of clarification, for which the author's own definition; "identified as information that is emotionally interesting and concrete," and that is "taking the form of concrete and imagistic language, personal narratives, pictures, first-hand experience" (31). They go as far as to establish a typology and a ranking of experiences that can move along the spectrum of "vividness," with "Most Vivid Information" prompting more emotional reactions than the "Least Vivid" one:

Most Vivid Information

- actual experience
- moving images with sound
- static photography
- realistic painting
- line drawing
- narrative, descriptive account
- descriptive account
- abstract, impersonal analysis

Least Vivid Information

- statistics

We see how the reader of *Illustrations* witnesses vividness of information through Cameron's static and theatrical photography and the narrative of her images, along with her own selection of Tennyson's text using his most descriptive and detail-filled accounts of the scene – all marked in the list above with the arrow symbol. All these concrete and photographically testimonial experiences were thought to persuade the viewer of *Illustrations* into a specific and emotional point of view, Cameron's one. The photographer directed him or her with great skill into the evidence, the presence and the vivid information in her photographs – aspects that will be looked at more specifically in the emphasis of each of the images and techniques later on –, and to substantiate them further, she used text in her persuasion.

On Realism

One of the initial roles attributed to photography in its early beginnings was, as we will see in chapter one, recording reality and true nature. In the case study of *Illustrations*, photography was used by Cameron to record Tennyson's story, being substantiated by his text. From this simple fact arose the odd possibility of *Illustrations* being a *realist* photobook. But the main obstacle I was trying to surmount here was the fact that Cameron's representational images were portraying fictional characters and a literary subject in a whimsical manner, perhaps closer in style to *idealism*. It was a clear struggle.

Barthes's take on realism is also a unique one. In his general enquiry into the nature of photography in *Camera Lucida*, he maintains that photographs cannot be detached from their ideological, cultural and political interpretations, as well as the lasting emotional effect stirred in the spectator. This idea of photography being highly subjective is illustrated, as discussed, with the twin concept of "studium" and "punctum."

On the other hand, he also claims photography's power of certification to attest what has existed and "what has been there" (85). With this statement, Barthes says that images are testimonial and evidential, and the photographer's "certificates of presence." They cannot have been invented, and "their power of authentication exceeds the power of representation" (88). Here, he enters the territory of the beholder's relationship with photography, and the photographer in this connection.

On this particular point, Kaja Silverman claims in *The Threshold of the Visible World* that "the spectator can do no other than identify with the camera...which has looked before him at what he is now looking at" (125). The photographer is, therefore, providing evidence of his/her reality for the spectator, who takes it as *truth*.

We can also understand Barthes's photographic reality of the *have-been-there*, not as a space-time conscious one, but one of pure awareness of the spatial immediate brought by the photographic image *now*, and a temporal anteriority of the *there-then*. This is a complex concept in itself, which he calls "the real unreality of the photograph" in his *Rhetoric of Image*, explaining that "in every photograph there is the always stupefying evidence of *this is how it was*, giving us, by a precious miracle, a reality form which we are sheltered" (159). And on the effects of this entire view on novel illustration, Barthes argues that "a photograph is an image in itself and does not allow for any room to the reader or anything to be added to his/her forming of a mental image. It is the 'Totality-of-Image' in photography, and how it fills the sight by force and nothing can be refused or transformed" (*Camera Lucida* 89).

As a whole, I began to realise the assessment on photographic realism is complex and awkward. When brought into the territory of *Illustration*, it can be understood as the beholder taking Cameron's images as her direct testimony of *having-been-there* with those Tennysonian women. And her commanding images can serve the spectator as true visions of the King Arthur's legend and the poet's poems, replacing the poet's realities.

In order to escort us towards a more conclusive deduction on the topic of realism in

Illustrations, it is also needed to explain the positioning of Tennyson's text in the reader's mind a bit further. The Arthurian legend is part of imagery collective of British medievalism and mythology in his mind, representing too the identity of a nation. Its main figure, King Arthur is seen within the limits between history and fiction. To the British, the king and his people were understood as real characters that actually existed. Not only that, as we will see in chapter two, Tennyson was working from Mallory's compilation of authentic medieval texts from the Welsh chroniclers, regarded as quasi-historical facts. The poet adapted them into tales for a modern Victorian readership to make the legend of King Arthur and its moral values more relevant and *real* to his contemporary public.

Further to it, Cameron was adding into this mix her objective photographic component by choosing *real* people and relatives – mostly female – around her as models to represent her story, personifying all strata from Victorian society, i.e.: servants, porters, ladies, gentlemen, writers and artists, and the beauty in each of them.

Along with *Camera Lucida*, Susan Sontag's *On Photography* is one of the most significant books in the theory of photography. Neither of the authors was a photographer, but even amongst drifts of criticism since the 1990s, these two publications still feel like bibles to some of us dealing with the essence of photography. In her book, Sontag dedicated a great deal of thought to the topic of realism. She began by saying: "Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire" (4), and that "photographs furnish evidence", and they "may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist" in them (5). I feel this statement completes, not contradicts, Barthes's view on his idea of the photographic evidence and testimony. Her use of the words "make" and "distort" is rather enlightening, as with them she is directly addressing the role of the operator/photographer, who makes reality and/or distorts it in trying to evidence it. Her view is that photography is not there just simply to reproduce the real but to put it to its own use and give it a new meaning (174).

Thus, my view in *Illustrations* is that Tennyson's reality was assigned a new meaning by Cameron's documentation of it. Her photobook is her version of *this-is-how-it-was* for these women living at the time of King Arthur, and this is how I represent them *now* to the viewer. In our photographic analysis, we therefore need to define reality and understand the photographer's reality and vision, and what he or she is making of it, and the change he/she is producing in the beholder's reality.

Another reflection on realism with regards to this position of the beholder can be found in Mitchell's chapter "Pictures and Powers" in *Picture Theory*, where he reflects the relationship between the image and the beholder, and the image and the rest of the world. He cites David Freedberg's model of "powerful" and "powerless images" explaining that when an image is overpowering to the beholder, *illusionism* is trying to deceive and surprise by simulating certain spaces, objects and actions in the image. *Realism*, however, prefers to show the truth of the objects in the image, by situating them in the place of the beholder and

not overtaking his sense of sight, but overtaking, instead, the power upon the rest of the world (323-4). Mitchell concludes that the realism-illusionism practice is being used alternatively and that it is a hard task to differentiate these two terms separately. Under this latest view, *Illustrations* gravitates more towards the realism premise, as its images show truthful and raw aspects of characters from Tennyson's poems, who regularly engage with the viewer, rather than amaze him or affect him.

In psychoanalysis, Silverman talks about the "strange way" photography maintains "the referential illusion – or the attribution to the image of a truthful vision," and how this is because of the physical separation between the camera and the human eye. She quotes André Bazin's *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*, when discussing the "objective nature of photography" providing a credibility absent in other means of picture making like painting, forcing the spectator "to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced" (130). This brings us back to the mechanical, instrumental, and scientific initial role of photography, and indirectly to Carol Armstrong's point of view in *Scenes of a Library* on how the first photobooks in the early beginnings of the medium – and she includes *Illustrations* here – followed the philosophy of positivism.

Cameron's positivist way of working – covered more in depth in chapter four – consisting in bringing a place and existence to Tennyson's poetry was obsessively methodological. Armstrong says that she observed, experimented, compared and recorded photographically the four stages of this philosophy of science and precision.

John Berger gives a description of what positivism meant at the time, which I found useful; "Precision would replace metaphysics, planning would resolve social conflicts, truth would replace subjectivity, all that was dark and hidden in the soul would be illuminated by empirical knowledge" (99).

And although positivism might sound a too cold approach and impersonal way for Cameron's working method in *Illustrations*, I believe she ended up feeling extremely close to it. She was in deed attempting to present her images as pieces of evidence and her *had-been-there[s]* in Tennyson's stories. She presented them as truth gifts, with absolute precision and carefully planning her representing and producing of *Illustrations*, in almost empirical fashion. This is the reason why I have decided to examine Cameron's positivist working methods in *Illustrations* later on.

To finally conclude on this subject, in her photobook Cameron worked hard to represent her photographic *thens* of old surviving legends with images that followed more an idealistic style, as we will see. However, she chose to package these, as photographic *nows* by referring methodically and relentlessly to text realities. Photography was at the time, more than ever, regarded as a truthful means of documentation of reality.

AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS ANALYSIS

I want to propose a new form of criticism, a kind of photographic *explication de texte* that involves an oscillation between close looking and equally close reading, and that therefore necessitates replacing the photograph in the series and the book from which it was taken.²⁰

Carol Armstrong, 1998

This section deals with the general purpose of this thesis and with my personal goals.

The first aim of this thesis has been to achieve a comprehensive study of a close reading of Cameron's work in *Illustrations*. As I completed this, I felt I needed to establish where and when this unconventional photobook sat within the rest of this photographer's *oeuvre*. It was clear that my image analysis could only benefit from referencing and drawing general conclusions from the rest of her work. Then I began to see in *Illustrations* her recurring themes, favoured genres and subject matters being portrait in similar manner, following a unique approach to aesthetics. To categorise her work, I realised then that a biographical knowledge of Cameron could point me in the right direction.

At this point, I also considered that her unique style required touching upon the technical and photographic limitations she encountered at the time (i.e.: little focal range and long exposures, amongst others), and how she used these and the source of lighting for her signature style. A basic understanding of these technicalities would explain an important part of her singular photographic narrative and whimsical effect, which no doubt was present in both her Arthurian and heroine representations in *Illustrations*.

When lacking facts and means of documentation I required a certain amount of thinking about the way she composed and produced each of these representational images. I became aware that to represent Tennyson's text, Cameron went through extraordinary artistic and financial journeys that pushed her to the limits of shooting and publishing *Illustrations* at her own risk. She chose that instead of keeping her work more sensibly within a gift album as she had done with some of her photographs previously. *Illustrations* was a very special project for her, on many levels, and the photobook clearly reflects all of these. My aim in this thesis is to highlight these facts for each image and its subject matter and analyse them comprehensively.

It will become apparent to the reader that on more than a few occasions, I found it refreshing to be able to include quotes from people who knew Cameron, Tennyson or people around them. These were direct accounts of their and her story, and especially the one of *Illustrations* photobook. Being able to delve into an era where letters and journals were an essential part of intellectual life benefited my contextualisation greatly. And having Cameron as an avid and prolific writer in correspondence and diaries brought me closer to this objective at the same time as to her persona. The words she wrote on her own photography helped me to understand many of her artistic choices. Additionally, through them, one can see that her

²⁰ *Scenes in a Library* 3.

persona has evolved from the beginning of my thesis to the end. It has been thoroughly enjoyable, and I hope to be able to reflect that with these quotations.

Another goal was to give *Illustrations* the place it deserved within Cameron's work, to assess its artistic standpoints and therefore, to be able to redefine the quality of those *tableaux vivants*, as often referred to denote photographic failures. Luckily, a number of Cameron's specialists have recently begun to appreciate *Illustrations* and to agree it should not be compared with the rest of her portraiture, but should be defined as something of a different kind. In her paper "Shadowing Sense at war with Soul," Marylu Hill says that *Illustrations* has been "largely unappreciated by scholars and museums" (445). And only a few scholars, so far, have been dedicated specific attention to this edition. These have been Carol Armstrong, Joanne Lukitsch, Charles Millard and Mike Weaver.

And recently, in an interview to *The Guardian* on Cameron's bicentenary, Marta Weiss supported that maybe it is time to think about *Illustrations* "alongside the knowingly composed groups of Jeff Wall, or the self-fashioning of Cindy Sherman" (Higgins). Referring by this to Cameron's exceedingly and inspiring eye-for-detail in the composition of her images and characterisation of her subjects. In *Illustrations*, these go to the maximum level, and it should be valued for that. To this, I would add that Cameron did all of these as well as beautifully narrating a tale about and with women. All of these make her photo book unique in itself.

Thus, the innovative value of *Illustrations* is more than apparent, as well as needed, and this thesis proposes to look at it as a text-image publication in its own right. It anticipates looking at Cameron's work within it and trying to interpret her interesting vision and personal goals when she produced it. *Illustrations* is true reflection of her own evolution as an artist and a businesswoman, and a result of her determination which started from a few illustrations for Tennyson's best of book of poems, to producing three entire volumes of her own photobook. This needs to be valued accordingly.

A further goal of this thesis is to also assess the importance of the representational images Cameron included towards the end of *Illustrations*, in her *Other Poems* section. I will be looking at these images as a relevant part of its story and also as fine examples of her literary photography. During my research, I noticed that these photographs are often forgotten by Cameron's scholars. Armstrong and Debra Mancoff and Joanne Lukitsch have published remarkable papers and book chapters on their Arthurian counterparts, however they have overlooked the heroines that appeared in Tennyson's *Other Poems* and that represent important issues of his poetry.

In my analysis, it was almost impossible to separate the two groups of women, as I believe that Cameron had intended her *Other Poems'* women to go after her *Idylls* in volume two of her publication and miniature edition. She achieved that by handpicking them from Tennyson's extensive lyrical work outside *Idylls*. Even when writing this introduction, I notice

that my references to Cameron's Arthurian women have easily outnumbered my *Other Poems'* ones, and I understand this is so partly because of their smaller representation in *Illustrations*, more isolated and superfluous than the main story. In spite of these and their less-legendary stories, these illustrations for *Other Poems* are beautiful, not only in a photographic sense, but in a noteworthy narrative attempt by Cameron to continue with her aim in *Illustrations*; that is, she intended to represent a different range of women beautifully.

To summarise, this thesis does not hope to place *Illustrations* above the rest of Cameron's work, but rather to recognise it unlike others as an accomplished photo-literary piece. Given its particularities, failures and achievements, and even with lesser photographic quality, it proved to be a brave exercise by its author, who put herself on the artistic spot in order to create something exceptionally idiosyncratic, a priceless legacy. And from the researcher's point of view, Cameron's journey to achieve this was a fascinating one, as the following chapters will reveal.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CORPUS

This exhibition follows the long-standing art-historical tradition of studying an aspect of an artist's career in an effort to better understand the whole.²¹

James N. Wood, 1998

As a way of conclusion, I will describe some final remarks on the general specifics and sourcing of this thesis that might provide useful background to its reader.

Firstly, I have based my analysis on the two volumes of *Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Other Poems* (1874-1875) located in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Their facsimiles have been included as plates in chapter five of this thesis. Additionally, important mention has been made to the rare copy of *Illustrations'* Miniature Edition, assembled by Cameron herself in 1875. The version I am referring to here is the one currently existing at the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust in the Isle of Wight, whose facsimiles are also being included as plates in the same chapter.

These are important clarifications, since when researching online about other copies of the volumes of *Illustrations* in other museums, I noticed differences between them existed. For instance, there were different print versions being pasted onto them, or different underlining on Cameron's part in their text. This issue was also brought to my attention when speaking to Marta Weiss in London. She teased me by saying that not enough had been done in existing research on the matter of different underlining, perhaps leaving a door open for me, or others, to continue with further investigation in the future. At this point, I also need to admit that sometimes referring to and comparing with the other archived versions of

²¹ Wood's, Director and President of The Art Institute of Chicago, writing in the introductory page of the exhibition catalogue for *Julia Margaret Cameron's Women*, 19 Sept 1998-10 Jan 1999. I feel this statement summarises faultlessly what the study of *Illustrations* has meant to my understanding of Cameron's work and artistic vision.

Illustrations in the issue of different underlining, proved beneficial to my analysis, leading me to more conclusions on Cameron's sources of inspiration from the *Idylls'* text.

Other setbacks were the difficulty of tracking Cameron's work, and all the different photo versions and prints she had produced for some of her images in *Illustrations*. Cameron was involved in "self-evaluation to a degree uncommon among her peers," thus she was obsessive about achieving her vision and re-shot many variations in her compositions (Cox and Ford 4). During her short photographic career spanning fifteen years, Cameron produced between 3,000 and 4,000 prints, and an overall image count of approximately 1,000 negatives (McKay 24). Julian Cox and Colin Ford produced a very complete printed gallery of these; a volume with the J. Paul Getty Trust, *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs* (2003), included in my bibliography, which contains her entire corpus of more than twelve hundred photographs she created with endless versions and lesser-known exposures that Cameron in her life. I enjoyed looking at these and even referring to them in my analysis as much as possible, as they showed the artistic process and representational journey of many of Cameron's photographs. But this overflow of images proved a challenge at times, and admittedly a distracting one, which, added to the abundance of exhibitions publications, monographs and thesis corpuses dealing with Cameron, was at times overwhelming. Nonetheless and all in all, the research process was very satisfactory.

In the end, I had to restrict the sources and materials in need of reading, and focus on the photo versions that I was able to obtain or see for myself, and make them the basis of my analysis.

I would like to end this introductory chapter of my analysis by briefly vindicating how stimulating it has been to be part of such a remarkable woman artist like Cameron, evolving by the minute and converging on so many enthralling topics in her persona, such as visual arts, photography, femininity, Victorianism, medievalism and, of course, Tennyson's work. It has proved very rewarding personally, and has given me the chance to understand her better and inaugurate with this thesis a fascinating process of investigation in my career.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE PHOTO BOOK

Fifty years today since I came to the throne. God has mercifully sustained me through many great trials & sorrows.²²

Queen Victoria, 1887

This chapter aims to provide a general context to the lives of Cameron and Tennyson and, to the years in which the *Idylls of the King* books were published. I will look at some of the era's most relevant historical, social and artistic events, and also at the people, some of them acquaintances of the photographer and poet, who played a major part in them. In general, the visual and textual worlds were marked by a strong Victorianism of the time.

Few representative dates in the reign of Queen Victoria taking place during Cameron's lifetime are shown as a visual aid in *Victorian Timeline*, included as Appendix I. As a whole, this chapter will give the reader of this thesis a 360-degree encircling knowledge and background that would explain the *what, how* and *why* of this photographer's body of work for *Illustrations*.

The Victorian era is one of the most fascinating times in the history of Britain, lasting sixty-three years overall and inaugurating a period of expansion for the British Empire, prosperity and great industrial, cultural and scientific changes. The supremacy of Queen Victoria, known as *Pax Britannica*, was a time of peace, unity and a strong national identity without any great wars, only temporarily disrupted by the short Crimean war (1854-1856) and the colonial revolts in Jamaica and India, where Cameron was born and finally died.

It was in that country where, in fact, the political situation and imperialism were changing most rapidly during her time, when in 1831, after years of trade with and ruling India the powerful East India Company lost its monopoly. Then the British government ceased its activities and allowed it to continue by paying taxes. India was on the road to self-government implementing its own legal system instead – aided by the British –, when the Indian Mutiny took place in 1857 involving many sectors of the native population. This was the outcome of excessive years of British colonialism, ending in the dissolution of the Company in 1858, and the subcontinent of India coming under direct rule of the British Crown. All British protectorates were incorporated into the Empire, and years later, in 1877, Queen Victoria would be crowned Empress of India.

This is arguably only a minor event in the British history of colonisation. No doubt these were years of glory for the British Empire, which expanded across the globe in all four

²² *Journal entry for her Diamond Jubilee, Jun 20, 1887, as quoted in BBC iWonder; "Queen Victoria: The woman who redefined Britain's monarchy," www.bbc.co.uk/timelines/ztn34j6 Accessed 2 May 2017.*

continents. One of the main areas of colonisation was Africa, especially in Egypt, West and South Africa, followed by the Caribbean and Australia, where many of these lands' natural resources until then were unexploited. With trade routes between her colonies, Britain became a country with global power enjoying important economic growth. However, all this came with the cost of slavery and the exploitation and displacement of native people and their cultures. Most people in Britain, though, preferred to ignore the effects of their country's colonialism.

The Victorian period was an era of liberalism and political stability generally in Great Britain, helping consolidate the country's economy and intellectual stock. Upon her arrival in England, Cameron witnessed the nation's golden years, with the increase of exports and wealth in international trade, heavy industrialisation and railway network expansion by the Great Western Company and its master engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel. A string of inventions and highly technological development happened too in the area of communications: the telegraph, telephone and postal system, and of course, photography.

Socially, this period brought unprecedented growth and movement of the British population, with migratory forces moving from rural Britain and Ireland to its major cities in search of work in the booming manufacturing industry. There was also continental emigration to the United States, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, as people looked for land and farming opportunities.

Both middle and working classes flourished with industrialisation. The latter was being looked after by the government with low taxes and social welfare, such as house development, schooling, and the opening of libraries all over the country. This, however, was insufficient in large metropolitan areas, where most of the population had so rapidly concentrated. Poverty, abuse of labour and prostitution arose in these cities, which were unprepared for welcoming the working hordes and their families. These suffered scarcity of housing, inadequate sanitation and public health. Added to their low wages, these labourers had to live in city slums or overcrowded private rented accommodation. These dreadful living conditions in areas like the East End in London began to be documented during the era in journals and novels.

The year that the Camerons moved to England, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published in London, anonymously, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) on social and labour injustices. The working class was beginning to demand better working conditions and new political rights like voting and more political representation from the middle classes, roles that had traditionally belonged for generations to the big landowners. Society was on the verge of changing.

Feminism was on the cusp of it too, arising in an era full of gender contradictions. With a British queen in power, society was constructed so that women were not allowed to vote, sue, go to university or even own property. They were allowed, however, to work in

factories or set up their own businesses, although this was seen as uncommon. In an ordinary middle and upper class household like the Camerons and their circle of friends, women belonged just to the domestic world, and their duties involved running the house, instructing the servants and the nannies raising their children, and attending to their social activities. Their rights were limited and the loss of ownership of their money, wages and properties the moment they got married. Marriage was truly institutionalised then, being considered under the law as solely represented and controlled by the husband. With time, new prospects led to gender equal opportunity movements and ideas and changes in law, such as the Divorce Act of 1857 if proof of bigamy, adultery and cruelty had existed, the publication of *The Subjection of Women* in 1861 by John Stuart Mill, the popularity of the suffragettes towards the end of the era and the married Women's Property Act in 1870 and 1882.

The notion of privacy was a staple in any middle-upper class Victorian household. The cult of entertaining took place regularly although under private invitation; people were invited to tea or to afternoon *soirées*. Keeping up a façade and appropriate behaviour in front of the outsiders was the norm and thing to do. There was a strong focus on high morality and ideals, being marked in this era, and a proper and prudish use of language, acceptable behaviour and religious beliefs were expected. This period leaned towards mysticism and spirituality, clearly affecting literature and art, as we will see in the next section.

With economic progress came outdoor leisure, the higher classes of society being able to practise hobbies and *amateur* activities in the areas of natural history, the studying of birds, butterflies or botany. Victorians were serious and avid collectors.

They also began to travel and visit the seaside, renting cottages and holiday inns along the British coast, which received the first form of tourism. Margate, Brighton, Worthing, and the Isle of Wight became famous holiday destinations.

In their spare time, many sports were practised, thus the development of cricket, horse-riding and croquet. The origination of the modern game of tennis took place around Birmingham in the 1860s.

In 1840, Queen Victoria had married her first cousin Prince Albert of the German royal family, Saxe Coburg Gotha. He came to England and acted as her Prince Consort until his early death of typhoid fever in 1861. During his short period in office his European views influenced the Queen greatly, the royal family and the entire nation. The royal couple had a happy marriage and large family unit with nine children, and the way they carried their family life inspired many aspects of upper and middle class domestic life. For instance, their celebration of the Christmas festival around the Christmas tree.

Most importantly, the Prince promoted the cultivation of art, music and science in his guest country, and aimed to convert its capital into one of *the* cultural quarters in Europe. He participated in the creation of free museums and exhibitions for the people, and was directly involved in the Royal Commission for the Great Exhibition with art entrepreneur Henry Cole.

This exhibition was the world's first national fair, opening in London in 1851 with a purpose-built crystal palace in Hyde Park showcasing Britain's manufactured products and industrial progress, including new medium photography. It was a huge success with six million visitors attending, representing an achievement for the nation and its cultural interests, setting the precedent for an interest in art for the people. Its profits were put towards the construction of the South Kensington museum – nowadays the Victoria and Albert museum –, which opened in 1852 with a permanent collection on photography. This was followed by the Science Museum in 1857, and the Royal Albert Hall in 1871 – renamed in his honour after his death –, all built in the Gothic Revival style, which dominated high-end architecture at the time.

Victorians clearly understood art and literature as essential parts in their lives, and took a special interest in dedicating their time to cultivate them.

1.1 THE WORD OF AN ERA

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.²³

Charles Dickens, 1859

The flourishing of book publishing during this period made reading and writing the most popular time-passing activities of the era. The prevalent genres were idealist poetry, fiction novels, children's literature and the scientific essay.

Due to industrialisation, the beginning of the Victorian period was still dominated by Romanticism in literature, poetry at the forefront of it. This being characterised by the emphasis on heroic individualism and the emotions and imagination of the self, and an exaltation of nature together with a nostalgia for the past, thus giving room for the revival of the classics and the era's mood, medievalism.

Robert Browning (1812-1889) and Sir Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) were the most famous poets during this time, with poet-dramatist Sir Henry Taylor (1800-1886), Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) and Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909) considered as important literary figures too. Other Pre-Raphaelites poets were D. G. Rossetti and his sister Christina. As well as William Morris's book of poems *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858).

Popular themes were primarily moral, for instance the cult of grieving for the bereaved – regrettably an everyday occurrence with high mortality in families – with Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Another recurrent topic was feminism, which dealt with the representation of women in different roles and ideals of perfection, some of them reciting their

²³ Opening quote from *A Tale of Two Cities*, "Book the First – Recalled to Life."

marital responsibilities towards their husbands like Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House* (1854), a real touchstone in Victorian culture.

Fiction novels were particularly representative of the Victorian period too, with the extraordinarily popular Charles Dickens dominating the genre with important titles like *Oliver Twist* (1837), *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *David Copperfield* (1849), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Great Expectations* (1860). In the first half of the century other novelists were William Thackeray, his greatest rival, who published *Vanity Fair* (1848), and the Brontë sisters with the notable and feminist *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Other women publishing under a masculine pseudonym were Mary Ann Evans, a.k.a. George Eliot, with *Middlemarch* (1872). In the same year, Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*, took the relay baton from Dickens.

The Victorians' fight against child labour and the introduction of compulsory education, resulted in children taking a much-needed interest in reading, and consequently a growth in the publication of Children's literature. Established novelists like Dickens wrote *A Child's History of England* (1851), and young writer Lewis Carroll came to the scene with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1872). There were others, and also editions of illustrated books for the children's market, in order to capture their interest and learn the important morals while reading. Themes varied from fairy and folk tales, but girls' literature dealt mostly with domestic issues, and boys' literature with exciting adventures.

In the second half of the era, as important developments in science took place, Realism began displace Romanticism. Victorians thrived observing, describing and classifying nature, thus essays on zoology, botany and geography were published in an amateur form. The most important one being the theory of the evolution by Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of the Species*, a book which undermined the nation's ideals and beliefs of the time in 1859. Illustrated journals on nature such as *The Illustrated London News*, founded in 1842, became widely popular too.

Other essayists wrote on philosophy like John Stuart Mill, politics like Thomas Carlyle, and art and its history, like John Ruskin.

This was also the era of the reference works. The most important being the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and the publication of subsequent editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

1.2 THE IMAGE OF AN ERA

Nine out of ten photographers are, unfortunately, quite ignorant of art; some think manipulation all-sufficient, others are too much absorbed in the scientific principles involved to think of making pictures; while comparatively a few only have regarded the science as means to give pictorial embodiment to their ideas...It is denied by some that art and photography can be combined, and these ridicule the idea that a knowledge of the principles of art can be of use to the photographer.²⁴

Henry Peach Robinson, 1869

The Victorian age was a dynamic and fruitful period for visual art, with an extraordinary panache and progress in the areas of art, illustration and photography.

The same year that the Camerons arrived in England in 1848 marked the founding of the Arundel Society to Promote the Knowledge of Art, an organisation that symbolised the period's admiration for the Classic and Old Masters. They encouraged the study and reproduction of classical works with a view to making them accessible to the general public. Most significantly that same year the famous Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed.

No one personified better than the Pre-Raphaelites the Word and Image eras of Cameron's and Tennyson's times. Originally founded by three young students of the Royal Academy of Art; artists and poets, John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, their philosophy and work was to be fully committed with the Sister Arts from the beginning.

Until then, the English art scene had been dominated by the Royal Academy, and with their manifesto that year, the Brotherhood was directly opposing this establishment and its conventions on how art should be regarded. They despised what the Academy represented and its ruling in Europe since Raphael in the Renaissance. They were determined to view art afresh, and purported to concentrate in detail, saturated colours and pursue complex compositions more typical of the Quattrocento, before Raphael. They viewed nature as the basis of art, and claimed to be painting directly from it with their motto of being "true to nature," whether this ended up realistic or not. Needless to say, the Academy saw their art as "vilified, unnatural and vulgar" (Olsen 86), and got strong criticism from *The Times* from very earlier on, resulting John Ruskin's famous defence in a letter to the editor in 1851 (*Ibid.* 94).

Historical, biblical and literary subjects were popular in their scenes for their moral and idealistic messaging. They admired the allegorical paintings of G. F. Watts, also a good friend who represented some of the Pre-Raphaelites in his famous *Hall of Fame*, and they were followers of the Gothic Revival in literature, finding inspiration from the classics such as Goethe, Shakespeare, Chaucer and Dante Alighieri, English Romantics like William Blake, and contemporaries such as Tennyson and Browning. Some of them were writers themselves, and the Brotherhood issued *The Germ* monthly, a publication that in fact went through two subtitles, says Janzen Kooistra; *Thoughts Towards Nature in Poetry, Literature and*

²⁴ Taken from the Preface of *Pictorial Effect*.

Art, and “*Art and Poetry: Being Thoughts Towards Nature Conducted Principally by Artists*” (7).

In 1857 D. G. Rossetti and other Pre-Raphaelites obtained their commission to paint the Oxford Union Building with scenes from Arthurian legends. It was precisely their medievalism that split them apart, drafting them in two directions towards the end; on one side were the more realists led by Hunt and Millais, and in the other the medievalists with Rossetti and his followers Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, more interested in fanciful and legendary subjects that represented the truth of their inner selves.

The Pre-Raphaelites played crucial role in the way we see photography today. They approved of it and even used it in their work; painting from photographs. From the start, the Pre-Raphaelites “arose after the invention of photography, so their work was among the earliest to show its influence,” sharing beginnings with Art Photography; if the first movement wanted to be truthful to life as photography was, the second movement aspired to the condition of painting (Olsen 106). This was named Pictorialism in photography. Although the Brotherhood found visual truth through beauty and the outer features and admired photography for recording these, Cameron, however, like Watts, also found truth and beauty as inner qualities (*Ibid.* 87).



Fig. 7 David Wilkie Wynfield, *John Everett Millais as Dante*, photographed 1860s. Left.

Fig. 8 David Wilkie Wynfield, *William Holman Hunt*, photographed 1860s. Right.

The actual journey of photography had begun much earlier on in France, circa 1816, with inventor Joseph-Nicéphore Niépce, who was able to fix a fading image on a metal plate. The heliograph had been born, and its first surviving copy dates from 1827. Later on, during 1837, Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre had recorded a still life, and in 1838 his famous *View of the Boulevard du Temple*, the earliest known photograph of a person with 10-minute exposure. On January 7, 1839, the ‘daguerreotype’ was presented to the French Academy of Sciences, with a great speech by physicist François Arago, which described it as a “cultural

creation, if not a legend, rather than a scientific invention” (Brunet 17). Photography was on the road to becoming art.

Across the channel, circa 1819 in England, scientist and experimental photographer Sir John Frederik William Herschel had discovered thypo-sulphite of soda (*hypo*), a photographic fixer. However, he was not interested in the recognition and informed Cambridge-educated and scientist William Henry Fox Talbot, a member of the Royal Society of this invention. In 1842 Herschel invented the *cyanotype*, and today he is credited for the use of the photographic terms “positive” and “negative.”

The advent of photography was therefore marked by an English-French rivalry and a race to claim its invention. Thus, Talbot made sure to document his share of the discovery in his book *The Pencil of Nature* (1844), which in fact gets the recognition for being the first commercial book with, and dealing with, photography. There, he narrated when in the summer of 1835, he had succeeded in recording an image from his window in his country estate in Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire, in the southwest of England (McCabe). In the introduction of his book, he admitted to have required a nine to ten-minute exposure to obtain just a miniature photograph, and was in need of further research to finally announce his achievement to his peers at the Royal Society on January, 31 1839, only months later than the Daguerreotype (*Plate XV*). With few further improvements, the *calotype* – also known as *talbotype* –, was finally patented in 1841 as the first process using high-quality writing paper dampened in silver iodine to produce a translucent negative image. Its novelty was that from it, unlimited number of copies could be reproduced by contact printing and, most importantly, allowing for photographic images to be printed on paper and the book page. Photo-illustration had been born.

Talbot’s second photo-book *Sun Prints of Scotland* in 1845 included picturesque landscapes inspired by Sir Walter Scott’s ‘Lady of the Lake’ poem, confirming after this and his *Pencil of Nature* the initial format of the photo-illustrated books of the era; printed text pages and photographic plates separately, these pasted and in for the final binding. These books were expensive and luxurious and inaugurated the “age of mechanical reproduction” (Armstrong 178), they were generally conceived under a scientific purpose or with the function of documenting field trips and the Victorian obsession of cataloguing and collecting specimens and types. Some examples were Charles Darwin’s *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) with some photographs from Oscar G. Rejlander, Francis Frith’s *Egypte and Palestine* (1858-1859) and Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851). Or, like *The Sunbeam, A Book of Photographs of Nature* (1859), a bound volume of six issues of photographic magazine *The Sunbeam* juxtaposing several of Francis Bedford’s calotypes, Philip H. Delamotte and other photographers. These were actual precedents of the booming of the printed visual culture to follow.

With the arrival of the wet collodion process, invented by Frederik Scott Archer in 1851, photographers were able to easily photograph on glass negatives – much sharper and

neater than paper negatives – and to reproduce from them – unlike with the Daguerreotype. *Cartes-de-visite* became then popularly purchased by rich and middle-class Victorians,²⁵ enabling the growing business of the entrepreneur commercial photographer. Photography had, therefore, become an instant hit, and even a hobby for the upper-class. Fox Talbot recorded this in his *The Pencil of Nature* with a disapproving tone:

Already sundry *amateurs* have laid down the pencil and armed themselves with chemical solutions and with camera obscurae. Those amateurs especially, and they are not few, who find the rules of perspective difficult to learn and to apply – and who moreover have the misfortune to be lazy – prefer to use a method which dispenses with all that trouble. (*Plate XVII*)

These were the years when photography became a discipline. In 1853, photographer Rogen Fenton and Charles Eastlake, director of the National Gallery, founded the Photographic Society – the world's oldest society in photography –, to later become the Royal Photographic Society. Fenton's photographs of the Royal Family and children had turned into best sellers (Olsen 97), making Queen Victoria the first British monarch ever to have had her picture taken. A year later, he worked as a photographic correspondent in the Crimean War documenting the human loss and setting the precedent for photojournalism.

The most important photographers of the Victorian era are Charles Dodgson, a.k.a. Lewis Carroll, Oscar Gustave Rejlander, Reginald Southey, Lady Clementine and David Wilkie Wynfield, contemporary to Cameron, some being great photographic references for her as we will see in her work.

Oscar Gustave Rejlander was a pioneer photographer expert in photomontage. Originally from Sweden, having studied painting in Rome, he established himself in England as a commercial photo-portraitist in Wolverhampton. He is better known for his genre and allegorical work, such as the photomontage *The Two Ways of Life*, of the good and the bad in youth, produced in a *tableau vivant* style. This image was first exhibited in 1857 at the Art Treasures Exhibition dedicated to fine art in Manchester, and Alison Smith claims this was the first time photography was exhibited next to paintings and sculptures (60, qtd. in Sothorn 58). Rejlander's work inspired good friend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson to become an amateur photographer and set up his own glass-house studio on the roof of his flat in Oxford College.

Dodgson took up photography ten years before publishing his celebrated novel in 1865. An Oxford dean teaching Maths, he is perhaps the photographer most frequently compared to Cameron, despite holding opposing views on the definition and composition of his images, and also disagreeing in their approach to their subjects. He also portrayed friends and important people of his time, but mostly devoted his work to photographing little girls in character, dressed-up in different costumes, or even nude. These portraits are unique for Dodgson's sensitive, and almost obsessive, understanding of childhood.

²⁵ Darrah says that from 1860 to 1867 an estimated 300-400 million *cartes* were sold in England each year (2-6, qtd. in Olsen 136).



Fig. 9 Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, *Amy Hughes*, 1863. Left.

Fig. 10 Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, *Alice Emily Donkin*, 1866. Right



Fig. 11 Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, *Xie Kitchin in Greek dress*, 1873. Left.

Fig. 12 Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, *Xie Kitchin standing in nightdress and crown*, 1874. Right.

David Wilkie Wynfield was also a painter turned photographer known to photograph his artist-friend subjects in a completely “original style at the time” (Hacking, n.p.), using in his large-scale prints historical costumes and a soft-focus and close-up technique to emulate the fine art effects of Renaissance painting. With these, he aspired to distance himself from the ordinary *cartes de visite*. He exhibited some of his work, and released for sale in 1864 under the title *The Studio: A Collection of Photographic Portraits of Living Artists, taken in the style of Old Masters, by an Amateur*, which had been generally agreed to have influenced Cameron.

This comparative of these two portraits of Watts is a clear example:²⁶



Fig. 13 Julia Margaret Cameron, *G. F. Watts*, 1865. Left.

Fig. 14 David Wilkie Wynfield, *G.F. Watts in Venetian costume*, photographed early 1860s. Right.



Fig. 14 David Wilkie Wynfield, *Portrait of unknown man in armour*. Left.

Fig. 15 David Wilkie Wynfield, *Portrait of Frederik Walker, ARA, in fancy dress*, photographed 1860s. Right.

Pictorialist Henry Peach Robinson also wanted to elevate his photography to art form by producing allegoric representational images – some including photographs inspired by Tennyson’s poems, as we will see in chapter four –, seeking precise focus and complex compositions instead. He was also very skilled in producing composite images from several negatives. In 1869, he wrote *Pictorial Effect in Photography: Being Hints on Composition and*

²⁶ Plates 57 and 58, comparative taken from *The Pre-Raphaelite Lens*, pp. 114-5.

Chiaroscuro for Photographers, a manual for beginners with all the photographic principles to achieve his pictorial effect in photography.

Few were the female photographers' contemporaries to Cameron, but the most relevant was Lady Clementine Hawarden, who like Cameron took up photography in late life. She became active in exhibitions and publications at the time, and to some extent, she shared some affinity with Cameron in her use of household areas as backdrops for her images. She was unanimously well-received by her male peers though, her work being described as charming, delicate and tasteful, instead of the "bold," "force" and "power" adjectives Cameron's work was attributed.²⁷ Others were scientific illustrator Anna Atkins, who printed and self-published the beautiful photobook *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* in fascicles beginning of 1843, and Gertrude Kasebier, although much later on in the 1890s.



Fig. 17 Clementina Lady Hawarden, *Photographic Study*, 1858-1864. Left.

Fig. 18 Clementina Lady Hawarden, *5 Princes Gardens, Clementina*, 1863-1864. Right.

Along with the important technological advances in photography and its reproduction techniques next to text came the flourishing of the illustrative book in this century. Wood-engraved illustrative editions and photo-books were suddenly affordable and mass-produced, no longer being luxurious items for collectors. Important factors contributed to this, like the popularity of woodcut work among artists, the invention of electrotyping in 1839, the abolition of the newspaper and paper stamp duties in 1855 and 1861, respectively, and the expansion of the railway network for distribution (Armstrong 457).

The 1860s were, therefore, the "golden years" of illustration and the proliferation of magazines associated with wood-cut illustrations, such as *The Cornhill*, *One a Week* and *Good Words* (Weaver 68), and the era of the Christmas Gift book. As we will see, other

²⁷ *Photographic News* 8, July 15, 1864, pp. 339-40 (Olsen 153).

important publications such as the Tennyson Moxon Edition and the reign of international illustrators like Doré and Maclise.

Naturally then, the idea of illustrating books with photography became more and more obvious; books of poems were being illustrated with landscape photography like the *Hyperion*; an 1865's edition of Wadsworth Longfellow's romances accompanied by scenery of the river Rhine being photographed by travel photographer Francis Frith.

After Cameron's death in the 1880s improvements in photography reproduction continued, such as the half-tone printing process, allowing photography to be inserted within text and printed simultaneously on to the same plate. During her lifetime, however, book pages would contain actual photographic prints.

1.3 THE PENCIL OF NATURE, THEN THERE WERE OTHER BOOKS THAT PHOTOGRAPHICALLY FOLLOWED

The chief object of the present work is to place on record some of the early beginnings of a new art, before the period, which we trust is approaching, of its being brought to maturity by the aid of British talent.²⁸

William Henry Fox Talbot, 1844

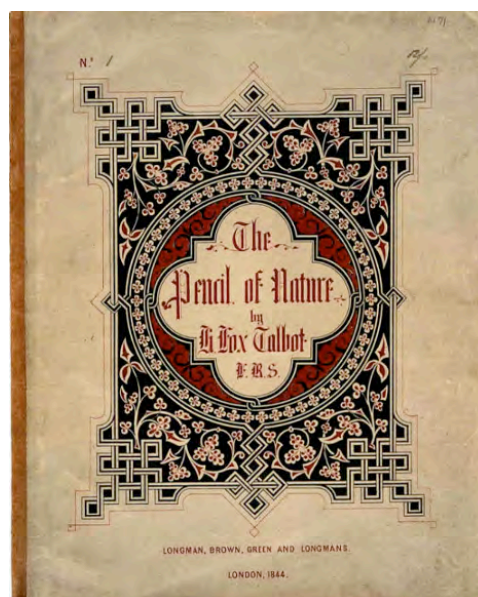


Fig. 19 Front cover, No. 1 of *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844-1846.

The Pencil of Nature, introduced “the new art of Photogenic Drawing” from “Nature’s hand” (“Introductory Remarks”) to the world in 1844, becoming the first ever photo-illustrated book dealing with the subject of photography. In it, its author Henry Fox Talbot claimed authorship of his invention of the calotype and communicated it in an autographical manner to the English photographic bodies, serving as a compendium of his experimentation, his personal impressions and the steps he took within the process. Carol Armstrong, who has

²⁸ *The Pencil of Nature* (Plate VI).

analysed this and dedicated a chapter in her book, focuses on Talbot's narrative style and brands it as positivist and scientific in his overuse the first person; “/ discovered”, “/ observed”, “/ laid the specimens...” (114). She adds that rather than announcing his invention as “the first photograph *per se*,” Talbot chose to publicise it as “the first photograph publishable in book form” (112). And this is precisely the book's particular milestone.

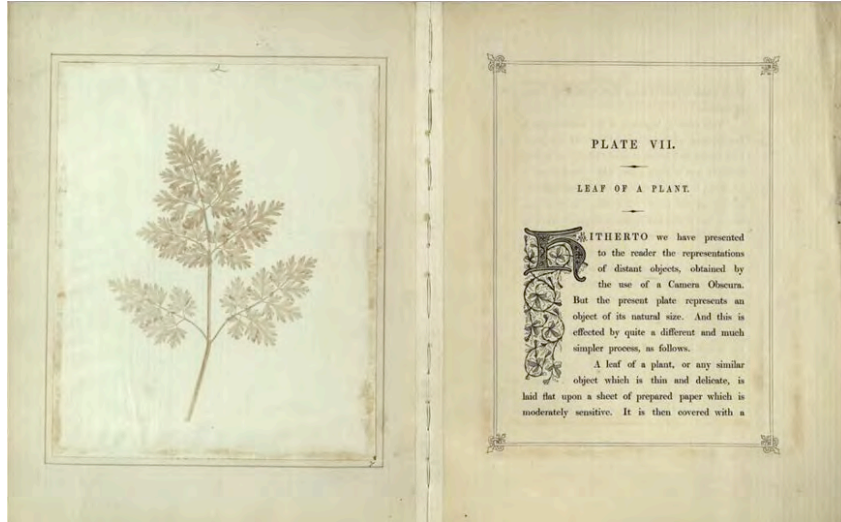


Fig. 20 Double-page spread with Plate VII of *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844-1846.

Talbot published the book in six luxurious and snobbish instalments between June 1844 and April 1846 costing three guineas in total (Schaaf, qtd. in Armstrong 110). In the edition, he included a total of 24 calotype-prints individually printed – resulting in some print variations from copy to copy – bound onto a double-page spread with text. Each spread, referred to as “Plate,” was an example of a different use of the new medium: urban settings, still lifes of everyday articles, architectural or rural landscapes, and finally photograms.



Fig. 21 W. H. Fox Talbot, Plate IV, *Articles of Glass*, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844. Left.

Fig. 22 W. H. Fox Talbot, Plate VIII, *A Scene in a Library*, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844. Right.



Fig. 23 W. H. Fox Talbot, Plate XIX, *The Tower of Lacock Abbey*, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844. Left.

Fig. 24 W. H. Fox Talbot, Plate X, *The Haystack*, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844. Right.

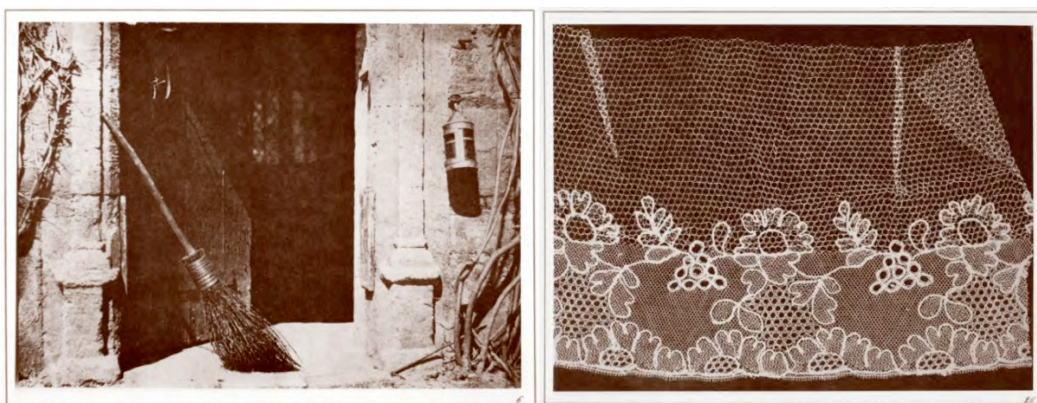


Fig. 25 W. H. Fox Talbot, Plate VI, *The Open Door*, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844. Left.

Fig. 26 W. H. Fox Talbot, Plate XX, *Lace*, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844. Right.

Each of these photos was accompanied by a description of the different photographic techniques that he had followed. For instance, how best to photograph a group of living subjects by arranging and training them to sit still for absolute immobility for the long exposure (Plate XIV), or the method of superposition by sun-printing without the use of the *camera obscura* (Plates XX and VII).

The Pencil of Nature is nowadays regarded as one of the most influential books in the history of photography. Its ideas on photography, which may seem obvious to the contemporary viewer, were ground breaking in Victorian times, as the author regarded photography as a technical progress in the mere recording of reality. In his plates of ‘The Open Door’ and ‘The Haystack’ (Plates VI and X), Talbot discussed the double role of photography for the first time in history.

Talbot was the first photographer to look at these images with “a painter’s eye,” capturing “where ordinary people see nothing remarkable” in order to read minute details like gleam of sunshine, shadow forms, time-withered oak or moss-covered stone as visual poetics that “may awaken a train of thoughts and feelings, and picturesque imaginings” (Plate VI).

Additionally, he was the first artist who saw photography bringing reality and “truth” to the image or scene being represented, as nature was writing it itself (Plate X). With these two

new concepts, Talbot is anticipating future definitions of photography as Art, as well as the peculiar realism of photography – I am referring here, for instance, to the *have-been-there* theory that Barthes would pronounce years later. Consequently, soon after this photobook, many of the century's illustrative books of the century inaugurated their pages with photographic frontispieces with places, people and manuscripts adding reality to the stories being told within. We will see this in Tennyson's Cabinet edition and Cameron's *Illustrations*, published years later.

Moreover, the long-lasting impact of *The Pencil of Nature* is clearly the “self-representation of photography as part of the book” (Brunet 42), as never before had the photographic image and text appeared side by side and page by page, proving compatible discourses and narratives.

There is no evidence or proof that Cameron ever read *The Pencil of Nature* in her time, as only around four hundred copies were ever sold from its original and overly ambitious book run²⁹, but its presence and influence is clearly felt in her photography, and on her own photo book of Tennyson's *Idylls*. Cameron's *Illustrations* very specifically conveyed her personal style, and also followed many layout and format elements proposed by Talbot in *The Pencil of Nature*. Both photo books shared a timing of publication before the development of half-tone printing. The issues explored in *The Pencil of Nature* highlight many significant theoretical notions to be discussed in chapter four, devoted as it is to the analysis of *Illustrations*.

To conclude, it is necessary to refer to Talbot's two plates dedicated to the bust of Patroclus, as they bring us closer and closer to Cameron's photography, in particular, to her portraits of the important men of her time.



Fig. 27 W. H. Fox Talbot, Plate XVII, *Bust of Patroclus*, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844. Left.

Fig. 28 W. H. Fox Talbot, Plate V, *Bust of Patroclus*, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1844. Right.

²⁹ National Media Museum Blog: nationalmediamuseum.blogspot.com.es/2009/09/pencil-of-nature-historys-first-book-of.html Accessed 28 Apr. 2017.

Significantly, the manner in which Talbot both depicted these plaster casts of the originals in the British Museum, and the way he described the process in his book, resembled Cameron's *modus operandi* in her portraits of her Famous men. Talbot dedicated two images to the bust of the Greek warrior in *The Pencil of Nature* (see fig. 27 and 28) in order to record the different silhouettes and array of contrasts that could be represented with the same subject as a model. He narrated how he turned the statue round on his pedestal to record "a second set of variations" and the different shadows created by sun falling upon it. He also mentioned that he recorded the busts "very rapidly, in consequence of their whiteness," presented in contrast with the pitch-black background, and even suggested the use of a white cloth on the darker side of the statue as an early form of reflector to bring out these areas and obtain further detail from them. He also suggested the technique of coming closer with the camera to the sculpture in order to play with size of it and add grandiosity. Talbot apparently made forty-seven images of this Patroclus,³⁰ showing he had really thought through this process, if not agonised over it completely.

Sadly, we do not know if Cameron followed these simple techniques for her Great men, but we can only assume that it was understood and common practice by the time she photographed them. Personally, I see strong similarities in the poetics and aesthetics between Talbot's Patroclus and many of the Famous men Cameron photographed who will be looked at in the chapters to follow.

As a summary of this section on *The Pencil of Nature*, and the important contributions to the artistic development of photography, we could cite Brunet's say on this subject. He revealed that one valuable input was Talbot's "singular emphasis on photography as experience," as the form of artistic self-expression that we now know today. Secondly, his foreseeing of photography's illustrative legacy. With "his practice and his conception of photography in a book, especially, he was anticipating an alliance between photography and literature that many would later regard as natural" (32-3). It is clear that both of these innovations are present in Cameron's body of work in *Illustrations*.

³⁰ Art Institute of Chicago: artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/39020 Accessed 28 Apr. 2017.

LORD ALFRED TENNYSON, 'THE POET' LAUREATE

Very peculiar looking... tall, dark, with a fine head, long black flowing hair and a beard – oddly dressed, but there is no affection about him.³¹

Her Royal Highness Queen Victoria, 1862



Fig. 29 James Mudd, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, 1861 (photographed).

This chapter is dedicated to Tennyson's life, and the legends and souls that inspired him in his career. A section of this chapter is devoted to his *Idylls of the King*, the Poet's personal endeavour of retelling the story of the famous King. Here, I will be looking specifically at its extended publishing record – of more than 30 years since he began to print on his Arthurian subjects –, how he grasped it and presented it to the peculiar Victorian audience and the crucial role he decided to attribute to its female characters in it. It will also individually discuss the portrayals and stories of these women in *Idylls*, as seen by Tennyson, and the relevant ones in *Poems*, with the purpose of preparing the reader of this thesis for my final analysis of Cameron's *Illustrations* in chapter four.

As a conclusion, the last section of this chapter will look at the work of Tennyson's different illustrators, and more specifically the illustrative books preceding Cameron's photo-illustrations, such as the influential Tennyson Moxon, a contemporary paradigm of Sister Arts.

³¹ Testimony from Queen Victoria after her first audience with Tennyson in Osborne House, Isle of Wight, 1862 (Howse).

2.1 HIS KING, IDOLS AND MYTHS

There's more about myself in *Ulysses*, which was written under the sense of loss and that all had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end. It was more written with the feeling of his loss upon me that many poems in *In Memoriam*³²
Lord Alfred Tennyson

Tennyson, also known as the “People’s poet,” was without a doubt the most representative and famous poet of the Victorian era, reaching a range of audiences from “the working men of England to the royal family” (Kooistra 179).

Born on August 6, 1809 in Somersby, Lincolnshire, mid-east of England, he was the son of a depressive clergyman with a drinking problem and a loving mother, daughter of a vicar herself. Being one of eleven children, his origins were humble and middle-class, marked by his father’s moods and different jobs and pursuits, who carefully took up the education of all of his children at home. Tennyson was writing poetry from a very early age and was home-schooled until in 1827, when he entered Trinity College in Cambridge. It was there where he met Arthur Henry Hallam, of kindred spirit and great literate enthusiast, both becoming members of the university intellectual society the Apostles. Christopher Ricks, well-known biographer of the Poet explains that their time in Cambridge was “the[ir] most important experience” (Day 360), forming in such a short friendship extraordinary close ties – Hallam would later propose to Tennyson’s sister, Emily –, settling them in their respective literary careers.

Tennyson never held any other position in his life, apart from his occupation as a poet (Day Frontispiece n.p.). In 1830, he already published his first solo book *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, including his first ‘Mariana’ and ‘The Kraken,’ showing already an excellency in lyrical talent. That same year in the summer holidays, Tennyson travelled around the Pyrenees with Hallam in support of the Spanish revolutionaries plotting against absolutist King Ferdinand VII. Their job consisted of taking coded letters to rendezvous guerrillas hiding in the Pyrenees. This was his first trip abroad, and the experience would clearly show in his next book *Poems* (1832), where he included his second poem dedicated to Mariana; ‘Mariana in the South,’ ‘The Lady of Shallot,’ ‘The Palace of Art’ and ‘The Lotos-Eaters.’ More trips followed after the Spanish adventure, alone and with his family, as Tennyson became an avid traveller, especially in his sailing all over the world. The year before, after the death of his father, Tennyson finally left Cambridge never being able to achieve a degree.

His latest book had not been able to receive favourable reviews, a fact that affected him greatly and made a young and sensitive-to-criticism Tennyson cease his publishing for nearly ten years. The sudden death of his dear friend Hallam, aged 22, of brain haemorrhage in Vienna that same year before his marriage with the Poet’s sister was a further blow for

³² As told to architect and editor James Knowles (Day, 360).

Tennyson, not only making a lasting impact on his future life and work, but contributing to his period of lack of publications as he began to write an elegy for his friend.

It took him ten years to find the courage to publish his next book *Poems*, with 'Morte d'Arthur' in it, inspired by the death of his peer and already hinting at the Poet's fascination for the legend of this king – the poem would later be integrated in the final twelfth idyll, 'The Passing of Arthur,' in the *Idylls*' 1869 edition. This *Poems* also included 'The Gardener's Daughter,' 'Ulysses,' 'Locksley Hall' and 'Break, break, break,' finally achieving the acclaim of the critics and gaining him the admiration of Thomas Carlyle and Charles Dickens (Everett Frontispiece n.p.) as well as establishing him the leading poet of his generation. He followed with *Poems* in 1846, and *The Princess* in 1847.

The year 1850 held more success and fame for him, in both personal and professional fields. He was named Poet Laureate by the Queen – succeeding Wordsworth after his passing that same year –, and finally married Emily Sarah Sellwood after a previous failed engagement to her due to financial insecurities and unconventional religious views on his part.

His *In Memoriam A. H. H.* was also finished and published that year too. It had taken him seventeen years to complete, and as the Poet admitted, it was "a very impersonal poem as well as personal... It's too hopeful, this Poem... more than I am myself."³³ The book was written like a requiem to his friend, in a series of idylls, becoming a huge success.

After their first meeting in the Isle of Wight, where the Tennysons had been living since 1853, Queen Victoria, an ardent admirer of Tennyson, met him again and admitted to have found in *In Memoriam* the necessary comfort and soothing when mourning of Prince Albert's death in 1861. Of the conversation, she recorded in her diary: "He was full of unbounded appreciation of beloved Albert. When he spoke of my own loss, of that to the Nation, his eyes quite filled with tears" (Howse).

Truthfully, the theme of mortality was permanently present throughout Tennyson's work, dedicating numerous verses to the people he had admired, loved and in the end lost. He was a melancholic person who found in poetry the best way to cope with their eternal absence.

Tennyson was also a fervent royalist and attributed his Poet Laureate status to his venerated Prince Albert, thus after his death he fronted his second printing of *Idylls* in 1862 with a 'Dedication' to the young prince after his passing (Everett xi). Tennyson saw in the young regent an idol and an example of contemporary monarchy in Europe. In fact, they were both on friendly terms, says Eggert, the Poet yet receiving one day an unexpected visit from the royal in his house in Wight (*Ibid.*). With his 'Dedication' Tennyson recognised his admiration for him, and one can say that he symbolically saw the royal as a modern-day Arthur.

³³ As told to Knowles (Day 364).

After his Laureate, Tennyson was in great creative shape and flow, publishing *Poems* in 1851, where he included his best work, then *Maud, and Other Poems* in 1855, and began to write his most popular book, the epic *Idylls of the King*, which he published in instalments. Writing from his Farringford state in the remote Wight, he issued other books of poems such as *Enoch Arden* in 1864 – an ode to his life intense love of the sea –, *The Holy Grail and Other Poems* 1869, *Harold* in 1876, which began an entire revival of King Harold, *Tiresias and Other Poems* in 1885, and famous *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* in 1886 and *Demeter and Other Poems* in 1889.

In 1883, he accepted the title of baron of Aldworth and Farringford, and finally a seat in the crossbenches in 1884's Gladstone's House of Lords, officially unaligned to any political party. Although with age he had gradually moved from moderate conservative to more radical one, politics were never a major life issue for Tennyson, who had declared himself "of the same politics as Plato, Shakespeare, Bacon and any sane man" (Purton and Page 281).

Two years later his second son, Lionel, died of a tropical fever during a journey to India, aged 32. This was a great loss for him, Tennyson would die a few years later after a short illness in 1892. In spite of his frail health he had never given up writing, travelling or sailing in his last years. Legend says that on his deathbed, he gathered some of the books he had loved as a boy, in search of comfort (Purton and Page 289), and merely two hours before his passing he had been conscious, reading *Cymbeline*, holding the Shakespeare classic until the end. He was buried with it, and amongst the country's finest in Westminster Abbey. Of this true poet, T. S. Elliot once wrote: "He has three qualities which are seldom found together except in the greatest poets: abundance, variety and complete competence" (Day Frontispiece n.p.). His brilliancy consisted of representing his characters "at a defining or dramatic moment" (Everett *vi*), fighting or merely being fully aware of the issues, conflicts or life events that Tennyson had been dealing in life himself; lost, criticism, fame, joy and the ideals of a whole era. Indeed, "the most representative English poet since Pope's death, and the one closest to literate readers" (Buckley 24-5, qtd. in Joseph 128).

2.2 HIS IDYLLS OF THE KING

Whatever might be felt about them, now, these *Idylls* had an immense influence upon us boys at the time. The contrasted knightly types, Galahad, Percivale, Lancelot, Bors, the sage Merlin, above all King Arthur himself, were very much to us. Side by side with Homer and Greek history, they gave us our standards. We saw them in our Head, in our Masters, and in our comrades³⁴

A mid-century schoolboy wrote

The greatest part of Arthurian revival in art and literature taking place since the 1800s in Britain was undoubtedly associated to Tennyson's *Idylls*, filtering the values and aspirations of the younger generation of his time. From a very early age little Alfred had read Mallory's

³⁴ Girouard 172-3, qtd. in Olsen 237.

manuscript of *La Morte D'Arthur* – Day substantiates that he owned the 1816's three-volume edition (359) –, becoming totally enchanted by the stories within it and familiar with the chivalry romance long-established sources on which it was based. At the young age of twenty-four, Tennyson began the planning and sketching of how to write about them in his life.

Mancoff says that in 1830, after his time in Cambridge university, Tennyson decided his new version of King Arthur should be adapted for the people of his era, and therefore, over a long decade of writing, in 1842 Tennyson published four works on the subject in his two-volume *Poems*; 'The Lady of Shallot,' 'Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere,' 'Sir Galahad,' and 'Morte d'Arthur,' for which he commenced his critical acclaim ("Legend 'From Life'" 90-1). This was just the beginning of a recurrent subject in his poetic being, having found it extremely fulfilling both creatively and personally. "After a series of journeys to Arthurian sites - Glastonbury, Camelford and Tintagel" (*Ibid.*), he would come back to the Arthurian legend once again; his "greatest of all poetical subjects" (Ricks *Selected* 669, qtd. in Everett *ix*), as he called it on more than one occasion. This time he would represent King Arthur as the British hero and epitome of all the good values and ideals he admired, and as a victim of betrayal by the people he loved, who were unable to keep abreast of his moral standards.

Thus, the first instalment of his *Idylls of the King* was published in 1859 with just four idylls; 'Enid,' 'Vivien,' 'Elaine' and 'Guinevere,' which remained the Poet's most popular. Ten years later these would be completed with a further four in the follow-up *The Holy Grail and Other Poems*, containing 'The Coming of Arthur,' 'The Holy Grail,' 'Pelleas and Etarre,' and 'The Passing of Arthur' – a revisit to his earlier 'Morte d'Arthur.' By 1868, his popularity had sky-rocketed and the Poet retired to the Isle of Wight years before – as we will see in chapter four – to find the much-needed peace and anonymity to finish his lyrical mission. In 1871 'The Last Tournament' followed, a year later 'Gareth and Lynette,' and then in 1885 the last story, 'Balin and Balan' would conclude his twelve-idyll volume, regarded as *the complete Idylls* (Everett *x*). For this last publication, Tennyson had split the original long tale of 'Enid' into two entire idylls; 'The Marriage of Geraint' and 'Geraint and Enid,' and edited the solely-female titles of two of the original idylls by adding the names of the knights to each. As such, 'Vivien' had become 'Merlin and Vivien,' and 'Elaine' 'Lancelot and Elaine.' 'Guinevere' would be the only one remaining on her own.

This edition would also remain royally-framed with his 'Dedication' to Prince Albert and an epilogue 'To the Queen,' with the twelve idylls between them grouped around three acts; the arrival of Arthur to Camelot and marrying Guinevere in 'The Coming of Arthur,' the main plot with the love and chivalry stories in 'The Round Table' and the King's death in 'The Passing of Arthur.'

Mancoff says that a year before his death, Tennyson revised some lines of this *Idylls*, aiming to complete the personal literary venture he had anticipated so many years in advance. She also points out that the term 'idyll' that Tennyson had chosen to tell this royal

story, had primarily changed since classical times when referred to short poems on a pastoral theme. For the audience of his time, an 'idyll' represented "a glimpse" of domestic life serving to deliver intimate portraits of the main players in the story ("Legend 'From Life'" 91).

Both critics and readers picked up on this creative format, and praised Tennyson's vivid human representations of his subjects,³⁵ placed in the midst of Imperialism and a strong British identity, and mainly focused on the Arthurian women. It was especially significant that this first edition was entitled and dedicated to only female characters, and by doing so, the author was considering them key in his story, as the source of both immorality and betrayal in court, eventually causing the King's death and the kingdom's downfall.

Laura Cooner Lambdin's book *Camelot in the Nineteenth Century: Arthurian Characters in the Poems of Tennyson, Arnold, Morris and Swinburne* provides an interesting essay on how Tennyson's story both based on and parted from the old Welsh romances and Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. She says the core of Tennyson's *Idylls* is ground on the concept of "true love [that] depends upon an admiration of character, a respect that results in trust," and when this ideal of trust, represented by the King and his royal bride, is broken, the entire Kingdom disintegrates (*xii*). Tennyson's story, therefore, has an inherent conflict between false and true, and it narrates the decline of a changing society and its lack of ideals during a regency – much reflecting the contradictions of his contemporary Victorian age –, with the Poet being specific about attributing this degeneration to female lust.

In her paper "Idylls in Conflict," Jennifer Pearson Yamashiro claims that the medieval timeframe in *Idylls* operated symbolically for the Poet's era in dealing with the social and changes of his time. In his epic, he was able to deal allegorically with the moral deterioration of his time wrought by women in a society, which, citing Mancoff here, had seen a power shift instigated by the Divorce and Married Women's Property Acts and the suffragette movement (*Arthurian Revival xxvi*, qtd. in Yamashiro 91-2). In *Idylls*, he classified the female characters between truthful and false.

In this sense, Tennyson's moral view contrasts directly with Malory's actual and legendary reason for the downfall, this based on the mere splitting of the Round Table because of the departure of its fellow members to the Sangrail quest and the role played in all this by Mordred. It is important to note that the author of the *Morte* did not directly condemn Lancelot's and Guinevere's unfaithful love.

Tennyson's King Arthur spoke, therefore, to the Victorian audience, reminding them of the greatness of their era at the same time as its instability, and warning them that it could easily come to an end if society's values did not restore. He consciously took his role of the bard of a generation to hark back about the nation's current situation of power and its temporariness. With this message in mind, he made important changes to the original Arthur's

³⁵ Mancoff quotes two journal reviews at the time: "His fabulous knights and ladies are not only true men and women, but sharing in the highest interests of genuine human life," *Saturday Review*, July 16, 1859, p. 76. "Enliv[ing]" them "with touches of human feeling, life and pathos," *Bentley's Quarterly Review*, Oct, 1859, p. 162 ("Legend 'From Life'" 92).

story and the relationships around him, the most obvious one making Guinevere's marital indiscretion the direct factor for Camelot's downfall. Everett compares this to Malory's ending and the earlier conception of Mordred out of the sin of incest between Arthur and his half-sister Morgan Le Fay. In *Idylls*, the disordered lust has its source in the royal affair making others in court to follow; Tristram and Isolt, for instance, the knight vindicating: "first mainly thro' that sullyng of our Queen" ('The Last Tournament' verse 677) (xv).

In his book of poems, Tennyson proved he enjoyed and had great knowledge of old English and the Arthurian saga, using regular archaisms such as 'anon,' 'betwixt,' 'hither' and 'thither,' 'thee,' 'thine' and 'thou,' and conjugating verbs Saxon style; 'stopt,' 'hath' or 'wouldst.' With his proficient use of knight-specific vocabulary, i.e.: 'slay' or 'smit' in the battles, he set out to bring the authentic medieval experience to his *Idylls*' readers.

Mancoff says that the original 1859's edition was the one which clearly influenced Cameron's *Illustrations* less than twenty years later. She also states that "readers knew the *Idylls* not as a singular epic with an overarching symbolic message, but as a collection of words that portrayed legendary characters as distinct individuals, subject to the same human frailties and desires as the readers themselves" ("Legend 'From Life'" 90-2). And women were at the centre of these, and Cameron expanded from that photographically.

I have included next an individual study of each Tennyson's characters from *Idylls* and *Other Poems*, with a view to throwing light into Cameron's study of the same women in *Illustrations*.

2.2.1 Lynette

'Gareth and Lynette' is the second of Tennyson's idylls – both in the series and length – following 'The Coming of Arthur' in the book, and giving commencement to the 'Round Table' group of idylls, with the juicy stories about life, love and battling in court.

The story of this couple, although not central to Arthur's legend, serves as the introduction of a newly instated court, where Arthur reigns over all kingdoms in England. In it, Gareth is a proficient knight who desires to enter court to escape from Lot, his suffocating mother: "Since the good mother holds me still a child!" ('Gareth and Lynette' verse 15). To do so, he disguises himself as a kitchen-porter and starts serving in court, until both King and Round Table are able to recognise his chivalry and dub him knight. His first mission is to go and help Lynette, the maid under siege threatened by four wicked knights assaulting her castle. Arthur sends newly-knighted and young Gareth with experienced Lancelot, but the mean and ungrateful maid complains about him coming, first insulting him; "thou smellest all of Kitchen-grease" ('Gareth and Lynette' verse 733), calling him; "dish-washer" (verse 751), and mocking him; "kitchen-knave" (verse 766).

As Gareth beats the four knights one by one, he begins to earn her recognition, and her doubts progressively turn into admiration to finally hear Lancelot speak of Gareth's good

nature and gallantry while he recovers and rests after the fight. The reader witnesses a change in Lynette, from a nasty and obnoxious spoilt girl to a repented and fully grown-up woman who finally sees Gareth as the brave hero he truly is. The final scene sees her looking after him in the cave sleeping, and serving him food and reflecting: "O knave, as noble as any of all the knights" (verse 1108) and "thou art worthy of the Table Round" (verse 1110).

With this story, Tennyson introduces in *Idylls* the drama of those who cannot or refuse to see. These being represented in his story by the two women close to Gareth; Lynette, the maid who cannot appreciate him at first or see who he truly is, and Lot, the mother who refuses seeing and from whom Gareth needs to disguise and become the individual he wants to be. Essentially, both females represent the opposite percipients of the same being; Gareth's real self and the disguised Gareth. Both are unable to see accurately for different reasons. Armstrong claims role-playing and real being are central in the theatrics of the Victorian culture (371), and in this idyll, this twofold impersonation is represented by these two women's attitude. Towards the end of the idyll, Lynette admits her fault; "I never look'd upon the face" (verse 1299) as she should have done.

2.2.2 *Enid*

In 'The Marriage of Geraint' and 'Geraint and Enid' idylls Enid is represented as the type of loyal and trusting wife. In the first one Tennyson is already hinting at the rumours in court with the Queen and Lancelot's affair – after Arthur has just married her in 'The Coming of Arthur.'

Geraint, prince of Devon has also recently married the noble Enid, one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting. On knowing about the gossip:

Tho' yet there lived no proof, not yet was heard
The world's loud whisper breaking into storm

('Marriage' verses 26-7)

And fearing she gets infected by the queen's bad doings, he decides to flee Camelot with his wife leaving his knightly duties unattended, and so receiving some criticism. With this fact, Tennyson introduces in his story the first case of disloyalty in Camelot, and of how Guinevere's infidelity is already beginning to break it.

This becomes Enid's first test of devotion for her husband, as she worries about his lack of chivalry and disregard to his obligations towards his Lord. He is risking his own life, and she unreasonably begins to blame herself for it lamenting;

Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is gone?

(verses 87-8)

And moaning; "O me, I fear that I am no true wife!" (108), which Geraint confuses for guilt for infidelity, as the Queen herself is doing, he then decides to punish her by humiliating her and commanding her to wear the ugliest and oldest dress in her attire. She obeys with

deference; “If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault” (verse 132), Tennyson clearly proving her obedience here, even when falsely accused. For her penance, she chooses to wear her old wedding dress, symbolising both devotion towards her mistaken husband and surrender to a flaw that it is not hers but others.

Enid is representing in *Idylls* the role model in a corrupted court, and subsequently the dutiful wife excelling for her submission, which was an important part of the marital moral values in Victorian times. The idyll ends with Geraint’s moment of weakness and reflection upon the reprimand he has imposed on his wife, remembering their happier times when he first met her, fought for her and married her in that wedding dress, once given by her mother with the moral tag;

Let never maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old

(verses 721-2)

The second idyll begins here, with the reflection on how men see their wives and how the former can be sometimes mistaken by the wrong appearances; “By taking true for false, or false for true;” (‘Geraint and Enid’ 4), and “That other where we see as we are seen!” (verse 7). This, I believe is the true essence and the pillar upon which Tennyson’s *Idylls* lay upon; the seeing of true for false by some of the characters. In this instance, Geraint begins to feel he might have made an error with his wife, and as they continue their journey to Camelot then several assaults, disputes and an encounter with an ex-lover put Enid’s love and loyalty to test each time. And he finally realises how mistaken he was. At last, he sees her as the truthful, devoted woman she is. The King, happy to see the couple back in court, lets them move to their own land in Caerleon and live there happily together, creating their own family. This “domestic” solution, as described by Lambdin, after numerous testings, sacrifices and distancing from a corrupted court, proves necessary to achieve wholesome perfection, and representing a “selfless Enid [as] Tennyson’s foil to Guinevere, Vivien, Isolt and Ettare” (35-6), the next malicious archetypes in court, key in this plot.

2.2.3 Vivien

So, the Poet has represented in *Idylls* two worthy women who were either initially deceived by false appearances or misinterpreted by others. After the twists in the plot, they will remain loyal and devoted women, proving to be an exemplary good template in human relations and society. The next woman to be represented in *Idylls*, is the antithesis of all this; Vivien, a clear villain and anti-heroine – along with Guinevere at a later stage. She is able to provide for herself; confident in her own views, she will be fully conscious of her own plans and schemes at all times.

Thus, since the beginning of ‘Merlin and Vivien’ the reader can foresee trouble: “A storm was coming” (‘Merlin and Vivien’ 1), referring to Arthur’s doomed kingdom. This act begins with Merlin and Vivien chatting casually under an oak-tree, and the royal affair subject coming up, as if to never let the reader stop blaming Guinevere for her secret actions. During

their talk, the young woman is visibly seducing the wizard by stroking his ego and telling him of the greatness he brings to other men, helping them achieve exactly this for themselves. Merlin seems to know about her strategies, and lets her do. He is “overtlk'd and overworn” (verse 963) and gives the impression to know and care little about women. Vivien, a sorceress herself, is recognisably after his power, and when he finally tells her the spell, she bewitches him and turns his magic against him, keeping him inside the oak for good. Without Merlin, the “fool” as she calls him (verse 970), Arthur is disarmed and powerless, and Vivien has now proved to be key in his doomed finale.

This idyll, is therefore, crucial to the development of Tennyson’s story, not only for its representation of Vivien as the shrewd and clever woman she is, fighting for her social status and own interests, that is, her revenge on Arthur, who killed her parents in war, but also for being the one who is fully aware about the happenings in court, and the first one to question the real values of the King and his Round Table. During her conversation with Merlin, she reveals the corruption of the “full-fed liars” (verse 690) forming the Round Table that; “Were I not woman, I could tell a tale” (verse 694). She is the one confronting the wizard with the rumours of the affair, but he is unable to deny it. Vivien is non-submissive and the feminist prototype, defying the most powerful wizard of all times, actively pursuing him and finally snatching his powers. Her ability is to see through men in court, and to discredit the King, whom she describes as a “coward and fool” (verse 787). She will ultimately accuse him of “caus[ing] all their crime” (verse 786), and thus, she will become the most powerful female character in *Idylls*, as the only one able to see.

2.2.4 *Elaine*

The next idyll, ‘Lancelot and Elaine’ is a central one in Tennyson’s narrative. It tells the tragedy of the one-sided love between Elaine, lady of Astolat, and the King’s first knight, Lancelot. Underneath its lengthy and extended plot, there are important statements and hints made about the royal affair, establishing the general positions taken by Lancelot and the King and Queen about it, as well as clarifying some important aspects of those affected by it.

The royal affair is, therefore, confirmed in this idyll, with a high degree of complicity between the lovers, and to a certain extent, a suspicion, if not acknowledgement, by the King himself. Tennyson begins this story with Elaine in her tower guarding Lancelot’s entrusted shield, living a world of make-believe sewing a case for the weapon; “There kept it, and so lived in fantasy” (‘Lancelot and Elaine’ 396). The story briefly explains how the shield got there, setting the precedents for this tragic story. Lancelot who wanted to joust incognito with a different shield in the annual diamond prize – reward that he has been winning for the last nine years – tells the King and Queen that he is too unfit to fight, and needs to remain at Camelot to recover from an old wound. Guinevere announces she will not attend either, proving a key moment in the lovers’ story; their involvement, the rumours in court and suggesting the King knows about them; “Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way”

(verse 95). The lovers discuss that staying behind in court would do the rumours no good. Guinevere says;

Only here today
There gleamed a vague suspicion in his eyes

(verses 126-7)

Lancelot, therefore, agrees to participate and travel to the games, although disguised. In the journey, he stops at Astolat to prepare the joust and meets Elaine, the young inexperienced maid who falls instantly in love with him. Lancelot, perhaps unaware of this at first, or perhaps enjoying her adulation and natural form of courting, is not clear about his feelings towards her. At the same time, he is fighting an internal battle of friendship, loyalty and true love within himself, and Elaine is a small matter in all this.

In this case, the young maid is a woman who cannot see through him, or even after him, the Poet already announcing “And loved him, with that love which was her doom” (verse 259). Before leaving, Elaine asks Lancelot to wear her sleeve on his helmet at the games, as sign of love to her. Lancelot is reticent and unsure initially saying;

‘I never yet have done so much
For any maiden living

(verses 373-4)

He finally agrees to it, not realising what this misunderstanding will finally cause. As the inexperienced in love, Elaine is not to be blamed for her own tragedy, but Lancelot will be to blame. He wins the joust and with it the diamond for his queen, but he gets wounded and needs to recover in a hermit cave for a while. In the meantime, news spread in court about his achievement and love for Elaine, finding a comforted King, relieved for proving the rumours wrong, but enraging the Queen, who must suffer her jealousy in silence.

As Lancelot recovers, it becomes clear to Elaine, who comes to his rescue and care in the cave, that he does not love her with the love “of man and woman” (verse 864). With this, she is crudely learning about love and finally sees her destiny; “Him or death” (verse 898). Back in Astolat, Lancelot breaks the silence and explains he cannot correspond with her, and sends someone to get his shield back from her, in order to part for Camelot and to the queen. He cruelly leaves Elaine in her tower alone, without a goodbye and dying of a broken heart. Then Elaine begins to see her final journey to death, sailing to Camelot in a barge. Her wishes come true and her body arrives at Camelot, just on the spur of the moment when the unfaithful pair is rowing in the castle, Lancelot clarifying to the Queen what has happened in Astolat.

Elaine’s body brings a letter with her, written by herself, telling of her heart-breaking story, then everyone weeps, including King, Queen and Lancelot, who later feels remorse and has to defend himself in court. The King believes him and promises to bury the young woman worshipfully.

In this profound idyll, Tennyson is able to articulate fully the emotions and thoughts of his main characters, portraying them and what they are going through. The reader begins to get a glimpse of the King and Queen's state of their marriage, based on mere admiration, but not love, contrasting at the same time with Lancelot and Queen's true love. Elaine is sadly being the odd one out; she truly believes in love, but sadly unrequited. She is shy, naïve and socially unaware, living a sheltered life with an overprotective father and two caring brothers. She is above all, inexperienced. Her doomed end is entirely caused by all these factors and her inability to see and recognise when love is not love but simple courtesy and gallantry. It is almost as if she is blinded by the knight's own lustre and gleam, who at the same time represents the kind of life led outside her world. She is the first and most obviously direct victim of the Queen's adultery, representing too for a very short of time a small chance to turn events around in a story of the kingdom. As this fails to take place, Tennyson makes both unfaithful lovers responsible for this young woman's death, and the last letter scene reflects that.

Elaine is too emotionally unstable and weak, and a little obsessive towards Lancelot. She ignores good family advice and even reality. Tennyson does not expand much on any of these aspects, and represents her as pure and innocent, and a victim of the circumstances. He praises her serenity and composure, both the ideals of a Victorian woman in love, suffering her rejection in silence, with self-control, and making the ultimate sacrifice; death. She truly touched the "emotions of readers and viewers" of the Victorian era, says Tupack (18), proving a real popular heroine, as we will see in the contemporary iconography.

This idyll stages her own point-of-view at all times, her fantasy and way of understanding love, with no room for accepting Lancelot's practical offer before finally leaving for Camelot; to protect her for life and give her a place in his realm at sea, without being unable to propose himself as the husband she wants. Lancelot's integrity here is commendable, although he is perhaps feeling guilty for his unclarified actions and greater devotion for his Queen.

Elaine is often associated with the 'Lady of Shalott,' to whom Tennyson had dedicated a poem in an earlier narrative. The similarities between these two characters are clear; both maids fall in love with the same man in different moments of the legend. The Lady suffers from a mysterious curse and must continuously weave her endless tapestry, and Elaine sews a shield case for him out of self-devotion. The first one is trapped and can only look into a mirror to see in it the reflections of the real world, and the other one chooses not to face reality and stay in her fantasy world, guarding the memory of her love in her chamber. Finally, they both face death, dying of a broken heart and of their inabilities to be requited. Both lifeless bodies sail to Camelot in a barge; the Lady having inscribed her name on it; "Below the carven stern she wrote THE LADY OF SHALOTT" ('Lady of Shalott' verses 125-6.), Elaine bringing a letter and a servitor to take her to the King.

2.2.5 *The Pale Nun*

The story of 'The Holy Grail' is, perhaps, one of the most mysterious and symbolic ones in the *Idylls*. Closely inspired by Malory's 'The Noble Tale of the Sangreal' (1485) included in the *Morte d'Arthur*, Tennyson tickled the reader's imagination with this legend of the Holy Vessel and its peculiar quest, part of the collective imaginary now. Chivalry and the adventures of the Round Table knights, who with their quest seek to redeem all sins and indulgence existing in court, are the main protagonists of this story. Tennyson begins with Sir Percival retelling the Grail's story and its properties, having once been brought to Glastonbury by Joseph of Arimathea. This revealed itself to his nun sister one night, who named Sir Galahad the son of Lancelot and the purest and youngest of all of those knights, to behold it. From then on, the whole Table swears to go on its quest and the poem focuses on the findings and adventures of just five of them; Percival, Bors, Lancelot, Galahad and Gawain. Because of their impurities, some of them are unable to retrieve and see the grail. They fall, and Arthur sees the fellowship of his Round Table beginning to break apart, anticipating no return to its original state;

lost to me and gone,
And left me gazing at a barren board, And a lean Order

('The Holy Grail' verses 888-9)

This idyll blames the impure knights for the breakdown of the Table and Arthur's kingdom, who have indulged in adultery before and during the quest. Tennyson does not actually make his knights responsible. He blames the women around them instead. With the Pale Nun's vision and the beginning of their soon-to-be-fated quest, Tennyson is impersonating, to a certain extent, the reason for the Table's breakdown. She is the one guiding Galahad; "Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen" (verse 160), making him an emblematic sword-belt from her hair. This contrasts with Malory's and the rest of the Arthurian romances representation of the Holy Nun, as the grail heroine and bearer of the holy chalice, guiding the knights but ultimately sacrificing her own life for the cause. Her body finally sailing to the City of Sarras to be buried, very much reminding us of our Elaine.

Although there is not much emotion in Tennyson's portrayal of the Pale Nun, just making her appear briefly and vaguely, her representation of the female cause for the quest is hinting at the fact that she is, along with 'Vivien' and the Queen, one of the main reasons for the kingdom's fall. She does not deceive, or practise adultery, but promises unattainable eternal glory and chivalry to the King's knights, knowing that all of them, with the exception of Galahad are not pure.

2.2.6 *Guinevere*

'Guinevere' is the last idyll of 'The Round Table' section of *Idylls*. Intense and filled with torn and contradictory emotions, partings, battles and undeniable fates, it is too, Tennyson's most inventive of all *Idylls*, as he departs considerably from the sources that he

has been following so far in the rest of the *Idylls*. For instance, Malory's episode of her condemning and defence by Lancelot is omitted by Tennyson.

As news of her affair with Lancelot reached Arthur in *Idylls*, the Queen has fled court and sequestered in Almesbury convent, where she ends up meeting one night with her lover. They talk about a future together and say their goodbyes, but Mordred, tipped off by Vivien, hears their conversation and confronts them. They run their separate ways, never to see each other again. Guinevere accepts her fate;

Mine is the shame, for I was a wife, and thou
Unwedded; yet rise now, and let us fly,
For I will draw me into sanctuary,
And bride my doom

('Guinevere' verses 118-21)

Lancelot goes into battle, and once in the convent, Guinevere lives anonymously, repenting and feeling remorse for the pain she has caused around her. She is torn between her feelings of sadness for Lancelot's final parting, and guilt when she hears the kingdom is being usurped by Mordred while the King was waging war on Lancelot. It is all her fault, and now, with the company of a young novice who is not afraid to condemn her sins, she hears her song "About the good king and his wicked Queen" (verse 207), saying;

That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life
Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round
Which good King Arthur founded, years ago

(verses 217-9)

She tries to defend herself insinuating that the Table was an unwise idea, and its members should have foreseen the doomed end for themselves. Upon being asked who is the noblest, whether the King or Lancelot Guinevere defends Lancelot and remembers the first time she saw him, experiencing instant love, contrasted to when she met her King; "Not like my Lancelot" (verse 404).

King Arthur comes to visit her to the nursery then. She is startled and runs, symbolically falling at his feet. He then accuses her of destroying a kingdom, splitting his knights, but finally forgives her. He says his goodbye to "meet my doom" (verse 447), delivering a monologue on the morals of leading a life of chastity loving "one maiden only" (verse 472), as he has done. He remembers when he met her and how he still loves her. She sees him go and regrets her life choices;

I yearn'd for warmth and color which I found
In Lancelot – now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest and most human too,
Not Lancelot, nor another

(verses 642-5)

She is made abbess of the nunnery and dies there three years later.

In Tennyson's eyes Guinevere has caused the King's fate, by breaking the institution of marriage. As it becomes clear in the end with the different array of good and bad women in court, she represents the worst of all; her indecision until the end, her selfishness and her inability to contain her emotions and desires, make her a spoilt and demanding woman, undeserving of her honourable title. She came to Camelot lethargic and unconvinced, marrying the noblest king by pre-arranged marriage. She was not in love with him, and perhaps hoped to be so one day, but she irresponsibly pays too much attention to Lancelot's appreciation; seeing his loyalty and devotion turning to love for him, beginning an affair with her husband and King's first knight very early on in the book. Lambdin says that "it may not be true that this type of reading was totally Tennyson's intention. He does make a sustained effort to show that Arthur and Guinevere are of entirely different natures" (22), representing Arthur as trustworthy and idealistic, and Guinevere as manipulative and practical. If he is virtuous and faultless, she is wicked and immoral, if he is brave and consequent, she is coward and indecisive; unsure until the last minute whom she really loves or wishes to end her days with. He is the perfect forgiving true husband, and she is the unfaithful false wife everyone loathes. She ends up antagonising her King's world, so no good future can come from it.

In her defence, Tennyson makes Arthur unaffectionate, lacking in passion, unlike Lancelot, who is closer to her emotionality and indecisiveness. Guinevere, a tempest of human emotions is everything Arthur is not, a King chosen by divine nature. Guinevere did not only corrupt the knights at court, she also corrupted Lancelot, the King's right hand. Therefore, her shameful double crime was not unforgiven by the Victorian readers and the male dominated society that was reading her then (Eggers 87-9, qtd. in Lambdin 22). The Poet blames the untruthful Queen even when the marriage was a fake.

2.3 AND HIS OTHER POEMS

You must remember always ... what it is meant to be – a drama in lyrics ... The things which seem like faults belong not too much to the poem as to the character of the hero.³⁶

Lord Alfred Tennyson, 1892

This section will look into some of Tennyson's female characters outside his *Idylls* and from other books of *Poems*, in particular, those photographically presented in Cameron's *Other Poems* section of *Illustrations*. With these women in general, the reader will encounter different life stories with diverse levels of heroism, learning about their personal choices and convictions, their flaws and virtues, all seeming truer-to-life and more contemporary and emotionally-warmer than those legendary characters in *Idylls*.

³⁶ Recorded by Henry van Dyke (Day 366).

Tennyson provided authentic lyrical glimpses of these women in the *Poems* published throughout his poetic life, writing about them in short rhymes or dedicating them entire books. They appeared as comprehensible and lucid characters, each with their own beauty.

2.3.1 May Queen

This character appeared very early on in Tennyson's career. In 'May Queen,' Tennyson narrates the rural life and death of Alice, the elected Queen of the May that year. What seems a fresh and youthful springtime pastoral ballad turns into a bleak poem about fatal fate in connection with death in the approaching winter.

The poem is structured in three acts; the first forty-four verses are set on the eve of May Day, when Alice prepares herself for the celebration, a second part is 'New Year's Eve' (verses 45-94), when the maid is in bed ill waiting for her death, and the final one entitled 'Conclusion' (verses 95-154) when she finally dies.

In the first piece, we have an exciting Alice, reminding her mother to wake her nice and early for her appearance in the festival. The May Day fest is a long-established celebration of pagan roots in rural Britain, involving a young girl being crowned Queen on the first of May. It is associated with the start of springtime, and for the crowning the maid wears a white gown and flower garlands over her head, symbolising purity, youth, and, naturally, virginity. She would then dance around the Maypole with other maids and, according to some myth and old folklore, the May Queen would be put to death after her reign was over.

As the queen-to-be, Alice looks vain to a degree, because she regards herself above other maids, darker and not as fair as her. As her story unfolds, the reader comes to know of the existence of an old suitor, Robin, whom she had to reject and discount – "ran by him without speaking" ('May Queen' verse 18). We presume she rejected him because she desired to keep her virginal status and become a worthy Queen of May. At some point, she wonders about his pain, or about being called "cruel-hearted," but she seems not to be too worried about it and determined to become a queen now, as suitors might come at a later stage.

In the second part of the poem, a drastic change of mood has taken place in Alice, preparing herself to die, although wishing to see the New Year dawn. Her words sound somber and sorrowful as her death is close. She remembers her happy times last May, turning now into a daughter and sister, caring for those she will leave behind. The reader has seen a change in her thinking; she has matured and her priorities have changed.

When Spring returns, in her 'Conclusion,' she is still alive but bids farewell to those who loved her. She repents and realises she has been sightless all this time with her futile "desire of life" (verse 143), rejecting love, family and a life fulfilled with all these things in it. She is to die in regret, but ready and at peace with those who loved her, including Robin, to

whom she wishes best. She concludes: “And the wicked ceased for troubling, and the weary are at rest.” (verse 156).

Tennyson saw in her women the perfect way to discuss and express extreme circumstances, delicate emotions and personal growth. This is the most domestic and indulging example of it, when he tells us about the transformation from child to womanhood in the character of the Queen of May. Chapter four will devote some space to further discussing this woman, since her complexity and close relatedness to Cameron’s work is worth a fuller analysis.

2.3.2 *The Princess*

In 1847, Tennyson first published ‘The Princess: A Medley’, a mix of complex “cantos” dedicated to the beautiful and heroic Princess Ida. To complete it and hoping to make it kinder on the reader, he added a few extra songs in subsequent editions in 1850,³⁷ such as the popular ‘The splendour falls on castle walls.’

This narrative poem tells about the story of the activist and erudite princess, first founder of a women-only university. As her royal blood demanded, she was originally destined to marry his prince, to whom she had been engaged since a child, but the Princess decides to abandon her life of nobility to found an academic institution for women. The rejected Prince, still in love with her, enters this restrictive university disguised as a woman with two of his most loyal friends. Once there, they are surprised by the excellent competence of the Princess’s academic organisation as well as her abilities of speech. Both royals start to engage in deep discussions about the equality of women, love, marriage, and other subjects, thus spending a fair amount of time together, and properly getting to know each other.

Eventually, the covered-up men are discovered and attempt to flee. In the chaos, Ida falls into the river but is then saved by her loving Prince. He and one of his friends are finally captured and remain hostages of the group of women. The King – his father – declares war on them, and the battle takes place to secure their rescue. Then, the Prince’s friends are wounded and the two accompanying ladies of the Princess take care of them nursing them, finally love blossoming between them. The Princess’ brother has injured the Prince in the battle, and the Princess, who begins to correspond him after he has declared his love for her, realises they have similar views on the equality of love between men and women, and finally decide to marry.

This lengthy poem is structured with complexity as a prologue, a main story and a conclusion. Tennyson sets both the first and last sections during the Victorian era, outside the main story, set in medieval times and treated as legend. In the prologue, the contemporary

³⁷ “Before the first edition came out, I deliberated with myself whether I should put songs between the separate divisions of the poem; again I thought that the poem would explain itself, but the public did not see the drift,” as quoted from Tennyson (Day 362).

characters are holding a summer party and start a storytelling contest to remember the old times. The core story about Princess Ida follows on, in a lyrical form, with seven songs, all narrated by the Prince. These do not follow a coherent order, but a random one, telling of emotions that could relate to the different moments in the story. This moving back and forth in time between the contemporary and mediaeval periods becomes disorienting for the reader.

Another aspect up for analysis in this poem is that each of the main characters – both the Princess and the Prince – have two accompanying friends, making the perfect balance between the men and women division. Princess's friends are Lady Blanche – with a “man-hating imagination” (Joseph 178) –, and Lady Psyche with “faded formed” (II verse 425) and a more composed behaviour, both rivals at first in getting the Princess's main influence, constantly talking her out of the idea of marriage, and convincing her to avoid men.

On the other hand, the Prince's two friends are Cyril and Florian, who making a paradoxical contrast to the women, have a more chivalric and down-to-earth attitude to life. What is surprising is that three couples unknot all the tangles and become perfectly happy in the end. This surprisingly trite outcome is rather disappointing and it runs contrary to the issues of the emancipation of women and their strong opposition to marriage and to men in general, the core issue in the story so far. The topic of women's rights for High Education was a very hot one during the nineteenth century, with the founding of Queen's College in London – Britain's first college, awarding academic qualifications to women –, and ‘The Princess’ being the Poet's response to these historical facts.

Ida is a forward thinking modern feminist. She is eloquent, well-read, and an accomplished intellectual, but must share protagonism with the Prince, whom she ends up marrying. It is he who narrates the story and tells it from his perspective. With ‘The Princess,’ Tennyson returned to his favourite period of history, the Middle Ages, but he updated it by bringing up the issue of his time. He did so by encapsulating them in a female character. Ida ends up being human after all, having feelings and needs that were previously ignored, and she needs to satisfy them through a final choice of marriage. One can feel that throughout the story, she is not unwelcoming to this end and listens to both sides of the story, represented by her ladies in-house and the prince himself. She gradually progresses – or regresses – from her initial “militant obstinacy,” (Joseph 177) practising of chastity and hardcore education, not the basic ideals of Victorian femininity, to finally opening up to love in herself and maturing as a woman of Tennyson's modern times. In the end, she chooses to marry the man she actually loved, rather than the man she ought to have initially, remaining susceptible to love. In connection to her attitude, Joseph comments state that she is facilitating “the maturation of the male ego” too (182). The poem's last few lines reflect this;

Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself;
Lay thy sweet hand in mine and trust to me,

(VII verses 344-5)

Both men's and women's attitudes have balanced out towards the end of the story to a more equal position, which can only ensure a happy ending in Victorian times.

2.3.3 *Mariana*

'Mariana, Mariana in the moated grange – *Measure for Measure*,' is one of Tennyson's early short lyrical published in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* at Trinity College. Its title makes reference to Shakespeare's play, as Tennyson borrows his main character, Mariana, living a secluded life since she had been abandoned by her fiancé Angelo. Her claustrophobic isolation makes her wish to end her miserable existence, repeating at the end of each stanza;

She said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!

This poem was Tennyson's first opportunity to show his great skill using landscapes and mundane objects to convey his characters' different moods. The poem's lyricism and metaphors are a total delight, easy on the read and showing a juvenile spirit and style. With regards to Mariana, it does not give much away, apart from representing her as an obsessive and passive woman doing nothing with her life, waiting around for a man she begins to realise is never coming back.

The year of its publication, Tennyson travelled around the Pyrenees, and their natural setting of dry and hot climate would be present in the background of its follow-up; 'Mariana in the South' – published only two years later in *Poems*. This time, it represented a more emotionally-active Mariana, praying and going through her old correspondence with the lover who left her behind. Its tone is a bit more depressing and mature, since Mariana has reflected prolongedly about her abandonment. In it, there is a glimpse of blaming towards the cause of her despair, even naming her ex-lover "cruel heart," and "cruel love" ('Mariana in the South' verses 69-70), and the protagonist already assuming her future, with the verse "Live forgotten, and die forlorn," being repeated throughout the poem as a requiem song.

The first Mariana reveals herself as a bit more hopeful and expectant of her lover's final arrival, while she looks out the window watching for his return.

In the second poem, however, she has finally accepted his rejection, and decides to console herself by reading their letters, perhaps in search of answers for the scanty information regarding his behaviour. Mariana knows now that she is in his past, and thus looks at her memories for comfort and solace, although never to the future.

2.3.4 *The Beggar Maid*

In 1842, Tennyson published 'The Beggar Maid,' a short 16-verse poem dedicated to the story of King Cophetua and the beggar maid. Here, Tennyson shows his love for the classics, revisiting this legend about an African king who felt no attraction for women. One

day he spotted from his window the beautiful Penelophon, wearing tattered clothes and begging for money. The King, immediately love struck, swore then and there to make her his wife. He walked out in the street in search of her, offering all the beggars his money with the hope of attracting her attention. When Penelophon finally came forward, he asked her to marry him; to which she replied yes, becoming his honorable queen. The legend says that they lived happy together until they died, being buried side by side in the same grave.

Tennyson's poem briefly tells about the moment of the King's and the beggar's meeting in the street, introducing her to the reader for the first time through the King's own eyes. In such a brief encounter and narrative, he envisions her fairness and shyness, her external features, but nothing else about her is disclosed. His final oath "That beggar maid shall be my queen!" (verse 16) begins their love story and future together, where one cannot help but feeling the beggar-queen is bound to be submissive to the King and will no doubt accept the choices he will make for her in their life together.

2.3.5 Maud

In 1855, Tennyson published *Maud, and Other Poems*, where he included the 'Maud; A Monodrama,' a poem about love, marriage and death. It is said to be one of Tennyson's most favourite poems, and the one that he often enjoyed reciting at social gatherings. Olsen says that despite being a very successful piece, he felt it was underappreciated (115).

This poem is structured in three parts, once more told to the audience by a male character. In the first part, the funeral of the narrator's father takes place, him dwelling on death and hesitating on his love for Maud, her wife to be. This part and the reflections on it remind the reader of Tennyson's masterpiece a few years earlier, *In Memoriam* (Day 359).

Time passes and his love finally transforms into passion for Maud, turning his narrative into an idyll, full of praise of her beauty and feminine qualities. Her brother is introduced here, forbidding her to marry the poet, and arranging a ball in their house in her honour, without the intention to invite him. The poet patiently waits outside for her in the garden in the famous song 'Come into the garden, Maud,' until the early hours of the next day, when she finally makes an appearance. When the evil brother sees them together, he challenges the poet to a duel by striking first. They fight and the poet kills the brother, consequently fleeing to France, where he learns that Maud has died of a broken heart and goes mad. When his sanity returns, he enrolls in the army to fight in the Crimean War.

'Maud' is a very intense and deep story, with some arduous parts where Tennyson draws conclusions about death in the style of his *In Memoriam*. Throughout the poem, there is an odd variation of poetic meter, perhaps to recreate the emotional instability and moody temperament of the narrator, which accounts structurally for the different parts of the poem.

As Ida, Maud has been affianced since a little girl to a young suitor, whom she actually loves, but her brother impedes the realisation of their marriage. She is, however, easily influenced in her string of life disappointments; first rejection, then acceptance from her lover, thenceforth the forbidding of this true love by her own brother, then death and abandonment, and a final tragic end from a broken heart. As a secondary player, she seems adaptable to the men around her, her happiness depends on them, on their choices and decisions. Her submission brings her death.

2.3.6 *The Gardener's Daughter*

In 1842, Tennyson published 'The Gardener's Daughter Or, The Pictures' in his *Poems*, a stunning idyll set in the typical English countryside. In it, we find parallelisms between the two main characters; Eustace and the narrator, and the real-life friendship between Tennyson and his close friend Hallam. Day says that the poem shadows Hallam's real-life love for Tennyson's sister, Emily, whom he finally engaged, with Eustace's love for Juliet, the narrator's sister (359).

The poem narrates how artist Eustace, inspired by the love he feels for Juliet, paints her and challenges his narrator friend to do the same and "climb the top of Art" ('The Gardener's Daughter' verse 165). With this in mind, they visit brown-haired and purple-eyed Rose, the gardener's daughter, outside her house, and the narrator is immediately love struck by her. She will become the first love of his life.

The descriptions in this idyll are colourful and a real poetic joy, with Tennyson excelling at using florae language and allegory to represent women. Earlier on in the poem Tennyson described Juliet's hair delightfully as; "More black than ashbuds in the front of March" (verse 28). There is a lovely anecdote by Hester Thackeray about it, telling how Tennyson's son Hallam, would show her the "ash tree growing by the path under the Down which led to Tennyson's Cross" – nowadays in Tennyson's Down, in Freshwater – that his father used to illustrate this verse, showing how the Poet found inspiration in the nature, hills and sea that surrounded him (18).

Rose is represented as part of the garden, as a beautiful rose and daughter of a gardener, knowing little about her or her personality, just her beauty. In this sense, there is certain similarity found between Rose and Maud, as both are seen as beautiful flowers waiting to be plucked by the male character. Both women give the impression of being impassive, submissive and a touch lifeless.

2.4 THE MOXON EDITION AND THE FASHION OF ILLUSTRATING TENNYSON



Fig. 30 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Tennyson reading Maud*,³⁸ 1855.

I must now ask why did you make the Lady of Shallot, in the illustration with her hair tossed about as if by a tornado?" Rather perplexed I replied that I had wished to convey the idea of the threatened fatality by reversing the ordinary peace of the room and the lady herself; that while she recogni[s]ed that the moment of the catastrophe had come, the spectator might also understand it.

"But I didn't say that the hair was blown out like that. Then there is another question I want to ask you. Why did you make the web wind round and round her like the threads of a cocoon?"³⁹

Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, 1905

At the height of his popularity as poet Laureate, Tennyson found himself in the midst of the Gift Book craze and the golden age of British illustration. His poetry was a regular source of inspiration for contemporary illustrators and painters who admired him greatly and shared his love for everything medieval and legendary. His *Idylls of a King* would impulse the Arthurian revival phenomenon taking place during the nineteenth-century in Britain too, which popularised his poetry to the extreme and made it constantly to illustrative work.

In the sisterhood framework of poetry and painting in the Victorian era, Tennyson's poetry was regarded as "word painting" (Kooistra 40) for its splendidly descriptive and narrative-filled poems. And thus, throughout 1857-1875 Tennyson's work became an essential part of illustrated book editions, the Poet profiting too from them (Kooistra 9), working with the foremost publishing houses at the time; Moxon, Strahan, Henry S. King, Kegan Paul and Macmillan.⁴⁰ This, however, did not necessarily mean that the Poet was easy to illustrate for. Tennyson did not grant illustrative permission to illustrators and publishers too

³⁸ Sketch drawn at a social evening gathering on September, 25 1855 at Robert Browning's home.

³⁹ Conversation recorded between Alfred Tennyson and Holman Hunt about his illustration for the 'Lady of Shallot' Moxon edition, which after much questioning to the illustrator, famously concluded with the Poet saying: "I think the illustrator should always adhere to the words of the text!" (Hunt vol. 2 123-5).

⁴⁰ Tennyson moved from publisher to publisher, remaining with Edward Moxon from 1832-1868, with Alexander Strahan from 1869-1873, with Henry S. King from 1874-1878, with Kegan Paul from 1879-1883 and finally with Alexander Macmillan from 1884-1892 (Kooistra 180).

straightforwardly, and when doing so, he was renowned for insisting on literal interpretations of his text or for his scolding at the freedom and liberties that some of the artists had taken in some of the editions. Such was the case of the Moxon edition, and the comment written by Hunt on his 'Lady of Shallot' above.

On one occasion, a discussion held between the Poet, John Ruskin and G. F. Watts on the role of illustration, the former defended that this had to be supportive and at service of text, whereas the art critic and painter thought that the relationship between poetry and illustration should not be slavish but a "content one" (Olsen 232). Kooistra explains that his hostility towards the art of illustration had to do more with his losing of control over the images that accompanied his text than an actual dislike of the practice (9).

The Pre-Raphaelites had a special devotion to Tennyson in general. Since their artistic motto caused them to engage in a profound dialogue between the visual and the verbal, the art they produced encouraged the viewer to exercise a "close looking" and a "close reading" (Kooistra 40-3), campaigning for a style perfectly suiting book illustration, and in particular, Tennyson's text. Thus, the Brotherhood and the Poet seemed like a sisterhood made in heaven, which occurred many times over in painting, as seen in the examples that follow:



Fig. 31 Sir John Everett Millais, *Mariana*, 1851. Left.

Fig. 32 John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shallot*, 1888. Right.



Fig. 33 Arthur Hughes, *Elaine with the Armour of Launcelot*, 1867. Left.

Fig. 34 Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones, *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*, 1884. Right.

This harmony between arts was produced too in the form of illustration, with the most venerated and frequently referenced illustrative book by Edward Moxon; the 1857's lavish edition that reprinted Tennyson's *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* and two-volume *Poems* in a single publication (Kooistra 37) for the Christmas Gift Book market. This publication, better known as "The Moxon Tennyson," included 30 woodcuts by the Pre-Raphaelites' founding members; D. G. Rossetti, Millais and Hunt,⁴¹ and 24 additional ones by better-established illustrators such as Thomas Creswick, J. C. Horsley, William Mulready, Clarkson Stanfield,⁴² and the renowned Daniel Maclise. This unexpected list was not random, but drawn by Moxon and Tennyson himself, the Poet "help[ing]" (Hallam Tennyson vol. 1 420, qtd. in Mancoff 92) this time with the final selection and travelling to London to meet each of the artists personally with Moxon in May 1854 (Tennyson *Letters* vol. 2 89, qtd. in Kooistra 38).

Once the illustrative themes from Tennyson's poems had been distributed – initially half a dozen each (Weaver *JMC* 68) – artists worked independently drawing their interpretations onto a woodblock, then sending these to the finest engravers working on the edition, such as The Dalziel Brothers and J. C. Thomson. The result would be a collection of black and white illustrations produced in the era of industrialisation and line manufacturing, assembling the work of multiple artists and different craftsmen aware of their own job but not

⁴¹ Kooistra says that if the plan was each artist would represent six subjects, Millais contributed with a total of 18 illustrations in the end, Hunt with 7 and Rossetti with 5 (38-39). She lists some of them – Millais's 'Dream of Fair Women,' 'Lord of Burleigh,' 'The Daydream,' 'The Sisters,' 'The Miller's Daughter,' 'Dora,' 'Edward Gray,' and 'Locksley Hall,' Hunt's first 'The Lady of Shallot', two pictures for 'Oriana', 'Godiva', the 'Beggar Maid' and 'Recollections of Arabian Nights,' and Rossetti's second 'The Lady of Shallot,' 'Mariana in the South', 'St. Cecily', 'Sir Galahad' and the weeping queens of Arthur's legend (58-61).

⁴² bl.uk/collection-items/the-moxon-illustrated-edition-of-tennysons-poems Accessed Mar 20, 2017.

of the whole one. This clearly affected the overall design and production of this publication, which ended up taking up three years to finish and encountered “legible tensions” (Kooistra 36) between the illustrations made by the Royal Academicians and those by new *anti-establishment* Brotherhood.

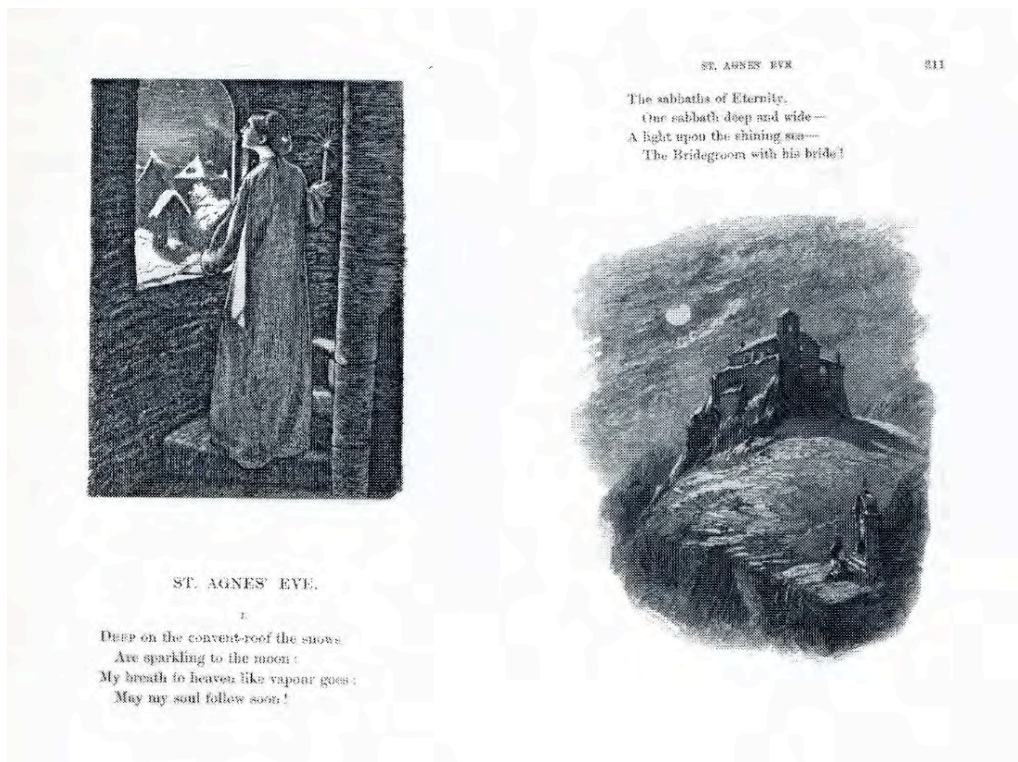


Fig. 35 John Everett Millais, *St. Agnes' Eve*, 1859. Left.

Fig. 36 Clarkson Stanfield, *St. Agnes' Eve*, 1859. Right.



Fig. 37 Daniel Maclise, *Morte d'Arthur*, 1857. Left.

Fig. 38 William Holman Hunt, *The Ballad of Oriana*, 1859. Right

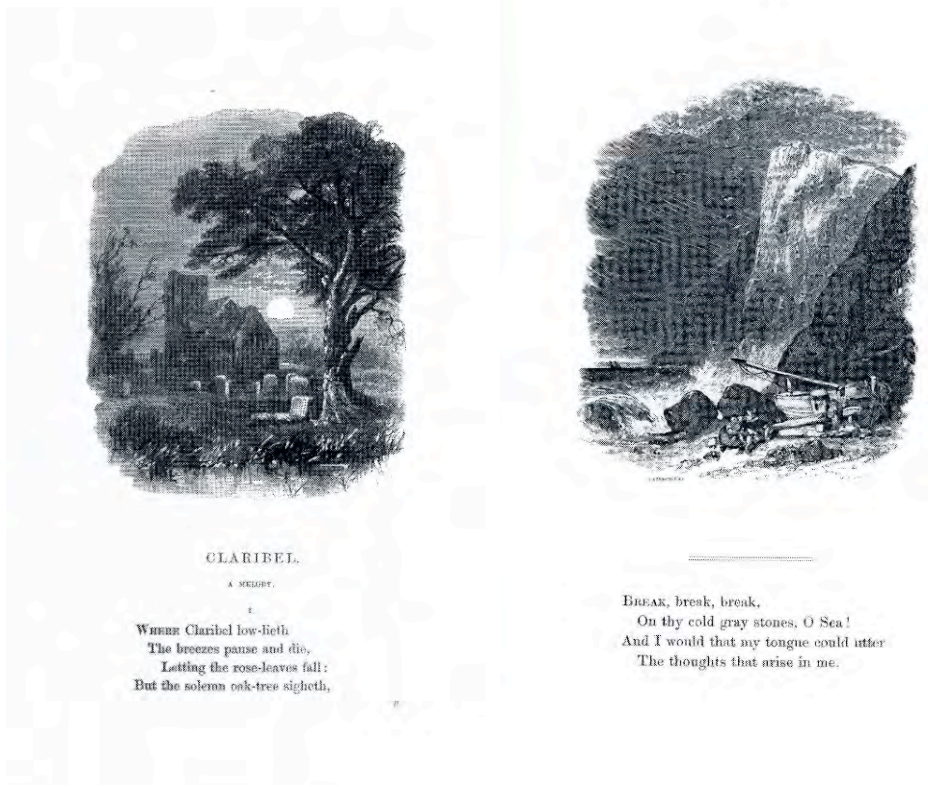


Fig. 39 Thomas Creswick, *Claribel*, 1859. Left.

Fig. 40 Clarkson Stanfield, *Break, break, break*, 1859. Right.

All illustrations were laid out and centred on the pages with integrated text, showing a real difference between the two distinct illustrative styles. If the old Romantic school approached page illumination with traditional and distant vignettes representing picturesque and atmospheric scenes non-specific to text to avoid detracting from it; the young illustrators, however, opted to focus on ideal and symbolic representations of the Tennyson's subjects, representing these emotionally-charged and psychologically entranced. Their characters remained dominant and visually-central in the page, neatly-defined and closely-framed within it, clearly separating them from the actual text (Kooistra 46-9). Their interpretations enjoyed freedom.

The first group chose the more lyrical scenes from Tennyson's *Poems*, whereas the Pre-Raphaelites preferred the narrative ones; interpreting truthful "to nature" and to the Poet's text, carefully composing their subjects around the objects and architecture as referred in it, encouraging a symbolic reading from the reading viewer (Kooistra 50).



Fig. 41 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Mariana in the South*, 1857. Left.



Fig. 42 Sir John Everett Millais, *Mariana*, 1857. Right.



Fig. 43 William Holman Hunt, *The Lady of Shalott*, 1857. Left.



Fig. 44 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Lady of Shalott*, 1857. Right.

As noticed, some long poems had more than one illustration, sometimes the same subject was being depicted differently by two different artists; for instance, *Mariana* is represented by Millais as upset and claustrophobically enclosed in her window bay (fig. 42), very differently from his early *Mariana* in painting (fig. 31) oozing sensuality and in a more composed state of mind. Rossetti represented Tennyson's *Mariana in the South*, kneeling before a crucifix kissing its feet and clasping some old love letters.

The Lady of Shalott had two representations; a dramatic one by Hunt, who saw her trapped in her curse and weaving web, and Rossetti's filled with symbolism showing Lancelot gazing at the poor dead maid.

In *Tennyson and his Pre-Raphaelite Illustrators. A Book about a Book* (1894), journalist and bibliophile George Somes Layard wrote a vocal review of the Moxon Tennyson,

describing it as “a bundle of splendid incongruities” (8) and dividing its work into; “solid stuff” from the Brotherhood that give “the real emphasis” to the edition, and the rest that simply seemed either “too familiar” – Mulready’s –, “too dry” – Maclise’s – or “too sweet” – Creswick’s (2). In his opinion, Millais had “reali[s]ed,” Hunt had “ideali[s]ed” and Rossetti had “not hesitated to contradict the text” and “sublimated, or transcendentali[s]ed” his subjects (9). Layard gave a special mention to the work from the latter stating that he “was never an imitator” but an interpreter, producing “profoundly original conceptions” (65).

Rossetti’s particular understanding of the art of illustration is an interesting one. He described it himself:

...can allegorize on one’s own hook on the subject of the poem, without killing for oneself and every one a distinct idea of the poet’s. This, I fancy, is always the upshot of illustrated editions, – Tennyson, Allingham, or any one.⁴³

Upon its publication, the Moxon Tennyson became unnoticed, both critically and commercially. At thirty-one shillings and sixpence, rather than the standard twenty-one of the gift book (Kooistra 39), it was too pricy for the middle-class. Its second criticism being that the “book itself was an apple of discord” with an undefined style for its audience, explained Hunt, unwilling to purchase it at such a high price:

In trying to please all, the [publication] satisfied neither section of book buyers. The greater proportion were in favour of the work done by prominent artists of the old school, and their admirers were scandalised by the incorporation of designs by members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; while our fewer appreciators would not buy the book in which the preponderance of work was by artists they did not approve. Thus the unfortunate book never found favour.⁴⁴

The Moxon’s freedom of interpretation and eclecticism of its illustrations worked to its disadvantage, and had Tennyson being more involved with each of the illustrations the result might have been more unified and different.⁴⁵ The Pre-Raphaelites clearly dominated the production, with a higher ratio of contributions than the rest, something that was not liked by the sceptic art academics at the time, but after the Art Treasures Exhibition in 1857 this changed and began to be regarded as the greatest illustrative book for marking “the moment that the sister arts of pictures and poetry shifted direction in popular publishing” (Kooistra 40).

And this is perhaps the reason why today it is often discussed and studied along Cameron’s *Illustrations*. The Brotherhood’s contribution to the 1860s book of illustration was extraordinary, changing not only the appearance of the edition but introducing a new style of text illumination. By feeling liberated from Tennyson’s words and subjects, as well as supervision, they challenged and engaged with the viewer in the era of mass and controlled publishing. Their imaginative illustrative art and their personal interpretations came with the

⁴³ In a letter to William Allingham, Jan 23, 1855 (Weaver JMC 68).

⁴⁴ Hunt *Poems* xxiii-xxiv, qtd. in Weaver 75.

⁴⁵ Layard describes that there was an initial planning between publisher and Poet to decide who would contribute to the edition. The choice of subjects was decided between publisher and artists, and the artistic interpretations and style by the illustrators themselves. Tennyson would see their work once completed, or published within the book, leaving it unsupervised (3). He adds that when compared to other authors like Dickens, he let his illustrators work “absolutely independently of any counsel” (6-7).

freedom and powerfully stood out non-submissively to text. In my opinion, they acted as a clear precedent to Cameron's photo-illustrations and layout of her *Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of the King*. She knew that type of artistic freedom was everything for her book. In fact, Dr. Hinton mentioned in our interview that he owned a third edition of the Moxon Tennyson signed by Mrs. Cameron (see appendix I), and that it was a presentation gift to one of her acquaintances. This datum proves that at the time she was aware of this illustrative edition and had read it, this being direct evidence that it might have influenced her *Illustrations*.

After the Moxon, a string of exquisite publications of Tennyson's single long poems illuminated by one illustrator began to appear in the market in the 1860s. This format was a consequence of the great popularisation of his poems, at his peak then. It also became *the* marketing norm and strategy to front these editions with a photographic portrait from the Poet in order to give its endorsement. This was the case of The Cabinet or "People's" edition and both volumes of Cameron's *Illustrations*, as we will see.

Before then, it is worth mentioning a few editions illuminated by female single illustrators, which I believe set a role model for Cameron's feminine *Illustrations* too. The art world was male dominated at the time, and women illustrators were beginning to find their place and voice in illustrated books for children. One of them was the renowned Eleanor Vere Boyle – highly praised by the Poet (Kooistra 185-7) –, who illustrated his *May Queen* in 1861, others were Amy Buttons's folio of sixteen etchings of *Idylls of the King* in 1862 (Weaver 67), and Anne Lydia Bond's *The Miller's Daughter* in 1867. All of these artists were the first to significantly look at Tennyson's female subjects from a woman's point of view, proving strong precedents to Cameron's photo-illustrations in the next decade.

Interestingly, Kooistra maintains that Tennyson was generally more accepting of female illustrators than with male artists, as he felt he had more control over their interpretations (182-3). His gesture of requesting Cameron a few years later to provide illustrations for his *Idylls* could be a significant proof of this statement.

THE
MAY QUEEN

BY
ALFRED TENNYSON

POET LAUREATE.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. V. B.



LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, SON & CO. 47, LUDGATE HILL.
MDCCCLXI.

The May Queen.

As I came up the valley, whom think ye should I see,
But Robin leaning on the bridge beneath the hazel-tree!



He thought of that sharp look, mother, I gave him yesterday,—
But I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

8

Fig. 45 Eleanor Vere Boyle, *The May Queen*, 1861. Left.

Fig. 46 Eleanor Vere Boyle, *The May Queen*, 1861. Right.

The May Queen.

I sleep so sound all night, mother, that I shall never wake,
If you do not call me loud when the day begins to break:



But I must gather knots of flowers, and buds and garlands gay,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

7

Conclusion.

To lie within the light of God, as I lie upon your breast—
For ever and for ever, all in a blessed home—



And there to wait a little while till you and Effie come—
And the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

Fig. 47 Eleanor Vere Boyle, *The May Queen*, 1861. Left.

Fig. 48 Eleanor Vere Boyle, *Conclusion* for 'The May Queen', 1861. Right.

The domesticity of the Poet's idyll format was ideal for these illustrations converging around female characters, such as these charming illustrations by Vere Boyle for the 'The May Queen', impregnated with a feminine point of view. In my opinion, some of the rural and

angelic scenes she represented here, such as that one of the two girls embracing in the front cover, or the lovers in the bridge, noticeably inspired Cameron's portrayals of the May Queen later on, as we will see in chapter four.

Other illustrations inspired by female characters were Daniel Maclise's *The Princess*, and Pre-Raphaelite Arthur Hughes's *Enoch Arden*, both published in 1860 and 1866 by Moxon respectively, soon to be ending his commercial agreement with Tennyson. Before then and between 1867-1868, Moxon published a luxurious edition of the *Idylls*, including steel-engraved illustrations by renowned French illustrator Gustave Doré. Although he was not the first one to illustrate *Idylls*⁴⁶, his work was rather unique, and the edition became extremely successful.

The Poet had published the first four books of *Idylls* in 1859, and Moxon produced Doré's work as four folios too almost ten years later; 'Elaine,' 'Vivien' and 'Guinevere' in 1867, and 'Enid' in 1868. Tennyson was not sold on Doré's illustrations.⁴⁷ These had a strong Romantic feel and followed the style of Gothic revival, representing the Poet's stories in detailed dramatic scenes including picturesque ruins, abrupt cliffs and thick woodlands. Doré's choice of backdrops from his natal Black Forest had out-proportioned Tennyson's characters, making them too insignificant, and misplacing the identity and aesthetics of the story of the King, set in Cornwall or Wales. Kooistra says that the artist was most probably working from a text-translation too, and had not read the text himself (238), shining through in his work, a little distant from Tennyson's story. Doré produced nine illustrations for each folio.



Fig. 49 Gustave Doré, *The Body of Elaine on its way to King Arthur's Palace*, in 'Elaine,' 1867. Left.

Fig. 50 Gustave Doré, *The Remorse of Lancelot*, in 'Elaine,' 1867. Right.

⁴⁶ As discussed, Button's folio had preceded Dore's one, but there had been Paolo Priolo's – an Edinburgh printer and engraver – sixteen outline drawings of *Enid*, *Vivien* and *Merlin* and *Guinevere*, produced for a publishing contest sponsored by the Art Union in 1863 (Weaver 67).

⁴⁷ Patent in Tennyson's letter to Palgrave on March 23, 1867; "I like the first four I saw very much, tho' they were not quite true to the text, but the rest not so well" (Hallam Tennyson vol. 2 43).



Fig. 51 Gustave Doré, *Vivien and Merlin Repose*, in 'Vivien,' 1867. Left.

Fig. 52 Gustave Doré, *The King's Farewell*, in 'Guinevere,' 1867. Right.

Doré's *Idylls* was an extremely popular edition at the time, and opened the gate for the long tradition of illustrating Tennyson's poem from then on, although it remains *the* definitive one in the readers' minds. Cameron knew this edition well, and reportedly wished his success in her own photobook, when in a letter to a friend, she wrote:

I do it for friendship not that I would not gladly have consented to profit if profit had been offered. Doré got a fortune for his *drawn* fancy Illustrations for these Idylls – Now one of my large photographs, take one for instance illustrating Elaine who is May Prinsep (now Hitchens) at her very best would excite more sensation and interest than all the drawings of Doré.⁴⁸

Both Doré's and Butts's *Idylls* loose folios were suitable for Tennyson's fragmented and sequenced stories of the King, and in my opinion inspired Cameron's style, choice and sequence of idylls in both volumes of *Illustrations*, and especially, influenced her choice of producing the Miniature in loose pages. Contrary to them – and as we will later analyse –, she did not include Tennyson's text in the same page as her images, instead she wrote captions down under her photos and published the text on a separate page.

To sum up here, many were the illustrators and editions who, as a whole, illuminated Tennyson's poems and text, a process that continued in the next two centuries. The illustrations shown in this chapter were only the tip of this iceberg, but especially influential and, in my opinion, passing valuable experience to Cameron's *Illustrations*.

During the Poet's lifetime, not many enjoyed his blessing, a statistic that makes Tennyson's next request to Cameron to illustrate his Cabinet edition the more valuable.

⁴⁸ Letter from Cameron to Sir Edward Ryan (Lukitsch ""JMC's Photographic Illustrations" 249, qtd. in Kooistra 236).

It is necessary to conclude this section on the most prominent Tennyson's illustrators with the last illustrated book issued as new and with his consent (Kooistra 9); Henry S. King's "People's" or the *Cabinet Edition of the Works of Tennyson* (1874). Published for the working-class market, it had been structured in inexpensive monthly tomes with minimal illustration, costing each two shillings and sixpence (Kooistra 231). Its illustrations came from photography, proving the Poet's openness towards the new medium and its realistic style, something he probably considered would suitably limit the idealisation of his text.

Each volume of the Cabinet ended up having a different photo frontispiece of the Poet's humanly presence; volume I had Mayall's portrait of the Poet, others had his bust in marble made by Thomas Woolner reproduced by Autotype, or an image of his garden in Swainston, or a fragment of a manuscript, or a portrait of his dear friend Arthur Henry Hallam reading (Kooistra 233).

For her *Illustrations*, Cameron emulated this frontispiece strategy by including two different portraits of the Poet in each of the volumes. From the work she presented for the Cabinet, only three portraits were used; *Elaine*, *Arthur* and *Maud*, her most generic ones. Helen Groth thinks that King & Co, chose the visual motif of the portrait to make it non-specific to a particular idyll and be able to carry the theme across each of the volumes (153, qtd. in Kooistra 234).

To make matters worse, the engraver, Thomas Lewin erased Cameron's characteristic soft-focus and fading edges, in order to provide the edition's illustrations with a neater and realistic style. On top of that, they were also reduced to the cabinet size of the duodecimo (Kooistra 234), and not surprisingly, Cameron was not amused.

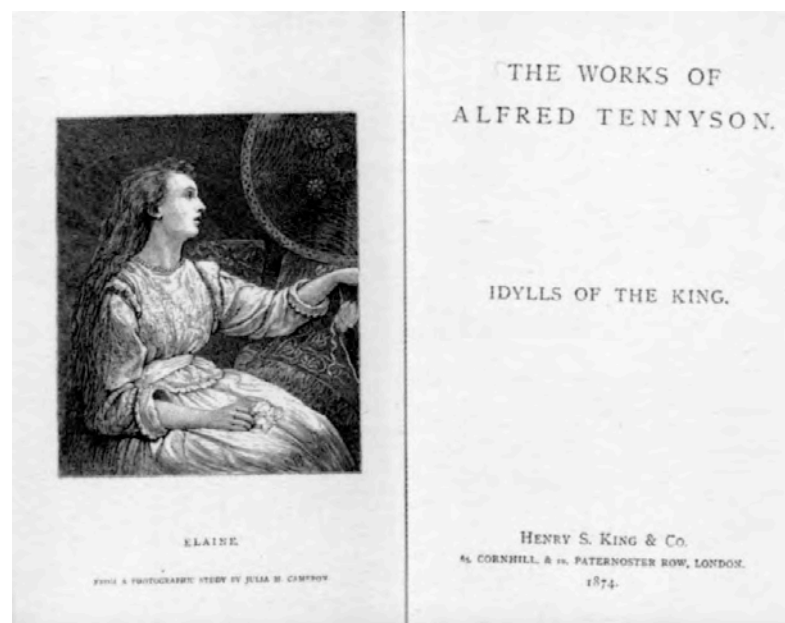


Fig. 53 Thomas Lewin's engraving of *Elaine*, title page of tome VI *Idylls of the King*, *The works of Alfred Tennyson – Cabinet Edition*, 1874.

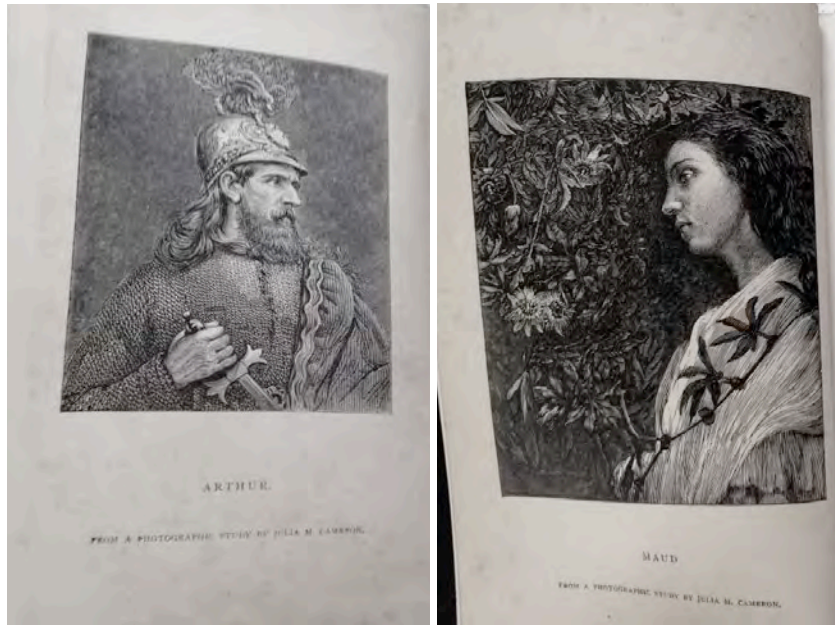


Fig. 54 Thomas Lewin's engraving of *Arthur*, title page of tome VII *Idylls of the King*, *The works of Alfred Tennyson – Cabinet Edition*, 1874. Left.

Fig. 55 Thomas Lewin's engraving of *Maud*, title page of tome IX *Maud, and Enoch Arden*, *The works of Alfred Tennyson – Cabinet Edition*, 1874. Right.

The Cabinet was not a great success – in despise of the 12,000 copies issued quotes Groth (162) –, and yet the literary world owes several achievements to it. Its innovative aura using photography as a tool for illustration serving to represent real people, real places, real art, and also real national legends. Its contribution in the further popularisation of Tennyson's *best of work*, bringing it to a working-class audience. And finally, and most important of all and our study, it gave Cameron the impulse and the confidence to firstly photograph her Tennysonian subjects and stories her own way, and then redeeming herself artistically and going ahead and publish her own book of *Illustrations*. Without her disappointment of the Cabinet, her photobook might have never existed today.

JULIA MARGARET CAMERON, PIONEER PHOTOGRAPHER

She played the game of life with such vivid courage and disregard for ordinary rules: she entered into other people's interests with such warm-hearted sympathy and determined devotion.⁴⁹

Annie Thackeray



Fig. 56 Henry Herschel Hay Cameron, *Julia Margaret Cameron*, ca. 1870 (photographed).

This chapter will delve into Julia Margaret Cameron's exceptional photographic journey. It will cover some chronicled events in her life, the influential people she met in it and her unique motivations to pick up a camera and complete her distinctive and prolific amount of work.

Her fascinating story has been told many times over by numerous biographers across these last two centuries. One of the most interesting ones is her great-niece's, Virginia Woolf and her *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men & Fair Women* (1926), already cited; following the steps of her own mother Julia Prinsep Stephen who wrote a charming memoir for Cameron's entry in the first edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* in 1886. Then came her first chronicler Helmut Gernsheim, who introduced Cameron to a group of women scholars such as Amanda Hopkinson, Silvia Woolf and Victoria Olsen, to name just a few. These women told Cameron's story from different points of view. Many of the dates, facts and testimonials mentioned in this section have come from all their books.

Additionally, in this chapter I have dedicated to discuss the technique and photographic-tools that Cameron utilised when portraying her sitters, and in particularly, her women, in order to prepare the reader of this thesis for my analysis of *Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of a King and Other Poems* in the next chapter.

⁴⁹ Hinton *Julia Margaret Cameron* 12.

3.1 HER PHOTOGRAPHIC STORY

I think that the *Annals of My Glass House* will be welcome to the public, endeavouring to clothe my little history with light, as with a garment, I feel confident that the truthful account of indefatigable work, with the anecdote of human interest attached to that work, will add in some measure to its value.

Julia Margaret Cameron, *Annals of my Glass House*

In 1876, one year after Cameron had started to slow down her photographic work and retreated to her natal India, she began to write her encounter with photography in *Annals of my Glass House*.⁵⁰ This is a very charming fragmentary story boasting and filled with few exaggerations, assertive self-credit and not entirely accurate information on her part. To its reader, it reflects what photography meant for this artist, the nature of her art and the remarkable woman she was. Written “on a sudden impulse,” as described by Gernsheim (*Her Life and Work* 180), this short and unfinished autobiography recalls Cameron’s impressions and reminiscences by using curious photographic anecdotes that, as Joanne Lukitsch says, have become an important text to art historians. This text, she adds, should be taken unbiasedly and as a metaphorical and subjective story marking the beginnings of Cameron’s identity as an artistic photographer (“The Thackeray Album” 36, qtd. in Mackay 44).

Her life story begins a few years earlier, when Little Julia Margaret was born in an affluent suburb of Calcutta in India, on June, 11 1815 during the buoyant period of British colonialism. She was the daughter of James Pattle, an official in the East India Company, and Adeline de l’Etang, a member of the French aristocracy. The Pattles, an Anglo-Indian bourgeois family who had been living in Calcutta since the beginnings of the British protectorate, were quintessentially British and inculcated their patriotism to their next generation. Without exception, Julia Margaret and her six sisters felt British and in spite of never visiting England until much later on in their lives, grew up speaking perfect French, English and Hindi at home (Olsen 11-4).

The l’Etangs, however, came from French aristocracy with Julia’s grandfather, the Chevalier Antoine de l’Etang having served in Versailles at the court of Marie Antoinette. He had arrived in India in exile, married and remained there the rest of his life, with his wife living in France partly educating the Pattle girls in later years, who each took turns in tutoring periods in her Paris house. Sending the young ones to Europe was a general practice amongst colonial families in India, as it provided their progenies with a good education and safeguarded them from diseases such as malaria and cholera, so widespread in India during these years. Even though these years meant a traumatic separation and homesickness for the little ones, they were essential to the development of ties and their strong identity with their lineage country in Europe, says Olsen (17). Cameron was sent to France at the tender

⁵⁰ Published in 1889 by her son Henry Herschel Hay Cameron as part of a posthumous exhibition catalogue. *The Photographic Journal* published it in 1927 (Mackay 37).

age of three to learn about social skills and European culture, and returned to Calcutta in 1834 as a young woman of eighteen. Later in this thesis, we will see how the notion of absence and fear of separation from her loved ones would stay with her for the rest of her life, and would permeate her art and her understanding of photography.

Once she returned to India the time had come to start looking for a husband, and as the family tradition marked, she should consider marrying a respectable Englishman. Bit by bit, the Pattle's sisters began to find husbands, well-positioned within the Company's councils or the British colonial government, and thus maintaining their privileged status in Calcutta's society. Mother and daughters clearly dominating their household, made their own choices in their conventional paths of marriage and remained extremely close throughout the rest of their lives even when living far from each other. Essential matriarchal values had been passed on the sisters to run their own domestic lives and families, as we will see in Julia Margaret's case. Olsen says that in her life she genuinely found support and complicity from the women around her; her household, family and friends (11), which explains, perhaps, her astonishingly sharp observation of female nature, the motif to become prominent in her work later.

In 1836, during her convalescence in Cape Town, a popular spot for the diseased in India, young Julia Margaret met Charles Hay Cameron, twenty years her senior. He was recovering from kidney disease and exhaustion after having worked on India's new Law Commission with Thomas Babington Macaulay to reform the country's penal code. They both shared a love for art and literature, and married two years later back in Calcutta, commencing a mutual devotion and admiration that would last the forty years they stayed together. Indeed, they were a match made in heaven, bearing five sons and one daughter – first four born in India –, and adopting five orphaned relatives and one foster child along the way. For the first few years of marriage in Calcutta, Cameron put together numerous social events for the socially-privileged ones there, assisting Governor Hardinge whose wife had retired to Britain. Even though, as Olsen tells, she was an excellent and lively hostess, she was not a big fan of these types of large social gatherings, and felt much more comfortable in those with just some close friends and eccentric artists, as in the parties held at Little Holland House and Freshwater saloons in the years to come (65). Still, during these years of social entertainment, she managed to translate from the German Gottfried August Bürger's poem *Leonora*, a victim of love who falls into despair. Thanks to this poem, Cameron experienced authorship for the first time and began fabricating a string of portraits of misfit heroines. Her translation was published in an 1847 limited edition book illustrated by Daniel Maclise.

Previously in 1841, Charles Hay had bought in Ceylon 1000 acres of land to grow coffee as investment for their family business, hoping to leave a good settlement and a prosperous future for their sons. It was not a secret that he preferred a quiet rural life in India, whereas his wife had always felt attracted to the literary and artistic urban circles. In the end, she won the battle, and in order to pursue that allure and remain closer to her sisters, they

opted to move to England seven years later, once Charles had taken an early retirement. With good prospects for profits from their coffee state, the Camerons decided to settle in London in 1848, where three of the Pattle sisters were already living. The Camerons moved around a lot and rented family houses in Kent, Richmond and Putney, while hooking up with the capital's most creative minds and following the entertainment in vogue at the time; the artistic salons. These, hosted by wives of influential men, were in full swing and gathered "people with intellectual and cultural interests [who] liked to share their ideas and projects with like-minded colleagues, both amateur and professional" (Olsen 83). The Pattle sisters, who had been naturally educated and trained to entertain according to etiquette were much in their element here. As newcomers to London society, their cultural oddness felt refreshing and casual in the salon that one of them, Sara – wife of Thoby Prinsep, former official of the Indian Civil Service – started to host every Sunday afternoon in their house in Kensington's Little Holland House, where the then lodger painter in residence George Frederik Watts became the centre.

This salon's main points of discussion were art and new Victorian technology and innovations, like photography and soon attracted a circle of non-conformists, art beginners and humble well-known artists such as Alfred Tennyson. Sara and her sisters certainly knew how to make them all feel artistically important during their soireés. The Poet would read extracts from his poems like 'Maud' to guests, and even shared early versions of 'Guinevere' and 'Merlin and Vivien,' from his *Idylls of the King* in progress. Cameron, naturally involved with the hosting, forged a close friendship with him and Watts, who would later become mentors in her photography, as well as meeting members of the Pre-Raphaelites who were frequent guests. When describing the atmosphere of these parties, Burne-Jones wrote of his first visit with Rossetti:

One day Gabriel took me in a cab – it was a day he was rich and so we went in a hansom, and we drove and drove until I thought we should arrive at the setting of sun – and he said, 'You must know these people, Ned; they are remarkable people: you will see a painter there, he paints a queer sort of pictures about God and Creation.' So it was he took me to the Little Holland House.⁵¹

The friendships and artistic connections that Cameron established during this incredibly creative time would mark her for life. Since it did not only introduce her to the art's scene but prepared her to embrace photography in the following years. The stimulus received then from the Pre-Raphaelites and Watts clearly influenced her allegoric photography and portraiture, as we will later see.

These years, however, were also the beginning of the Camerons' financial worries. To add to their expending and lavish lifestyle in London, the family's coffee plantations back in India were not providing the expected and necessary income, so they had to resort temporarily to borrow money from family and friends. By the end of the decade, in October 1859, their estate managers in Ceylon were notifying that the crops had begun to fail –

⁵¹ Burne-Jones 159, qtd. in Olsen 88.

perhaps the first sign of blight decimating the coffee crops in India that would eventually turn the country into growing tea (Olsen 108). This prompted Charles Hay to go back and visit the crops with their two eldest sons to try to solve the problems. Their financial difficulties led the Camerons to move to a more rural environment and so change their engaging life in London to a less expensive lifestyle in the Isle of Wight. During her husband's absence, Julia Margaret visited the Tennysons' estate there, in Freshwater Bay. This secluded and remote island in the English Channel had provided the perfect environment for the Poet to finish his successful *Idylls of The King*, which he had begun to publish that year. Cameron would instantly fall in love with their idyllic settings and started house hunting for a more permanent and affordable cottage there. In 1860, Cameron moved the family to Freshwater where, as she told in her *Annals*, her photographic journey began:

The pleasantry of our island is very handsome. From men, the women, the maidens and the children I have had lovely subjects, as all the patrons of my photography know.

The location played an essential part in Cameron's new creative beginning and work, which ultimate led to the publication of her *Illustrations*. This has been the main reason why I have opted to depict her island as another character in her book in my analysis, in chapter four, describing there more in detail the surroundings and friendships that flourished in Freshwater. For now, I focus on the events that led and immediately followed Cameron taking photography. These were told amusingly and fantastically by Cameron herself in *Annals*, which begins the moment she was given her first camera by her daughter Juley for Christmas. Of that moment, she says: "I began with no knowledge of the art to take pictures unknowingly of where to place my dark box, how to focus my sitter," converting the "coal-house into my dark room, and a glazed fowl house I had given to my children" into her glassed studio. Charmingly, she describes too the event of producing her first image with her new camera of "sweet, sunny haired little Annie" Philpot, daughter of a friend, entirely by herself. She inscribed her prints with *My First Success*.



Fig. 57 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Annie*, January 1864 (photographed).

There is yet nowadays, more and more evidence that Cameron had been exposed to photography from much earlier on in her life,⁵² and although Cameron's storytelling of her initiation is a very charming narrative, the event is only partly true.

Olsen describes Cameron as a poignant and emotional woman whose life events and anniversaries meant a lot to her, and it is precisely that way that she would have meant the event of her camera gift in her *Annals*, as marking an emotive date and a "shift in identity," which would turn into a life changing existence with the "immersion in the field" as she knew afterwards (134). The above-mentioned new evidence tells that she had initially consulted well-known photographers of her time – of the likes of Rejlander and Reginald Southey – to learn about photographic new techniques and printing processes years before her gift, and admittedly taking a lesson from renowned David Wilkie Wynfield.⁵³

The evidence was as follows. In spring 1863, she received visits from both Rejlander and Southey in her new house in Freshwater, to whom she had commissioned the portraits of her family and the Tennysons. Dodgson, as we know also a photographer, visited Cameron too around the same time and also took pictures of them at Dimbola. It is more than likely that Cameron assisted in all of the shoots as well as in the printing. Today, we have proof of this apprenticeship in the prints she produced from Rejlander's negatives (see fig. 58 and 59) below. She had printed Kate Dore's portrait using the photogram technique of superposition (Lukitsch in Cox and Ford 103) – as in plate VII in Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature*, see fig. 20 in chapter one – of both frame of ferns and glass negative in contact exposed to sunlight.



Fig. 58 Oscar Rejlander and Julia Margaret Cameron (in collaboration), *Kate Dore with Photogram Frame of Ferns*, ca. 1864 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 59 Oscar Rejlander and Julia Margaret Cameron (in collaboration), *The Idylls of the Village*, ca. 1863 (photographed). Right.

Cameron was clearly influenced by Rejlander's and Sotheby's style, unconventional and different from the typical studio portraits fashioned at the time. Theirs were casual and

⁵² Olsen, Wolf, Lukitsch and Weiss all agree.

⁵³ As proves an unpublished letter from Cameron to Herschel, Feb 26, 1864, *The Royal Society*, London (Olsen 145).

featured people in their everyday lives at home, wearing normal clothes, going on their ordinary activities.

Lukitsch says that Cameron's actual photographic journey alone most probably began after that spring, between July and December 1863, when she actually began to re-photograph and reprint other people's work, like Rejlander's and Sotheby's, for her albums (Cox and Ford 101). In the following chapter we will see how, during these early years, Cameron became an avid photography collector and a photo-album assembler for friends and family, demonstrating her solid interest in the subject before having received her box camera. Its gift choice was perfect for someone as keen as her on the new medium. And the timing for it could not have been better, with her sons and daughter moving out into education, family business or marriage; Cameron had begun to feel lonely and depressed lately, missing them all and worrying about money, continuously borrowing from friends. All of these might have compelled her to pick up photography and channeled her creative inner self.

Some scholars, like Weaver, have suggested, with her photography she hoped to earn some money for the family, as she still had young "sons to educate."⁵⁴ Regardless of this hypothetical need or of any other Victorian household constraints, she worked with endless energy from the start, photographing all day at Dimbola. She put her and her housemaid's duties on hold to prepare and develop her negatives accordingly. As some visitor witnessed:

Mrs. Cameron sits up till two o'clock in the morning over her soaking photographs...in the morning mists. Then come eggs and bacon. Then we go to the down top. Then we lunch off eggs and bacon. Then we have tea and look out of the window, then we pay little visits, then we dine on eggs and bacon...⁵⁵

Six months later after her image taking beginnings, in 1864 she signed an agreement with London's leading print gallery and seller, P. & D. Colnaghi and Co., in order to register her photographs in the Fine Arts Registers of the Public Record Office (Weaver 11). By the end of the year she is elected a member of the Photographic Societies of both London and Scotland, exhibiting in the latter her 'Fruits of the Spirit,' a series about the nine Christian virtues recorded in the New Testament by Paul; 'Epistle to the Galatians' (5: 22-3).

⁵⁴ As written in her letter to Henry Cole, April 7, 1868, at the National Art Library archives at the Victorian and Albert Museum (Weiss 181).

⁵⁵ Taken from a contemporary journal, around Easter 1865 (Hinton *Immortal Faces* 30).



Fig. 60 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Fruits of the Spirit* series, 1864 (photographed).
 Top row: *Love, Joy, Peace*. Middle row: *Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness*.
 Bottom row: *Faith, Meekness, Temperance*.

The triangular arrangement used throughout the images seems to have been influenced by Italian Renaissance painting. Upon examination, the series looks monotonous and with a repetitive composition, and seems conceptually too ambitious for Cameron to attempt to represent such spiritual subjects. In January 1865, she donated this series to the British Museum, never to endeavour another photographic series again until her *Illustrations* years later.

During the same year, Cameron focused on religious subjects and the representations of her renowned 'Madonnas' and children 'Cupids,' and did few portraits of friends and relatives and also some narrative work Renaissance style. Her desire was to create 'High Art' in her photography, and as one of the first museums to support photography, the South Kensington Museum began to buy a large amount of prints from her at the time. They thought to be inspirational and good "Studies for painting" teachings of the new photographic tools, and Henry Cole, the museum director, saw that Cameron's work could "hold a proximity to the paintings in galleries" (Weiss 14-9).



Fig. 61 Julia Margaret Cameron, *St. Agnes*, 1864 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 62 Julia Margaret Cameron, *St. Cecilia, after the manner of Raphael*,⁵⁶ 1864-1865 (photographed). Right.



Fig. 63 Julia Margaret Cameron, *A Sibyl after the manner of Michelangelo*,⁵⁷ 1864 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 64 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Henry Taylor*, 1865 (photographed). Right.

⁵⁶ After Raphael's 'Ecstasy of St. Cecilia' (1516-1517) (Weiss 17).
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ecstasy_of_St._Cecilia_\(Raphael\)#/media/File:Cecilia_Raphael.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ecstasy_of_St._Cecilia_(Raphael)#/media/File:Cecilia_Raphael.jpg) Accessed 15 Mar. 2017.

⁵⁷ Inspired by Giovanni Volpato's engraving 'Sibilla Erithrae,' after Michelangelo's fresco in the Sistine Chapel, late 18th-19th century (Weiss 17).
ids.lib.harvard.edu/ids/view/20408026?width=3000&height=3000 Accessed 15 Mar. 2017.



Fig. 65 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Whisper of the Muse*, 1865 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 66 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Circe*, 1865 (photographed). Right.

Being a photographer at Cameron's time meant to use Scott Archer's popular wet collodion process. The viewer and modern photographer might underestimate that this procedure was rather cumbersome, expensive and exceedingly messy and treacherous due to the exposure to many toxic solutions. In her dark room, Cameron first had to prepare the pre-cut glass plate by polishing and coating it carefully with pre-mixed iodized collodion to make it light sensitive. This was tricky and had to be done by balancing the glass in one hand while pouring the liquid with the other, moving it until the entire surface looked evenly coated. The challenge was to keep the coating free from dust specks or fingerprints, otherwise they would appear on the image. Cameron tells about this in her *Annals*: "my first picture I effaced it to my consternation by rubbing my hand over the filmy side of the glass."

The coated glass was then introduced into the box of her camera and given an exposure for as long as ten minutes, and then taken into the dark room to be developed by pouring silver nitrate over it, then washed again to take the excess collodion off, and then sodium thiosulfate (or hypo) to fix the image. A final coat of varnish was applied onto the negative and dried next to a fireplace to get it ready for printing. Cameron would later print onto a pre-coated albumen paper – already commercially available from the early 1860s – by placing the glass plate onto the paper emulsion side down, and exposing it under the sun outside. Then the positive imprint had to be developed and toned with gold chloride for a warmer feel in a choice of sepia, eggplant or black toning; or gold thiocyanate for a blueish and colder feel. Then it was finally fixed.

For the photographer, these seemed like too many steps to undertake under full attention, and although Cameron would print the picture at a later stage, all the preparation, developing and fixing of the glass negatives had to be done before and while taking the image, which also required setting the camera, staging the models, composing the picture, lighting it, focusing it and finally exposing it. A process with plenty of room for mistakes and failures that could destroy either the negative, the image, or the final print. Cameron

embraced every stage of this process, and with it, its outcomes and mistakes. The “slovenliness” in her technique⁵⁸ and careless manipulation made it an easy target for criticism, although Cameron refreshingly began to see the flaws and errors in her images as equally precious, and as part of her style and her making in the dark room and her presence as photographer. Some critics also began to see the imperfections in her images as “special beauties of her workmanship.”⁵⁹



Fig. 67 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Diana*, 1864-6 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 68 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Group*, 1864 (photographed). Right.



Fig. 69 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Turtle Doves*, 1864 (photographed).

⁵⁸ As described by one critic in *The Photographic News*, June 3, 1864, p. 266 (Weiss 31).

⁵⁹ ‘Mrs. Cameron’s Photographs,’ *Pall Mall Gazette*, Jan 29, 1868, p. 394 (Weiss 35).



Fig. 70 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Shunammite Woman and her dead son*, 1865 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 71 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Hosanna*, 1865 (photographed). Right.

Her flaws and mistakes included soft focused images – her most characteristic feature, thus to be referred to in my image analysis –, collodion stains and swirls from poor washing (see fig. 67), torn collodion that printed as black patches (fig. 68), haphazard prints showing rough edging of the glass plate (fig. 71), trimming prints into tondos, curved tops or oval shapes imitating classical painting (fig. 69) or composites of several negatives (fig. 70). Other times, her prints had just fingerprints or smudging, or had been clumsily retouched or intervened by drawing and scratching onto the negative.

It would be too simplistic and naïve to attribute all these flaws to the technical barriers she encountered with the awkward collodion process, or to her lack of technical knowledge, or even being witnessing unfinished prints not ready for the public. Cameron was being confident not to discard or rid of them in her editing. It is true that she did not follow the rules of perfection and the standard high definition of her commercial peers, but aimed for artistic, unconventional and original results. All these techniques achieved an amazing atmospheric and effect and they are living proofs of her presence and her vision as well as of her willingness to experiment in her field.

And precisely for these, she threw off her critics and divided them. She got good reviews on non-photographic press, like the *Pall Mall Gazette*, but gained plenty of criticism from specialists like *The Photographic Journal*, which wrote at the time:

We are sorry to speak in condemnation of a lady's work; but these photographs have been put prominently forward, and we should be doing an injustice to photography to let them pass as examples of good art or perfect photography⁶⁰

The matter of soft focus is a whole different issue in its own. Gernsheim once concluded that Cameron's lack of focus was due to a technical problem in the lenses of her

⁶⁰ *The Photographic Journal*, Aug 15, 1865, p. 26 (Weiss 12).

first camera,⁶¹ assuring that with them she had been unaware of it and unable to focus. This could only have been part of the explanation, and as proof of it, when Cameron changed cameras and lenses in 1866, her images continued to be soft.

Other critics have suggested that she had an eye deficiency that made her incapable of achieving focus, like her son Henry, who was blind of one eye. But this belief fails on the basis that when he later became a professional studio photographer, he was able himself to achieve perfect focus in his images (Olsen 148).

Today more and more scholars agree in the need to read Cameron's out-of-focus technique as part of her own artistic statement. She approved of it and stuck with it, as she explained in her *Annals*:

what my youngest boy, Henry Herschel, who is now himself a very remarkable photographer, told me is quite true – that my first successes in my out-of-focus pictures were a fluke. That is to say, that when focusing and coming to something which, to my eye, was very beautiful, I stopped there instead of screwing on the lens to more definite focus which all other photographers insist upon.

And it was precisely her own son who later set the record straight when describing to a journalist his mother's *modus operandi*:

It is a mistake to suppose that my mother deliberately aimed at producing work slightly out of focus. What was looked for by her was to produce an artistic result, no matter by what means. She always acted according to her instinct; if the image of her sitter looked stronger and more characteristic out of focus, she so reproduced it; but if she found that perfect clearness was desirable, she equally attained it.⁶²

Henry Herschel could not have been more perspicacious; Cameron decided on her focus herself on the spot and image basis. She was being clearly unconventional. She refused to use headrests to minimise movement in her sitters, for instance, which were standard in every commercial studio. She thought that they delivered a rigid and unnatural pose.

She occasionally produced prints by reversing her glass negatives and placing them emulsion side up, in order to soften the mood and feel of the image.⁶³ She undoubtedly followed her own criteria in order to *embellish* in her eyes her work with softer areas.

She also got a share amount of recognition for this creativity. To add to her museum sales and sassy copyrighting in 1865, she began to obtain international praise in exhibitions in Berlin and Dublin. But as her hobby was proving expensive and her family's financial situation was becoming a little more apparent, Cameron decided to immerse herself into her work to generate more print sales.

⁶¹ Photographer Peter Henry Emerson investigated in both Cameron's lenses, and then claimed that her first ones were "useless to the artist," due to their positive chromatic aberrations, making "*impossible* for Mrs. Cameron to get what is technically known as the 'sharpest focus'" (Weaver *Julia Margaret Cameron* 139).

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Wolf compares the different prints Cameron did of her niece Julia Jackson's portrait in 1867. She had produced two negatives of this sitting, and from each she made several variations of prints; some in the original orientation and some in the reversed one ("Julia Margaret Cameron's Women" 75).

As if recognising the importance of focus to improve her work, in 1866 Cameron invested in a new camera that took larger plates – 15 by 12 inch, compared to 11 by 9 inch plates of her first Jamin lens camera covering only 6 inches of the plate in focus which, as a result diffused the rest of the image. This latest camera carried new Dellmeyer Rapid Rectilinear lens that would mark a change in her perspective, composition and work in general. With them, Cameron benefited from a longer focal length of 30 inch (76 cm approx.) – before they were 12 inch, or 30 cm approx. –, which meant she could get more of her subjects in her images while still remaining close to them. The lenses had a wider aperture; f8 – before it had been f6-7 –, allowing more light into the camera and hoping for an improvement in her definition, although this was coming at the cost of a shorter depth of field. This implied that she was shifting towards greater clarity, definition and intensity of her subjects, but also incurring in some soft areas that fell outside the plane of the depth of field. Thus, Cameron’s soft focus did not improve technically as a whole, but her portraits gained in boldness and precision. Here, she commenced with her series of large portraits, better known as “life-size heads”, for their magnitude, power and greatness in conveying their innermost feelings. They were surely unprecedented in photographic portraiture, and Cameron, proud of them, annotated each of her prints with the wording “From Life. Not enlarged” (Wolf “Priced Catalogue” 215). Olsen says she compiled some of them into a special two-volume set that she called *Photographs from the Life* and gave to the Tennysons (186).



Fig. 72 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Charles Darwin*, 1868 (photographed), 1875 (printed). Left.

Fig. 73 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Henry Cole*, 1868 (photographed). Right.



Fig. 74 Julia Margaret Cameron, *John Frederik William Herschel*, 1867. Left.

Fig. 75 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Thomas Carlyle*, 1867 (photographed), 1875 (printed). Right.



Fig. 76 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Aubrey de Vere*, 1868 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 77 Julia Margaret Cameron, *A. H. Layard M.P.*, 1869 (photographed). Right.

These years coincided with Cameron's most productive ones. Between 1864 and 1866, Cameron registered between fifty-eight and 109 photographs for copyright a year.⁶⁴ Her "series of Life-sized heads"⁶⁵ were those of the beautiful women and the great men around her. In this series, she photographed some of the most important and venerated men of her era, as Watts was doing in his *Hall of Fame* in painting. Celebrity culture was born in this century, and Watts had begun to paint in 1850 his *Hall of Fame* with the leading people of his day – today at the National Gallery in London

⁶⁴ Compared to 1869, when they went down to sixteen, and then under thirty in 1875. Unpublished 1996 booklet by R. D. Wood's "Julia Margaret Cameron's Copyrighted Photographs" (Olsen 202).

⁶⁵ As referred to in unpublished letter from Cameron to Herschel, February 18, 1866, Royal society, London, HS 5, 164 (Olsen 184).

Cameron's endeavour for the series of masculine heads was "to do its duty towards them [sitters] recording faithfully the greatness of the inner as well as the features of the outer man," as she had told in *Annals*. She methodically followed a style here too; suspending those "immortal head[s]" in her compositions, isolating them from distracting backdrops or contemporary clothing, covering this in dark clothes, to depict them in a sculptural manner; bust in profile with strong features of masculinity, heavy drapery and folding.

The male intellect was fully admired during Victorian times, and Cameron was no different. Wolf says that her photographing of these great men was "not merely a creative act, but a religious experience" for her. She adds that by taking them, Cameron "aligned herself with their greatness" (39-41), and hoped to make some money from it along the way. They were copyrighted and being printed on demand by P. & D. Colnaghi with their crediting stamp. She fully understood the power of the famous subject and also the major endorsement that including their signature on her prints would mean to her sales. She was also working with the Autotype Company to produce more time-resistant carbon prints from her glass negatives to sell to her clients too (Olsen 182). They were images full of life and undoubtedly her best work to date, but also her "manifesto to the photographic establishment," she adds (204).

Cameron exhibited many of these life-size heads in the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1867, gaining rave reviews and awards. Previously, in November 1866, she had put together her first solo exhibition at Pall Mall, London, renting a room by herself from the Colnaghi's.

During these years, she began her real self-promotion; she sent her work to influential people, experts in the field, museum owners, art critics and any renowned artists in her pursuit of exhibition shows and favourable reviews. She had written to the *Athenaeum's* and *Spectator's* art critic William Michael Rossetti – brother of her acquainted Pre-Raphaelite; "Have you no means of introducing any friendly paragraph into any paper that has good circulation?"⁶⁶ She was a superb Public Relations persona, and understood too well the art of favour asking, opinion consenting and networking. It was unusual and forerunning for a woman of her condition.

On the business aspect, she was not a bad player either. In 1868, she put up another solo exhibition at the German Gallery on Bond Street, London, where she sold out her prints and obtained great reviews at the *London Standard*, the *Morning Post* and the *Art Journal* (Olsen 216).

Wolf, who has studied an annotated price list from this exhibition,⁶⁷ shared some important clues on how Cameron conducted her photographic trading at the time in her essay "Mrs. Cameron's Photographs, Priced Catalogue' A Note on Her Sales and Process." Cameron, an atypical woman seeking money from her art – something not completely unheard of during Victorian times –, showed that she did not see herself as an amateur photographer, but as a professional one. The norm was that upper-class amateurs used the

⁶⁶ Letter to W. M. Rossetti on January 23, 1866. University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, Gernsheim Collection Letters.

⁶⁷ Including three loose pages of a catalogue – possibly from the German Gallery, Jan-Feb 1868 – found pasted in a photography folio currently at the National Museum of Photography, Film & Television in Bradford, England.

medium to express themselves and as a hobby, enjoying more freedom than those on the other side of the spectrum; the commercial professional photographers, who were commissioned for studio portraits, documentary and travel photographic jobs. The reality is that she was neither. Cameron might have started as an amateur photographer, as referred to by art critics at the time, but soon went beyond this term to self-adopt the status of the “professional” art photographer. Her aim was to create unprecedented photographic art at the same time as profiting from it – as any commercial photographers would do – and receiving the recognition from the artists and critics of her time. While she presented herself as an artist photographer who sent her prints to museums and exhibits, she worried about sales, as these represented artistic status and credit, as well as a supplement to her family’s income. Wolf says that she was rather generous with her prints and albums giving too many of them away, but she also valued her prints with reasonable pricing (213). She was also smart about it; her famous large heads were double in price than the rest of her allegorical work, proving that she was responding to her clients’ demand (209).

Cameron owed a lot to her British photographic peers in the subjects of technique, mood, style and finally comradeship. In chapter one of this thesis, I have included some of the work of contemporaries such as Dodgson, whose genre portraits are often compared to Cameron’s, Rejlander and David Wilkie Wynfield for the role they both played in her photography apprenticeship.⁶⁸

We will also see in the specific image analysis how Cameron’s allegoric images in *Illustrations* had a lot to do with pictorialist Peach Robinson’s representational images, in particular with their similar narrative and choice of Tennysonian subject matters.

Cameron’s out-of-focus artistic imagery and unique style made her stand out from all of them, and being praised and compared to the Old Masters by non-specialist press such as the *Reader*, *Illustrated London*, *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Athenaeum*, who advocated setting her apart from the “vulgar” and “professional photography” (Olsen 153-4). Still, she did not receive nearly as much acceptance as Peach Robinson’s, Lady Clementine Hawardern’s and Wynfield’s work, which was obviously better regarded by the photographic journals.

Her own life was inspired and guided too by some fascinating personalities. As Cameron tended to mix personal friendship with business and artistic contacts, she managed to pick up along the way some outstanding and brilliant individuals of her time – mainly male – as friends and acquaintances, whom she worshipped and adored. Olsen says that Cameron forged “friendships with moody, private people by simply ignoring their sensitivities and disarming them with her buoyant good nature” (36), believing “in the aura of [these] geniuses as an almost tangible force that could distinguish [them]” (81).

Amongst her most renowned intellectual *conquests* credited in her *Annals* are; first of all, her husband, whom she enjoyed “listen[ing] to his enthusiastic applause” every time she

⁶⁸ Of Wynfield, Cameron wrote to William Michael Rossetti on January 23, 1866: “to my feeling about his beautiful photography I owed *all* my attempts and indeed consequently all my success” (*In Focus* 16).

produced a picture at home. Then her “chief friend, Sir Henry Taylor,” whom Cameron had first met upon arrival in England, remaining in touch with him for the rest of her life in avid correspondence. Her grandniece Virginia said that “every day she wrote to Henry Taylor, and every day he answered her” (16). Cameron venerated his poetry and photographed him thirty-two times (Cox and Ford 761-90), mostly in character. While neighbours in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, it was through Taylor that Cameron met her other poet friend Alfred Tennyson in 1850, before becoming a Poet Laureate, also an important man in her life as we know.

Then there was her “beloved friend,” Sir John Herschel. A companionship going back to their time at Cape Town, where they had met in 1838, they remained in close touch and correspondence for decades after, sharing their own view on religion, family and life events, between the latest photography technology:

You were my first Teacher and to you I owe all the first experience and insights which were given to me when you sent me in India a score of years ago – the first specimens of Talpotype of photographs coloured by the juices of plants.⁶⁹

Finally, her most artistic friendship with Watts, who remained supportive of her art throughout: “Mr. Watts gave me such encouragement that I felt as if I had wings to fly with,” says Cameron in her *Annals*. He advised her to push herself artistically, be neater in her work, and vary her subjects more, sometimes sending in the post sketches to her for how to pose a certain model in an image. Olsen says that the division existing in Watts’s work between allegorical and successful portraits from his *Hall of Fame* might have influenced Cameron’s own *oeuvre* (174) and different range of portraits and themes.

The reality is that many art historians today split her work too between the sober and straightforward portraits of her famous and genius male subjects and the allegorically idealised representations of *tableaux* of fair women. A trend that began already in Wolf and Fry’s monograph on Cameron in 1926, debated in more depth in the next section of this chapter. Between the two groups of works there is not a real obvious progression, but more a simultaneous and eclectic way of working on both from her part, even when she had begun to shoot her *Illustrations*.

Throughout 1873, Cameron continued to exhibit in London and Vienna and rented the Colnaghi’s gallery once more to organise another solo exhibition. This year would be especially hard for her, with her daughter dying in childbirth in October. For her mourning, she gained the company of her sister Sara Prinsep, whose family and friend Watts moved to Freshwater, as their lease in Little Holland House had ended along with their artistic salon. The Camerons’ move to Ceylon started to become foreseeable, due to their serious financial situation in Britain and their sons being demanded there to run their coffee business. In her last attempt to make money from her photography, she began to work on her illustrations for Tennyson’s successful – although yet uncompleted – *Idylls of a King*. It is believed that

⁶⁹ JMC in correspondence to Herschel, December 31, 1864 (Wolf “JMC’s Women” 27).

Tennyson might have been the instigator of this photographic project, as a last attempt to provide help for his friend without having to sit for yet another portrait, and thus keeping the Camerons in Wight. In August 1874, he commissioned the job to her dear friend, knowing that, aside from this good gesture, she would bring an illustrative unprecedented work. I believe he knew all too well of her passionate and individual artistic flair, and trusted it fully. Cameron proudly recorded this moment in her correspondence:

About three months ago Alfred Tennyson walked into my room saying, "Will you think it a trouble to illuminate my 'Idylls' for me?" I answered laughing "Now you know Alfred that I know that it is immortality to me to be bound up with you that altho' I bully you I have a corner of worship for you in my heart" – and so I consented.⁷⁰

This recollection shows the sweet and affable terms of their friendship, on which I will elaborate a bit later on in chapter four of this thesis when I begin to read *Illustrations*. As she often did in her correspondence and handwritten text in *Illustrations*, she had underlined and emphasised key words. In this case, the figures of *the Poet* and Her, *the photographer*, as if to highlight *their* collaboration, and finally *her* consent. She was the one ultimately agreeing to it, and she must have realised the importance of such a project. It was important for her to get this initial accreditation.

Cameron worked solidly on this assignment from that moment onwards until the family's departure to Ceylon. Upon completion, *Illustrations* would have been her second series of photographs but the only one being commissioned. Also, her last and yet largest project that she would ever have work on. Its publication was an absolute commercial failure and did not really solve the family's financial stress. Thus, on October 21, 1875 Julia Margaret Cameron, then sixty, embarked with her husband of eighty onto the steamer *Pekin* at Southampton (Thackeray 30-31). Their trip would take them back to Ceylon via the relatively newly open Suez Canal, ensuring their journey would be shortened for about two weeks, an advantage considering their old age (Olsen 244).

Their departure did not come as a surprise to their friends and family. Cameron's husband had expressed his wish of dying in India, and although for Cameron her photography was vital, she could not keep up with its expenditure and little profit making, which added to the family's expensive lifestyle and entertaining in England, had descended into real financial strain. On top of that, her four remaining sons had already settled in Ceylon years before and were managing the family's state, now partly turned into cinchona, the plant that produced quinine to cure malaria. Her place and her husband's was near them.

The Ceylon period corresponds to Cameron's final years of life, away from and missing England, mentally drained and lacking in photographic resources – her source of lighting was too bright sunlight, and in the subtropical heat, she struggled with technical difficulties.⁷¹ During this time, she photographed little, mostly native sitters and female

⁷⁰ Unpublished letter with original underlining from Cameron to Sir Edward Ryan, November 29, 1874, Gilman Paper Company archive (Mancoff "Legend" 87)

⁷¹ As stated in *Julia Margaret Cameron: Influence and Intimacy*, Science Museum, London, 2015.

housemaids, as she has done in England. She left her images untitled and depicted her subjects differently. Art historians, like Warnapala Channa believe that they had been portrayed and composed within the colonial stereotype framing (2), placing them at a greater distance from her viewpoint, and without the sense of fear of separation that her English portraits had (Olsen 252). The general agreement is to call this photographic period as “quite unimportant” (Gernsheim *Her Life* 83) or “less representative” (Hopkinson 34).

Before she left Cameron entrusted her negatives to the Autotype Company, who produced on demand and sold carbon prints of her images, longer lasting prints than the usual albumen ones. She kept her commercial agreements with Colnaghi's and visited her relatives in England for a short period in 1878. During these years, she began to reflect upon her own and remarkable photographic journey, and commemorated it in her *Annals*, which unfortunately remained unfinished at the time of her death in Kalutara on January 26, 1879, just a year earlier than her beloved husband. Legend has it that she uttered ‘beautiful’ in her last breath, while looking at the Indian sunset.

3.2 LITERATURE AND FEMININITY IN HER ‘FANCY SUBJECTS’

You are standing on a hill the height of which is perceived by the greatness of the men who surround you as friends, to say nothing of the women!! They seem to me to be the salt of the Earth – the men great thro’ genius the women thro’ Love – that which women are born for!⁷²

Julia Margaret Cameron, 1877

During her photographic journey, Cameron had a soft spot for literature and narrative themes being represented in her allegorical imagery, regularly including in it female and feminine subjects. *Illustrations* being a clear example of it.

In this section, I will delve into Cameron’s style and into the technique used in her typology⁷³ and genre (Vallone 193) photography, as an essential first step to read *Illustrations* later on. For this, her goals when portraying women and literature need to be reviewed.

As previously discussed, Cameron’s *oeuvre* was gathered around two big groups of works, a division initiated in the nineteenth century by Wolf and Fry, when they divided her portraiture into two categories; those of “Famous Men” and those of “Fair Women,” with daunting effects of separation in Art History, according to Olsen (202).

Recent feminist studies have questioned this gendered division in her portraiture,⁷⁴ suggesting a clear an inequitable detachment between Cameron’s masculine masterpieces of straightforward portraits that represented intellect, and her female representations of women, all maudlin-like and over-romantic, and at times too staged. In the latter category, her sitters

⁷² In correspondence to Henry Taylor, 1877 (Wolf “JMC’s Women” 23).

⁷³ MacKay uses the term “typological feminist” from Weaver (*Whisper of the Muse* 30) with a pinch of salt, describing Cameron as “an individual woman, grounded in the physical and spiritual experience of her time, whose love comingled with genius to project beyond her constrained present to a latent holism that constitutes her unique vision” (36).

⁷⁴ Lindsay Smith’s papers on ‘The Politics of Focus’ (Olsen 272).

are mostly young beautiful women from her family and circle of friends, non-famous or extraordinary in their achievements, and are often represented with cupid-like children in the role of motherhood. This type of portraiture, described by Cameron herself as of her “Fancy Subjects,”⁷⁵ or “Fancy Subjects for Pictorial Effect,”⁷⁶ dealt with religious, literary, and mythological, being represented by Cameron’s heroines, her Madonnas and some of the photographs she had already taken during the 1860s for Tennyson’s *Idylls*, says Wolf (“Priced Catalogue” 208). Thus, in there and in her difficult and scribbly handwriting, we can read initial studies for some of her *Illustrations* subjects such as *King Cophetua*, *May Day*, *The Passion Flower at the Gate* and *Maud by Moonlight*, an earlier version of *The Gardener’s Daughter*. Even final versions that were later used in the actual volumes of *Illustrations*. Such is the case of *Maud* and *Lily Maid of Astolat*.

By conveniently positioning my study here within this gendered division of ‘Fancy Subjects,’ my next analysis of *Illustrations* would benefit from studying and analysing Cameron’s style, tools and techniques used to story tell and represent the lives and events of all these women outside *Illustrations*. In the first place, we have to reach an understanding of Cameron’s pursuit of female beauty with a view to finding support to some of the theories that come up when I read *Illustrations* in the next chapter.

In her *Annals*, she had written: “I longed to arrest all beauty that came before me, and at length the longing has been satisfied.” Here, she was explaining the single motive of her photography; *beauty*, and what will come to rule her aesthetics strategy, especially to and in this particular category of women’s photography.

I will begin by discussing her earliest period of the ‘Madonnas’, where Cameron represented beauty by focusing in the religious aspects of the iconography of motherhood and family. In her eyes, *motherhood* was the primacy of beauty. Her early depictions of the *Fruits of the Spirit* series, *Hosanna* or *The Shunammite Woman and her dead son* are thought to resemble the iconography of the *Pietà*.

⁷⁵ See her grouping in Wolf’s “Mrs. Cameron’s Photographs, Priced Catalogue,” pp. 210-1.

⁷⁶ See also her List of Contents in the Overstone Album, August, 5 1865. J. Paul Getty Museum, L.A. (Cox and Ford 2).



Fig. 78 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Head of Madonna*, 1865 (photographed).

In this image, sometimes compared to Guido Reni's style of his Madonnas in adoration (Howard 33), Cameron's model is Mary Hillier, who represents here the Virgin Mary gazing down outside the frame sadly and in deep thought, as if admiring her son, whom the reader imagines lies lifeless on her lap.

Art historians situate her Madonnas work within two contexts. One is the Victorian vision and the role of motherhood in it. During this time, most families had lived through the death of one of their infants, as high mortality for children was very common. This coincided with Cameron's fear of separation and loneliness at the time, as her children were leaving home one by one. This interpretation is central to an understanding of her intimate rendering of nostalgic thoughts, grief and sense of the lost childhood years. Her Madonnas convey the idea that they are supportive and caring mothers and are consequently represented as saints. Children, on their part, were impersonated as angels.

The other context is, of course, its religious context. Cameron's Madonnas reflect her own interpretation and devotion for the Anglo-Catholic Christianity. Her female subjects are a mixture of the divine and the human, in agreement with the "dichotomy" existing in the Church of England (MacKay 26). Hillier represents both a holy mother and a nurturing woman. Her "pure and perfect"⁷⁷ features are those of a feminine Virgin, both celestial and earthly.

⁷⁷ Hillier gets a special mention in Cameron's *Annals*, describing her as "one of the most beautiful and constant of my models, and in every manner of form has her face been reproduced, yet never has it been felt that the grace of the fashion of it has perished." She does a rendition of her "pure and perfect in outline as were my Madonna Studies ten years ago, with ten times added pathos in the expression."



Fig. 79 William Holman Hunt, *Isabella and the Pot of Basil*, 1868. Left.

Fig. 80 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Pre-Raphaelite Study*, 1870. Right.



Fig. 81 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Decidedly Pre-Raphaelite*, 1864-1865.

Cameron gave importance to detail and poise in her images, and the following test studies (see below fig. 82 and fig. 83) of *Isabella and the Pot of Basil*, which recreated the tragic story of Isabella, heroine of John Keats's poem prove so. She did at least five studies (Cox and Ford 249-51). In fig. 80, however, Cameron feels to have achieved not only perfect contrast and exposure, but the exact pose in Hunt's painting; resting head, exposed neck, hanging hand and propped up leg, with her greatest improvement of the model's gaze directly looking into the camera, thus fully engaging with the viewer. Her other improvement is the model's hand been propped on her waist to empower the image and give the perfect balance to it. In this stunning composition, Cameron has managed to isolate her sitter from the rest of the story. There is no sign of Lorenzo – her lover, whose head is inside the pot – or any detail in the background. Light and detail have also been conceived in a Pre-Raphaelite manner. Cameron has not left any part out of focus either.



Fig. 82 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Pre-Raphaelite Study*, 1870. Left.

Fig. 83 Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Pre-Raphaelite Study*, 1870. Right.

Since this section of the thesis is devoted to Cameron's 'Fancy Subjects', we also need to take into account the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites on her art. They mainly shared an understanding of femininity and the aesthetics and manner to portray it. To their aim of recording *beauty*, Cameron added another objective: the pursuit of *truth*.

These two examples – the first one being a well-known comparative (Howard 107) – prove that Cameron admired and regarded the Brotherhood's style as suitable to her artistic vision. The Pre-Raphaelites were known for painting beautiful women in desolation, melancholy and despair with a flair for flowing hair and big drapery. Cameron knew of their work well, also their visual strategies and subject matters from her Little Holland House years and correspondence with some of them.

Some art historians and curators like Jan Marsh and Diane Waggoner have included Cameron within this art movement, because of their sharing of visual vocabulary and effort to represent truth with a precise eye for detail and light as the main feature.

The P.R.B. were also strong advocates of photography, and especially women in art, with some female artists impulsing the Brotherhood's second wave, like Rebecca Solomon, Evelyn DeMorgan, May Morris and Lucy Madox Brown. They joined the group once that the P.R.B. had officially dissolved in 1853.

There are a few more examples that show the fascinating artistic association between Cameron and the Pre-Raphaelites, specifically in connection to the *Illustrations* subjects. These examples will be discussed in chapter four. They all prove that Cameron relished focusing on the female figure, her sensuality and mysticism. Like the Pre-Raphaelites, who had history of mixing love, friendship and musing, Cameron used sitters around her; female friends and relatives, and she depicted them with "certain ingenuousness of feeling that conveys the artist's understanding of the sitter's character" (Marsh 10).

The way the Pre-Raphaelites and Cameron saw their works of art interacting with literature was also akin. According to Joanne Lukitsch, D. G. Rossetti made “double works of art”, where “poetry shaped the viewing of painting and painting affected the reading of poems.” And Cameron’s “creative uses of contemporary literary sources asserted her unique vision of a text’s relationship to the photographic image” (“Like a Lionardo” 134-54). If Rossetti incorporated text from poems and writings into many of his paintings by writing it on their frame or actual canvas, Cameron literalised and textualised her interpretations by captioning and titling these with verses from her favourite authors, the bible or classical writings, often inscribing them on her mounts too.

At the same time, there is the obvious style difference between Cameron and the Pre-Raphaelites. Their neat and honest definition of art – ironically almost photographic – vs her preference for allowing part of her subjects being out of focus, giving room to the viewer’s imagination. Olsen explains it perfectly by saying that:

Cameron, Watts and the Pre-Raphaelites might have started out in a similar place, in Little Holland House, but they pursued different paths afterwards as the P.R.B. turned more towards the aestheticism that would inspire other critics and artists to insist on ‘art for art’s sake. (107)

Cameron was not able to separate art from its main function of honouring ideals, morality and narrative in her works, as the original slogan “art for art’s sake” defended. When stripped from its moral subjectivity, Cameron thought her art would cease “to be art at all,” adds Olsen (*Ibid.*).

Cameron’s artistic endeavour was to create high art, like those of her admired Old Masters, in a constant effort to give meaning and sense to her portraiture, especially to her women’s one. Reason that she continued to put her trust on her unique style and way to portray femininity. In order to elevate her art to the most meaningful, she gave herself a greater creative scope and freedom in her female portraits, devoting much of her technique and aesthetics to this gendered issue. She wished to portray “Love” in her women, as she stated, and with it the different moods and emotions that came with love. Her women would gaze directly at the camera, or melancholically and thoughtfully away from it, longing at their loved one. A range of behaviours, dispositions and personas left to feel, which shows the changing role of women in Victorian Britain. The ideals of beauty and femininity were changing too.

Victorianism is, therefore, a strong concept in Cameron’s women portraiture, being either in conformity with it, or in opposition to it, as in the issue of arranged marriages, for example. During the Victorian era society is starting to suppress this trend and to rethink marriage in terms of love. Many of Cameron’s unhappy subjects reflect this issue, suffering from true passionate love not accepted by her family and status. We will see this in her interpretations of Guinevere and Maud in *Illustrations*, and one of Cameron’s portraits of Ophelia, a favourite subject of the Pre-Raphaelites too.



Fig. 84 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Angel at the Tomb*, 1870 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 85 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Ophelia*, 1875. Right.



Fig. 86 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Beatrice*, 1866 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 87 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Mountain Nymph Sweet Liberty*, 1866 (photographed). Right.



Fig. 88 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Angel in the House*, 1873. Left.

Fig. 89 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Dream*, 1869 (photographed). Right.

Fig. 85 is Cameron's particular rendition of Shakespeare's Ophelia.⁷⁸ a disturbed and desperate woman in a shifting and ominous pose, this strategically directing the viewer to the subject's hair, a sign of femininity in many of Cameron's women portraits.

In her book *Creative Negativity: Four Victorian Exemplars of the Female Quest*, Carol H. Mackay has written about Cameron's visual meditation on women's hair, theorising that her subjects are usually portrayed with loose and tussled hair to suggest femininity and sensuality (31). We also need to look at this aesthetic strategy within the Victorian context, where loose hair was seen as too sexual, and as a symbol of "womanhood while worshipping it" (*Ibid.*). A proper Victorian lady would never pose with her hair down and loose, as Gitter cites, she would only "let their hair down in private and in their bedchambers" (936-54 *passim*, qtd. in Wolf "JMC's Women" 35). Cameron is giving herself the same artistic freedom as the painters, like the Pre-Raphaelites, who represented their female characters in such a guise, to convey sensuality and femininity.

In *The Angel of the Tomb* (fig 84), for instance, Hillier, characterised as a female angel assisting to Christ's resurrection, is depicted with wild and disarranged hair that blends with both background and clothing. This external feature of the model becomes prominent in the image and it gorgeously catches the string of light in the image and sketching Hillier's profile in lamenting expression and gazing down.

Cameron likes to present her subjects pensive and thoughtful, and doing so, she summons the viewer to muse on their "imaginary internal discourse" (McKay 26). One of the key elements for this introspective state of deliberation of the character is the feature of the eyes, which premeditatedly "constitute a key element in the iconography of meditation," adds Mackay (22). Eyes play an essential role in Cameron's imagery and composition, with her subjects often gazing sideways or into the distance with head in profile, appearing vacant in

⁷⁸ Cameron might have photographed two more Ophelias previously with model Mary Pinnock (Wolf 51).

their thoughts and taking the viewer outside the frame. In this customary posing, sensual long necks and hairs are displayed, as it becomes apparent in fig. 90 below.

In *The Dream* (fig. 89), Cameron represents Milton's poem 'On his Deceased Wife,' with Hillier as the beloved spouse appearing in a dream gazing down with half close and lid-hooded eyes, made to reflect a state of inner thought, as eyes are "windows to the soul" (McKay 26).



Fig. 90 Julia Margaret Cameron, image of Mary Hillier.

Sometimes though, female sitters stare directly into the camera, making a total impact on the viewer and connecting with them. This is the case of Cameron's female life size heads *Beatrice* and *The Mountain Nymph Sweet Liberty* (fig. 86 and fig. 87), the latter based on Milton's poem 'L'Allegro,' real paradigms of Cameron's studies of the female features and form. With these, she fully compromises her sitters by achieving emotionally penetrating portraits through their bodily features, thus allowing the viewer a freer interpretation of their attitudes.

As previously discussed earlier on in this thesis, Cameron represented the popular story of Beatrice Cenci during her time. She must have felt captivated by the tale of this heroine who lived in sixteenth-century Rome, a woman who was abused by her father and plotted his killing, only in the end to be caught and hanged. She produced at least five interpretations of this character,⁷⁹ this particular one reminiscent of Guido Reni's one⁸⁰ to the well-travelled and intellectual Victorian.⁸¹ The intimacy and closeness in her composition, tight cropping and thoughtful direct gaze suggest the character's final fate to the viewer.

⁷⁹ Three studies with May Prinsep and two with ten-year-old Katie Keown, the latter depicted as the young maid (Wolf "JMC's Women" 59).

⁸⁰ upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/48/Cenci.jpg Accessed 9 Mar. 2017.

⁸¹ They would know about Reni's reproduction courtesy of the Arundel Society, or about the original on show at the Palazzo Barberini in Rome. Anne Thackeray had seen it in Rome and would have described it to Cameron (*Ibid.*).

Indeed, Cameron had a predilection for portraying heroines and victims, popular subjects at the time in fine art, as Victorians saw beauty in grief. For her *The Angel in the House* (fig. 88), Cameron took inspiration from Coventry Patmore's poem with the same title dedicated to his first wife and the celebration of marriage, popularly becoming a symbol of the ideal of femininity then. At the time of Cameron's portrait, Patmore's wife had already passed away and this portrait conveyed the longing and grieving of her poet friend, feelings that become apparent in her melancholic gaze.

In September 1875, when she finished the production of *Illustrations*, a month before leaving England, Cameron wrote 'On a Portrait,' which was published a year later. To the reader, this poem feels like a true reflection on her vision and mannerism to portrait the beauty of her women's melancholy and absorption, present in so many of their faces.

Oh, mystery of Beauty! who can tell
Thy mighty influence? who can best decry
How secret, swift, and subtle is the spell
Wherein the music of thy voice doth lie?

Here we have eyes so full of fervent love,
That but for lids behind which sorrow's touch
Doth press and linger, one could almost prove
That Earth had loved her favourite over much.

A mouth where silence seems to gather strength
From lips so gently closed, that almost say,
Ask not my story, lest you hear at length
Of sorrows where sweet hope has lost its way.

And yet the head is borne so proudly high,
The soft round cheek, so splendid in its bloom,
True courage rises thro' the brilliant eye,
And great resolve comes flashing thro' the gloom.

Oh, noble painter! more than genius goes
To search the key-note of those melodies,
To find the depths of all those tragic woes,
Tune thy song right and paint rare harmonies.

Genius and love have each fulfilled their part,
And both unite with force and equal grace,
Whilst all that we love best in classic art
Is stamped forever on the immortal face.

(*Macmillan's Magazine*, February 1876)⁸²

In this poem, Cameron enumerates the key features serving to arrest beauty in her art. With it she defines the aesthetics in her female portraits, where one can see splendour and loveliness of love, sorrow, gloom and other "tragic woes." Her aim is to create moral and High Art, stamping forever in Art.

⁸² Cox and Ford 35.

With her out of focus, Cameron's most controversial and characteristic technique, Cameron's scholar Lindsay Smith claims that she "elevated the importance of focus in photography for ideological purposes" in her analysis in "The Politics of Focus"⁸³ (Vallone 200). It is generally agreed now that her style responded to a need to intensify the viewer's imagination, a technique acutely unsettling in Cameron's time, when photography was considered to be "the art of definition."⁸⁴ Although a review from Patmore already described her work as being between realism and idealism, in the latter lying specifically the very essence of all art.⁸⁵

From a modern perspective, after there have been so many definitions of what realism is, perhaps we can conclude that Cameron's tendency to idealise was the result of her artistic aspiration, as she pursued a kind of truth that lied beyond literary depiction of physical reality. She wished to endow her images with the powers of the spirit, representing reality as the *have-been-there* – as Roland Barthes meant it in his *Camera Lucida* –; *there* being an imaginary reality, and as artistically powerful as the authentic one.

Both Smith and Vallone have compared Cameron's subjects with Dodgson's, concluding that his little girls, rendered in perfect focus, looked tightly controlled in his compositions (Vallone 202), as he had done in his portrait of Beatrice (fig. 86). This a pristine depiction heavily focused on her little body. If we compare it with Cameron's Beatrice, we find that her rendering becomes pure emotion and ideal thanks to her soft focus and her subject's gazing.

This is also felt in Peach Robinson's renditions of Mariana or Elaine, as we will discuss in the next chapter. His characters are also too contained and inanimate when compared to Cameron's as Robinson does not make room for idealisation to the viewer.

Cameron's female portraits are, therefore, more suggestive and "proto-feminist" than those of her contemporaries, as MacKay claims (24), because she allows her viewer to zoom in and out of the subjects' features, assets, virtues and failures, making him or her engage with her women and feel them close. By making her viewers participant of their experiences and aspirations, Cameron is allowing them to form their own opinion on issues like abuse, rejection, grief, motherhood and adultery. This strategy will be discussed specifically to some of the images in *Illustrations*, and consists mainly in leaving up to the viewer what they consider moral or immoral.

To conclude on this topic, Olsen is right to suggest that Cameron's imaginative feel is due to her *soft focus*, not to her *out of focus* (4). This is obviously her own artistic choice, when stopping screwing her lenses and seeing a beautiful picture, or one that represents the

⁸³ Title of two of her articles and book relating to Feminism and Photography Theory.

⁸⁴ "Photography is pre-eminently the art of definition, and when an art departs from its function, it is lost" (Peach Robinson 145, qtd. MacKay 22).

⁸⁵ "An amateur photographer, Mrs. Cameron, was the first person who had the wit to see that her mistakes were her successes, and henceforward to make her portraits systematically out of focus" *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. 3, 1866, pp. 230-1.

beauty she is after in her subject that time. Therefore, to say that Cameron's wonderful effects in her imagery derive from her neglect would be to obliterate her technical expertise and, most importantly, her marked aesthetic vision of the female body.

Her source of lighting is equally at her disposition too when capturing beautiful and idealistic imagery. Cameron knew how to make the limited source of lighting in her glass house and camera equipment work to her own advantage by placing her female subjects at the centre and highlight certain aspects of their beauty or personality. She could foresee beauty in the motion and the blurriness of their gestures as they provided lifelikeness and nothing else. She understood that her "mistakes were her successes," and this is why images like *The Mountain Nymph Sweet Liberty* (fig. 87) are here with us today: to be admired.

In others, we see that Cameron has recreated in full and with abundance of detail the sitter's clothing, with cascades of folding and drapery filling up the photographic frame. This is not just heritage from the Pre-Raphaelites, but her own intention to shake and arrest the observer, in the same manner that the strapped pumps do to Barthes's looking of the image in fig. 5. The clothing in her images is ageless as if trying to immortalise her subjects by erasing the Victorian period from her images. We have already seen her doing this with the hair, engaging in a kind of aesthetic that seeks to preserve the female beauty, merging the beautiful feminine body with the blank background with a view to giving these figures a more 2D texture and paint-like impression.

To this effect, Groth says that Cameron's images are "self-consciously poetic in their slowing down of time and fascination with duration" (151). As they seldom represent her own time and prefer to deal with the past, this is a natural thing to do with their aesthetics.

Elizabeth Heyert says Cameron was very Victorian in her understanding of photography amateurism, and this also affected her aesthetics and image composition:

Victorian portrait photography travelled a fine line between fact and fiction. Many amateur portraits were genre photographs, dependent on a strong fictional story line usually with a moral, and executed in a formal, composed, and painterly manner. In these pictures, the photographer was evidently the organi[s]er, and the image resulted from the mechanical execution of a literal idea. (141-2 *passim*, qtd. in Vallone 183)

And while doing this, Cameron was not purely documenting, but remained subjective at all times; she controlled everything that went on in front of and behind her camera. Her women photography, as we have seen, could be very narrative and allegoric as it repeatedly referred to literary and biblical works. Much of the moral messaging during this time in British art was done through myths, legend and literature rather than through religion.



Fig. 91 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Friar Laurence and Juliet*, 1865 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 92 Julia Margaret Cameron, *King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther in Apocrypha*, 1865 (photographed). Right



Fig. 93 Julia Margaret Cameron, *King Lear allotting his kingdom to his three daughters*, 1872. Left.

Fig. 94 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Gretchen at the Altar. See Faust*, 1870-74 (photographed). Right.

All literary images above show great sensibility and aphorism in them. They tell stories of tragic madness and wrong choices where fate is being heaped on to their characters. In *Friar Laurence and Juliet* (fig. 91) and *Gretchen* (fig. 94) the heroines are fated to die, and this event will permeate the photograph through their sitters' measured and meditative gazes.

The other two images show what a King's erroneous choice can bring to his own kingdom due to madness. As in *King Lear and allotting his kingdom to his three daughters* (fig. 93) or to an entire nation, as in *King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther in Apocrypha* (fig. 92). Sinful suicide, genocide, false and fabricated praising and unethical seduction are the moral lessons in each of these stories.

Like Wynfield, Peach Robinson and Rejlander, Cameron lived in a time when photography served recreational purposes to artists like them, “where the game consisted in giving life-likeness and photographic authenticity to obvious non-entities and thus playing on the borders between real and the virtual” (Brunet, 104), and “the aesthetic criteria of the day, photography could only be considered an art if it could represent abstractions and ideas as well as physical reality” (174). Cameron’s photography was living proof of the paradox of realism in photography, an argument that I attempted in my introduction. In much of her work, but mainly in *Illustrations*, she played in the borders of Barthes’s “real unreality.” Her aesthetics said High Art and *illusionism*, whereas her characters said *realism*.

As a whole, Cameron’s *oeuvre* proves to be a feminine photographic essay of beauty and strength applied to an immense variety of roles performed by women. What started as a gendered division in her selection of portraiture has nowadays cast significant and critical implications on feminine studies. MacKay says that if in first instance Cameron’s formal and straightforward depictions of famous men formed the basis of her portraiture – mainly in her attempt for commercial success and glory –, what “consume[d] her cannon” (33) towards the end was her informal and personal typological – and allegorical, I add – photography of her women. And this leads us to her last project and main subject of this thesis; her *Illustrations of Tennyson’s Idylls of a King and Other Poems*, a complete feminine reading in itself of King Arthur’s story. In it, Cameron manages to include opposed visions of women portrayed in her unique manner and aesthetics.

READING ILLUSTRATIONS

Her [Cameron's] shifting of the gender terms as part of that discerning (mis)reading and seeing of the poem as a woman bringing out the gender instabilities that were already there in its surface.⁸⁶

Carol Armstrong, 1977

This chapter will complete a comprehensive interdisciplinary study of *Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of a King* in the framework of the analysis and objectives discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Firstly, it will start by looking at this publication's most proximate context; the time, the people involved in it and the place where it was originated and produced. Then it will examine Cameron's special working method and her journey of its making and publication. After having all of this information in mind, the reader of this thesis will have acquired a better understanding of the format of Cameron's photobook and her choice of presentation to deliver her unique photographic interpretations.

The analysis will begin by the *seeing* of *Illustrations* as a publication in itself, to then move to the *reading* of all images individually, found in relation to and produced for any of the three editions of *Illustrations*. Cameron's photographic techniques and shrewd selection of excerpts from Tennyson will be a key part of my discussion here. The individual analysis has, in point of fact, been organised by *Illustrations'* female characters, following the order the photographer chose to present them to the reader. Cameron's ultimate vision in *Illustrations* was to mesmerise him by means of an assortment of female visual renderings representing a powerful story parallel to Tennyson's poems.

4.1 IDYLLIC SCENERY

The elms make a golden girdle around us now. The dark purple hills of England behind are a glorious picture in the morning when the sun shines on them and the elm trees...there is something so wholesome in beauty, and it is not for me to try to tell of all we have here in those delicate tints of a distant bay and the still more distant headlands. These I see every day with my own eyes.⁸⁷

Julia Margaret Cameron, 1865

Cameron and her family left London in 1860 to permanently move to the Isle of Wight in search of English countryside living. Previous to that, during one of her many short visits to the Tennysons, who lived already in the island, Cameron purchased the lease of two nearby adjacent cottages overseeing Freshwater Bay, in western Wight. In no time, these were converted and made into one great cottage in order to accommodate her large family and a

⁸⁶ *Scenes in a Library* 490.

⁸⁷ Written in her correspondence (Hinton *Immortal Faces* 2).

vast horde of regular visitors from the Big Smoke. The cottage was named *Dimbola Lodge*, after the family's plantations in Ceylon, and would provide Cameron with the perfect location for her newly acquired hobby, a creative spur and blissful scenery, as she recorded in her correspondence above. During these years, she would strengthen her friendship with Tennyson, lasting a lifetime.



Fig. 95 Unknown photographer, *Dimbola*, 1871.

Dimbola served Cameron both as a home and as a studio. She lived and photographed there for 15 years, taking portraits of her family, visiting friends, island locals and of course, her domestic servants who doubled as both photography assistants and muses. As mentioned, legend tells that *Illustrations* originated one quiet afternoon at the end of August 1874 in this house, out of a conversation between the Poet and Cameron.

In the months that followed, Cameron photographed in the 100-metre radius of Dimbola all the scenes for *Illustrations*, embodying the lighting, the people and the artistic juices flowing in the house. In recent years, it has recently become more than apparent when documenting *Illustrations'* context that both Dimbola and Freshwater played key parts in its production. The places are palpable within its pages, and this is a good enough reason to *characterise* it in this thesis with some of its most representative facts, testimonials and descriptions of interest found during my research. Both *Idylls* and *Illustrations* were being written and photographed in Freshwater during those exciting years.

Thus, I begin by providing some of the information on the island. The Isle of Wight is a small island in the English Channel, located in the Solent strait about six kilometres off the coast of Hampshire, southwest of mainland Britain. It is currently the largest and second most populated island of England, with approximately 140,000 inhabitants,⁸⁸ who these days

⁸⁸ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isle_of_Wight Accessed 4 Jan. 2017.

continue to live mainly on tourism besides the island's strong agricultural heritage of sheep and dairy farming.

Its history is very rich in facts too, as the island has suffered numerous invasions and occupations, from Celts, Romans, Vikings and finally Normans. Its fortified ports kept battles ashore, like the one against the Spanish Armada, also stationing troops during the Second World War, when the island was heavily bombed. Due to its geography and strategic positioning, shipwreck sighting along its coast was common during Cameron's time, and many military families lived there at the time and became acquaintances of her.

During the reign of Queen Victoria, she and Prince Albert built their family summer residence, the Osborne House, in the coastal village of East Cowes in Eastern Wight. Years later, as a widow, the Queen retired to mourn the death of Albert in total seclusion. Tennyson was both received in Osborne and impromptu-visited by both the prince and the Queen on several occasions while living there.

This royal residency put, without a doubt Wight on the map, contributing to the island's development in the 1860s and making it *the* place to holiday for the rich and celebrity-type Victorians. The Poet had chosen to live in Freshwater years before in order to escape from his recently-acquired fame as Poet Laureate, and finish his series of famous *Idylls*. So, it was in Freshwater where the story of *Illustrations* began too.

Before that, Freshwater had been a traditional soft spot for visiting landscape painters, such as William Turner and John Martin. It is no wonder, as this area of the island is especially delightful; feeling remote and surrounded by dairy farms with thatched-roof cottages, thick foliage and stunning bays with chalky cliffs. To get here, one has currently to take the ferry on the mainland, at Lymington, direction Yarmouth, and then easily reach Freshwater by car. In Cameron's time, this journey was far more awkward, as travellers from London arrived by train in Brockenhurst, and then had to take a horse carriage to Lymington to then board the rather infrequent steamboat. If they missed the boat, they had to cross the Solent in a rowing boat, to either walk to Freshwater or take a two-horse carriage afterwards (Hinton *Immortal* 10).

The Dimbola lodge stands, nowadays, in Terrace Lane, five-minute walk from Freshwater Bay, and houses the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust and Museum. When its visitors walk up Gate Lane, they can read on their guides about the 'Freshwater Mile', and find there the Holly Tree Cottage, the Hazlehurst, the Myrtle Cottage, the Monksfield and the rest of guesthouses where Cameron's and Tennyson's artistic and well-known friends were put up for their stay in the Bay. Some have not changed much architecturally since, others, like the Plumley's Hotel, have been repurposed, and others, like The Porch or The Briary, where Watts lived, have been demolished.

Walking further up the Gate lane for 5 minutes, passing by St. Agnes Church with its characteristic thatched roof, the visitors finally arrive at the magnificent Farringford House,

Tennyson's estate for 39 years. Half-claimed by the creeping ivy and undergoing some refurbishment work, these days the house stands on a hill in its vast garden, welcoming the visitor in true English Gothic Revival style, with massive double doors, elaborate windows, turrets, and a garland of battlements adorning the top. After some house-hunting in the island the building was Emily Tennyson's love at first sight, who convinced her husband to buy it outright in 1856. *Maud* had just sold extremely well, and "by the end of the decade the first four books of the *Idylls of the King* were generating large royalties" (Olsen 117). Hester Thackeray Fuller, the grand-daughter of the famous writer William Makepeace Thackeray wrote of this:

They came to Farringford and found there all the loveliness and beauty they had been looking for ever since they first married. The glorious view of Afton Down from the drawing-room window, and the lovely views of the English Channel through the elms and chestnut trees, decided them that they had come to the ideal place in which to live. (Hinton *Immortal*, 19)

The Tennysons settled here as a family and the Poet found the inspiration for much of his work, including his *Idylls*.

Most often than not, it rains in Freshwater. And if not, skies are probably overcast, adding plenty of character to the picturesque bays and beaches in this part of the island. Tennyson loved going for long walks in the early morning mist along the coast, often with company, otherwise alone. Each day, he would walk up to the top of High Down, nowadays 'Tennyson Down,' from Farringford to find the inspiration for his writings (Hinton *Immortal* 19-20). But his favourite walk was from the Down to *the Needles*, the furthest tip of the island, a 2.1 miles walk west – about 3.5 kilometres – along the seaside, crossing farms and muddy paths to finally reward you with a stunning view of the Atlantic Ocean. Olsen also says that Tennyson liked to compose his poetry during these walks, often reciting his lines out loud (115). More specifically, 'The Revenge', 'Enoch Arden' and 'Crossing the Bar' would have been composed during or after these walks beside the sea, as Fuller claims (19-20).

Tennyson shared with Cameron a love for the island's natural beauties, and the two would often stand on the beach together watching the sea in silence (Olsen 117). Sometimes the Poet would come to fetch her from Dimbola on stormy nights to go down to the shore (Fuller 8). Their compliance was recognisable. And some mornings after his walk, Tennyson would often pop in to visit her friend and chat about art, literature and any other business. They saw each other eye to eye, and their artistic and personal admiration were mutual, the Poet also enjoying her vibrant personality thoroughly, as she was a total contrast to his melancholic and shy character.

Their two houses shared a private path. Cameron built a green gate at the back of her garden to encourage the Poet's visits allowing him to come to her house discreetly and avoiding all the fans and admirers waiting outside his house. The "Cockneys," as he would call them (Hinton *Immortal* 2), came regularly to the island on 'pilgrimage' to catch a glimpse of the famous bard, and in time they ended up spoiling his adored solitude.

Tennyson was a man generous with his time, but only with his friends as he despised public life. He was extremely private and could come across as anti-social in a group situation, but the tenderest and kind in one-to-one. Olsen describes him as “a union of opposites: strength and sensitivity, courage and cowardice; complexity and simplicity” (120), and Cameron could see him through all this. His frowning and reserved façade did not affect her, and likewise, her spontaneous and unpretentious character made Tennyson feel at total ease. Agnes Weld, Tennyson’s niece, once wrote that Julia was “his dearest women friend; almost the only woman outside his relations whom he called by her Christian name, and who called him in turn by his” (Hinton *Immortal* 38).

Upon her insistence, Tennyson consented to be photographed on more than a few occasions by her, but only as the Poet laureate himself, never being characterised as other close friends would have done; Watts or Taylor for instance.

There were many other famous Victorians at that moment in time on the island, and Thackeray Fuller tells biographer Wilfred Ward writing at a young age about the time of enlightenment:

Freshwater in [those] days seethed with intellectual life. The poet was of course, the centre, and that remarkable woman, Mrs. Cameron, was stage manager of what was, for us young people, a great drama. For Tennyson was still writing the *Idylls of the King* which had so greatly moved the whole country, and we felt that we were in the making of history. (34)

The book *Three Freshwater Friends: Tennyson, Watts & Mrs. Cameron*, written in 1933 by already referenced Hester Thackeray Fuller – daughter of novelist Anne Thackeray Ritchie, also a central figure to the literary life in Freshwater and a close friend of Cameron – offered one of the best testimonials of the time too. Thackeray Fuller described the idyllic place in her book full of delightful people who had come to live there to be near their friend Tennyson.

The Poet, therefore, provided the appeal, and Cameron’s exuberant personality and splendid hostessing, the entertainment. Between the two they attracted a continuous flow of intellectuals from London. Amongst those, some made it a long stay. like Watts, who after a few visits moved permanently there and completed the construction of The Briary in 1873. The Thackerays moved in to The Porch around the same time, being in close proximity to the Camerons and the Tennysons.

Other special visitors were Holman Hunt, Millais and sculptor Thomas Woolner; poignant literates such Lewis Carroll, Aubrey De Vere, William Allingham and Edward Lear and finally, regular visitor Sir Henry Taylor. There were many more sundry characters in the form of intellectuals and scientists, and everyone generally admiring Tennyson and wishing to be ‘someone’ took up holidays in Freshwater those years. Visitors came and stayed with relatives or friends living in the bay, or just renting out one of the cottages. They socialised a good deal together, took up walks and attended the numerous impromptu soirées organised

at Dimbola or Farringford. Unintentionally, Cameron had moved the Little Holland House artistic circle to Freshwater, and if the first one evolved around Watts and art, the second one evolved around Tennyson and poetry. Cameron was, clearly, at the right place and the right time to immortalise this era and the people in it.

This artistic flow, in fact, continued for years long after Cameron and Tennyson had left Freshwater. As such, Leslie Stephen, editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* came to Freshwater with her wife Julia Jackson, who was Cameron's young widowed niece, and their children in the 1880s. Amongst them were young Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, who breathed the enduring legends and tales about the past artistic circle during her great-aunt's time in the island, and would later go on to found the Bloomsbury Group. Woolf would honour this time in the bay and its legendary characters in her spoof play *Freshwater: A Comedy* – first performed in 1923 –, presenting a sweet portrait of Cameron and her photographic endeavour.

Years later, Wolf would depict her aunt as a professional photographer in the aforementioned *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women*. While Fry concentrated on the artistic side, Wolf offered a more testimonial description of her persona. She did not meet her, but described her as a little eccentric, full of energy and of lavish generosity. The following anecdote proves it:

The Taylors loved her; Audrey de Vere loved her; Lady Monteagle loved her; and 'even Lord Monteagle, who likes eccentricity in no other form, likes her.' It was impossible, they found, not to love that 'genial, ardent, and generous' woman, who had a 'power of loving which I have never seen exceeded, and an equal determination to be loved.' If it was impossible to reject her affection, it was even dangerous to reject her shawls. Either she would burn them, she threatened, then and there, or if the gift were returned, she would sell it, but with the proceeds a very expensive invalid sofa, and present it to the Putney Hospital for Incurables with an inscription which said, much to the surprise of Lady Taylor, when she chanced upon it, that it was the gift of Lady Taylor herself. It was better, on the whole, to bow the shoulder and submit to the shawl. (15-6)

The Cameron of the Dimbola years strikes me as a fun woman who had found her artistic niche, and thrived when working at home extensively in her photography, surrounded by her people, controlling them and never daring to leave unattended her largely extended family and a house full of guests and social events. The atmosphere at the cottage must have been a sensational artistic spot, as Henry Taylor described: "a house indeed to which everyone resorted for pleasure, and in which no man or child was ever known to be unwelcome" (Hinton *Immortal Faces* 6). Also, Thackeray Fuller recalled the photographer's generosity towards her guests and random visitors by planting a wild briar hedge in her garden in the lane so that it could "be picked and enjoyed" by all passers-by (7). She was indeed *the hostess with the mostest*, encouraging all-day liveness at Dimbola, spoiling rotten her visitors and accommodating those even when space was short. She improvised staged plays, costume fittings, dinners and lunches at short notice, dancing under the stars on the

back lawn after dinner, and, of course, photographing and documenting this exciting time in between. Some of the most famous faces Cameron portrayed during these years were: Browning, William M. Rossetti, Alice Liddell, Thomas Carlyle, Ellen Terry, Longfellow, Darwin, Trollope and Tennyson, of course (Hinton *Immortal* 4).

And as Cameron's photography was becoming so prolific and productive, she was in continuous search for subjects amongst her acquaintances and friends, servants and random locals. She would sit in her bedroom, at the end of the house, peeking through her window, looking for potential sitters walking down Gate Lane. If she ever spotted "a good-looking" one, she will then rush directly or send one of her maids to beg to sit for her *Idylls*, Thackeray Fuller recounted (34). Cameron's wonderful forwardness and formidable spontaneity in her lack of Victorian etiquette was very refreshing for her time. She was mostly adored and loved for it, as well as feared with anecdotes of too much eagerness and regular bossing with sitters. Carlyle described sitting for Cameron as "inferno," and Lady Troubridge, a former child model wrote of her experience in her *Memories and Reflections* that "she dashed out of the studio in Dimbola, attached heavy swans' wings to the children's shoulders, and bade them 'Stand here'," for their parts of angels and cupids (34, qtd. in Wolf 15).

Wolf also says that a young Ellen Terry, who had recently become Mrs. Watts described Cameron as "most impulsive" and "invincible" (14-5). I believe this enthusiasm and hastiness appeared in her photography too. It was not surprising when she eagerly threw herself into illustrating *Idylls*, photographing in frenzy at home on the back lawn or glass house, printing throughout the day from her negatives in her studio inside the house, her maids drawing litres and litres of water from the outside well.

Those *Idylls'* years were described by those who witnessed them as a little chaotic, with spontaneous Cameron constantly at work; borrowing props, recruiting models and assigning them clothes that would transform them into knights sailing to Avalon, or young beautiful maids from the past. Then, she tormented them with her long exposures with the purpose of obtaining wonderful stunning results.

4.2 UNLIKE ANY OTHER OF HER GIFT ALBUMS

For many decades, the book has been the most influential way of arranging (and usually miniaturising) photographs, thereby guaranteeing them longevity, if not immortality.⁸⁹

Susan Sontag, 1977

Photographs are *memento mori*, says Sontag, signify nostalgia, as they participate on someone's life and past moment in time (15). There is no doubt that Cameron's work in and throughout her *Illustrations* convey that. And curiously, Olsen suggests that a relevant circumstance in Cameron's life that probably determined her to take up photography was the sudden death of her childhood friend William Makepeace Thackeray on Christmas Eve in

⁸⁹ On *Photography* 4.

1863 (144). This might have contributed to her regarding the camera she received as a New Year's gift from her daughter and son-in-law that same year as a suitable memory-retention tool. Thus, photography came at a meaningful time to Cameron, as she was feeling lonesome, living away from her sisters and children. Photography could help her stay close to them and treasure the portraits of her loved ones.

This might have been the purpose of her usage of photography initially for Cameron, but I sense in her work that it did continue to represent that idea and her way of understanding the medium. The gift albums that she began to present from very early on to her family and friends were clear examples. Seen nowadays as pieces of evidence, these albums confirm too that before taking up photography that year, Cameron was occupied in printing and reproducing photographs from glass negatives that were not even hers. As popular gifts amongst Victorians,⁹⁰ Cameron enjoyed assembling them for her closest ones, and help her to connect and deal with their absence. Joanne Lukitsch, who has significantly researched that album period of Cameron in the 1860s, assures that family albums helped the artist to overcome the distances she maintained with those she loved the most, her sisters (30). In them, Cameron included a selection of studio portraits and *cartes de visite* of her family, those of other famous people and also photographic reproductions of paintings and drawings, as well as some sketching. Their pages felt highly autobiographical and imaginative. In them, she had no problem in including the work from other photographers, such as Rejlander's. Weaver says that in the MacTier Album, given to her niece Adeline in October 1863, Cameron had reprinted from the negatives Rejlander had produced in his visit to Wight, most probably shooting in collaboration with Julia. In the previous page, she had written: "from Life year 60 printed by me J.M.C" ("Stamp of Divinity" 153-61 *passim*).

⁹⁰ Charles Dodgson also compiled photo albums with his work. After his death, it was estimated that his estate included thirty-four of them (Olsen 143).

These albums were like works of art, and felt tremendously autographical telling their viewer what a family woman and loyal friend Cameron was at heart.



Fig. 96 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Lady Layard and Sir A[usten] H[enry] Layard M.P.*, from the “Di” Garing Album. Left.

Fig. 97 Julia Margaret Cameron, *May Prinsep*, [Marie Spartali], *Mary Ryan*, and [May Prinsep], from the Julia Hay Normal Miniature Album. Right.

In all the gift albums that Cameron produced in her lifetime, Gernsheim distinguishes between those sent to sisters and close family, her “family albums,” and those regarded as portfolios containing her best work. The latter were given to influential male people she knew, says Olsen, and a simple way to differentiate these is that photographs in Cameron’s professional albums appear as indexed and trademarked with her characteristic “from Life”, and those in family albums were not (143). Some of the professional albums left in private and museum archives today were given to her closest intellectual friends such as Herschel, Watts and Taylor. She sent them the albums as a symbol of friendship, also in the hope of receiving their valuable artistic advice and the reassurance that she was in constant need of hearing.

Gift albums were costly and involved great amounts of work and dedication. Images had to be selected, developed, printed, mounted and inscribed on each page, and then all pages sent for leather binding and embossing with her titles and the names of those being addressed to. Each album was unique and personal, and included a different set and sequence of prints.

Cameron’s researchers are unsure of the extent of her gift album portfolio, but for the pieces of evidence that they have gathered, it is obvious that she was rather prolific at it, and very much enjoyed their assembling. Before 1864, she gave out six albums containing other people’s works, says Olsen, then came her celebrated Mia Album, and between 1864 and 1875, her true photographic years, Cameron produced at least ten albums with full-size prints of her own work, while also compiling small albums for her family and friends (*Ibid.*). It is

precisely at the end of those album compilation years when she photographed and put together her three volumes of *Illustrations*, which I believe is a very significant fact that marked the essence and production of her photobook.

Cameron's best known and most representative family album is the cited Mia Album. Lukitsch, who researched it extensively, revealed that Cameron had presented it to her sister Maria for her forty-fifth birthday in July 1863, and that this was meant to be half-filled with prints and as an evolving project between the sisters, who in subsequent visits and letters would be replenished with further prints. In them, Cameron would only provide her sister with new photographic work, but also the exact instructions of where and how to place these within the album (Olsen 140-1). This event shows how specific and particular Cameron was about her albums and the presentation of her work in general, in spite of her renowned haphazard technicalities.

The Mia album contains 120 prints, the majority of them dedicated to the Pattle sisters and their daughters, thus celebrating the strong female figure in Cameron's family (Olsen 141). It is rather tempting to embellish this piece of information and draw some conclusions from the Mia Album and think that it might have acted as an early precedent and inspiration in Cameron's *Illustrations*. Her fondness for album compilation, and the skills, hands-on approach and working methods that she employed to produce all of her gift albums certainly coincide with those used in the production of *Illustrations*, especially in her most DIY version, the Miniature Edition. Through the process of selecting print versions, sequencing them and thinking about captions and titles for each, she was undoubtedly telling a story. If in her Mia Album she was telling a story of the women in her life, in *Illustrations* the story revolved around legendary women and fictional heroines who were as beautiful and human as the first.

Sontag says that "The photograph in a book is, obviously, the image of an image," meaning that imagery within the book follows the storyline within it, and that printed photographs within the book lose "much less of its essential quality" (5). With this inspiring statement, we can go one step further and think that photographs also lose their identity within the book, as the reader looks at the context of the photobook as a whole, and follows its photographic pace and sequence. The Mia Album proves that Cameron must have been aware of this process, and that put extra care in both her photographic representation and presentation. And thus, when *reading* any of the *Illustrations* volumes, one has to look at them as single entities at times, with unique stories told within them, as they are being presented with care and subtle variations in the photographs and text within them.

Prior to that, I would like to discuss certain aspects of Cameron's unique choice of presentation and format of *Illustrations*. As considered, her photo-illustrations worked in collaboration with Tennyson's text, her decision being to separate them as two different identities. Print mounts – actual photographs being stuck on cardboard pages with gold

embossing, in the style of photo albums – had been imported into the album of *Illustrations* in the binding, and sat after pages of text with Tennyson's excerpts. Several conclusions can be drawn when compared this method of presentation with the traditional gift book in chapter two, with images printed at the same time as text standing within the same page. The main conclusion is that Cameron's images, being large actual photographic prints were made to look more prominent within the page, not really becoming part of text or being imbued in it. In *Illustrations*, Cameron's authentic prints, produced by Colnaghi's, felt as if deposited in the book, pasted onto the mounts and giving *Illustrations* an instant photo album feel. This has been partly the reason why many copies of this publication have arrived in the hands of museums today as loose pages. In my conversation with Dr. Hinton, he explained that some buyers of *Illustrations* dismembered the book and kept the photographic pages for themselves (see appendix II), and this was due to photographs being seen as rare and valuable at the time. This physical separation was indecisively encouraged by Cameron. I use the term *indecisively*, as at the same time, she simultaneously made the effort to donate her images with a textual and poetic context, not just being literal with small details to Tennyson's poetry, but by linking them with regular cross-referencing with verse entitling and text underlining. With this, Cameron wished to tell a story that had originated in Tennyson's poetry, at the same time as making her representational images meaningful in their dominance within and outside the photobook. Thus, with her titling she made sometimes self-explanatory art within the page.

Another variance from the gift and illustrative books, and in particular from those loose folio books of Gustave Doré's and Amy Buttons's *Idylls*, was the fact that the extracts from Tennyson that Cameron had chosen to precede her images were significantly longer. Not just a stanza or paired verses, but actual whole poems as we will see in her *May Queen*.

To compensate for this lengthier text from the Poet she added *her personal touch* to, owning it if you like, by presenting it as facsimiles of her own handwritten poems. While doing so, she edited out some bits – including dots in the omissions –, underlined it where she wished – this could be consecutive or separate verses, loose words even – in order to directly point the reader to her photographic source of inspiration. And by presenting source and representation separately, she also engaged the reader in finding connections and subtleties between the two discourses throughout her *Illustrations*. Essentially, she never followed a fixed formula for each poem, she was ingeniously creative.

Cameron also liked to keep it loose and unrestricting in the sequencing. And so, neither of the first two large volumes of *Illustrations* ever had an index with a list of plates at their beginning or end, as other illustrative books normally had. See for instance *The Pencil of Nature*. With this, she continued to leave her story line more open to the reader, without any foretelling. The Miniature edition was all the more so produced unbound.

Even when aiming at the gift book market, her resistance towards some of the traditional aspects was more than apparent in the format of *Illustrations*, neverminding the medium and her own particular style. She proposed to her public a crafty and homemade

looking photobook, very similar to her gift albums, and the reader was able to feel this along with her strong physical presence from the first page. Her photographic interventions as we will see, manual printing and photo-pasting, own copywriting, handwriting and underlining are hard to be ignored, as they all make *Illustrations'* volumes fully impregnated with Cameron's essence, as those autographical photo albums. She enjoyed personalising and taking care of every stage of the production of *Illustrations*, sticking to her vision and not chancing it this time around. As we know, her illustrations had appeared previously as small wood cuts in Tennyson's Cabinet edition to great disappointment. Her photographic jewels, into which she had put so much work, sat distantly as engravings, away from all her textual inspiration as frontispieces of the tome. The editor had chosen one of her single portraits of *Elaine* to front tome VI (see fig. 53), another one of *Arthur* in tome VII (see fig. 54) and *Maud* in tome IX (see fig. 55). These looked very detached from Cameron's original vision, even from Tennyson's text as a matter of fact.

In her *Scenes of a Library*, Armstrong explains the methodical and autobiographical aspects of *Illustrations'* format as those belonging to positivism. She begins by encapsulating the photographer's vision and stating that she "located poetic ideas in the visible here and now of existence of place" and "confirmed the truth of the poem by locating it materially and temporarily in her household, combining epic with detail, historical and legendary with the quotidian here and now of the home-made photographic trace" (365). This agrees with perfectly Barthes's dictum, explained in the introductory chapter of this thesis, and the primary realistic aim within *Illustrations*, that one of *authenticating* Tennyson's tale, *furnishing* it with evidence, but also *distorting* it. Completing it with Sontag's terminology, also mentioned in the same chapter.

Armstrong claims that in the early years, photography was affected by the empirical nature of British science, and that Cameron's working method, full of precision, draws from the scientific outlook. Positivist philosophy, science and art aided each other in this new medium of expression. Her theory is pursued in Cameron's *Illustrations* – as well as three other contemporary cases studies; Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature*, as discussed in chapter one, Anna Atkins's *Photographs of British Algae* (1843-1854) and Francis Frith's two illustrative books *Egypt and Palestine: Photographed and Described* (1858-1859) and *Hyperion: A Romance* (1865). In *Illustrations*, she sees a "positivism narrative" that emphasises on "observation, experiment and comparison," and follows the natural formula of "succession and resemblance," as forged by the godfather of positivism August Comte⁹¹ (18).

There is no doubt that in *Illustrations* Cameron built a relationship between her images and Tennyson's text that became apparent in a manner of progression from idyll to idyll. Her method of working when excerpting text from *Idylls* to accompany – or rather illustrate – her images proves it. Armstrong says Cameron was finding an "alibi for the image" (365), and she excelled in cross-referencing her images with text.

⁹¹ "The first characteristic of Positive Philosophy is that it regards all phenomena as subject to invariable natural Laws ... Our real business is to analyse accurately the circumstances of phenomena, and to connect them by the natural relations of succession and resemblance" (Comte, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste*, 1830).

As seen above, in her method of working she intervened in text alone, cutting and pasting as if disintegrating it and reaching her own reading of *Idylls*, tactically approaching to her photographs. And she was being totally explicit about it, to the point that Armstrong declares the excerpts were *hers*, and not Tennyson's, and that these "st[ood] in for his text" (*Ibid*). In fact, she had no problem autographing them with Tennyson's signature in her own handwriting.

Cameron's positivism feels also present in her writing of her *Annals*. She distorted her photographic story to justify her artistic choices and accomplishments, and in *Illustrations* she did the same by simply twisting and interfering with Tennyson's *Idylls*. The famous Poet's story of Arthur was repositioned artistically well within her comfort zone. Cameron highlighted her "first-person voice"⁹² when representing the Tennysonian heroines by using people around her and following her artistic vision and unique photographic style, and when producing her book very personally. With all of these, she was ultimately moving the emphasis towards herself.

4.3 SEEING HER ILLUSTRATIONS

The sequence in which the photographs are to be looked at is proposed by the order of the pages, but nothing holds the reader to the recommended order or indicates the amount of time to be spent on each photograph.⁹³

Susan Sontag, 1977

After her disappointment with the Cabinet's edition, Cameron took matters into her own hands and in November 1874 reached a commercial agreement with King and Co. to publish her own *Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Other Poems*. With this, she tried to cash in on the success of the Cabinet and enter the ever-growing illustrative books market with her photographs. Her deluxe and expensive illustrative edition made a better use of the 245 exposures she had taken in her reinterpretation of *Idylls* and these finally materialised into two consecutive volumes with 12 original prints each, uncropped and reproduced by Colnaghi. Volume one of *Illustrations* appeared before the public in late December 1874 – early January 1875, and volume two later that year in May 1875 (Mancoff "Legend 'From life'" 88).⁹⁴ Neither of them sold well, and it is uncertain how many copies were ever made for each, but should not have been many. Today, only nine copies of the first volume are known to exist (Armstrong 364).

In spite of its commercial failure, sometime later that same year, Cameron went on to produce *Illustrations'* "Miniature edition," which compiled both volumes into one quarto-size including a total of 21 prints. This edition was even rarer and Philippa Wright says that only four copies have been seen today (90). It appeared before the public sometime early 1875.

⁹² "I read, I selected, I saw, I directed my household, I produced my own album at home, it was *my* handwriting" (Armstrong 366).

⁹³ *On Photography* 5.

⁹⁴ There is a minor discrepancy between several authors about the date of publication of volume one of *Illustrations*. Some state that this was in January 1875, although Weiss agrees with Gernsheim that this was published in December 1874. I am of this latter opinion.

The large volumes of *Illustrations* included 350mm x 280mm approx. full-size prints, mounted on blue cards and gilt borders of 430mm x 330mm approx. size pages. The Miniature copy contained smaller prints of around 125mm x 96mm approx. mounted on a cream-coloured pages of 239mm x 203mm approx. Surprisingly, none of the miniature prints has been captioned, with no handwriting on any of the pages mounted.

As previously mentioned, the large volumes were part of bound folios for sale, the Miniature edition was not, still remaining to date a bit of an enigma to scholars. It is still possible that it was conceived and put together as a gift album for friends and family, or as a professional portfolio. Judging by the few copies around, it is safe to assume that it was produced under a very limited edition, most probably by Cameron herself,⁹⁵ containing her main body of work for *Illustrations*. As novelties, the prints in it had been reduced from volume one and two's original plates, additionally including some new ones such as a unique single portrait of Guinevere standing, and one of two little girls surrounded by flowers. On one of the pages, she also pasted a review of *Illustrations'* first edition published in the *Morning Post* of January 1875.

This mystery edition is, perhaps, the most puzzling and fascinating one, as it leaves many questions unanswered, for instance its date of publication – we gather that sometime in the first half of 1875 – and the publisher⁹⁶, or the general purpose of it and to whom this was intended. Gernsheim says that “the book was long considered by me to have been a master copy of an intended, cheaper edition, never published” (*JMC Her Life* appendix). Thus, without the possibility of further research on this subject during this thesis, I have come to the conclusion that the artist understood and produced this edition as an amalgamation of her large two volumes, reworking their original sequence of prints and with it their story into a final compilation of her best work and final story on *Idylls*. There are little differences between this and the large volumes that in fact altered her final story, and I believe happened as she changed her mind once or twice while doing it. She decided to add a few extras here and there to complement her original story, or replaced print versions for others that would improve it. This hypothesis fits perfectly well with what we know of Cameron's personality; a prolific and energetic photographer, indefatigable in her production of prints, tests and studies. I see the Miniature edition as the true reflection of the hard work she put in Tennyson's *Idylls* and *Other Poems*, and one final attempt to tell the final story of his heroines before leaving for India. A useful definitive portfolio of her illustrations in a convenient format that would allow her to just pick up and have it at hand when showing and self-promoting her work.

⁹⁵ Although there is no real evidence Cameron reduced these prints for the Miniature, and most probably instructed Colnaghi to do so, as she had done for her *cartes de visite* (those surviving have Colnaghi's blind stamp). The Miniature prints all have numbers that would have been scratched into the glass negative, which have nothing to do with the sequence order in the book (Hinton *Illustrations* 3). They were just perhaps mere instructions for handling of negatives and print versions from them, as the work was being outsourced.

⁹⁶ Gernsheim says in his copy of the Miniature no title page, publisher's name or date have been written (*JMC Her life* appendix).

The obvious proof for this statement is that the Miniature edition was never bound and left loose, says Dr. Brian Hinton, resulting in another missing piece of the puzzle; the order of its sense and pagination. These had to be *guessed* by scholars. In his own edition of the Miniature for the Trust – a copy that came down the Prinsep family, proving the album nature of the edition –, Hinton assures that the order he followed here is “the generally agreed sequence,” and not the order of the numbers scratched on the negative, which “make no sense at all” (*Illustrations* 3), as feels suitable with the order Cameron had established in the two large volumes, Tennyson’s book of poems and Mallory’s *Morte d’Arthur*. Here, he followed Gernsheim’s suggested order in *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work*, and I have too decided to settle with this, and followed his order in my analysis of the images from the Miniature.

Contrary to how the *Illustrations* pages are shown nowadays in museums and book pages,⁹⁷ in volumes one and two *text* comes before *image*, bound in consecutive *recto* pages leaving *verso* pages blank, presenting Cameron’s photographs as illustrative results of Tennyson’s text. In the Miniature, however, this collaboration seems to appear looser and more unrestricting, allowing the possibility for an inverse order, viewing images first to be *restated* by text afterwards for instance.

The first form of presentation is a very convenient one as it serves to study each of Cameron’s photographs next to their pre-text, and thus I have decided to follow this in my image analysis, with the inclusion of sizeable thumbnails of text and photography pages together in order to appreciate their correspondence. Additionally, facsimiles of the single pages of *Illustrations* have been reproduced in chapter five to facilitate the reader my allusions to them in the matters of flow and story line in this thesis.

As discussed, not many copies of the large volumes of *Illustrations* remain intact today, as some of them were dismantled and rebound along the way. Thus, copies from different museums might differ between them. For instance, the ones at the V&A were very deteriorated, says Weiss in her interview (see appendix III), and had to be carefully rebound following the correct order; or, the rebound copy of volume one I saw on loan at the Trust in 2015 had some pages that had been swapped. In this thesis, both for the analysis and narration of their plot next, I have followed the order both Cox and Ford and Gernsheim suggest for volumes one and two, and the one Hinton presents as agreeable for the Miniature edition.

Thus, Volume one of *Illustrations* begins by portraying the women from *Idylls*; Lynette contemplating her knight first, and then followed by a contrast representation of two Enids; the humiliated one in the present and the more sensual one in the past. Vivien’s female astuteness and superiority comes next more than apparent, first with her seduction of the

⁹⁷ See, for instance Weiss’s and Hinton’s publications, where text pages and photo pages are printed in pairs and side by side.

wizard and then spell her final curse, fully contrasting with the next case of naivety and inexperience in love of the maid of Astolat. The story of Elaine is narrated by first appearing optimistic and hopeful, and then grief-stricken in her abandonment. This range of heroines informs the reader as to the possible causes of the Kingdom's fall: the blameless vision of the Holy Grail by the Pale nun and the Queen's affair with Lancelot, true love. After the damage is done, the Queen repents at the nunnery before seeing a king hurt by her actions, ultimately dying. The flow and story of this volume progress as a sequence of paired portraits as we will see.

Volume two does not simply pick up from this point in *Idylls*, but moves on to rendering other Tennysonian heroines, most of them victims. Among them we find: women that make her own choices, such as overconfident and naïve teenage May Queen, who refuses her old suitor, or Princess Ida, the university founder and thinker. But also, more passive and dependable women, such as the secluded Mariana, and the rescued Beggar Maid, both unable to do or say. Here, Cameron resumes her story of Elaine, the maid who could not see, representing her dying of unreturned love. An idyll directly in photographic resemblance to King Arthur's story, as he also is represented in his final journey escorted by his three trusty women; the three Arthurian queens. The volume ends with one last casualty, weak and pensive Maud, also unable to pursue her true love.

In the Miniature edition, Cameron compiles both stories slightly altering their sequence, with some additions. This volume feels that all Tennyson's heroines, from *Idylls* and *Other Poems*, share the same spotlight and are being democratised. The Miniature caresses their full and definitive story; the story that Cameron perhaps intended to tell all along. One can easily imagine that once she had photographed all portraits for the first two large volumes of *Illustrations*, she had a sudden afterthought of chronicling them into one story, more heartfelt. And she had a go at it.

This time, the re-telling of the Miniature begins with the story of the May Queen in three different stages. The viewer sees her turning from a naïve child to a poised young woman who chooses to die as a Queen of May. No sign of her suitor visually. Hinton says that her death is forewarning the reader of a tragic ending (*Illustrations* 5), and the previous stories of the women of *Illustrations* are suddenly tinted with a more melancholic tone in the Miniature. Beginning with Lynette's and Enid's depictions, who now seem all the more moving and sorrowful. Vivien malevolence is represented with just the final moment of the spell, marking the beginning of the Kingdom's disintegration. The tale of its first victim is Elaine, told in full sequence this time, with the story of her romance and disappointment lived in her chamber, and then sailing to Camelot and final appearance in court before the King and Queen. Then, as a novelty comes the story of Guinevere, thoughtful feeling torn between the two loves, realising of what her true but disloyal love is being capable of. She must choose between love and duty, and by saying her goodbye to Lancelot, she chooses to repent as a queen in Almesbury, away from it all. In the midst of this assortment of victims, villaines and

instigators, an emotionally and physically damaged Arthur is depicted, first when confronting Guinevere at the nunnery and then when dying in the battle, she has herself caused. The story of *Idylls* ends here in the Miniature, with Cameron stripping it to its bare basis, representing only its lead women; apart from Lynette's one, who acts as an introduction to the tale.

Other victims of love follow, thoughtful Maud and Mariana, preceding the pensive looking representation of The Princess. As the viewer observes the Gardener's Daughter, the story ends with the ideal of Victorian beauty.

In this Miniature edition, Cameron offered a lucid connection between Tennyson's women from *Idylls* and those of *Other Poems*, which as we can see, makes perfect meaningful sense in a looser format and sequence, left open to interpretation. Cameron's editions and additions created a mesmerising story to the observer.

When seeing *Illustrations* in general, the topics of femininity, graceful aesthetics and the theatricality of the women within it arise and become palpable. All of them share their beauty in reflection and solitude, which as we have seen in chapter three, is how Cameron pursued to arrest beauty in her photography. Here in *Illustrations*, she continues to do so, going a step further and tightening her observations and taking the reader to the inside and the lives of these women who are represented in a sequenced series, unveiling and singling out their unique story from Tennyson's poems. Cameron paid full attention to the lives of these women, their sexuality and needs in the chivalry and male dominated world Tennyson had voiced. Men in *Illustrations* appear little; they are either ignored or just briefly alluded to, and if represented at all, they are sleep, looking away or are seemly abstracted. There is certainly not much life in their performances, as if told by the artist not to overshadow her women's emotional act.

Therefore, in her imagery for *Illustrations* Cameron decides to stop and celebrate womanhood, engorging on all female features and following all the beautification steps as she has done with the rest of her *oeuvre*. She does it to enhance the role and sentiment of her women, whether this one is merited, or unfairly deserved; whether a villain, or a heroine. Every single one of them appears as most beautiful and feminine as possible, truly feeling, which represents even more beauty. And for this, she will custom the clothing, the gazing, the posture and gesture of all of them, and of course, their loose hair as a sign of Victorian beauty. Her out-of-focus trademark is present here too, in order to insinuate detail to the viewer, as she is already accustomed to doing in the rest of her women portraits. Her women come out more feminine and more heroic, and we will see that when comparing some of them to other representations in fine art and photography of the time.

The 'acting' and 'performing' of Cameron's characters are two obvious elements that come to the viewer's mind when seeing her representations in *Illustrations*. The ever-so-popular *tableaux vivants* of the Victorian time, representing motionless scenes in front of the camera with grandeur and certain paraphernalia, made art critics often associate these with

Cameron's representations ones in her photobook. *Illustrations* was since and for many years after an easy target and Cameron's work in it was being disregarded and disdained then. Mackay describes them individually as "clumsy" and "artificial" (33), and she might be partly right, and only for that reason we need rediscover them and look at them as a whole, as a story-telling assignment and within the context of very theatrical literature photography at the time. In style, the argument is lost, and some of Cameron's medieval representations in *Illustrations* – especially the group ones – do resemble the rigid posing of the *tableaux vivants*, the overdressing of their characters and their time freeze effect.

Tableaux vivants and the concept of role playing were extremely popular during the Victorian era, as eased the rigid confines of society, family and own identities. Nina Auerbach says that they embodied the fear of change and that "putting on a costume and assuming a pose," "role-playing" and "speaking through another's voice" was easier than face the reality of certain social issues (31, qtd. in Mackay 33). In truth, spite of Victorians being stiff and serious-minded, they enjoyed role playing, and theatre offered the perfect entertaining therapy for their curtailed personas. Olsen says that "acting permitted flirtations, rebellions, and all sorts of exceptional behaviour under cover of a costume" in the context of an artistic salon. And at home, before the days of television and radio, plays, music, readings, pantomimes and other games in the parlour were the usual leisure pursuits in a middle-upper class family like Cameron's (162). This explains the popularity of the *tableaux* in art too, and how when seen in the context of enjoyment and fun Dimbola, Cameron encouraged all these when photographing her models. The people around her were already used to performance, and their posing in front of her camera would not be much different.

When researching for contemporary *tableaux vivants* to *Illustrations* that might have followed an approximate style, theme or purpose, I found the work of Cincinnati photographer James M. Landy, who represented and illustrated the monologue delivered by Jacques in *As You Like It*, Act II Scene VII of Shakespeare's *The Seven Ages of Man*. His photographs had been pasted too onto the pages of the book, this published by Robert Clarke & Co. Herewith two illustrations out of the seven are included:



Fig. 98: James M. Landy, *The Lover*, illustrating 'The Third Age' with caption: "And then the lover, / Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad / Made to his mistress' eyebrow." *The Seven Ages of Man*, 1876. Left.

Fig. 99: James M. Landy, *The Soldier*, illustrating 'The Fourth Age' with caption: "Then a soldier, / Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard, / Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel, / Seeking the bubble reputation / Even in the cannon's mouth." *The Seven Ages of Man*, 1876. Right.

Here, Landy used real stage actors to represent these scenes, which is quite obvious and differ from Cameron's models. Their standing and representation is more stage-like and stiff. Landy's imagery offers at the same time less contrast and a more even lighting, and this caused them to lack in narrative and dramatism. They are less enchanting and less engaging to the viewer, as they appear full body and looking away from the camera. On the other hand, they do the job efficiently, as they are meant to represent a play and their focus relies on the theatrics of the image, dramatised posing, painted backdrops and full costumes. They leave barely nothing to the viewer's imagination. Their focus is the model's acting in their interpretation.

Mieke Bal says that theatricality in art goes beyond those external elements, and "refers to a mode of looking, a mode of composition, and a mode of representation" (50), and continues by referring to Michael Fried's book *Absorption and Theatricality*, where the author differentiates these in art as:

two modes of the painting-beholder relationship: *absorption*, where the figures are ostentatiously engaged in an inward activity (seeing as one of the possibilities), and *theatricality*, where they are acting out their relationship to one another and thus drawing the viewer. (45)

This device can serve our analysis when seeing Cameron's and Landy's work on theatricality. Although I do differ on the drawing of the viewer entirely. If Landy's *tableaux* are engaging with the viewer for the preppy melodramatics of their actors, Cameron's ones engage differently, bringing the viewer to the inside world and enthrallment of her women actors. They symbolised absorption more than theatrics, and this perhaps could be the source of their disregarding.

4.4 READING HER *ILLUSTRATIONS*

To photograph is to confer importance. There is probably no subject that cannot be beautified, moreover, there is no way to suppress the tendency inherent in all photographs to accord value to their subjects.⁹⁸

Susan Sontag, 1977

This chapter will look at the images of *Illustrations* in a painstaking individual analysis where each will be dissected photographically in order to read the narrative both within it and in the context of the book. This will mean going behind each of these poetic scenes as a way to understand some of Cameron's artistic choices and own doings.

All analysis has been character based, in order to obtain a comprehensive and meaningful depiction of all of Cameron's women, the definite leading characters in her photo book. This will get the reader closer to her vision and give a continuity to what has been discussed in previous chapters regarding femininity and aesthetics. For each of the characters, the images being outsourced belong to those published in any of the editions of *Illustrations*, and those found amongst private collections, gift albums or museums all over the world. As a whole, the reading of these images shows the evolution of Cameron and her poetic subjects.

The accompanying text from Tennyson will also be analysed within the framework of the image, and cross-referencing between both discourses will be taking place. Its narrative will be compared to that of the visual in an exercise of interdisciplinarity.

4.4.1 *Frontispieces*

In all volumes of *Illustrations*, the first image that Cameron includes in them is a photograph of Tennyson, the Poet. She alternates two different portraits in each edition – one portrait used in volume one and the Miniature, and a different portrait in volume two.

Tennyson's portrait is preceded by two pages with acknowledgments; one dedicated to the Royal Princess Victoria, and one to herself; a poem entitled 'To Mrs. Cameron.' Thus, these three pages act as frontispieces of the book; two are textual and one is illustrative, and introduce the presence of the royal figure, the photographer and the poet to the reader in the book.

⁹⁸ On Photography 28.

Herewith, the verso page to front cover and first page of volume one:

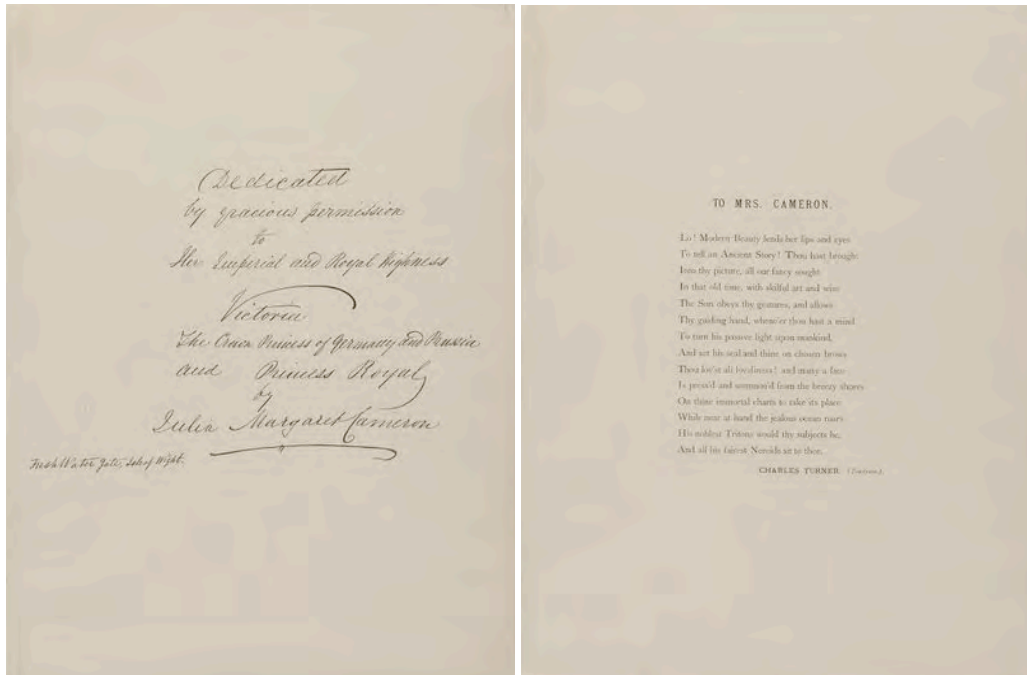


Fig. 100 Facsimile with handwritten text by Cameron: "Dedicated by gracious permission to Her Imperial and Royal Highness Victoria The Crown Princess of Germany and Prussia and Princess Royal by Julia Margaret Cameron. Freshwater Gate, Isle of Wight." Vol. one of *Illustrations*. Left.

Fig. 101 Facsimile with text sonnet 'To Mrs. Cameron,' written by Charles Turner (Tennyson). Vol. one of *Illustrations*. Right.

The volumes of *Illustrations* were therefore never dedicated to Queen Victoria' as Armstrong has stated in her *Scenes* (369), but to her first Princess daughter Victoria, known as King Albert's favourite descendent for her brightness and discipline. She had married Emperor of Germany and Prussia Frederick III in 1858, thus subscribing to her parents' grand plan of unifying Europe's royal houses through matrimony.

With such intro page, Cameron is dedicating *Illustrations* to a woman, a young and gracious princess, instead of King Albert as Tennyson had done in his second printing of *Idylls*' first edition in 1862. This variation reflects how Cameron chose to focus on female characters rather than male. By starting and dedicating her story to a young princess, in many aspects victim and under pressure of her own royal position, Cameron was shifting their roles from the start. I believe was she was also a great admirer of the Royal Princess, and she probably understood her difficult position of having to produce an heir who unified Europe, at the same time as meeting her father's expectations. She was known for her liberal convictions and sense of royal duty, and Cameron admired that. Her admiration can be appreciated when she gave the princess a special mention in her *Annals*. There, she wrote of the anecdote of one day receiving a letter from a German gentleman praising her portfolio:⁹⁹ "Germany has done me honour and kindness until, to crown all my happy associations with that country, it has just fallen to my lot to have the privilege of photographing the Crown Prince and Crown

⁹⁹ This has apparently been identified as Dr. Wilhem Vogel, professor of photography and editor of the *Photographische Mitteilungen* journal, and instrumental in Cameron's participation in the Berlin International Photographic Exhibition (MacKay 199).

Princess of Germany and Prussia.” This photographic job, as the letter says, might have just been a mere suggestion from the English Ambassador, never taken place during Cameron’s life, but we can see her excitement and honour felt at the possibility of it.

The next Dedication page contains Charles Turner’s – Tennyson’s younger brother – sonnet dedicated to Cameron herself. Its text was reproduced in both volumes by letterpress, although in the Miniature edition, this was also handwritten by Cameron. The poem said:

Lo! Modern Beauty lends her lips and eyes
To tell an Ancient Story! Thou hast brought
Into thy pictures, all our fancy sought
In that old time, with skillful art and wise.
The Sun obeys thy gestures, and allows
Thy guiding hand, whene’er thou hast a mind
To turn his passive light upon mankind.
And set his seal and thine on those brows
Thou loost all loveliness! And many a face
Is press’d and summon’d from the breezy shores
On thine immortal charts to take its place
While near at hand the jealous ocean roars
His noblest Tritons would thy subject be,
And all his fairest Nereids sit to thee.

It is rather peculiar noticing that in the midst of *Illustrations*’ handwritten text in facsimiles, she includes a ‘typed-up’ version of this poem in the large volumes, as if perhaps to draw a clear line there between the poetic text referring to imaginary and Arthurian and other poetic characters, and that one referring to a real person, herself, the photographer. As mentioned, in the Miniature she presents the sonnet handwritten as with the rest of the extracts, conceivably to provide the entire edition and its text with a more real *DIY* feel. With this simple fact, we begin to see now how throughout her work, and certainly during the production of *Illustrations*, she was making her own choices, changing her mind sometimes. She used text elements as she pleased, and to a certain extent taking the credit instead of its original author.

Armstrong adds that this act of typing instead of writing was a way to: “underscore the voluminous commitment to the privately produced and the handmade” feel of *Illustrations*, assuring Cameron was “treating Tennyson’s mass published text as a privately-owned book” (369), which the reader will witness being underlined, edited and handwritten later on. Agreeing with the previous assumptions of bestowing *Illustrations* with a photo album feel.

One can assume that she included this poem by Turner because she liked what it is said on it about her. Most probably, she found it suitable and complimentary to her work, and enjoyed the flattering wording; i.e.: “with skillful art and wise,” “The sun obeys thy gestures,” “Thy guiding hand, whene’er thou hast a mind” and so on. Furthermore, it glorifies the new photographic medium as an illustrative device, and therefore endorses what we are about to witness in the subsequent pages of the publication: “a Modern Beauty lend[ing] her lips and eyes to tell an Ancient Story.” Cameron must have thought these lines were the perfect introduction for her *Ut pictoria poesis* illustrations for Tennyson’s poems.



Fig. 102 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Dirty Monk*, May 1865 (photographed), from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874. Left.



Fig. 103 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Alfred Tennyson*, May 1865 (photographed), from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875. Right.

By inscribing underneath each of Tennyson's portraits with her trademark: "From Life" and "From Life Registered. Photography Copyright by Julia Margaret Cameron," their author was clearly stealing some of the limelight from her subject. These were portraits of the most famous poet in England at the time, and could provide her book with a much-needed authentication and vital certification of his presence in the book – in reference to Barthes's discussed terminology. They were a living proofs of his permission to use his story for the illustrations that followed on the coming pages. We have already seen during the British golden years of publishing cases of photographic frontispieces bringing realism to illustrative books. For Cameron, aiming to enter the gift book market with *Illustrations*, depicting the Poet holding and reading a book of what the viewer might assume a copy of *Idylls of the King* would be the greatest of the endorsements.

The first portrait, used in volume one, was better known as "The Dirty Monk." In her *Annals*, Cameron describes how she "took another immortal head, that of Alfred Tennyson, and the result was that profile portrait," and continues, "a fit representation of Isaiah or of Jeremiah."

Throughout her lifetime, there were numerous photographic portraits of Tennyson which demonstrated his acceptance of the medium, and like many more conventional paintings and sculptures of him in different poses, hats, settings and backdrops, showed his love for staging and representing himself; in spite of being considered by many as a reserved and private person. In most of them, he appeared in profile, like this one of Watts, showing his

strong classical features and characteristic aquiline nose. Both painting and first photographic portrait encounter an evident resemblance.¹⁰⁰

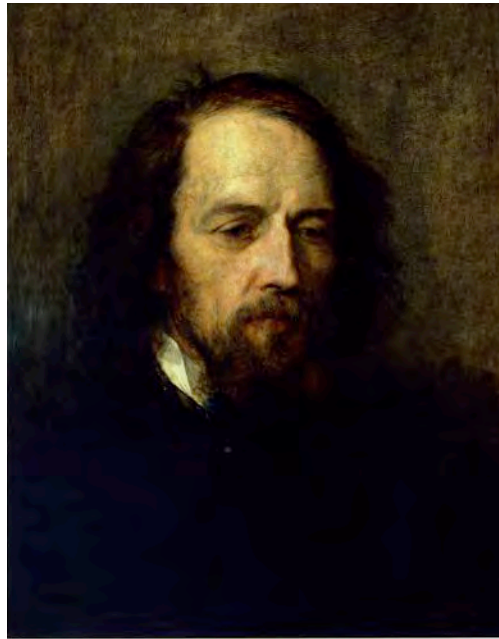


Fig. 104 G. F. Watts, *Alfred Tennyson*, 1859.

Cameron had photographed Tennyson several times in this manner, but it is this “The Dirty Monk” one that she praised the most, depicting the Poet as a thoughtful and timeless prophet of the arts. She chose, however, a different portrait for her second volume of *Illustrations* that lacked in charisma. The Laureate had apparently liked the first one best as well, along another one by successful studio photographer John Edwin Mayall in 1867 (Olsen 118).

Having photographed both of these frontispieces in May 1865, when both Cameron and Tennyson were living in Freshwater, it is hard to establish if they were at Dimbola or in her sister’s Little Holland House in London, where Cameron set up her studio temporarily that month to photograph several celebrated men then (Olsen 177). It is highly likely that Tennyson’s portraits were photographed there. Perhaps done in the same sitting.

Judging from her technique, format and date of taking – ten years prior to *Illustrations* –, we can be sure that she was using her first camera, and felt pleased with both versions, as she chose to use one portrait for each of the *Illustrations*’ volumes. In all probability, Cameron thought that they captured the Poet’s “greatness of [his] inner as well as the features of [his] outer,” as she was keen on doing when portraying her famous men. Her “immortal head” signature style is patent, with the Poet’s bust appearing suspended away from distracting backdrops and contemporary clothing, and detailed buttoning-up of his characteristic cloak, as if to cover what he was wearing at the time. In her association to “Isaiah” or “Jeremiah,” Cameron was seeing him as the legendary influential figure he was.

Closely cropped in a three-quarter view and positioned in the centre of the image, the Poet appears with little contrast in the misty background. He is propped with a straight back in

¹⁰⁰ Comparative taken from *The Pre-Raphaelite lens: British photography and painting*, Plates 64 and 65 (Waggoner 120-1).

profile, gazing to the side and looking outside the picture frame at what the viewer cannot see, thus engaging with him in some guessing or speculation of the Poet's current thoughts. This is what Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen call a "Reactor" with "no Phenomenon," fixed looking outside the frame, afar, creating the standard "powerful sense of empathy or identification" between the subject and the viewer (66). This is probably the reason that made this image being so likable by both photographer and subject, and in a sense a very suiting one for a frontispiece of *Illustrations*.

The Poet appears abstracted in his musings and thoughts, which seems a good representation of his hard-thinking persona, but he is not looking grandiose while doing it. His head appears in sharp focus offering full unflattering detail, such as a mousy hair, unkempt whitening beard, and bags under his eyes. Hence the given apposite title of 'The Dirty Monk.'

His gaze directs the viewer's eyes down, towards the positioning of his prominent hand with the book, both image-unbalancing and out-of-focus, as free standing from Cameron's focusing range. There is certain realism and down-to-earthiness about this portrayal of Tennyson, thanks to the abundance of detail of his physicality, and the soft lighting. When aiming for glorification of her great intellectual, she has succeeded in recording the Poet's greatness coming from within, through his posing, gazing and proceeding in front of the camera. His disregarded outer features, become secondary.

In the second portrait of Tennyson, Cameron attempted too for greatness using a darker background instead, also on track with her famous Victorian men. Here, she has also managed to isolate him from the mundane, with a great contrast, but this time, however, the Poet poses comfortably crossing his legs, not in hard profile and in full length. Cameron's out of focus is even more extreme here. When aiming for abundance of detail in his face, she set for a sharp chest area, and unfortunately lacked information in the rest of the image. The poet's foreground, in particular his hand, was too close to the finder and ended up looking totally blurred. Our eye moves insecure around the portrait, due to the confusion between sharpness and out-of-focus. This portrait is less engaging to the viewer, although what it lacks in focus in the imager, it gains, however, in texture and dark tones in its beautiful drapery. If the first portrait had a great head, this picture depicts a great body.

4.4.2 Portraits of the 'Fair Women' in Idylls

4.4.2.1 Lynette

This illustration for Tennyson's second idyll of the book, 'Gareth and Lynette' introduces the reader of *Illustrations* to the bulky thematic of the photobook; the love stories between knights and maids that shape up the future of Arthur's kingdom. Therefore, it offers a first glimpse and preliminary representation of this central theme, and inaugurates the series of female characters that will elapse. It depicts an intimate portrait of the two prospective lovers, which in the story is coming to an end of their idyll. This has dealt with the elements of first disguise, then perception of the real self and finally admiration.

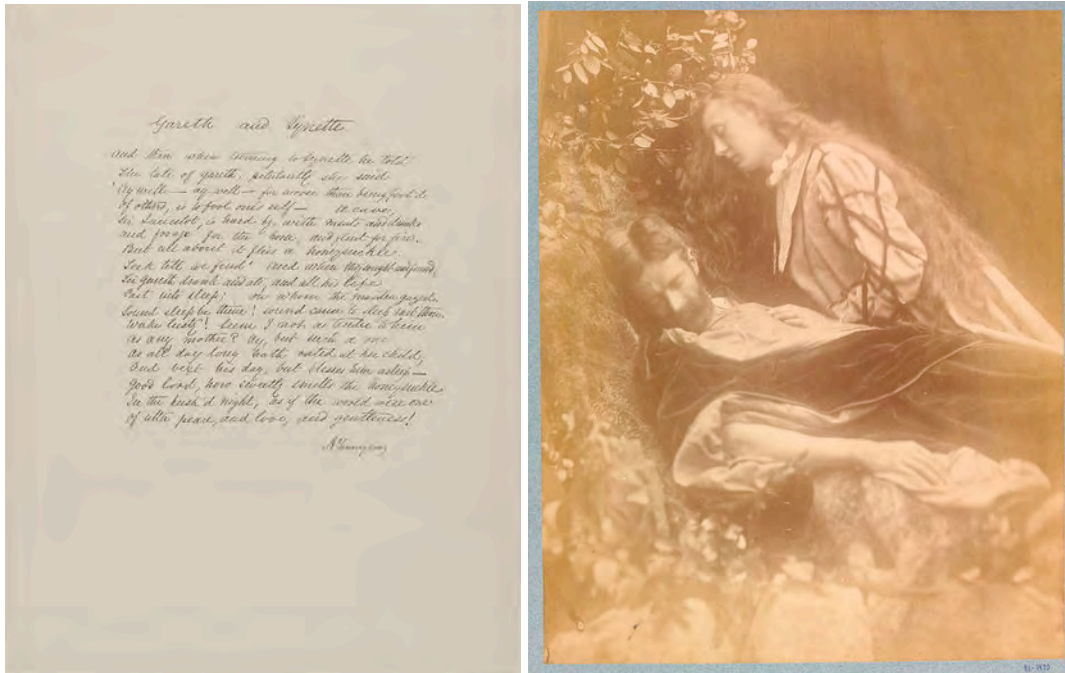


Fig. 105 'Gareth and Lynette' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874.
 Left: Printed page of poem text, handwritten by Cameron. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Gareth and Lynette*, 1874 (photographed).

As the image is ushered in by Tennyson's final extract of the idyll, it represents Lynette gazing lovingly at Gareth, properly *seeing* him as the true brave man that he is. The excerpt included belongs to this moment of realisation:

And then when turning to Lynette he told
 The late of Gareth, petulantly she said
 'Ay well __ ay, well __ for worse than being fool'd
 Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,
Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and drinks
 And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.
 But all about it flies a honeysuckle.
 Seek, till we find.' And when they sought and found,
 Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
Past with sleep; on whom the maiden gazed:
 'Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to sleep hast thou.
 Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to him
 As any mother? Ay, but such a one
 As all day long hath rated at her child,
 And vext his day, but blesses him asleep __
 Good lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle
 In the hush'd at night, as if the world were one
 Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!

('Gareth and Lynette' verses 1240-57)

In *Scenes*, Armstrong says that Cameron had underlined verses 1243 and 1244, and 1248 and 1249, as in the poem above (371-2). Armstrong works from the J. Paul Getty Museum copy, underlined, and the text page thumbnail included in fig. 105 belongs to the V&A Museum, not underlined. This is a just one example of many with the discrepancies in underlining existing in the few copies of *Illustrations* surviving around the world's museums, as referred to in my introduction. It is evident that the verse "and all his life / Past with sleep;

on whom the maiden gazed” had clearly served Cameron as her source of inspiration. As for the reasons she chose to underline some copies and not others, these are unknown.

Gareth and Lynette was one of Cameron’s first idylls to ever be photographed, and to certain extent it appears as a too literal a description of Tennyson’s story; little imaginative and lacking in the artistic confidence or intensity that Cameron’s compositions normally possess throughout *Illustrations*. Cameron’s *Gareth and Lynette* is textual to the end of the idyll, representing him asleep, Lynette looking on, all too static. The scene being represented says nothing of the layering of the idyll’s characters; Lynette’s gaze is pure veneration and there is no sign of her initial doubt for this man’s bravery, who is now lying immobile. Although she is the active part and the “Reacter” in the image, she is not one of Cameron’s heroines, but neither one of Tennyson’s. ‘Gareth and Lynette’s story never felt central to *Idylls*, but just a trifling appetiser for what is yet to come. Cameron sensed this and represented a Lynette flat and with little contrast in the scene and in front of her male counterpart. In fact, Lynette is the only female character in *Illustrations* who shares her act with her knight without any protagonism in herself. When witnessing Guinevere and Lancelot’s farewell or Vivien and Merlin’s spell, we will see stronger leading women in them.

Due to its textuality, Cameron’s *Gareth and Lynette* does not offer much tension to the text, and as Louvel’s maternal model of illustration, cited in my introduction, it suggests, this photographer’s interpretation is at pure service to the plot and to Tennyson’s story. Great effort has been put to recreate the textual context and the background setting of the cave – underlined verse 1243 –, and Cameron has gone a step further to convey the comfort and cosy feel essential to story she is representing. The setting includes the honeysuckle folly from the garden at Dimbola,¹⁰¹ foliage and thick fabrics that compose a rather crowded image, full, but also snug and not disturbing to the scene. The leaves and branches from the bush are in sharp focus aiding the initial reading of the image, and giving a vivid sense of touch to the viewer, which instantly draws his eye to it. They offer the only rendered detail in the image, repetition and visual mass, and also an immediate visual authenticity in reference to Tennyson’s poem. From then on, the viewer’s eye naturally moves around, first to Lynette’s face, with soft-focus but with great luminosity, and then along the cascade of long hair falling and unveiling her posture and lining body over Gareth. Both her gaze and resting hand upon his chest direct the viewer to the immobile knight. Her gaze is the action and line in the image, actively looking and pointing us towards the “phenomena”, Gareth, passively sleeping. His face is soft, less importantly conveying a peaceful and whimsical sleep.

There is a slight imbalance in Cameron’s composition, with a left side of the background piled up with information and detail which offers all kinds of textures and sensorial effects, and a right side left empty, creating what William DuBois and Barbara Hodik

¹⁰¹ In October 1874, Cameron wrote to Charles Turner Tennyson saying she had “taken Enid at the Cedarn cabinet and Gareth in the cave with honeysuckle outside” (Hinton *Illustrations* 1).

call the “negative space” (49). The relationship between these two areas is key, as it suggests the couple is being left alone with no other characters around. Lancelot, who in the poem has been the narrator of Gareth’s chivalry a minute ago and that Cameron has highlighted his presence with her methodical reference to text, is no longer there photographically disturbing this precious moment between the lovers. Perhaps this is the only discrepancy between both discourses here. Intimacy and adoration is the real emphasis and message of the image, and the little interaction between these two human figures, not the nature which lavishly frames them, but their love, unconcealed in the prettily staged setting. As we will witness, Cameron’s expertise in *Illustrations* excels in choosing the moment that best suits her style, technique and storytelling of events. This is just one first example.

Gareth’s opulent clothing outlines stunning curves and creases full of texture that add to his angelical pose, and bear on his good nature, as we know it. Lynette, played by Mary Emily (May) Prinsep Hitchens (1853-1931) – Cameron’s niece –, displays stunning young feminine features and a virgin-like profile suitable to a maid. Gareth is played here by May’s actual husband Andrew Kinsman Hitchens,¹⁰² whom she had married earlier on that same year (Lipscomb 225). Although this moment between both newlyweds in real life and represented lovers in the story could have been more sensual, Cameron has made it look sweetly innocent and chaste. Prinsep’s young body language, posing and virginal appearance reinforce the candid gaze looking at Gareth in a motherly way, meditating about and observing Gareth. The viewer engages with her unavoidably, and thinks about what she is thinking. This is the visual rhetoric of the image, and its strength.

Lynette’s motherly gaze is unnatural for a maid who is alone in a cave with her saviour, or even for a young girl recently married. It almost feels as if Cameron is depicting Lynette here as Gareth’s mother, statement that agrees in spirit with Tennyson’s open-questions in the extract: “As any mother?” in verse 1252, and “...rated at her child?” in verse 1253. Cameron is clearly following this, requesting her sitter to gaze like a mother, merging the figures of both women in one, as Tennyson had progressively done in his story. Cameron has managed to convey excellently this transformation, very simply and she knows best; a gaze and representing with this her sitter’s inner thought, and thus achieving the real essence of this idyll.

¹⁰² V&A Museum website. Accessed 11 Jan. 2017.



Fig. 106 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Shadow of the Cross*, 1865.

Armstrong compares this Cameron's *Gareth and Lynette* with the style of her Madonnas, and in particular as reminiscent of *The Shadow of the Cross* (fig. 106 above) and *Prayer and Praise*¹⁰³ (373), describing it as the Christianisation of Lynette's and Gareth's story (376). This iconographic reference to the Virgin Mary is indeed a valuable one, especially when it comes to style and composition. Truthfully, Cameron interpreted sensuality compliantly between the lovers, and conventionally married sitters, very pure and innocent, as representing motherly love. The word 'lusty,' used by Tennyson in verse 1251, meaning merry and joyous, vigorous and robust at the time is lost in sense in this representation.

When considering the history of *Idylls*' series of publications, 'Gareth and Lynette' was one of the last idylls to be written and included in the series by Tennyson in 1871 with a leading woman in it. This fact is felt in Cameron's illustration, as Lynette's persona is neither regarded as a central to the original story nor engraved in the reader's mind, somehow feeling her detached and singled out from the rest of the women in *Idylls*, as we will notice next.

4.4.2.2 *Enid*

With *Enid*, Cameron commences her tradition in *Illustrations* of representing each of the main characters as paired images. *Enid* is the first woman to be victimised by the male standards in King Arthur's court, encapsulating perfectly Cameron's idea of heroin and therefore receiving the two-illustrations treatment in the book.

Although Tennyson had dedicated two idylls to this story in his book of poems; 'The Marriage of Geraint' and 'Geraint and Enid,' Cameron's portraits of *Enid* concentrates in illustrating two different episodes from just the first of them, thus focusing in the early part of the lovers' story; the courting and their nuptials. However, in neither of the portraits is Geraint, present. He is visually excluded from both. In the role of *Enid*, Cameron asked her neighbour

¹⁰³ See 'Prayer and Praise' (1865): commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Julia_Margaret_Cameron_%28British,_born_India_-_Prayer_and_Praise_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg Accessed 18 May 2017.

– or perhaps long stay visitor – Emily Peacock (born c. 1855)¹⁰⁴, of exquisite physical beauty, to sit for her, as she will also do later on as *May Queen*.

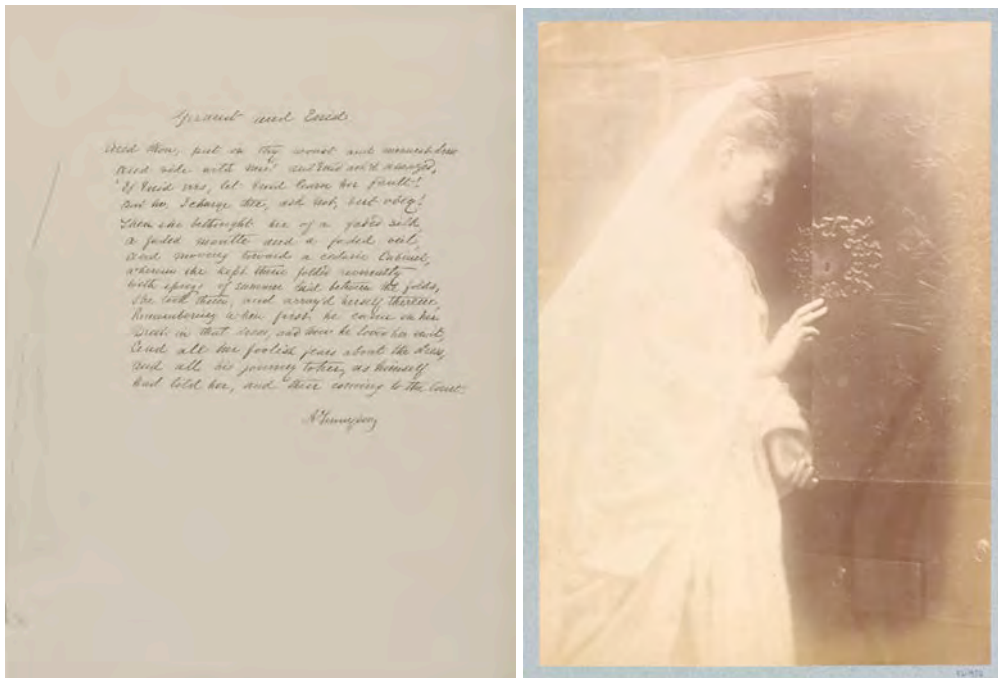


Fig. 107: 'Geraint and Enid' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874.
Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Enid*, 1874 (photographed).

In the first of Cameron's portraits, we see Enid dressed in a magnificent white dress – that in fact looks like a wedding dress –, pulling open a wardrobe and looking inside it. To accompany this scene, Cameron handwrote the following excerpt from Tennyson's idyll¹⁰⁴:

And thou, put on thy worst and meanest dress
And ride with me.' And Enid ask'd amazed,
'If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault.'
But he, 'I charge thee, ask not, but obey.'
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
A faded mantle and a faded veil,
And moving toward a cedarn cabinet,
Wherein she kept them folded reverently
With springs of summer laid between the folds,
She took them, and array'd herself therein,
Remembering when first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey to her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to court.

(*'The Marriage of Geraint'* verses 130-44)

Here Tennyson narrates the moment in the present when Geraint seeing Enid as the untruthful wife, wishes to humiliate her commanding her to wear the "worst and meanest dress," and how she then goes obediently to the "cedarn cabinet" to find one. And yet simultaneously, the Poet is referring to a moment in the past, when Enid reflecting on how her once-beautiful dress, now old and "faded," folded and forgotten in the cabinet, was worn once

¹⁰⁴ There are no records in the Freshwater Bay register of a Ms. Peacock having been living there (Lipscomb 225).

to marry Geraint. And how much he loved her that day, and how far gone this feeling is today. Cameron has encapsulated both moments in this same portrait too, by representing Enid wearing that dress – the beautiful past, as she visualises herself in it –, and at the same time obeying Geraint's orders and looking in the cabinet – the real and crude present. A temporary contradiction that can only make sense in the dreamlike subconscious.

As before, the copy of the J. Getty Images Museum had two verses underlined – and none in the V&A museum copy (see fig. 107). In them, Cameron had precisely highlighted those two moments, past and present, referring to the cabinet – present – and to the dress she is now wearing – past.

In her image, the viewer sees in the same plane of focus and perfect photographic contrast both the subject's gloomy and submissive face, and the dutiful and obedient hand gesture, corresponding to the *moving* and *arraying*, the only two movements underlined in the extract. These three slow actions are key in the narrative of this scene; moving to the cabinet, opening it and arraying herself in the dress. A magnificently cinematic sequence, staged perfectly visually thanks to Cameron's image contrast and strong vertical division created by the rim of the cabinet door. This immediately forces the eye to move from left to right and vice versa. On the left side, details are blurred and overexposed and there remains a ghost-like and motionless Enid, seeing herself in the past but accepting her dutiful present: "If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault." On the right-hand side, there is the cedarn cabinet, darker and filled with intricate details of the door engravings, that was keeping her old dress, representing both a happy past and a miserable present-future. DuBois says that in photography, clear vertical lines can create moods of dignity and formality (16-7). In *Enid*, the female subject is certainly conforming with her husband's punishment.

It is also possible that Cameron did not intend to produce such blinkered contrast, but just that in order to record all the particulars of the cabinet, she might have ended overexposing the rest of the image, i.e.: the Enid in her white dress, thus losing part of its detail in these lighter areas and obtaining a spectral effect here. But as with the rest of Cameron's photography, one can never be certain but surely can admire its poetic and enchanting result.

Therefore, this image represents a tender moment of meditation and remembrance of earlier happy times, as Cameron is generally committed to. The subtlety and stillness of this nostalgic movement is reflected by the tender action of the hands, as mentioned in perfect focus and also in the centre of the representation, which unavoidably catches our eye. The hands direct our look towards the cupboard, in focus too with stunning, almost 3D-like detail of the engravings on the door. We move then to the maid's face, in half tone, sad and deep in thought. Cameron was portraying a humiliated Enid, saddened by the unfairness of her husband's request. The eye cannot help but move to the blurred cascade of creases found in the dress and veil. Its blooming whiteness is overpowering and contrasts with the rest of the image. It is almost spectral, not of this time but, as indicated of the past. The eye finally returns to the maid and wardrobe, and the hand action of opening and peeking inside. It is

here where resides the visual emphasis and where the image creates the slow action and the narrative.

Carol Armstrong has noticed that this is a “moment of stillness” in Cameron’s subject, silent and abstract, and refers to Cameron’s persistent theme in the women of *Illustrations*, the camera pointing at their “inner life of thought, rather than the outward activity of narrative” (382). In *Enid* the narrative is locked in her head and the inside of the cedarn cabinet.

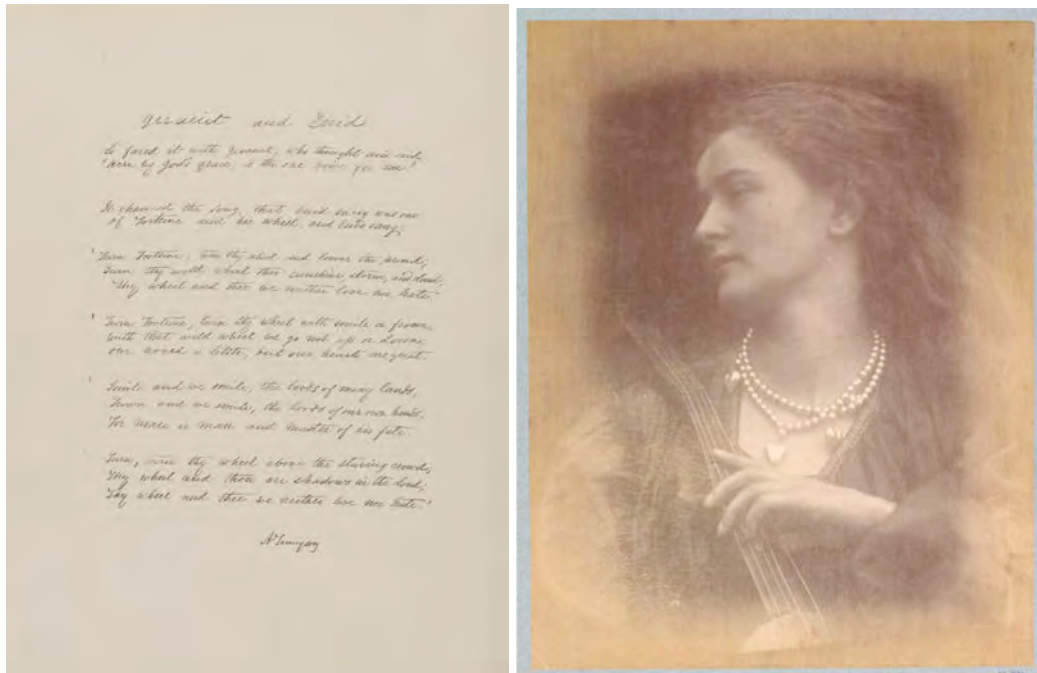


Fig. 108 'Geraint and Enid' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874.
Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *And Enid Sang*,
September 1874 (photographed).

With *And Enid sang*, Cameron continues to represent the past. In it, Geraint remembers the moment he first heard Enid sing from her father’s tower. The photographer’s composition and general approach has changed entirely here. Enid, also framed and centred in a classical manner in the image, is being represented this time as a close-up and with a string instrument across her chest. Howard suggested that this Enid is a close reminiscence of this representation by Rossetti (89-90):



Fig. 109 Etching by Eugene Gaugen after Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting *A Christmas Carol*, 1867.

Truth to it, this *And Enid Sang* somehow seems borrowed for *Illustrations*, standing out within the book for its tightly-cropped composition and following a style that perhaps belongs more to Cameron's so-called Fair women portraits. We will see more intimate portraits in this manner in the *Other Poems* women in *Illustrations*, such as *May Queen* and *Maud*, and not in the *Idylls* ones.

Here, Enid is wearing a fancier dress and is adorned with several necklaces. Details and lighting have been taken with more care, faultlessly exposed, and Enid is presented here as the ideal and the sublime of beauty; porcelain skin, white breast, golden loose hair – compared to the other Enid, married and with tied up hair –, and with gracious hands. All archetypes of medieval and Pre-Raphaelites exquisiteness which, this time, stands out emphatically from the dark backdrop. We have seen how Cameron uses backdrops in her photography in order to accentuate a contrast between it and her subject matters, also to achieve a perfect sense of isolation. Thanks to this, Enid's splendour and fairness stand out from a repetition of darker tones, and Cameron achieves an outstanding representation of Geraint's thoughts when idealising Enid before her supposed infidelity. The constructed halo effect also helps to make her belong to the dream world. This effect was apparently due to Cameron using too large plates for the size of her camera lens, creating this 'falling off' of the images and blurred edges in the photographs (Julian Cox *JMC Complete* 48).

Most of the detail in *And Enid Sang* arrests on the necklace, at the centre of the image. From then on, the viewer will move to Enid's face, gazing left, outside the frame, directing the eye after the stringed instrument she has in her hands. In this Enid, we come back too to the gentle movement of the hands playing, and here the eye temporarily rests, carrying out the narrative of the image; Enid singing, and the emotions that this provokes in Geraint. He felt love at the time and the nostalgia of it now.

Cameron included this excerpt of 'The Marriage of Geraint' to go along with this image, occurring a few verses after the episode of the dress:

So, fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,
"Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me."
It chanced the song that Enid sang was one
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang:
"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel..."

(‘The Marriage of Geraint’ verses 343-7)

On this particular occasion, she titles her image with a verse from Tennyson, this belonging to one of Geraint’s quotes. MacKay says that “this time, Tennyson has not made us privy to her thoughts” (34), and with this underlining and titling neither has Cameron. Instead, Enid’s portrait belongs to Geraint’s mind, imagined and longed by him, and this is perhaps why this portrait feels slightly different to the rest in *Illustrations*. But while doing that, MacKay says, Cameron has featured a strong independent and more liberated Enid; “self-contained” and “self-fulfilled,” additional readings that, she says, could not be Geraint’s ones. In the poem, he sees himself as the one who “fulfils her destiny,” and converts her in the object of his desire and ultimately his devoted wife (34). Thus, this portrait of the independent Enid, stands out amongst the idea of submission to the male’s view of love in Tennyson’s world of knights and chivalry. Geraint is besotted by this view of the emancipated Enid, whom he sees as “the one voice for me” in verse 344.

The singing Enid is visually more dynamic, oozes confidence, freedom and sensuality in her loose hair, turned neck and closeness. By being represented playing the lute she shows other interests in art and music, apart of the general duties of a maid of her status. This knowledge in Victorian time indicated culture and erudition in women.

Thus, Cameron has chosen to represent this change in the two Enids as part of her cinematic and sequence of paired images. Enid went in time from the independent and free maid to the submissive and obedient woman through marriage. And with this interpretation, Cameron portrays a feminist story of the maid Enid. To convey these values, Cameron has ensured to record the movement of the hands playing in the centre in full detail. The other key movement is depicted in Enid’s thoughtful glance, looking away to the left, outside the frame, directing the viewer to end of the lute, which is not in full view, to show her playing and dedication to her art. Cameron has chosen to depict the ideal of beauty through music here, from a memory that has not even come from a visual perception, but from an auditory one: “is the one voice for me.” The reader can notice the word parallelism between Tennyson’s verses 344 and 368, where ‘maid’ sounds like ‘voice’ in Geraint’s vision. Her singing makes Enid incredibly beautiful, and Geraint fell in love instantly. Cameron portrays music and titles her portrait with the action of singing. The image is sensorial; hearable and sound-felt.

Cameron liked using the element of music in her images, and clear examples are *The Whisper of the Muse* (as seen in fig. 65) and *The Minstrel Group*,¹⁰⁵ and in the *Illustrations* book *The Princess*. Music was her manner to convey art, and the lyricism in poetry. We will

¹⁰⁵ See ‘The Minstrel Group,’ (1866):
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O207749/the-minstrel-group-photograph-cameron-julia-margaret/> Accessed 14 Jan. 2017.

see that she is attracted towards Tennyson's songs, and many of her *Illustrations* extracts like those in 'The Pale Nun,' or in 'The Princess' contain songs. If Tennyson introduced songs in his verses to break the rhythm of her poetry, Cameron used those to infuse thinking and meditation in her women subjects.

To bring the character of Enid to a close, Cameron had chosen to represent her with her change as part of her cinematic and sequenced of paired images. Enid went in time from the independent and free maid to the submissive and obedient woman through marriage. And with this interpretation, the photographer is hinting a feminist tale in this maid's representation.

4.4.2.3 Vivien

Cameron produces also two images for Tennyson's 'Merlin and Vivien' idyll next, but decides to reverse her title to *Vivien and Merlin*, to change their protagonism. Armstrong says that with it she is establishing a new hierarchy in them (391).

Vivien is represented throughout *Idylls* as the evil anti-heroine who seduces and bewitches Merlin. MacKay considers she is not being illustrated in such terms, but "on much equal" ones, especially on Cameron's first photograph (34-5).

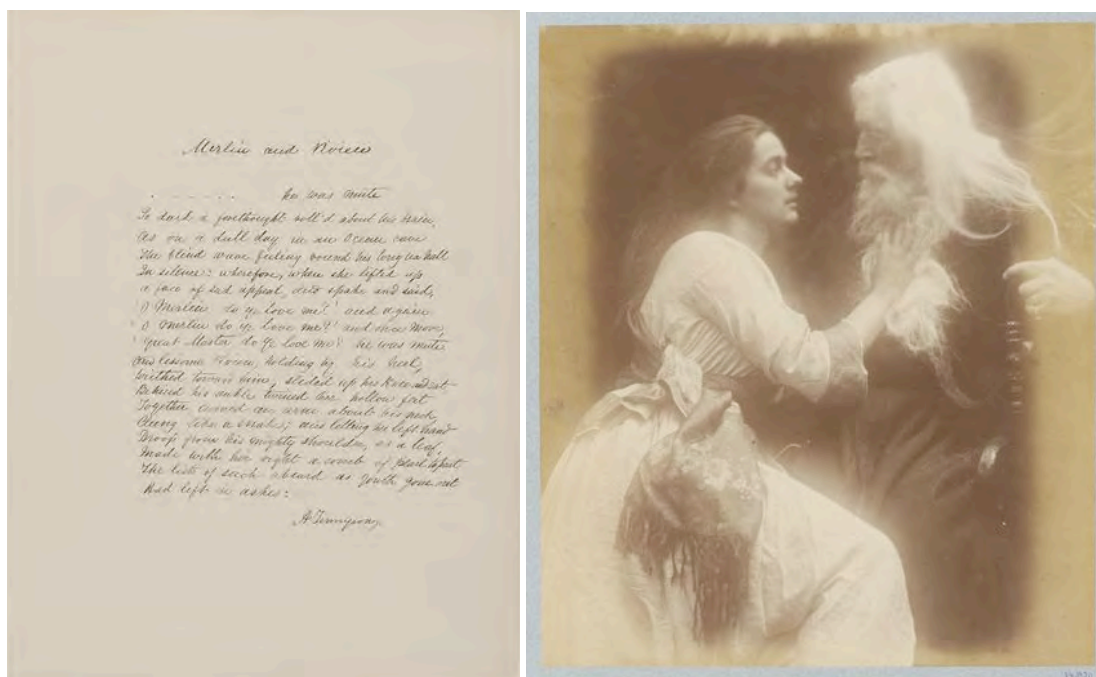


Fig. 110 'Vivien and Merlin' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Vivien and Merlin*, 1874 (photographed).

This is true to certain extent. In my opinion Cameron is being very clever in her entire representation of Vivien, and uses different composition and cropping to depict how Vivien wishes to come across in each of the situations as we will discuss.

Cameron used sitters with a considerable age difference, which might have contributed to Vivien's "daughterly" gesture, as MacKay sees in the first illustration. For the role of Vivien here, she used young Agnes Mangles (c.1850-1906), and her husband for that one of Merlin. Charles Hay Cameron and his long white beard made a picture-perfect wizard, who was required to epitomise age and wisdom in *Idylls*. In verses 243-4, Tennyson had described Merlin in "a beard as youth gone out had left in ashes," and in Cameron's usual attempt to recreate text, she saw in her husband and his outer physical attribute key in her representation. The viewer can realise Mr. Cameron's beard is clearly highlighted – and even bulked-up with extra wool or cotton in Ms. Mangles' hand – through lighting and contrast. As a man full of wisdom, Merlin's inner features were photographically made to shine through his outer ones, as Cameron knew how to from portraying her great and Famous men.

The first 'Vivien and Merlin' image depicts the seduction of the wizard, accompanied by the following excerpt:

..... he was mute.
 So dark a forethought roll'd about his brain,
 As on a dull day in an Ocean cave
 The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
 In silence; wherefore, when she lifted up
A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,
 'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and again,
 'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and once more,
 'Great Master, do ye love me?' he was mute.
 And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
 Writhed toward him, slid up his knee and sat,
 Behind his ankle twinned her hollow feet
 Together, curved an arm about his neck,
 Clung like a snake; and letting her left hand
 Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
 Made with her right a comb of pearl to part
 The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
 Had left in ashes:

('Merlin and Vivien' verses 227-42)

In the J. Getty Images Museum, Cameron had underlined verses 231-2, and in this and the V&A museum she had taken part of the first verse out with Vivien saying: "And I will kiss you for it." Instead, she had inserted dots. She also intervened in the last verse, excluding Merlin's intervention about to start. With these actions, she wishes to avoid an effusive dialogue between the two characters, and leave it as a monologue by Vivien directed to a "mute[d]" Merlin instead.

Thus, Cameron's entire composition moves around Vivien, getting most of the focus and the contrast, by wearing light clothing amongst the black setting. Cameron seems to be photographing one of her Famous men and one of her Fair women in this scene; the famous and intellectual wizard and a woman in character, acting and performing to be someone else. Stylewise, Merlin's profile and straight-sitting and suspended head against the dark background proves this. And so, does Vivien depicted in light dressing, loose hair, and more

physical liberating pose. Cameron is able to achieve that great contrast and tonal range, obtaining perfect beautiful whites in Merlin's beard, and luminous drapery in such a dark setting.

Her composition reminds one of Doré's *Vivien and Merlin Repose*, (see fig. 51). Both couples sat down canoodling as Vivien admires Merlin from below in a docile posture. The observer's eye begins to travel from Vivien's face, the sharper out of the two. There he would notice a young maid gazing confidently into Merlin's eyes, pointing the viewer to his soft face and aura. Two motions take place in the imagery, one is Vivien's right hand on Merlin's chest, combing the old man's beard, as the text narrates in verse 241; and the second one, Vivien's twisting and slithering in verses 236-40.

The posing and interaction between the two characters in Cameron's representation obeys fundamentally to text. As highlighted in there, Cameron has composed a Vivien kneeling down and looking up to the wizard in fake admiration while talking and in a sensual posing wrapping herself around him like a snake. The diagonal lines of Vivien's pose, confer a sense of instability in the image, hinting the dangerous and indecorous situation, which corresponds with Tennyson's snake allegory, i.e.: "lissome," "writhed," "slided," "twinned," "curved" and "clung." Rather than MacKay's equality of characters, I see a depleted Vivien in Cameron's composition, but a strong presence visually, being placed closer to the camera at the service of full detail, perfect contrast and halo in the image, that stages inferiority to the wizard. There is no doubt, though that Cameron's Vivien is a confident and sassy woman, who knows how to talk up to the wizard but move around with superiority.

With regards to the action of the beard combing, it is perhaps necessary to reference Barthes' theory of *punctum*. I feel that with Cameron's representation of the beard combing has accomplished great imagery in this scene, showing once again her great eye for detail and understanding of poetic narrative in photography. The combining is engaging for the viewer, and he can bring himself directly to this almost-biblical seduction scene by picturing Vivien twisting enticingly Merlin's hair as she chit-chats, praises and builds the old man up to the level she wants. Making herself look more love-struck than devilish and resting her hand on the man's beard is a great signifier of the action in this story-telling.

To represent her Vivien, Cameron chose a model with darker hair than usual, and placed her in the middle of light-haired *Idylls* beauties. Pre-Raphaelite Sandys's Vivien springs to mind here, portrayed with dark hair and wrapped scarf around her bosom. She could be an inspiration for Cameron.

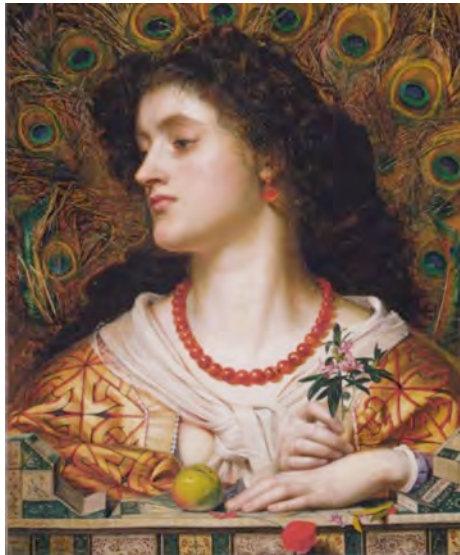


Fig. 111 Anthony Frederick A. Sandys, *Vivien*, 1863.

To stage Vivien's second act and the moment of the spell, Cameron changes strategy. The contrast of the two close-up characters that we will see continue in other couple representations in *Idylls* gets upgraded to a full-length one for this. Again, this is necessary in her textual execution, as she is in need of a larger background set to fit an oak to essentially recreate Merlin's immobilisation. She goes a few steps back with her camera to be able to achieve that.

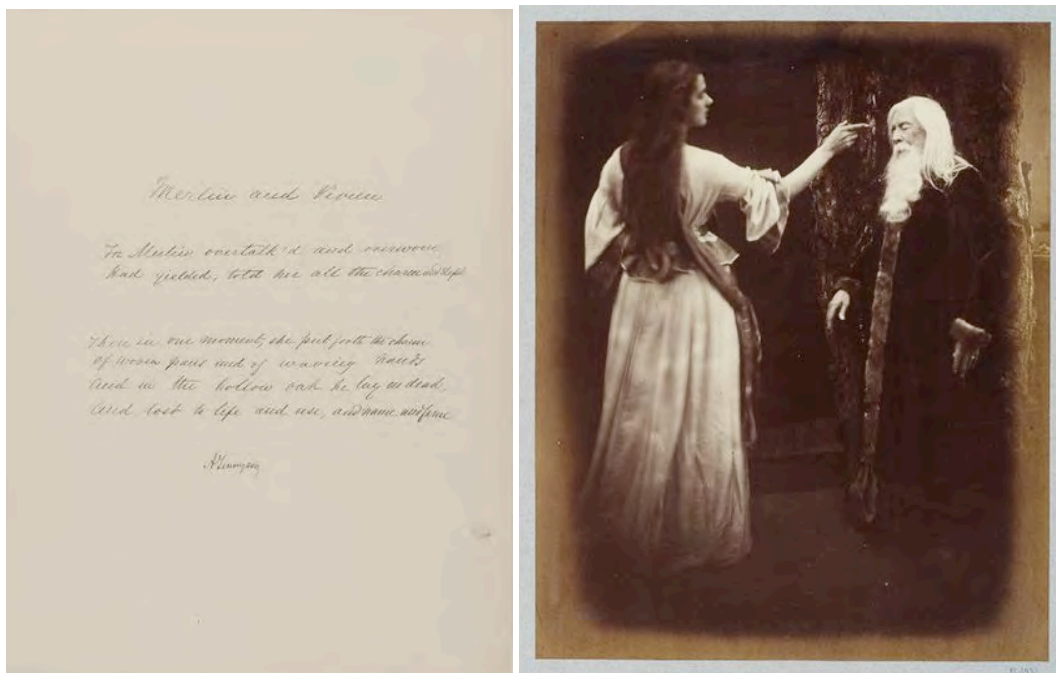


Fig. 112 'Vivien and Merlin' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874.
Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Vivien and Merlin*, 1874 (photographed).

The focus of the camera is this time on Merlin, still and in a trance. Behind is the oak that came from a hollow tree from Farringford (Hinton 3). Charles's acting is awkward, and Vivien's back is turned appearing although in soft focus in perfect outline and tonal contrast.

Here she appears superior, as the true self. She has succeeded and overpowered the male character of this story. And the excerpt that Cameron includes to narrate this moment is:

For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn
Had yielded, told her all the charm, and slept.

Then, in one moment, she put forth the charm
Of woven paces and of waving hands,
And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
And lost to life and use and name and fame.

(‘Merlin and Vivien’ verses 963-8)

Peculiarly with some extra lines being written in *Illustrations Miniature*, probably added as Cameron’s after-thought:

Then crying, ‘I have made his glory mine,’
And shrieking out, ‘O fool!’ the harlot leapt
Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
Behind her, and the forest echo’d ‘fool.’

(‘Merlin and Vivien’ verses 969-72)

There is a strong sense of staging in Cameron’s representation of this scene, and to be frank not very successfully. The theatricality – or absorption as previously referred in this chapter – of this image contrasts with the effortless posing of the earlier *Vivien and Merlin*, has been criticised by both Armstrong and MacKay.¹⁰⁶ It is due to the intense propping around and the overacting of the characters, given by Vivien’s hand gesture and aggressive profile, and Merlin’s unskilled fainting. Cameron perhaps went out her comfort zone for this, and she probably felt that Tennyson’s dynamic text required a more active and forceful illustration, encouraging Vivien’s hostile pointing and Merlin’s blackout as he is imprisoned in the oak. She tried to convey superiority vs. shrinkage, Vivien standing up and Merlin collapsing, as the roles had clearly changed, on Cameron’s decision as she needed to scale up in her photography. She went over board and missed.

However, looking at the evolution of Cameron’s Vivien, we see a shrewd and intellectual woman who knows how to present herself to achieve what she wants. And the different techniques in Cameron’s representation have succeeded in doing so. To the point that this last Vivien is the one Cameron wished the reader to remember; the successful Vivien, the prototype of feminine strength and accomplishment. It is significant that the first *Vivien and Merlin* was never included in her *Miniature* edition.

4.4.2.4 Elaine, the Lily Maid of Astolat

Cameron gave an extended treatment to this story by producing a total of four images to illustrate Tennyson’s *Elaine and Lancelot* idyll, key part in the development of King Arthur’s story and the destiny of his kingdom. The popularity of this story is proven by the numerous representations of Elaine in fine art; “over eighty works of art in various media between 1860

¹⁰⁶ Armstrong calls it “meta-tableau” (392) and MacKay “ingenious performance” (35).

and 1914,” as estimated by Christine Poulson (Lupack 18). This section will show and cite a couple in direct comparison to Cameron’s interpretation, but there are many more.

The first two illustrations of Elaine appear in volume one of *Illustrations* and the Miniature edition, and are a matching set of the maid’s single portrait narrating her love story with Lancelot. The next two, however, appear in volume two, as well as the Miniature edition, and are group portraits narrating her death from a broken heart and sailing to Camelot. The gap between the two sets is therefore rather significant, in both photographic terms and in distance in time and space.

Cameron captioned her first two portraits *Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat* and *Elaine*, excluding Lancelot both textually and visually. At first sight, these paired portraits follow identical compositions, but as we read more closely, we notice variances and weighty repetitions that Cameron intended them to be read as part of a sequence and to look at these two portraits in alliance.



Fig. 113 'Lancelot and Elaine' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874.
Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Elaine the Lily Maid of Astolat*, 1874 (photographed).

To portrait Elaine, Cameron photographed Mary Emily (May) Prinsep, seen previously as Lynette in *Illustrations*. In the first portrait of the lily maid, the viewer’s eye first notices her positioned at the centre of the image in complete profile admiring her lover’s shield. This central area possesses clarity to enjoy the intricate details of her costume, and the dark background makes her stand out. From here on, and following her gaze up, our eye moves onto the magnificent piece of armour on display, straight up on the wall.

The natural reaction for the reader of *Illustrations* is to go and observe the second Elaine, and compare the two. This one is posing also very two-dimensionally, now against a bare background, head downwards, contemplating the piece of embroidery on her lap. A

sense of emptiness and absence comes unavoidably to the viewer's mind, caused by the *there-was* of before and the *there-was-not* of after. Cameron conveyed it beautifully with this "cinematic sequence," as Armstrong calls it (397).

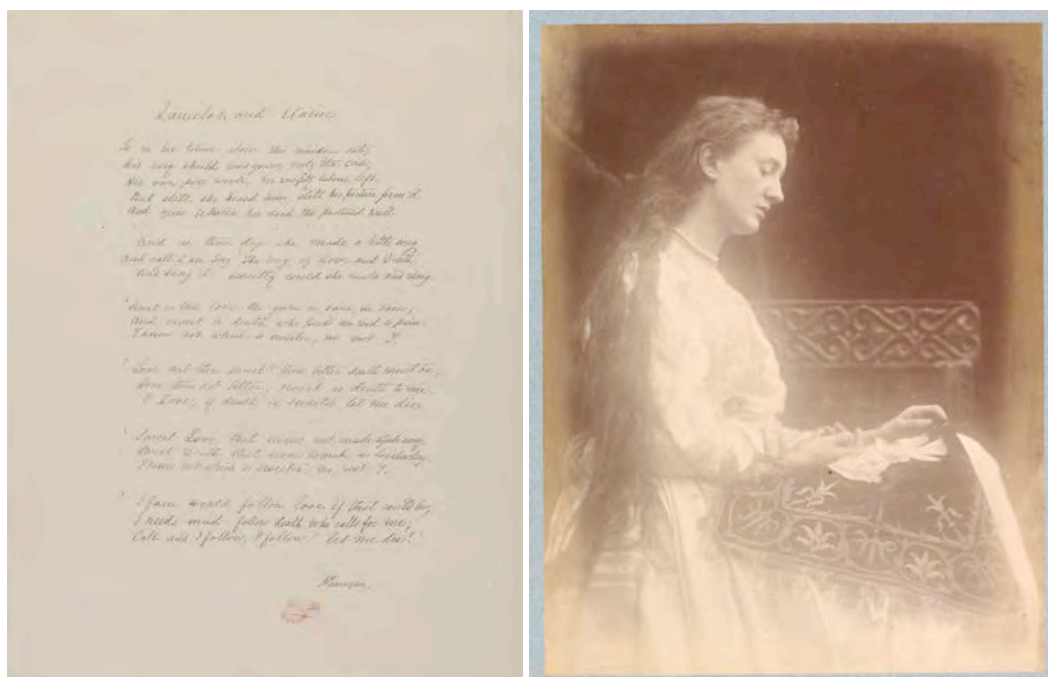


Fig. 114 'Lancelot and Elaine' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Cameron, Julia Margaret, *Elaine*, 1874 (photographed).

There is a clear and intended sense of repetition between these two Elaines, who were probably photographed in the same sitting, given the resemblance in the clothing and the framing, and just a few alterations happening with the backdrop, props and model's gestures. Despite that, there is no redundancy between them, instead there is progression. What apparently looks like carbon-copied photographs, they depict a series of images with two different women and moments in time on them; a "slight shift" between the present and past" (Armstrong 402) of our Elaine. This subject is represented first admiring and venerating Lancelot, and then having been abandoned by him. When witnessing these events, the viewer feels that being present in Elaine's chamber, he has entered her world and state of mind in this love story. The two Elaines' gaze is engaging with the viewer.

There are two moments in the history of Elaine that been wildly revisited in the History of Art, one of them is the portraying of the lily maid of Astolat guarding Lancelot's shield and armour in her chamber, and the other one is of the lifeless body sailing to Camelot to meet. In chapter two, we saw Hughes's 1867 painting *Elaine with the Armour of Launcelot*, (see fig. 33), and when looking for photographic interpretations of this Elaine in time, we need to look at Peach Robinson's *Elaine Watching the Shield of Lancelot*. This photograph was first exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition in London. A print copy of this is currently at the Royal Photographic Society containing a handwritten extract from Tennyson's poem, corresponding to the same moment depicted by Cameron. At this point I am unable to

document if this print was exhibited with this extract then:

and ah God's mercy what a stroke was there!
And here a thrust that might have killed, but God
Broke the strong lace, and roll'd his enemy down
And saved him: so she lived in fantasy

(‘Lancelot and Elaine’ verses 24-7)



Fig. 115 Henry Peach Robinson, *Elaine Watching the Shield of Lancelot*, 1862.

Unavoidably, there are numerous resemblances between Cameron's and H. P. Robinson's photograph of Elaine. And yet at the same time, an essential difference; the idealism and the subject's mind set conveyed by Cameron's out-of-focus.

The excerpt to accompany Cameron's first Elaine includes the opening twelve lines of Tennyson's poem:

Elaine the fair, Elaine the loveable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot;
Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam;
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'ed for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.

(‘Lancelot and Elaine’ verses 1-12)

To illustrate this Elaine in the first part, Cameron has chosen once more to focus on a moment of meditation of the young maid and her reflection on love. Tennyson's visuality of this moment is delightful, narrating how Elaine is being awoken every morning by the

reflection of her knight's shield being guarded in her chamber which proves maximum devotion. By choosing this moment photographically, Cameron firstly depicts Elaine confined in her bedroom with her object of admiration; the shield, and representing Lancelot with it. Naturally, this is only present in the first Elaine, hanging on the wall.

Furthermore, she underlines two verses in this extract – from the Getty volume –, referring to the shield case Elaine is making for him as a sign of her devotion. The visible cotton threads in the image are proof of this.

There is a further reference in the text; the “yellow-throated nestling” in verse 12, which Tennyson has used here as a metaphor to symbolise Elaine's fragility and the brittleness of her love for Lancelot, and that Cameron decides to represent in both portraits to give continuity to this element. This small feature is represented as a kind of silhouette in both Elaines, anecdotically not photographed in the original glass negative, but added afterwards onto it or the image by clumsy intervention – either scratched onto the negative, or drawn onto the final print (Hinton *Illustrations* 50). We can only guess that this was an after-thought decision from Cameron, who probably thought it impossible to keep a little bird in place for such a long exposure. Placing the little nestlings on both images was an essential part in her representation, and proves Cameron's endless quest for detail in certain little aspects of Tennyson's text that she will think would bring her female subject closer to it. This “perusal of the detail,” says Armstrong will sometimes take “precedence” over the story for Cameron (401), and will provide an instant more with her subject and her story. Detail is a constant throughout Cameron's work in *Illustrations*.

The contrast in Elaine's gazing between both portraits reflects her joy and hope have turned into broken heart. The second Elaine has lost the object of her desire, her knight's shield and with it the knight himself, and she is now left with an empty silk case and dead nestling lying on it. Cameron found and highlighted the corresponding antagonistic state of mind of the maid in Tennyson's narrative in the following extract:

So in her tower alone the maiden sat.
His very shield was gone; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labour, left.

...

And in those days she made a little song,
And call'd her song “The Song of Love and Death,”
And sang it: sweetly could she make and sing.

“Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain.
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

“Love, art thou sweet? Then bitter death must be.
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

“Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away;
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay;
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

“I fain would follow love, if that could be;

I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! Let me die.”

(‘Lancelot and Elaine’ verses 982-1011)

In it, Tennyson uses significant and hearty words to describe the misery and rejection Elaine feels then: “alone”, “gone; only the case”, “own poor work,” “empty” and “left.” This literal sense of absence is conveyed in Cameron’s second Elaine via the “negative space” in the top right corner of the image, where the shield was hanging before.

The cinematic and sequenced single portraits of Elaine engage with the viewer in inspecting for details and the differences between the two, as an early form of “spot the differences” photo game. They tell the tragic story of this maid by zooming into her naivety first and then into her pain. Her knight is ignored but given the presence visually as the direct author and cause of her end. This is clear and foretold by the song Cameron has selected in the second extract, from which she has edited out 12 verses in the middle of it referring to the consoling from her family. A crude melody about death concludes with “Call and I follow, I follow! Let me die,” verse 10111, verse that inspired her to represent seven years earlier a more somber Elaine, entitled with the same wording.



Fig. 116 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Call I Follow, I Follow, Let Me Die*, 1867 (photographed).

On this occasion, she photographed her gorgeous housemaid, Mary Ann Hilliard (1847-1936), as seen an unconditional *muse*. Personally, I find *Call I Follow* one of Cameron’s most wonderfully produced portraits, representing a virginal Elaine in the style of her later *Angel in the Sepulchre*.¹⁰⁷ A Maria Magdalena-like soul, doomed and penitent, left with her suffering prior to her final death. Cameron manages to depict a spectral Elaine here,

¹⁰⁷ See ‘The Angel in the Sepulchre,’ (1869-1870): <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O123369/the-angel-at-the-sepulchre-photograph-cameron-julia-margaret/> Accessed 2 Jun. 2017.

non-*Idyll* relevant if you like, appearing from total darkness and a delightful sense of movement.

As discussed, Cameron completed Elaine's tragic story with two more images representing her death in volume two. In her natural photographic shift from volume to volume and development as a photo-illustrator, Cameron decided to introduce different techniques, as we will notice, when looking at the set of two images with the death of Elaine. We will see similar upgrades and enhancements, also in the story of Arthur, his single portraits and final death. In both she began by expanding her view and introducing new characters to their stories to give dramatism to their deaths, both being victims of adulterous love. The viewer will see clear parallelisms between them and their illustrations in both volumes of *Illustrations*, and with it a Cameron becoming more confident and indulging in her photographic project. It becomes apparent that in volume two she understands better her place in *Illustrations*, and gives more definition to her soft images and narrative by using more elaborate sets.

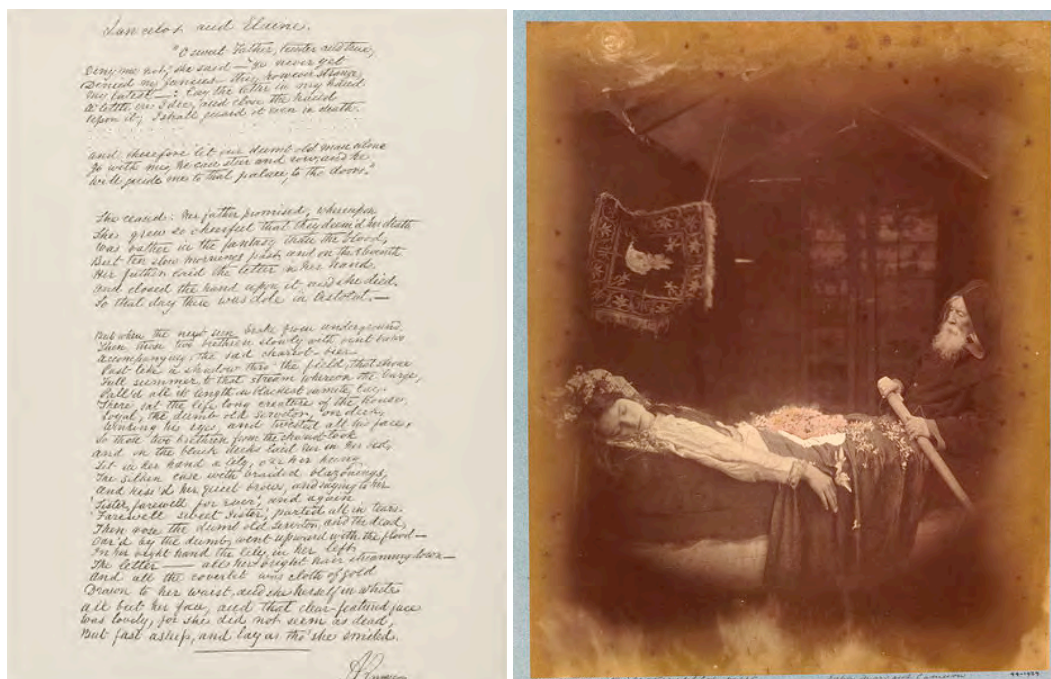


Fig. 117 'Lancelot and Elaine' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Lancelot and Elaine*, 1875 (photographed).

In the first dead *Elaine*, Cameron represents her lifeless body being taken to Camelot by her "old dumb servitor," maintaining a strong resemblance to Doré's earlier *The Body of Elaine on its way to King Arthur's Palace* (see fig. 49). With an extraordinary eye for detail, Cameron keeps her illustration closer to text, also including in her representation other elements in Tennyson's story; white lilies over her dead body, symbols for chastity and purity, letter addressed to the King in her hand, white dress, clothing covering to her waist, bright long hair flowing down and Elaine's clear smiling face. Elaine's femininity is here at her best.

This illustration is a solemn and peaceful picture of death, and the first burial at sea or rivers in *Illustrations*, a theme that culminates with *The Passing of Arthur*. In the sailing of

Elaine, we see a cautious composition throughout, considering it was just being recreated in Cameron's "glass house" with limited lighting, she obtained great detail and tonal range, very evident in the centre of the image. The viewer starts his journey here, where sharpness reflects unit of detail with the maid's lifeless hand at the hub of it, next to some lilies and her letter. Moving from there on, we reach Elaine's face, turned and half smiling, peacefully sleeping. The model is unidentified, and we lack information of who she really was.¹⁰⁸

Next is the aloof and detached object hanging in the top corner of the image, but the eye always gives precedent to the other human figure and moves to see the old man at the other end of the boat and edge of the image. The loyal guardian of the maiden's body, a.k.a. Mr. Cameron, "steer[s] and row[s] in full contrast.

All detail is pre-delivered by the following extract:

"O sweet father, tender and true,
Deny me not,' she said—'ye never yet
Denied my fancies—this, however strange,
My latest: lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it; I shall guard it even in death.

.....
.....
.....

And therefore let our dumb old man alone
Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors."

She ceased: her father promised; whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow through the field, that shone
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kissed her quiet brows, and saying to her
'Sister, farewell for ever,' and again
'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
Oared by the dumb, went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left

¹⁰⁸ Neither Woolf, nor Cox and Ford, nor the V&A: collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1098304/death-of-elaine-photograph- Cameron-julia-margaret/ Accessed 18 Jan. 2017.

The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

(‘Lancelot and Elaine’ verses 1103-54)

The reader will notice that in this part of *Illustrations*, Cameron begins to include longer poems, and rather than underlining some verses, which she is barely doing now in volume two, she leaves out whole chunks of text here and there that are not relevant to her art.

Here the artist has omitted all the references about Lancelot and Guinevere in verses 1109-19, presumably as her illustration was not about them. Instead of pinpointing her source of inspiration, Cameron leaves this time the interpretation up to the viewer’s imagination, and by editing out from text the characters she considers extraneous here, she endures to sole focus on Elaine, and non-refer to the cause of her death, Lancelot. Although obedient to textual detail, as she has accustomed the reader of *Illustrations* by now, Cameron provides continuity to this story which with the paired portraits in volume one including the symbolic “silken case” hanging – as Tennyson refers in verses 1141-2 – representing Lancelot this way.

This final journey of Elaine is often associated in art to Tennyson’s own ‘The Lady of Shallot’ (1833). Chapter two showed Waterhouse’s 1888 famous painting of this heroine (see fig. 32), and here below are some photographic *tableaux* equivalents:



Fig. 118 Henry Peach Robinson, *The Lady of Shallot*, 1860.



Fig. 119 Ronald Leslie Melville, *Elaine*, 1860s.

The stories of both ladies share some facts, but generally differ iconographically with the representation of the old servant escorting the maid of Astolat's body. Doré's and Cameron's representations both follow this canon, but not amateur photographer Leslie Melville's *Elaine*, who includes the maid alone instead (fig. 119).

All these representations, apart from Cameron's and Melville's are seen as more landscape than portrait imagery, depicting their heroines in wonderful and picturesque settings in wild nature, and wrapped in an abundance of drapery and foliage. Cameron bares Elaine from all of that and fills her up with Tennyson's real references and details instead, making Elaine's death more human and sincere. However, in her composition, Cameron has not turned a completely blind eye to the river bank settings. In her attempt to recreate scale and nature, she stepped out with her camera to compose a greater image that would include Elaine's body, a second character, boats and nature. She also intervened in her image, which was framed already with her characteristic halo that added midst and clouds, and painted a moon onto it. With these features in place, and by upping the scale of her composition, Cameron ended up providing her interpretation of this act of Elaine with absolute textuality, which added to her own realistic premiums of photographic texture and human feel in it, resulted, in my opinion, in a real enrichment of her illustration.

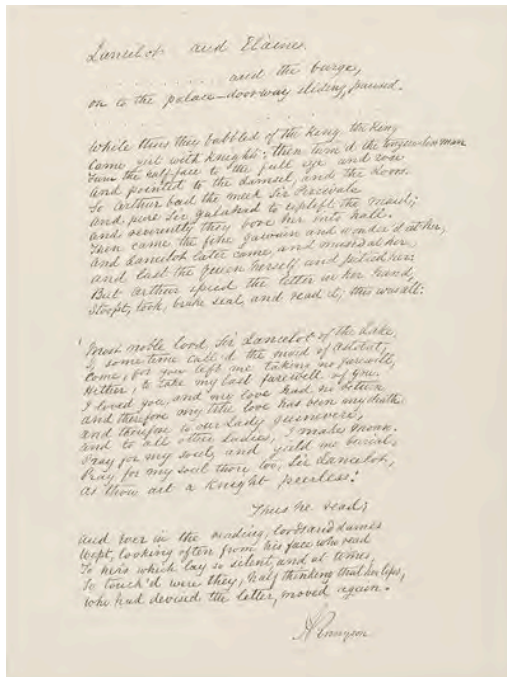


Fig. 120 'Lancelot and Elaine' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Death of Elaine*, 1875 (photographed).

The next illustration known as *Death of Elaine* or *The Corpse of Elaine in the Palace of King Arthur* fast-forwards the story of Elaine eighty-one verses later, representing the excerpt:

.....and the barge,
 On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
 Came girl with knights: then turned the tongueless man.
 From the half-face to the full eye, and rose
 And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.
 So Arthur bad the meek Sir Percivale
 And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;
 And reverently they bore her into hall.
 Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
 And Lancelot later came and mused at her,
 And last the Queen herself, and pitied her:
 But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
 Stoops, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:

"Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
 I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
 Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
 Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
 I loved you, and my love had no return,
 And therefore my true love has been my death.
 And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,
 And to all other ladies, I make moan:
 Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
 Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
 As thou art a knight peerless."

Thus he read;
 And ever in the reading, lords and dames

Wept, looking often from his face who read
To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
So touch'd were they, half-thinking that her lips,
Who had devised the letter, moved again.

(‘Lancelot and Elaine’ verses 1237-79)

This tells us of the reaching of her boat to the castle, the reaction of the other characters and the content of the letter, and Cameron goes on to represent her lifeless body is center stage. Cameron has skillfully arranged her models in two levels of perspective. Elaine, as the heroine, is in light clothing and nearer to the viewfinder in soft detail, receiving plenty of light from above glowing supernaturally. While the mourners, being above and behind her, enjoy all the detail and tonal range which the viewfinder focus, as well as life and existence, provides them. Thus, in this image, Cameron has installed a contrast fence between those living and those that are dead. If the first two Elaines represented her subject's inner thought and fantasy world of love, these two group portraits of the dead Elaine represent her external world, and how the sadness of her death is felt from an outside point of view. It deals with her death and its consequences. Tragically and from now on, the three pillars upon which the kingdom stays afloat will begin to shake one by one. These are represented by Cameron's subjects in full definition; Arthur's monarchy and domain, Arthur's marriage to Guinevere and Arthur's friendship entrusted on Lancelot.

Over Elaine's body rests her letter fully-centred in the image, in the same pallid shade as her and representing a lifeless extension of her. In total clarity, this is the visual emphasis of the picture, holding the viewer's eye, as if to pay attention to its content, read aloud by the King who is holding it. This element engages with the spectator who feels being present at this final act of death of the maiden whose only sin was to love.

4.4.2.5 The Pale Nun

We return to volume one of *Illustrations*, to see Cameron’s representation for ‘The Holy Grail.’



Fig. 121 (for reference only; identical to Figure 2) ‘The Holy Grail’ from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874. Left: Printed page of handwritten and underlined poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Sir Galahad and the Pale Nun*, 1874 (photographed).

As seen in fig. 2 of the introductory chapter, in her illustration *Sir Galahad and The Pale Nun* Cameron depicted the nun passing her vision of the grail. This moment is symbolised with her speech “for thou shalt see what I have seen” in line 160 to Sir Galahad, and passing of the belt she has knitted with her hair and is now she tides around the knight’s waist. Cameron used this extract as text reference:

“But she, the man sweet maiden, shore away
 Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair
 Which made a silken mat-work for her feet
 A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread
 And crimson grail within a silver beam;
 And saw the bright boy-knight, and bout it on him,
 Saying: ‘My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
I, maiden, round, thee, maiden, bind my belt.
 Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,
 And break thro. All, till one will crown thee king
 Far in the spiritual city;’.....

(‘The Holy Grail’ verses 149-62)

Here, she underlined verses 156-9, with some of the words uttered by the pale nun while fastening the belt. There, she calls the knight “my love” and “my knight of heaven,” which may or may not contain a subtle sexual innuendo. By choosing to illustrate this fragment and conveying a sensual – although still chaste – mood in her image, Cameron has

again chosen to feminise this poem, dealing with this passage rather than those about knights questing and adventuring in far magical lands. In her illustration, the holy maiden is clearly the doer of the action, the “actor,” and the heavenly knight the passive one and “goal,” allowing her.

A young and boyish model – Mr. Coxhead – sits for Sir Galahad, and the striking and “man sweet maiden” Mary Hillier for the Pale Nun.¹⁰⁹ He is more noticeable at first, looking in an odd facial expression *through* – rather than *to* – the holy sister posing opposite him. He is in perfect focus under a beam of light that reveals his youthful and fine-looking features. The cross on his chest stands out, as a sign of his entrusted sacred venture. Cameron had used wooden handmade crosses throughout her bible-inspired work, as seen for instance in *Fruits of the Spirit* (fig. 60) and *The Shadow of the Cross* (fig. 160). In this occasion, the cross icon is rather prominent, as it stands out in size and shade against the knight’s light garment. It symbolises both the holy order of the knight and its sexual purity and good intentions with the religious woman next to him.

As the viewer’s eyes continue to move down, he notices the nun’s arms around his waist, and the hairy belt with a hint of jewel around it. There is no room for misreading this action from the holy female character. Cameron had set it straight with the inclusion of the cross between the two. Their interaction is holy and for a good cause; the grail. This is the object of their unpolluted bond, strictly platonic, embodying their now joint vision with the belt, which will provide the young knight with guidance in his quest.

In Hillier, the viewer recognises her pure and innocent features, delightfully protruding from her dark veil, from her many of portrayed Madonnas. Here she sits discreetly against the background, her features framed by white clothing and black habit. MacKay says that Cameron uses this strategy of draping the heads of her Madonna subjects with cloths “apparently trying to obscure” them (31), and guessing not to make them too sensual. We will see this covering action in Cameron’s portrait of Guinevere later on, as a holy sister. Hillier’s characteristic expression reincarnating the nun looks pallid and in gloomy gaze, capturing Cameron’s female favourite state of mind. The viewer immediately recognises in this her fearing for the knight’s quest to travel afar and bring the grail for the King. Her fixated gaze on the knight contrasts with Galahad’s one, aiming outwards, to the outside of the frame, to the unknown, passing the beautiful maid he has in front of him. This proves his purity and virginity and determination in his commitment to the search.

Cameron has photographed tight close-ups of these two characters who mirror each other in a black and white contrast, as if to represent opposite roles in the Grail matter; a physical one and a spiritual one, a male and a female, a fearless and an apprehensive one.

Technically, the source of lighting from above is zenith like, reaching all the right places and giving a rather suitable supernatural effect. This falls on the characters’ outline,

¹⁰⁹ V&A website. Accessed 18 Jan. 2017.

skillfully making them stand out from the blurred background and allowing for intricate detail in the creasing and folding of Hillier's veil, forming great textures.

All in all, this representation seems feigning and odd for *Illustrations*. The matter being represented in it is key for King Arthur's and *Idylls*' plot, but does not feel as such in the photobook. There is no real sense of focus in it; nor the sitters, nor narratively. It feels transitory and obligatory when telling the story of Arthur. Cameron might have feminised the scene, and given so important a role of quest visionary to the Pale Nun, but still without *punctum* and real impact to the viewer. In fact, in the end she withdrew it from the Miniature edition story.

4.4.2.6 Guinevere

Like Elaine, Cameron dedicates the grand total of four illustrations to characterise Guinevere, these scattered around the chapters of the three editions of *Illustrations*. Her story is both central to *Idylls* and *Illustrations*.

So far, she has appeared as a supporting character herself, in the death of Elaine. There she looked taken by the sad passing of the maid. In her leading story, Cameron will introduce the roles of her two loves; the King and Lancelot.

To represent her Guinevere, Cameron takes her story into her own hands and illustrates it in a rather creative manner yet unseen in *Illustrations*. By creative, I am purposely referring to, firstly how Cameron generates subtle story variations between volumes and editions of *Illustrations* with the addition and exclusion of a single unique portrait of Guinevere, which was actually inspired by two verses from the 'Lancelot and Elaine' idyll. And how in all her editions Cameron separates the first of King Arthur's paired portraits – next in my analysis – to illustrate here text from the 'Guinevere' idyll.

To the effects of a more sensible structure and division of characters, I have included in this section only the three images of the Queen together to analyse the character of Guinevere, and in the sequence established in the Miniature edition of *Illustrations*, as cited by Hinton. This is, the single portrait of Guinevere standing, *The Parting of Sir Lancelot and Guinevere* and the Queen at Almesbury. The remaining image for the 'Guinevere' idyll, the single portrait of King Arthur, will be analysed in the next section, where I will be reading both portraits of the King together. We need to clarify that only these last three images were published in the first of the large volumes. The single portrait of the queen standing was exclusive to the Miniature edition of *Illustrations* only.

In Cameron's eyes, Guinevere is a heroine, a female victim in a world of chivalry wanting to experience true love in her own and wrong circumstances. Like Tennyson, she ultimately makes her accountable for the end of the kingdom and King, by giving her centre stage in her story in spite of a less malevolent personification. The photographer seems to understand better the Queen's feelings and attributes the irrationality of her actions to real

love, and presents her as a more human Guinevere, able to repent at the end and stay as the queen – and not *the* mistress – for her admiration and respect for her King, as we will see next.

To commence with the story of Guinevere, Cameron surprises the reader of the *Miniature Illustrations* by including this new portrait of Guinevere on her own,¹¹⁰ and in just one copy of the second large volume (*Hinton Illustrations* 3).

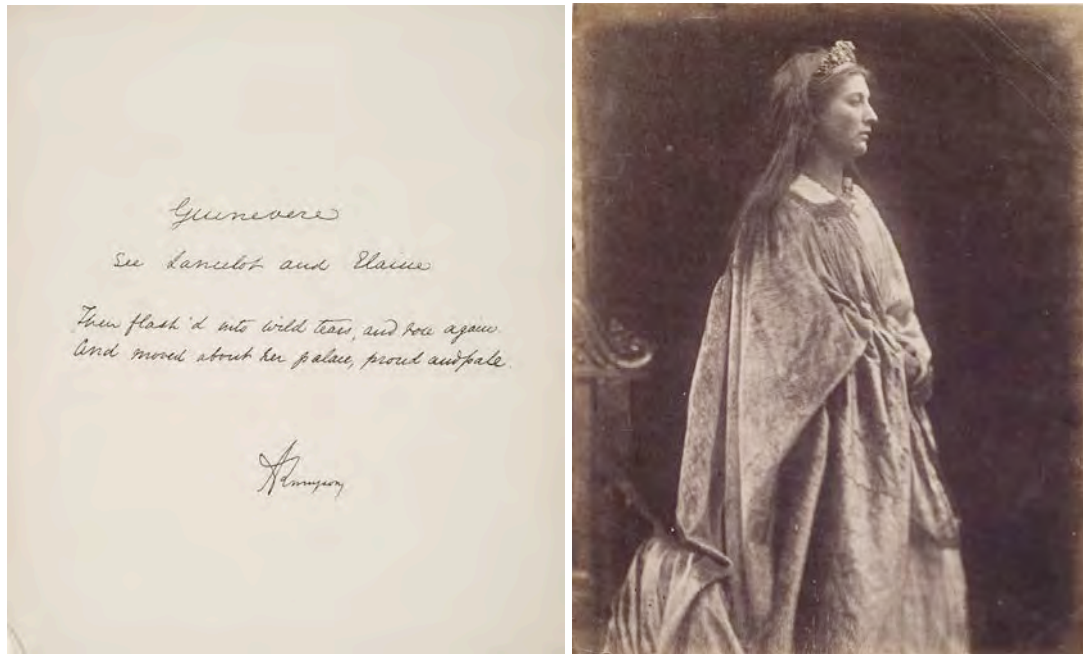


Fig. 122 'Guinevere' from *Illustrations'* Miniature Edition, 1875.
Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Guinevere*, ca.1874.

In this portrait, the queen is represented alone and thoughtful, and the reader learns from its accompanying extract that she is upset and has been crying:

See Lancelot and Elaine

Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose again,
And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

(‘Lancelot and Elaine’ verses 609-10)

The extract that Cameron included belonged to the ‘Elaine’ idyll, and in fact refers to the moment Guinevere finds out in court about the rumours of Lancelot’s romancing Elaine of Astolat. Thus, in *Idylls* Guinevere’s finding runs parallel to Elaine’s and Lancelot’s doomed and misunderstood courting. And in *Illustrations*, Cameron placed this extract with her illustration of Guinevere right after the death of Elaine. I believe that with this action, Cameron wished to portray a Guinevere who is able to feel and emotionally respond towards what has taken place with the lily maid of Astotal and what is running through her mind. Whereas

¹¹⁰ Lukitsch says that “a photograph of Guinevere standing alone is listed in the copyright registrations of December 8, 1874 (Copyright registrations, Public Record Office, Kew, England),” and that “fits this description featured in prototype copy of the *Illustrations* – this copy is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC. Also, used in a copy of the *Illustrations* in the collection of the Tennyson Research Center, Lincoln (Millard 192) –, preceded by a text describing Guinevere as jealous of Lancelot’s love for Elaine” (*JMC Her Work* 34).

Tennyson, briefly presented Guinevere feeling resentment and envy for the new lovers. This moment in the story of *Illustrations* is a lucid proof that Cameron was telling her own story of Guinevere, by looking for inspiration at different moments in Tennyson's book of poems and adding emotions and states of mind to her own characters as extras to the Poet's story. By adding this portrait of Guinevere feeling here, in pain, misunderstood and lonely in Arthur's court, and surely experiencing the guilt about Elaine's death, she is coming to Guinevere's rescue.

We have learnt that Tennyson's *Idylls* was filled with moral charge, and previous medieval chronicles more or less, all represented her as the spoilt and irrational queen, disloyal to his King and kingdom, but Cameron focuses in the suffering woman with contradictory thoughts and the felt responsibility of her unfaithful sin. She presents her as lonely or the outcast of the King's world of chivalry and her conveniently-arranged marriage to him. Doubting herself about being able to accomplish what is expected from her. To convey all these feelings the viewer reads in this image and extract within the book, Cameron photographs Guinevere pensive and engaged in her thoughts, making her fit with the rest of her heroines and *Illustration's* womanly-focused story line.

With this portrait, Cameron begins her beautification process that clashes with Tennyson's – and to certain extent Malory's, although not so extreme – portrayal of her as a jealous and slightly irrational lover who cannot take Elaine's competition. The photographer offers her feminine point of view, understanding what Guinevere is going to through as a woman and Queen. As both, she is not the sole cause of the tragedy, she is a woman who wants to feel real love, but cannot and should not in her royal position. She has tried and failed and for it, blames herself.

There is a portrait by Pre-Raphaelite William Morris of the queen in solitude, that for me bears great resemblance to Cameron's one:



Fig. 123 William Morris, *Queen Guinevere*, 1858.

In this painting, we see a sinful Guinevere, fastening her belt and dressing up after a night with Lancelot, but the spectator is able to appreciate her gazing full of aching and torturing guilt about what she is trapped in. As cited in chapter two, Morris wrote *The Defence of Guinevere* that same year of the painting for an audience who began to understand “love at first sight” as discourse gaining popularity in the mid-Victorian era, where he let the Queen talk and justify her actions to her unintended love to Lancelot without choice (Pearce 118). In my opinion there is much of this Guinevere in this single portrait of Cameron, with the rest of the feelings she is also going through.

Her portrait is an odd one out in the *Idylls* section of *Illustrations*, and closer in style to the ones of *Other Poems* section, as we will see. Perhaps it was even photographed at the time of her *Other Poems* heroines, and shows Cameron’s after-thought portrait to complete her vision of Guinevere. In it, she has added distance between her camera and her subject, and her model is in full body to add dramatics and privacy to the scene. She had previously done this with *Vivien and Merlin* and Elaine in the boat, obtaining a different result here where the sense of detachment from the subject is apparent, conveying her solitude and isolation. The negative space left around the subject creates this optic illusion and makes Guinevere stand far from the viewer. This is, in fact, a thoughtful pose and composition, she is facing away from her day-to-day world, her royal duties; this represented by her chair, or perhaps throne. In her mind, she might be wishing to escape from it all, becoming a normal woman who can freely choose. Her gazing away, outside the photographic frame tells the viewer that she is looking away from her kingdom, and the given sense of motion here represents her wish to escape.

To have picked up a specific moment in an idyll and represented it not with its main character is something that Cameron had not previously done in *Illustrations*. It proves her confidence and authority in representing her story and her subjects in it, and her images are in service to achieve that, as in Louvel’s maternal model of illustration cited before. Cameron likes to bend rules, and this extract from ‘Lancelot and Elaine’ is an excellent choice and textual proof to represent her Guinevere raw feeling. Cameron’s clever composition carries an extraordinary narrative; her looking away from her King and court, who must not notice her rage, unhappiness and pain and her remaining put in a serene composure. Her place, her royal duties, her veneration for Arthur and the guarding of her honour are all elements being visually represented in this image by the chair, or throne. Her spill of heavy ropes secures her to it, anchoring her to the reality of her Kingdom. This action and visual arrangement creates some kind of tension in the viewer, that makes him reflect on the sense of unhappiness for the Queen unable to enjoy the freedom.

To achieve this, the photographer has dressed her subject in light-coloured clothing to create the contrast with her background and perhaps to add to the paleness and fairness of the maiden, as described by Tennyson in the text. Guinevere’s expression and body gesture is priceless. The viewer when imagining the moment can picture a previous cry, to then pick

herself up, compose herself and return to her daily duties, right and proper. Drying her tears, looking away and striking her royal pose. He can also imagine turning back next with a pretend smile and going on about her normal life at court. Here Cameron has given her a moment to herself, a moment of inner thought.

Right after this portrait of the Queen, Cameron includes *The Parting of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere* that narrates their meeting at the nunnery. In my opinion, this is probably the finest looking representation of their adulterous love in the history of Arthurian illustrations. It is tender and pure and without much sense of disloyalty or infidelity between them in it, and surprisingly contrasting with what the reader of *Illustrations* might feel in Tennyson's words extracted by Cameron; "And then they were agreed upon a night when the good King should not be there to meet and part forever," verses 95 and 96. With it, Cameron did not mean the lovers were planning a future together out of the wedlock, but a substantiation of their love as truthful to even discuss a future together. An impossible future as they both know.

Visually, their love is not harmful either, as she focuses on Guinevere's sad gaze for her farewell to Lancelot. She is set to continue showing the Queen's human side with this image.

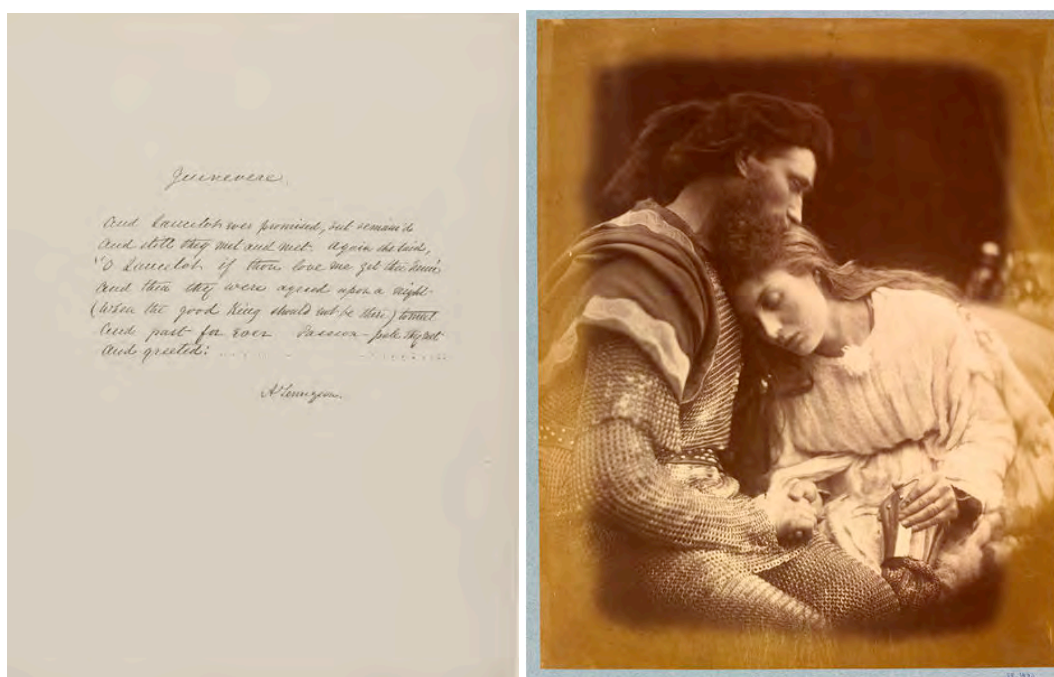


Fig. 124 'Guinevere' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874.
Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Parting of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere*, 1874 (photographed).

It is hard not to feel sorry for the lovers in *The Parting*. Lancelot's being seems secondary, his pain lessened, and his embracing more distant than the Queen's. Cameron depicts him softly defined and looking away from the camera, in order to afford filling up the scene with a focused Guinevere, in contrasting and sorrowful expression. She is again here

feeling, perhaps the more from the two, as the viewer notices she holds his hand with one hand, and Lancelot's gauntlet with the other. Getting the most from him in this final meeting.

The story tells that an unknown Mrs. Hardinge, who had played Guinevere in the dead Elaine and I believe in the queen's single portrait, sat for the queen here with Mr. Read.¹¹¹ Previously, when Cameron had met Bishop Vaughan while visiting Freshwater, she said to Tennyson: "Oh Alfred, I have at last found Sir Lancelot," to which the Poet replied, "he won't do, his face is too good looking. For Lancelot, you must have a man seamed and scarred with human passions" (Hinton *Illustrations* 2). Cameron might have taken Tennyson's advice in the end, and with it decided to give her male sitter a less significant visual presence in order to grant Guinevere with the total humanity and feeling in her gaze. To my judgement from all the research, Cameron used these same models throughout the Elaine and Guinevere stories in order to give continuity to their characterisation and to her final story.

Although *The Parting* never made it to Tennyson's Cabinet's edition of *Idylls*, it was reproduced as a woodcut years later for the cover of *Harper's Weekly*:



Fig. 125 *Harper's Weekly*, September 1877.

The cut-out of the *Morning Post* review that Cameron pasted in the Miniature edition of *Illustrations* – to be discussed later at the of my analysis –, stated that Cameron took forty-two different exposures to come to this one of Lancelot and Guinevere parting. She enthusiastically praised the sitters' achievement not only in their posing and fine physical appearance, but also in permeating "with the poetic spirit of the themes they co-operate in

¹¹¹ Lipscomb cites copyright documents of December, 8 1874 identifying the models of *The Parting* as Mr. Read and Mrs. Hardinge. Not much information is available about who Mrs. Hardinge was (221).

illustrating.” Not to diminish their accomplishment, which was without a doubt a total success, Cameron seemed relentless to achieve the perfect picture. She must have known of its importance to represent real and true emotion in her female character.

Herewith is included one of the images that remain from these exposures, not quite cutting it for its blurriness and distance between both sitters:



Fig. 126 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Lancelot and Guinevere*, 1874.

In my opinion, Cameron was influenced by Rossetti’s *Wedding of St George and Princess Sabra*, below. There are strong parallelisms between both compositions of the embracing between the lovers and their perfect understanding of each other’s arms. In both arrangements, the subjects merge into one exquisitely:



Fig. 127 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Wedding of St George and Princess Sabra*, 1857.

The accompanying extract for ‘The Parting’ was as follows:

And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,
 And still they met and met. Again she said,
 "O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence."
 And then they were agreed upon a night –
 When the good King should not be there – to meet
 And part forever.....

('Guinevere' verses 92-7)

As mentioned a little disconnected perhaps from Cameron's representation, who concentrates on the representing of the moment and emotions. In it, Cameron made a great use of natural lighting to capture this timeless moment of the farewell and the sadness that comes with it, i.e.: both lovers' closed eyes and gaze down. Cameron's use of conventional framing directs us to their sorrow. The photography's halo surrounding the lovers provides our eye with a beautiful and fancy focal point to the couple, for whom time has stopped. On this occasion, and apart from Lancelot's fainty face, Cameron has not assigned too much out-of-focus to her image, but arranged for detail and a stunning contrast between the two lovers instead. Lancelot sits with a shimmering chain mail and Guinevere with a pallid garment, both representing, the defiance and the grief that is left to feel in their love. Presenting maids in light tones so as to make them stand out from the rest in the image is part of Cameron's style, also in *Illustrations*. They represent beauty and sensuality, unlike *The Pale Nun* and the Queen Guinevere at Almesbury, who both as holly women wear black and their physical beauty should be dressed down.

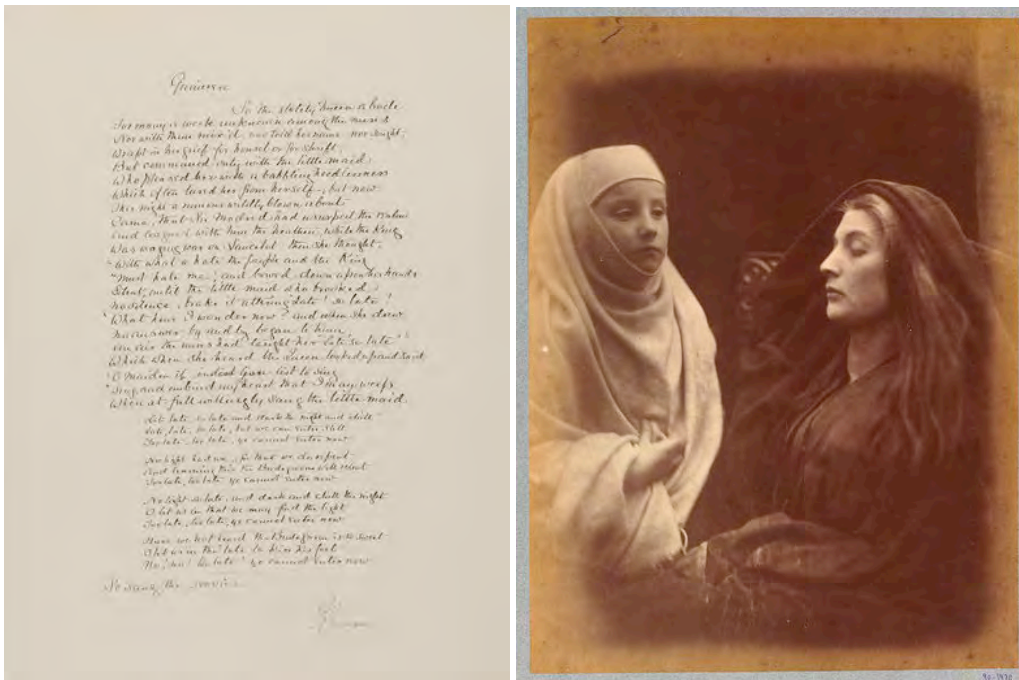


Fig. 128 'Guinevere' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1875.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *The little Novice with the Queen Guinevere in the Holy House at Almesbury*, 1874 (photographed).

The Little Novice and The Queen Guinevere is the illustration that represents the queen repenting for her sins. Here, she is left alone with a young novice signing a condemnatory song reproduced entirely by Cameron in a rather extensive excerpt:

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week, unknown, among the nuns,
Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name, nor sought,
Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,
But communed only with the little maid,
Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness
Which often lured her from herself; but not,
This night, a rumour wildly blown about
Came that Sir Mordred had usurp'd the realm
And leagued him with the heathen, while the King
Was waging war on Lancelot. Then she thought,
"With what a hate the people and the King
Must hate me," and bow'd down upon her hands
Silent, until the little maid, who book'd
No silence, break it, uttering "Late! So late!
What hour, I wonder now?" and when she drew
No answer, by and by began to hum
An air the nuns had taught her: "Late, so late!"
Which when she heard, the Queen look'd up, and said,
"O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep."
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

"Late, late, so late! And dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late! But we can enter still.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"No light had we; for that we do repent,
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

No light! So late! and dark and chill the night!
O, let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O, let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now."

So sang the novice.....

('Guinevere' verses 144-78)

In the J. Paul Getty Museum copy, Cameron underlined verses 148-9, to support her illustration. Repetitions later in the extract corresponding to the song; "too late", "ye cannot enter now" or "no light" reiterate the harm and damage done to the kingdom and give the sense of loss.

Cameron's illustrations for this moment of the idyll is purely story-based and does not do much for Guinevere's characterisation, apart from knowing that she is meant to repent in the convent. Her face is mysteriously vacant with her eyes closed, straight pose and too-grandiose air, not really conveying the appropriate emotions.

Hinton says that according to V.C. Scott O'Connor, a lady visiting Dimbola played the role of Guinevere in *Illustrations* (*Illustrations* 50). We presume he is referring here to Mrs. Hardinge who sat for all the Guinevere portraits, thus disagreeing on this point with Armstrong when she states that Mary Hillier played Guinevere with the little Novice, and suggests a connection of two alter-egos between this holy Guinevere and the Pale Nun – rightly represented by Hillier – and signalling the two main causes of the fall of the Round Table (407). Unfortunately, this statement by Armstrong is not in any way accurate. To me, it is clear that Mrs. Hardinge played Guinevere with the Little Novice, as she had done in the rest of the Guinevere portraits. Assumption that matches with Cameron's general attempts, when possible, to offer continuity with her models and characters, and she had one with most of the ones who kept cropping up in her images; Merlin, Vivien, Arthur, Lancelot, and now Guinevere. All except from Elaine, who had seen first being represented by May Prinsep in the single portraits in Astolat, and then by an unknown model in the dead Elaine. Cameron was very protective of her continuity and story facts, and endeavour to the true to the authenticity and reality of her characters and the models who played them.

There is, however, a strong link existing between *Guinevere and the Little Novice* and *The Holy Grail* in style, as Armstrong suggests (409), and also between *The Parting* and the first *Vivienne and Merlin* for that matter. In all of four portraits, Cameron has photographed close-ups, and created compositions with their two characters in full contrast. In the latter pair, the two characters, merge and entwine with each other to represent love, one real and one fake. And in the former one, the two characters, mirror each other, looking distant and chaste, representing total opposites – i.e.: youth vs. age, innocence vs. guilt in one of them, and male vs. female and chivalry vs. cult in the other. *The Little Novice and Guinevere* and *The Holy Grail* seem to have been photographed almost under the same template; tightly cropped and with characters whose stare aims at the infinite. They are solemn and austere, totally straightforward. The use of contrast in these two accentuates the opposites – white figure on the left, dark figure on the right –, facing each other in the same plane of focus.

It almost seems as in *The Little Novice*, all motion and expression have frozen, perhaps as if to allow the viewer to listen carefully to the song. Guinevere looks perplexedly hearing her sins in a lyrical form.

As usual, Cameron lets a great deal of detail in the clothing come through. The observer can engorge in the divine cloth wrapping and fabric tangling in the imagery as a sign of external feminine features, that in this case are used to cover religiously and appropriately both women's hair.

The sense of symmetry in this image comes with both human figures facing each other in reverse, almost like positive and negative photographic impressions. The novice's expression is warm and genuflects comfortably, whereas Guinevere looks tense and ostentatiously, like the Queen she is. Our eye moves back and forth between the two characters, comparing them. However, the visual emphasis relies on the Queen, whose classical features and royal beauty offers a great contrast against the background and the

unusual dark clothes she is now wearing. Cameron had dressed both her and Hillier in *The Holy Grail* in dark nun's clothes, with the difference that Guinevere's beauty is, however, displayed openly, with her hair flowing from her magnificent profile. She is reminiscent of the tragic Elaine in *Call I follow*. She is a holy woman now, but not in its entirety. She still loves a man.

To conclude by quoting Lukitsch saying that Cameron's "sympathetic interpretation of Guinevere evolved over the course of the production of the *Illustration*" (JMC *Her Work* 33-34), which I believe explains perfectly how Cameron felt and went about representing Guinevere. We have witnessed how she excluded and included her portrait of the pale standing Guinevere in and out of the different editions of *Illustrations*.

Cameron longed to represent Guinevere as a heroin and not a villain, with her torn and mixed feelings, a representation that concludes with her final illustration for the idyll of 'Guinevere,' the single portrait of the King, corresponding to a set of two.

4.4.3 Portraits of the infamous Arthur

As discussed, Cameron chose to portray the King alone to illustrate the moment in the 'Guinevere' when he comes to visit her at the convent. She paired it, as she had done with other *Illustrations* subjects, with another single portrait of the King that went into illustrate 'The Passing of Arthur' idyll. The King's presence is a novelty in Cameron's photobook, so far inhabited by female characters and their stories.

The first Arthur is represented as the head of his kingdom, Britain. This is manifested in his crest as he goes into battle. Cameron wishes to depict him as the biggest British literature icon he is. For the role of Arthur in *Illustrations*, it is well known that Cameron photographed a porter at the Yarmouth pier she once saw in the street, William Warder. She must have thought that he fitted the description of the king perfectly with his black beard and long hair.

Dr. Hinton retells how Warder ended up wearing some "borrowed robes with a bemused summer visitor grovelling on the floor as the penitent Guinevere, her arms locked around his feet" (*Illustrations* 1).¹¹² This testimonial is actually of particular relevance. With it, Hinton can only be confirming that the moment in the idyll when the Queen is lying on the convent floor at Arthur's feet listening his speech about the pain that she has caused to his kingdom and life ('Guinevere,' verses 408-607), was actually represented by Cameron. This could well have been inspired by Doré's, *The King's Farewell*, in his 'Guinevere' Moxon edition, as seen in fig. 52. But this image of the King and Queen together at Almesbury has never been seen, nor in any of the surviving editions of *Illustrations*, nor as an individual print. Instead, Cameron decided to include a single portrait of the King, the first in a set, to illustrate that moment.

¹¹² Here, Hinton is citing Scott O'Connor's description of the shoot of Arthur's portraits in Dimbola, and refers to the moment when the King visits Guinevere in Almesbury, recorded in his article "Mrs. Cameron, her Friends and her Photographs" article. Lukitsch also refers to it (JMC *Her Work* 34).

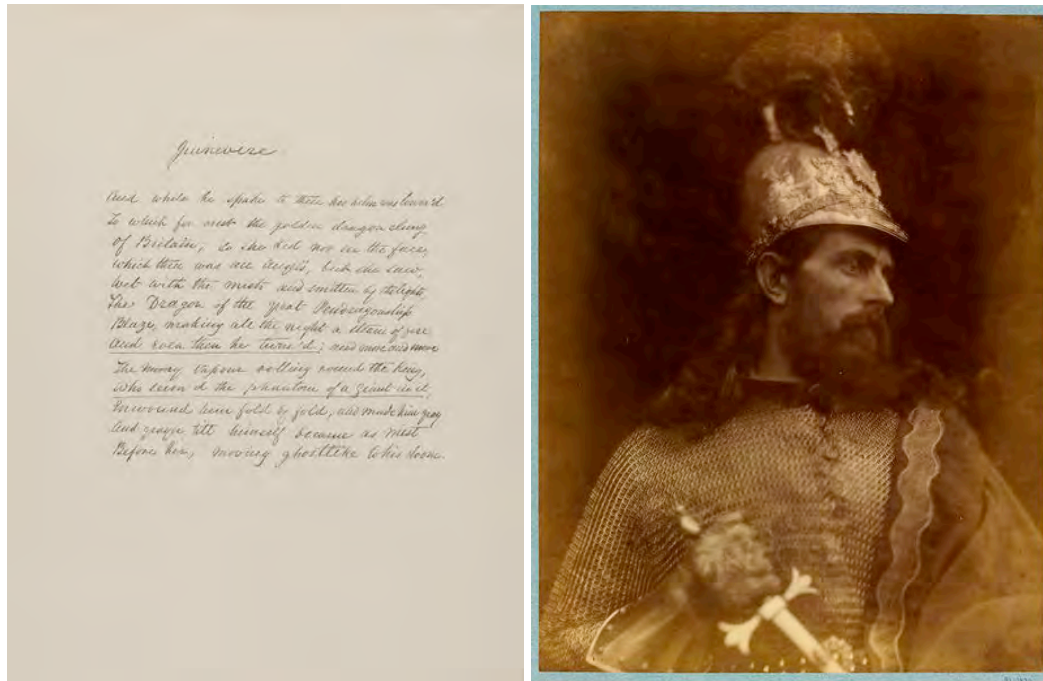


Fig. 129 'Guinevere' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten and underlined poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *King Arthur*, 1874 (photographed).

The extract she accompanied it with refers to minutes after the actual speech and encounter, as Guinevere sees him leaving the convent in the mist:

And while he spake to these his helm was lower'd,
 To which for crest the golden dragon clung
 Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
 Which then was as an angel's but she saw,
 Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
 The Dragon of the great Pendragon-ship
 Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turn'd; and more and more
The moony vapor rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a giant in it,
 Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
 And grayer, till himself became as mist
 Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

('Guinevere' verses 589-601)

Here Guinevere is the narrator, Arthur's portrait represents the way she sees him in that moment. Cameron has opted to represent this episode in *Idylls* in an oblique manner, from a female's point of view and sentiment, rather than in a more narrative one, considering its being a rather crucial moment in the story. Instead Cameron fills it up with textual references, as she likes doing, for the viewer to recognise and engage with. As well as to justify her illustrative choice.

As a portrait of Arthur, this is a proficient one, packed with detail and rhetoric in itself. In it, Cameron has made sure to illustrate the small aspects of Tennyson's words; "he turn'd," "vapo," "phantom" and "moving ghostlike," at the same time of spoiling herself with a close-up in the *And Enid Sang* and *The Dirty Monk* manner of model looking on the side holding object

in his hands. In fact, this photograph was one of the chosen ones to illustrate Tennyson's Cabinet's edition as a wood engraved illustration, as seen in fig. 54. In my opinion, Cameron considered that a portrait of Arthur was without question necessary in an illustrative edition of Tennyson's edition of *Idylls*, even if it was dedicated to women. Still Cameron limited the reader's chances to two. The King will be present in two more group pictures, including the one of his final sail to Avalon, to be analysed next in this section.

There is a sense of anger in this portrait, conveyed by Arthur's fixed gaze and effusively open eyes. He has just confronted his sinful wife. His face is livid, looking to the side in profile, turning and walking away from her, holding in his hand his famous sword, enraged, hurt, and puzzled, having to prepare himself for battle. Cameron managed a sharp portrait here, not achieving the characteristic haze of her other images that would have been appropriate here with Tennyson's referencing to mist and a ghostlike Arthur. Still, there are some blurred areas, such as Arthur's crest merged in the background and his hand, propped closer to the camera, that have probably have to do with the recording of movement and narrow depth of field.

Thus, the emphasis of this image is Arthur's face, where we return to regain rhetoric. Around it, there is flamboyancy with his helm – not lowered as the poem recalls –, suit of armour and masculinity. This is represented with great texture and detail, though the dragon on his crest is not well appreciated in the picture. In a sense this portrait is Cameron's male counterpart to the way she liked to photograph her fair women, heroines and sibyls. As a legend, Arthur is represented here in character and attire who, unlike those of Famous men, oozes masculinity rather than intellect as outer features. Like Armstrong, I would go further as to compare this portrait of Arthur's greatness for that one of the poet in the book's Frontispiece¹¹³. Both in the same posture, profile to the viewer and holding their respective weapons in hand. Whereas Tennyson belongs to the hall of intellectual men of greatness in black-cloaked statuesque style, Arthur is a myth, perhaps a non-existent figure, whose braveness is questioned in this story via his adulterous marriage. His masculinity is redeemed here as he goes to battle to save his honour.

Whether these readings question if this image was the appropriate scene to illustrate this part of the 'Guinevere' idyll is a different matter. Cameron's choice is ambivalent.

¹¹³ "With this illustration, she returns the reader to Tennyson and his text, linking the figure of Arthur to the opening features of the poet" (Armstrong 416).

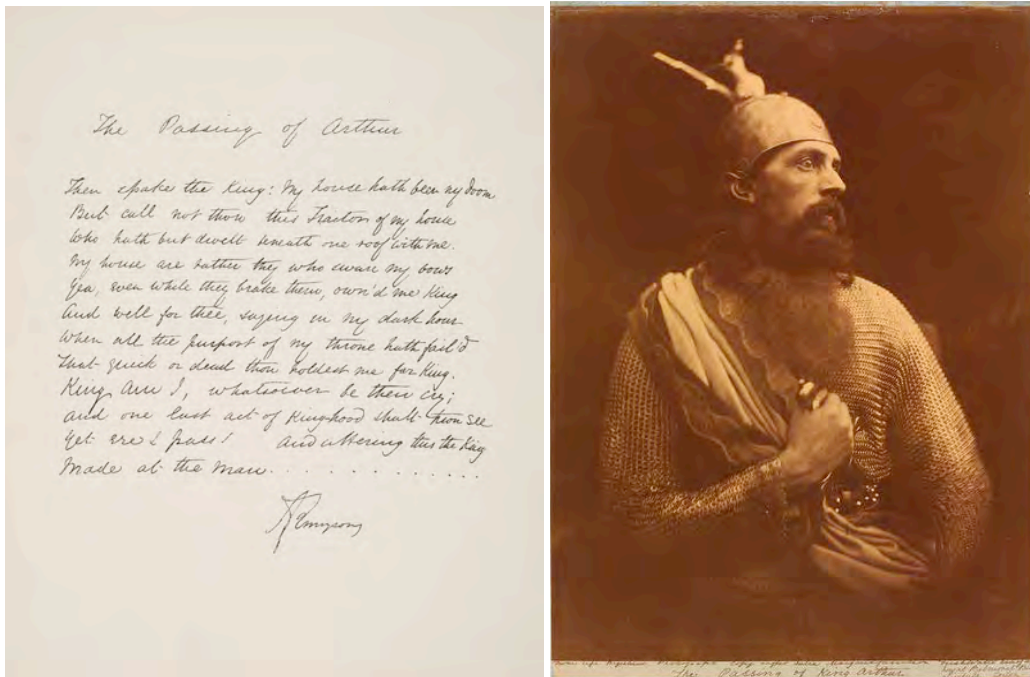


Fig. 130 'The Passing of Arthur' from Vol. I of *Illustrations*, 1874.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten and underlined poem. Right: Cameron, Julia Margaret.
The passing of King Arthur, 1874 (photographed).

The second nearly-identical portrait of Arthur illustrates his passing in the final idyll in 'The Passing of Arthur.' Between both portraits of Arthur, a bloodied and ferocious war has taken place. This manner of story-telling with paired images in *Illustrations* has already been used with the two Elaines previously, and later in *Other Poems* will be with the two May Queens and, as matter of fact, with Tennyson's frontispieces for the large volume editions. In all of them, Cameron tells their story through difference in details.

Both these portraits of Arthur were probably shot during the same sitting, although this time Warder is representing Arthur's end, just seconds before or while receiving Mordred's deadly blow. The accompanying text is as follows:

Then spake the King: 'My house hath been my doom.
 But call not thou this traitor of my house
 Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.
 My house are rather they who sware my vows,
 Yea, even while they brake them, owned me King.
 And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
 When all purport of my throne hath failed,
 That quick or dead thou holdest me for King.
King am I, whatsoever be their cry;
 And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see
 Yet, ere I pass.' And uttering this the King
 Made at the man.....

('The Passing of Arthur' verses 154-65)

Tennyson's words reflect the end is approaching, and a resigned Arthur dissents about the treason and purport that has taken place in his kingdom. It stops abruptly in verse 165, where Cameron has edited out: "Then Mordred smote his liege..." This can only mean

that she chose to omit reference to any other character in the scene, as she had done in other idylls, thus illustrating Arthur's monologue with a single image of him. As Tennyson, she is focusing on his chivalry and kingly figure, and for this reason she underlines: "King am I, whatsoever be their cry." When looking at his face, the viewer can see the King's bravery and nothing else. Armstrong says:

In her use of her photographic illustrations to assert the truth of Arthur's royal being, Cameron was eminently Victorian. As she had before over and over again, she committed herself to the somatic life of inner character hypnotically revealed, rather than outward events narrated through gesture and action. (418)

This statement is entirely exact. For the last two illustrations, Cameron had ignored critical events in the story of Arthur to do with his confrontations to Guinevere and Mordred in order to illustrate these scenes with singled out portraits of the King. On them she encouraged subtle gestures and detailing stated in the text she had selected. In these apparently stagnant Arthurs, the viewer is able to feel motion from gesture to gesture between the two, and difference in body language. The first Arthur is drawing his sword to imply going into battle, and the second is indicating he is been wounded by it. His posture, turned head and gazing up is repeated across both images, implying little movement before and after. The inclination and direction in both of the King's body linings reflect that he is first going forward, charging; and later he is retreating, fatally wounded. Armstrong describes movement within image repetition here – also used in the identical Elaines – as an early moment of film, this being not long until discovered.¹¹⁴ Although I find this comparison is slightly forced, the sense of movement in time and story is clearly patent with these variances.

The viewer can also spot a slightly different cropping between the two and in the distance between photographer and model. Other inconsistencies take place intentionally in the clothing, the wrapping of the cape in opposite shoulders, change of helms and, of course, lighting. The first Arthur enjoys a more even lighting overall, and the second has some darker areas, making it more dramatic. Here, the light has arrived at his face with great intensity, showing a sharp frightening gaze that bestows a sense of fear and physical pain. Here relies the visual emphasis of this second portrait, and therefore where the inward looking of the character begins, engaging with the viewer for what is going through in his mind.

The chain mail is full of texture and his hands stand out within it. There, we see clearly the cause of his pain and the fear of death strikes. The eye studies it, comparing both swords, this one is deeper and has entered the body. This Arthur stands within the mist and seems smaller, as if going, retreating with his wound, and finally passing to the other side. Unmentioned within the text fragment, the image is already suggesting it, engraving the mortal scene in the reader's mind. Ending a chapter in the story and a volume of its illustrations.

¹¹⁴ The Lumière brothers invented the Cinematograph in 1895.

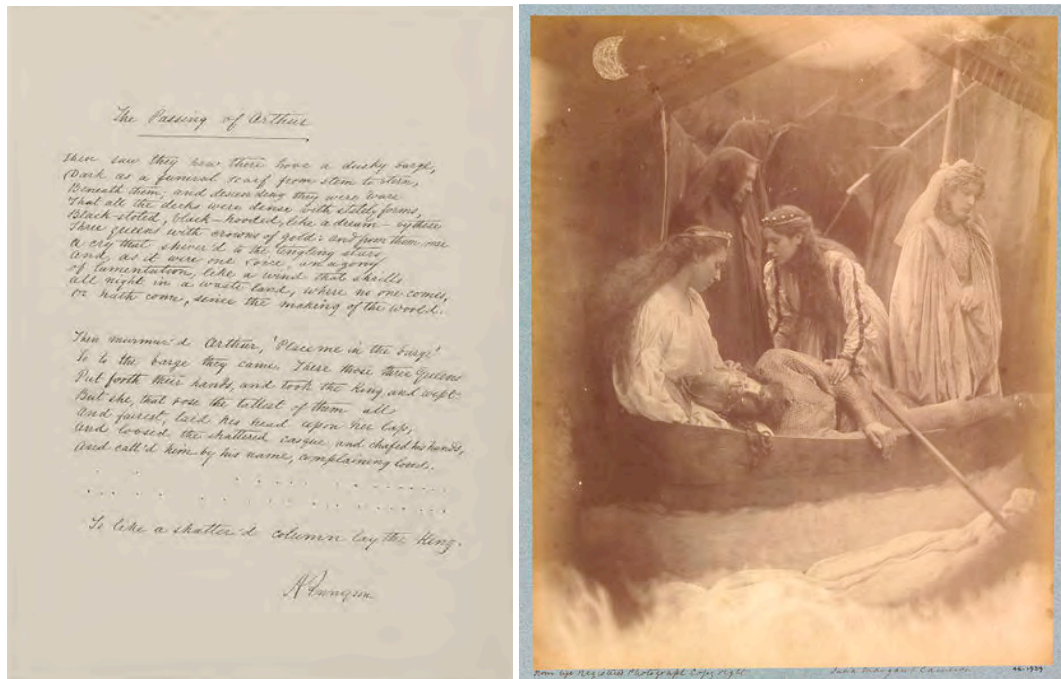


Fig. 131 'The Passing of Arthur' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *The passing of King Arthur*, ca. 1875 (photographed).

For the second representation of Arthur's death, we move to *The Passing of Arthur* in volume two of *Illustrations*¹¹⁵, where Cameron has fast-forwarded to the moment of the moving episode when a dying Arthur asks to be put in a barge to Avalon. In this occasion, she decides to make a bigger effort, and like in the death of Elaine including more characters in the image; the three queens – one of them being, possibly, Morgan Le Fay as the legend says –, and moving herself and her camera further out from her subjects. Cameron's representation takes full inspiration from the following extract:

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
 Beneath them; and descending they were ware
 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, like a wind that shrills
 All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
 Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmured Arthur, 'Place me in the barge.'
 So to the barge they came. There those three Queens
 Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
 But she that rose the tallest of them all
 And fairest laid his head upon her lap,
 And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
 And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,

.....

¹¹⁵ Although a different print version of group picture for 'The Passing of Arthur' was used in the Miniature edition. The two versions barely follow the same composition, just a few variances in the movement of the models.

So like a shatter'd column lay the King.

('The Passing of Arthur' verses 361-89)

In this, Cameron has intentionally edited out verses 378-88, intended by Tennyson to give a description of Arthur's peaceful and lifeless face. This editing might have had to do with Cameron's possible post-shooting thought that Tennyson's description did not suit her own illustration. In it, Warden's expression looked everything but lifeless, as he clearly tries to hold on to the boat in a long exposure and an uncomfortable position. He has either forgotten to close his eyes, or opened them half way through, and the camera has recorded blurriness.

By now in the volume two of *Illustrations*, the reader is used to this theme of ship burial ceremonies, with Elaine's and Arthur's deaths closing the *Idylls* series. The tale of Arthur sailing to Avalon, and both ladies of Shallot and Astolat on their fatal boats, all belong to pagan iconography of heroic deaths and imagery that is not only deeply rooted in history,¹¹⁶ but that it has made it to literature on numerous occasions. Hinton, Armstrong and some others have associated this representation of Arthur with the illustration of Maclise in the Moxon Tennyson (see fig. 37), that Cameron knew of well.

The parallelisms between both photographic and illustrative representations are noticeable, and have to do with the setting of the boat to Avalon during night time and mist, with dark figures in the background. Cameron went to great lengths to represent these in her glass house, and this is in full view in the use sticks and drapery for her boat, printed halo and scratching of the moon onto the negative. Everything that she had already done in the death of her Elaine. In this one, she included several hooded models in the background, which I think created great sense of perspective and depth in her representation, at the same time as kept it close to Maclise's one and Tennyson's text – "stately forms, Black-stoled, black hooded," lines 364-5. In fact, she surpassed her textuality by representing the three fairy queens. Important feminine elements in Arthur's funeral which were brought to the foreground of Arthur's story, and thus continued to feminising *Idylls*, and in this case, one of the most central events in the story of the King.

Mary Hillier as Morgan Le Fay is a stunning vision, and her two female companions – one of them being Mrs. Hardinge,¹¹⁷ unsure whether she is playing queen Guinevere herself – are all dressed in light garments with flowing hair and tiara adornments, remaining the focus of the image. Forget Arthur; it is they, Tennyson's "three Queens" that really stand out in Cameron's representation. When the Poet describes them as wearing black, Cameron relegates this dressing code to the rest of the spectral crowd, and clothes them instead in the usual light robes and hair down of her Fair women. The resulting composition is gorgeous and striking. The symmetrical interaction between the two queens frame the dying Arthur

¹¹⁶ There is proof that during Anglo-Saxon England ships were used, although rarely, in burial ceremonies. In 1939, the British Museum underwent an excavation in Sutton Ho, Suffolk, England, to study the biggest ship tomb ever buried in Britain. It dated A.D.600s and belonged to a high-ranking man, most probably a king. The Arthurian legend sets our King prior to that time, as a Roman-Briton fighting against the Saxon invasion.

¹¹⁷ V&A website. Accessed 21 Jan. 2017.

delightfully, who by now is on Le Fay's lap. The standing third queen on the side is hunting as she blends in the mist and gives the ghost-like effect in the scene. Cameron's superb use of contrast and light within the photograph makes her, once again, achieve quasi-textual representation with just mere detail and the tools we know she prefers best: the female figure. Even when portraying the death of the most famous King in literature.

4.4.4 Portraits of the 'Fair Women' in Other Poems

4.4.4.1 May Queen

The character of the Queen of May is the first woman to be represented in *Illustrations'* section of *Other Poems*, of a clear feminine undertone. The story of this heroine will appear in both the large volume two and the Miniature edition of Cameron's photobook, with some important differences.

This story picks up from a dying Arthur in volume one, and the arrival of the new year. Hinton believes that Cameron's *May Queen* acts as a forewarning of the doomed love and marriage break-up between King Arthur and Guinevere, who actually married in the month of May (*Illustrations* 5).

Years before her single portraits of the Queen of May, Cameron had produced *May Day*, a group picture dealing with this rural and allegoric celebration. In there she photographed her three housemaids and two children,¹¹⁸ amongst various striking homemade flower arrangements.



Fig. 132 Julia Margaret Cameron, *May Day*, 1866 (photographed).

¹¹⁸ Kate Keown, Mary Hillier and Mary Ryan, with the boy Freddy Gould and an unknown girl. From V&A website. Accessed on 22 Jan. 2017.

This early picture is a good example of the idylls and rural pictures Cameron so loved to represent, and it proves that she had already approached the myth of the May Queen a few years before, although in a different manner. Here, she concentrates on the festivity and the crowning in a too calm atmosphere filled with nature and young maids who surround the Queen of May, played by Mary Ryan (1848-1914). The balanced composition gives a sense of organic poise, everything rotating around the main character, motionless and perfectly lit. In this representation of this celebration, no doubt flowers and youth symbolise the joy of springtime at the same time innocence and beauty, all conveying the theme of time and perishing.

The most noticeable element in this image is that Ryan is the only subject looking at the camera, engaging directly with the viewer. The other subjects are gazing chaotically in different directions, symbolising individuality and different stages in female meditation, a distinctive feature in many of Cameron group shots which she will not use in any of her group pictures for *Illustrations* – with deaths of Elaine and Arthur –, as here the gazing consolidates in one point, the lifeless bodies.

It is believed that Cameron produced a total of four illustrations for ‘The May Queen’ in *Illustrations*; two paired single portraits of the maid, one of her with her old love interest, entitled *New Year’s Eve*, and finally, a stunning portrait of two young girls surrounded by flowers; *The Childhood of Alice and Effie*, as entitled by Hinton (*Illustrations* 48). Once more, Cameron varied slightly her story of the ‘May Queen’ between the volumes of *Illustrations* by different options in their sequence. The first three images were used in the volume two, and in the Miniature edition, *The Childhood* preceded just the two single portraits of the Queen.¹¹⁹

Emily Peacock modelled for the Queen of May this time. In this first portrait, she appears young and joyful with a garland of flowers, symbolising her blooming into womanhood. In essence, this is the theme in the ‘May Queen,’ a journey that Cameron represents with her favourite technique of pairing single portraits. Thus, a set of two May Queens with virtually identical composition and little visual variations between the two on light and contrast, dress and crown, and hand gesture and turning head will narrate Cameron’s story.

¹¹⁹ Gernsheim established this order in the appendix of his *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work*. He names the picture of the young girls “Untitled picture of the two girls with flowers.”



Fig. 133 'The May Queen' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875. Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *For I'm to be Queen of the May, Mother, I'm to be Queen of the May*, May 1, 1875 (photographed).

However, Mary Ryan led two studies for the *May Queen*, years before Cameron had set to illustrate this story for her photobook, and around the time of photographing *May Day*. She included them in photo albums she presented to family:



Fig. 134 Julia Margaret Cameron, *May Queen*, 1864 (photographed). Left.

Fig. 135 Julia Margaret Cameron, *May Queen*, 1864 (photographed). Right.

In them we see the ill Queen dying, with her mother and little sister at her side, both supporting characters in Tennyson's story, who Cameron essentially excluded from her

representation in *Illustrations*. Instead, Hinton says she included the image from fig. 135 in the family album presented to Nellie Mundy, currently held by the Cultural Services Department of the Isle of Wight. She had entitled it: *If you're waking, Call me early, call me early, mother dear (Immortal Faces 86-87)*, corresponding to verse 45 from the second section of 'May Queen,' beginning to narrate the maid's death. Here, she chose, as we will see, to focus on her queen and her life events introspectively. These two early photographs hold for me a great reminiscence with that one of the bedridden May queen from Eleanor Vere Boyle's illustration for Tennyson's book (as seen in fig. 47). In my opinion this popular illustrative book proves to be true inspired for Cameron, influencing later on the other two illustrations for her photobook; the two young girls with flowers and the May Queen with her old suitor, as we will see next.

In the first *May Queen* – actually photographed on May 1¹²⁰ –, Cameron depicted Peacock as young Alice wearing white and treasuring her Queen of May flower coronet, as she was about to be crowned with it the next day. To textualise her image, Cameron included a 44-verse excerpt as first part from Tennyson's poem, which will appear in its entirety, unedited and ill-fitted into three pages interpolated in the series of illustrations. The first excerpt is as follows:

You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear; Tomorrow'll be the happiest-time of all the glad new-year, Of all the glad new year, mother, the maddest, merriest day; For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.	4
There's many a black, black eye, they say, but none so bright as mine; There 's Margaret and Mary, there's Kate and Caroline; But none so fair as little Alice in all the land, they say: So I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.	8
I sleep so sound all night, mother, that I shall never wake, If you do not call me loud when the day begins to break; But I must gather knots of flowers and buds, and garlands gay; For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.	12
As I came up the valley, whom think ye should I see But Robin leaning on the bridge beneath the hazel-tree? He thought of that sharp look, mother, I gave him yesterday, But I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.	16
He thought I was a ghost, mother, for I was all in white; And I ran by him without speaking, like a flash of light. They call me cruel-hearted, but I care not what they say, For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.	20
They say he's dying all for love, but that can never be; They say his heart is breaking, mother, what is that to me? There 's many a bolder lad'll woo me any summer day; And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.	24
Little Effie shall go with me tomorrow to the green,	

¹²⁰ V&A website.

And you'll be there, too, mother, to see me made the Queen;
For the shepherd lads on every side'll come from far away;
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May. 28

The honey-suckle round the porch has woven its wavy bowers,
And by the meadow trenches blow the faint sweet cuckoo flowers;
And the wild marsh-marigold shines like fire in swamps and hollows gray;
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May. 32

The night-winds come and go, mother, upon the meadow-grass,
And the happy stars above them seem to brighten as they pass;
There will not be a drop of rain the whole of the livelong day;
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May. 36

All the valley, mother'll be fresh and green and still,
And the cowslip and the crowfoot are over all the hill,
And the rivulet in the flowery dale 'ill merrily glance and play,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May. 40

So you must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear;
Tomorrow'll be the happiest time of all the glad new year;
Tomorrow'll be of all the year the maddest, merriest day,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May. 44

In this first excerpt, Tennyson tells about Alice's conversation with her mother about next day, when she will be fairest of all May queens. She asks her to wake her up on time. Her excitement and joy – apart from her encounter earlier with Robin, an old suitor –, are conveyed by Tennyson floral and spring allegories. For instance, the return of the shepherds, rivers running again and, of course, a full account of the wild blooming. Hester Thackeray tells of Tennyson's extraordinary knowledge of Botany and Astronomy (7), reflected in the usage of nature in many of his poems to describe feelings and pictures of life.

There is a sense of freedom and joy in this *May Queen*, with a young Tennyson amusing himself in a wealth of language and colour of feelings in double rhyming and paired verses. His repeating of 'For I'm the Queen...' throughout the poem, reflects the maid's excitement changing along the poem by means of contrasting the same verse in the different statements, thoughts and feelings. Halfway through the poem Alice's tone turns a slightly sour as she speaks about a love she does no longer correspond. After that, she tries to pick up the happy tone again, but it is no longer the same.

Cameron's first *May Queen* was entitled with the refraining cheery verse at the end of each stanza; "For I'm to be Queen of the May, Mother, I'm to be Queen of the May." She chose to caption her image rather than underline the poem. The line is meant to represent happiness, but it begins to unveil melancholy and a languid maid in solitude, perhaps as a premonition of what is yet to come.

There is a sense of harmony within the photo, which comes from its balanced composition, and the transpiring beauty of the queen. The crown of flowers mirrors the round shape of the hat worn by the maid, and its position directly below might be symbolic. She has not been crowned yet, but will be soon, and until then she is holding it over her chest, very close and to her heart. It is her dearest wish and ambition to become the Queen of May.

With close view and direct gaze of her subject, Cameron discontinued the usual series of profile portrayals she has commenced in *Idylls*; Lynette, Enid, Elaine, Vivien and Guinevere, all looking to the side. The *May Queen* is different, pure and innocent, resolute, young and unattached. Her lop-sided face interests the viewer's attention, with lighting being reflected on from the white dress. So much luminosity perfectly frames the crown of flowers. Here, detail, texture and contrast are all offered at once, held in the maid's hand, demanding our attention too. The eye moves from the maid's face to the crown, back and forth, thanks to this hand. Crown and face are not yet together. She has not yet been crowned Queen of May. The detail of this crown is key in the story, and reminds the viewer of Arthur's sword and Elaine's nestling, and before that, Enid's laud. All significantly symbolic in each of the stories.

Cameron provides this portrait with full contrast between the maid's fairness and light clothing and the dark background, textually following Tennyson's verse 17; "He thought I was a ghost, mother, for I was all in white." She made her pure and spectral, centred in the image receiving the light from above.

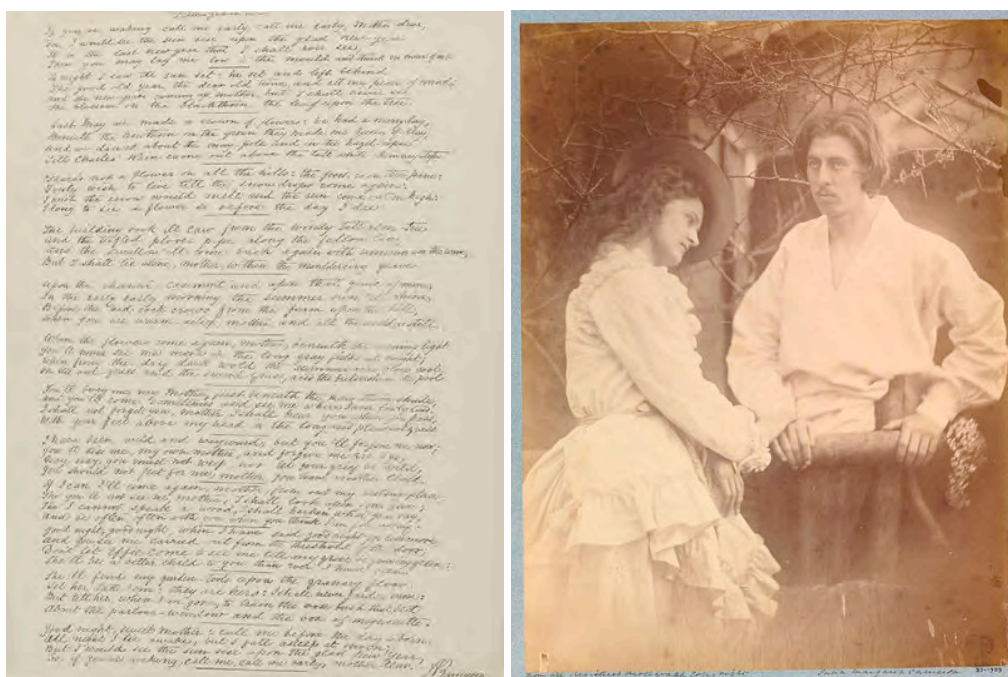


Fig. 136 'The May Queen' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *New Year's Eve*, May 1875 (photographed).

Before the second paired portrait for 'The May Queen', Cameron intercalated a picture of Mrs. Peacock and Lionel Tennyson, the poet's youngest son, in volume two entitled *New Year's Eve* in the copy of the V&A museum, as above. In actual fact, this picture illustrated two verses from the first extract of 'May Queen,' featured in the previous text page in the photobook; "He thought of that sharp look Mother I gave him yesterday," verse 15, and "They call me cruel hearted I care not what they say," verse 19. We are certain of this

because Cameron used different inscriptions in different prints versions.¹²¹ Thus, it represents the moment the two lovers meet before the May Day celebration, and serves to introduce Alice's old suitor, Robin to the reader. In the image, it is apparent that he looks cross with her, as if ignoring her, and she, on the other hand looks callously towards him.

It is an unusual picture for Cameron, both in the context of her *Illustrations* and work. The photograph has been taken outdoors, and models are framed by dried tree branches and a fence between the two, from which a crown of flowers hangs. This gives in to the sense of separation in between the two, although there is a final attempt from Alice's hand to reach to his. The lack of interaction between the two and their gazing crossing not meeting creates a sense of tension in the composition, with which Cameron conveyed their unshared feelings.

Furthermore, the viewer's eye finds it challenging to focus on one place in this image. The background is full of texture, but as usual in photography, the human figures stand out from it and take priority. Their faces being noticed first, then coming down to their hands, as if to try with this order to establish what each of the character's intentions are.

Cameron had not photographed yet two characters in this manner before in *Idylls*, and perhaps Eleanor Vere Boyle's illustration of this scene – also with verses 13-6 excerpted next to it –, might have influenced her choice of representing Alice and Robin outdoors in a bridge setting. Still, the photographer's representation achieved sufficient narrative out of its realisation.

Cropped in three-quarter length, the models show a natural body language. They are not entwined with each other as in *Vivien and Merlin* or *The Parting*, nor exactly mirroring each other as in *The Little Novice* or *The Pale Nun*. The May Queen and Robin seem to have a more tangible, domestic and mundane relation than these ones in *Idylls*. They share a candid past which cannot prolong in their future.

Cameron's composition is raw and organic, not just for the nature that surrounds her characters – notice the great texture in dry tree branches in reference to the "Hawthorn"¹²² of verse 73 – but for the honest and unimaginative interaction of its characters. Out of the two, Robin enjoys the better focus, facing the camera, in a striking pose and gesture. Alice, on the contrary is head down and in profile, meditative. With this representation, Cameron engages the viewer in the Queen's innermost, not Robin's.

By burning slightly their white and pale clothing – especially Alice's dress –, Cameron has lost some of the detail in her, at the same time as she continues giving her the spectral and ghostlike effect to which Tennyson refers in his poem; "He thought I was a ghost, mother, for I was all in white," as cited in verse 17. This, however, is Cameron's only literal allusion to Alice's response to Robin in her character, as instead of representing her as "cruel-hearted" and "sharp," ignoring him and running away from him, she shows a more thoughtful and pitying Alice. The woman the reader begins to see in this second part of 'The May Queen', who with the new year starts to value the things around her and regret having been so

¹²¹ Gernsheim listed this illustration as *He thought of that sharp look Mother I gave him yesterday*, (*JMC Her Life* appendix) and Cox and Ford as *The May Queen and Robin* (102).

¹²² The Hawthorn, commonly known as May-tree, is a tree with pink and white flowering branches used in celebrations and decorations on May 1. *Wikipedia*. Accessed 25 May 2016.

superficial. In these illustrations, Cameron depicts an Alice who seems to understand Robin's wounded position, beginning to realise that she had been too "wild and wayward," verse 75 from the 'New Year's Eve' extract:

If you're waking, call me early, call me early, mother dear,
For I would see the sun rise upon the glad new-year.
It is the last new-year that I shall ever see,
Then you may lay me low i' the mold, and think no more of me. 48

Tonight I saw the sun set, he set and left behind
The good old year, the dear old time, and all my peace of mind;
And the new-year's coming up, mother; but I shall never see
The blossom on the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree. 52

Last May we made a crown of flowers; we had a merry day,
Beneath the hawthorn on the green they made me Queen of May;
And we danced about the May-pole and in the hazel copse,
Till Charles' Wain came out above the tall white chimney-tops. 56

There's not a flower on all the hills, the frost is on the pane;
I only wish to live till the snowdrops come again.
I wish the snow would melt and the sun come out on high,
I long to see a flower so before the day I die. 60

The building-rook'll caw from the windy tall elm-tree,
And the tufted plover pipe along the fallow lea,
And the swallow'll come back again with summer o'er the wave,
But I shall lie alone, mother, within the moldering grave. 64

Upon the chancel-casement, and upon that grave of mine,
In the early, early morning the summer sun'll shine,
Before the red cock crows from the farm upon the hill,
When you are warm-asleep, mother, and all the world is still. 68

When the flowers come again, mother, beneath the waning light
You'll never see me more in the long gray fields at night;
When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow cool
On the oat-grass and the sword-grass, and the bulrush in the pool. 72

You'll bury me, my mother, just beneath the hawthorn shade,
And you'll come sometimes and see me where I am lowly laid.
I shall not forget you, mother; I shall hear you when you pass,
With your feet above my head in the long and pleasant grass. 74

I have been wild and wayward, but you'll forgive me now;
You'll kiss me, my own mother, upon my cheek and brow;
Nay, nay, you must not weep, nor let your grief be wild;
You should not fret for me, mother, you have another child. 78

If I can, I'll come again, mother, from out my resting-place;
Though you'll not see me, mother, I shall look upon your face;
Though I cannot speak a word, I shall harken what you say,
And be often, often with you when you think I'm far away. 82

Good night, good night, when I have said good night for evermore,
And you see me carried out from the threshold of the door,
Don't let Effie come to see me till my grave be growing green,
She'll be a better child to you than ever I have been. 86

She'll find my garden tools upon the granary floor;
Let her take 'em; they are hers; I shall never garden more;

But tell her, when I'm gone, to train the rosebush that I set
About the parlour-window and the box of mignonette. 90

Good night, sweet mother: Call me before the day is born.
All night I lie awake, but I fall asleep at morn;
But I would see the sun rise upon the glad new-year,
So, if you're waking, call me, call me early, mother dear. 94

The length of the extracts that Cameron has selected to illustrate her portraits present the problem of slowing down her representations. The evolution in the characters and the story that she is reinterpreting for 'The May Queen' are not synchronised with the extracts. Which added to the confusing of going back and forth and her imprecision of her text-sourcing does not help the reader either.

To conclude my analysis of this second illustration for the poem, the contrast and detail that Cameron gave to the hands area and gestures in her image emphasises the narrative of this particular theme of the lovers. At one end, Alice and Robin's hands meet and touch, perhaps as a sign of Alice's begging for sympathy and understanding for her rejection. And at the other end hangs alone her May Queen crown, a "symbolic attribute" – as referred in my introduction (Kress and van Leeuwen 130-48 *passim*) – of virginal purity and Alice's final choice. Robin cannot possibly have one with the other, and feels flanked by both, sadly turned down. With this final reading of Alice in this representation, the reader attains sympathetic signs from a woman who begins to understand the damage she had caused on others by putting her personal ambitions before anything else.

Text-wise, in this second fragment of 'The May Queen', Alice continues in first person her monologue, fifty-two verses filled with remorse, admission of guilt and profound regret, in a time where the story has fast-forwarded to the thick of winter, a reflecting time in the year; New Year's Eve. Alice goes back to her happy detailed memories of being crowned as Queen of May under the Hawthorn and her dancing under the May-pole until the "Charles' Wain"¹²³ was up in the sky, hence night time. By giving these accounts, she shows that she remembers all of it fondly, but also melancholically, as it has already passed. In her narrating, she is subtly introducing the reader to the idea of death, first with "lay on the mold", and as the poem evolves, more bluntly with "moldering grave" or "gray field." Her death is clearly being associated here to winter, and the sad reality is that when summer comes back she will no longer be. She will be buried under her beloved hawthorn, that holds all these memories for her. Tennyson puts side-by-side spring and winter lyrically, contrasting their most typical elements of nature. His flair for botanic is delightful.

The extract opens and ends with the refraining line: "If you're waking, call me, call me early, mother dear", which ties up with the idea of sleeping and waking up in the first part of the poem. However here, she is mostly speaking of death. Thus, Alice asks her mother to say

¹²³ In Astronomy, the Charlemagne's wagon, an asterism of the northern sky resembling a cart, is part of the constellation *Ursa Major*. *Wikipedia*. Accessed 25 May 2016.

her farewell to her sister Effie, and gives her advice as to how to run the house and the looking after of the flowers in the garden, once she has become the only daughter.

Tennyson's nature allegory is a joy in this poem, and Cameron made a great effort to touch upon it in her illustration with a real outdoor accompanying picture of Alice and Robin, which made it stand out in the volume two of *Illustrations*. Before, she had only staged the cave for *Gareth and Lynette* and the sea for the passing of Elaine and Arthur in her little studio. The following photographs taken from Cox and Ford's catalogue show her attempt to recreate nature and the story between the lovers. She strived for different model positions and gestures unsuccessfully engaging as the final illustration, where she had included the crown of May Queen for extra narrative.



Fig. 137 Julia Margaret Cameron, *He thought of the sharp look Mother I gave him yesterday*, May 1, 1875. Left.

Fig. 138 Julia Margaret Cameron, *New Year's Eve*, May 1875. Right.

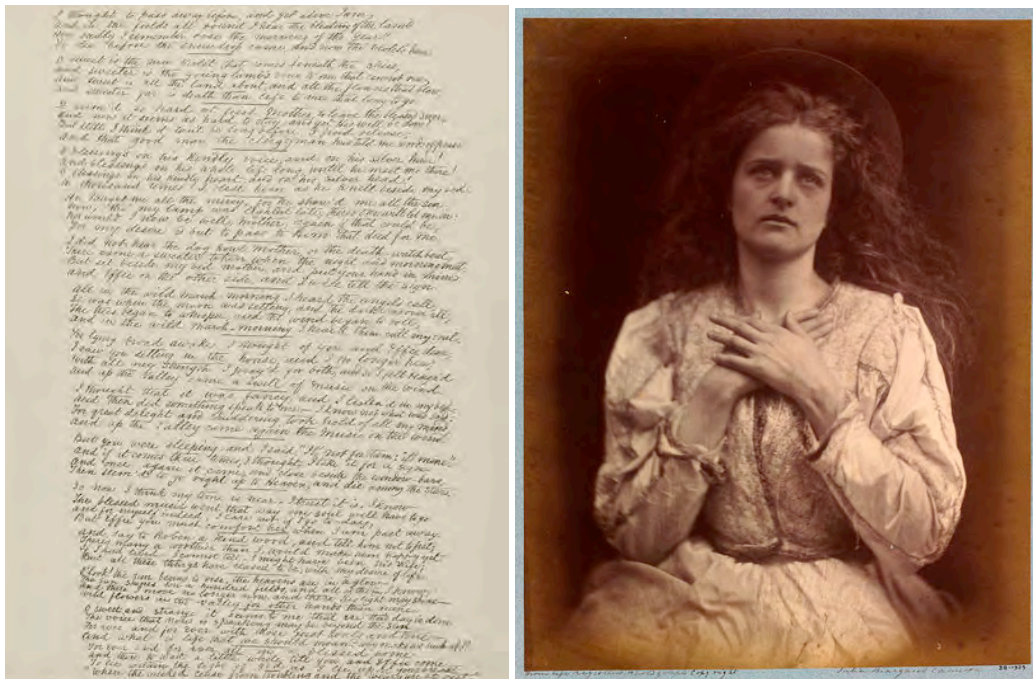


Fig. 139 'The May Queen' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Conclusion*, 1875 (photographed).

This second *May Queen* concludes Cameron's story of this heroine. A print version in the *Miniature* was inscribed with verse 135; "So now I think my time is near." The composition in this image offers little motion, with the model looking up and directing the viewer to something above her, heaven or god, clearly indicating death approaching. The source of light from above reinforces this feeling of parting of the maid. Here, Cameron is revisiting the photographic arrangements applied in the second portrait of the King dying for 'The Passing of Arthur.' The model's upward gaze and hands crossed on chest engage with the viewer in her discomfort and pain, generating a melancholic feeling in him.

The subject's great contrast against background, makes this portrait considerably more dramatic than the first *May Queen*, softer and more uniform, therefore creating a closing effect towards the subject and her arms crossed, hence pain. This centre area of the chest forms the most textured and detailed part in the image that emphasises her agony and depicts her poorly looks and languid face, almost blending with her pallid dress halving in the fore.

Tennyson's poem concludes with the final extract of 'May Queen's' entitled 'Conclusion,' which Cameron changes to 'The End' in her extract:

I thought to pass away before, and yet alive I am;
 And in the fields all around I hear the bleating of the lamb.
 How sadly, I remember, rose the morning of the year!
 To die before the snowdrop came, and now the violet's here.

98

O sweet is the new violet, that comes beneath the skies;
 And sweeter is the young lamb's voice to me that cannot rise;
 And sweet is all the land about, and all the flowers that blow;

192

And sweeter far is death than life, to me that long to go. 102

It seemed so hard at first, mother, to leave the blessed sun,
 And now it seems as hard to stay; and yet, His will be done!
 But still I think it can't be long before I find release;
 And that good man, the clergyman, has told me words of peace. 106

O blessings on his kindly voice, and on his silver hair,
 And blessings on his whole life long, until he meet me there!
 O blessings on his kindly heart and on his silver head!
 A thousand times I blest him, as he knelt beside my bed. 110

He taught me all the mercy, for he show'd me all the sin;
 Now, though my lamp was lighted late, there's One will let me in.
 Nor would I now be well, mother, again, if that could be;
 For my desire is but to pass to Him that died for me. 114

I did not hear the dog howl, mother, or the death-watch beat,
 There came a sweeter token when the night and morning meet;
 But sit beside my bed, mother, and put your hand in mine,
 And Effie on the other side, and I will tell the sign. 118

All in the wild March-morning I heard the angels call,
 It was when the moon was setting, and the dark was over all;
 The trees began to whisper, and the wind began to roll,
 And in the wild March-morning I heard them call my soul. 122

For lying broad awake, I thought of you and Effie dear;
 I saw you sitting in the house, and I no longer here;
 With all my strength I prayed for both, and so I felt resigned,
 And up the valley came a swell of music on the wind. 126

I thought that it was fancy, and I listened in my bed;
 And then did something speak to me, I know not what was said;
 For great delight and shuddering took hold of all my mind,
 And up the valley came again the music on the wind. 130

But you were sleeping; and I said, "It's not for them, it's mine;"
 And if it comes three times, I thought, I take it for a sign.
 And once again it came, and close beside the window-bars;
 Then seem'd to go right-up to heaven and die among the stars. 134

So now I think my time is near; I trust it is. I know
 The blessed music went that way my soul will have to go.
 And for myself, indeed, I care not if I go to-day;
 But Effie, you must comfort her when I am past away. 138

And say to Robin a kind word, and tell him not to fret;
 There's many a worthier than I, would make him happy yet.
 If I had lived—I cannot tell—I might have been his wife;
 But all these things have ceased to be, with my desire of life. 142

O, look! the sun begins to rise! the heavens are in a glow;
 The sun shines upon a hundred fields, and all of them I know.
 And there I move no longer now, and there his light may shine,—
 Wild flowers in the valley for other hands than mine. 146

O sweet and strange it seems to me, that ere this day is done
 The voice that now is speaking may be beyond the sun,—
 Forever and forever with those just souls and true,—
 And what is life that we should moan? why make we such ado? 150

Forever and forever, all in a blessed home,
And there to wait a little while till you and Effie come,
To lie within the light of God, as I lie upon your breast,
And the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. 154

These sixty verses tell how Alice has survived the Winter, and like the Spring she then awakens. Tennyson represents this season with his usual references to nature, i.e.: violets and newly born lambs in Alice's voice, who has turned less melancholic than previously when she thought she was dying first time. The reader feels she is longing for the final soothing of death, having comforted on the words of the local priest, and made final peace with Robin, she is prepared for her passing, which seems just a pure formality. It is in this section of the poem, that Tennyson finally explains a little more about the story of these two lovers; Alice's rejection of Robin and preference for her May Queen title and to continue looking until finding the right candidate. This explanation had been already conveyed in Cameron's previous illustration, being ahead of Tennyson's text.

For the viewer of *Illustrations*, going from the first *May Queen* to the second is no news. Cameron's previous storytelling through paired single portraits of her characters had trained him to pursue narrative in their before and afters and little detail variants between the two. From one *May Queen* to the next lies Cameron's story of a maturing woman, who as she leaves her impulsive youth comes her suffering, and she realises her adolescence aspirations are superfluous and come at a great price; loss of family, love and finally death. By misreading slightly Tennyson's poem for a less-determined and indulgent looking queen, Cameron is presenting to the viewer one of her heroines. Hers can anticipate her end, it is patent all along in her melancholic and meditative gaze, as well as kind proceedings towards others she had hurt in her life. Cameron's representation of a more genuine and wiser maid victim of herself, puts her *May Queen* in the category of her female leads in *Idylls*. And by focusing on her female aspects, with her virtues and vices, and the "instabilities" on the surface of character (Armstrong 490) offered in Tennyson's story, her heroine acts as the perfect narrative bridge between the women in *Idylls* and those in *Other Poems*. All equal heroines in the photographer's viewfinder.

Cameron's free interpretation of the 'The May Queen' pitches another imagery jewel for *Illustrations*, entirely different and unlike from any of her women in it:



Fig. 140 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Childhood of Alice and Effie*, from *Illustrations*' Miniature Edition, 1875.

It is very likely that Cameron produced this additional illustration for 'The May Queen' when including it in her Miniature edition. It is exclusive to this edition and did not appear in any of the large volumes copies of *Illustrations*. Gernsheim calls it the "Untitled picture with two girls with flowers", as it comes without accompanying text or title on the mount¹²⁴, and he lists it in his sequence for the Miniature at the forefront of the paired *May Queens* – Cameron excluded her illustration of Robin and Alice from the small edition. Hinton calls this image *The Childhood of Alice and Effie* (*Illustrations* 48), a choice I find both agreeable and charming. This image is not just a beautiful one, but unique in the context of *Illustrations*. Mostly, foreign to the photobook is the reminiscence of Cameron's previous children photography representing the tenderness and purity of infancy with her angels, beggars, baby Jesus and mythological subjects:

¹²⁴ Inscribed as "English Blossom" next to the Colnaghi stamp (Cox and Ford 429).



Fig. 141 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Red and White Roses*, 1865. Left.

Fig. 142 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Cherub & Seraph*, 1866. Right.



Fig. 143 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Infant Bridal*, (two versions), 1864.

Her child subjects also appeared almost naked, with loose hair, close and embracing, and giving an intensive gaze directly into her camera. They conveyed the innocence and sincerity of childhood, which like in that one of Alice and Effie represents also pure sister love. To this illustration, Cameron did not follow a direct text reference from Tennyson, but was likely to be inspired from Eleanor Vere Boyle's title page for the *The May Queen* (see fig. 45). Not only did Cameron not include an excerpt next to it, but she went back to a moment that had not existed textually. Still, she produced a striking image that belonged to her imagination and, to be fair, suiting to the series of *Illustrations* series and her story. In *The Childhood*, the viewer recognises Alice as the elder of the two, being portrayed protective of her younger, Effie, both surrounded by their garden flowers and roses, everything present in the poem. Cameron's picture already feels familiar to the viewer without the need of text explanation.

Style-wise, Cameron proves to be in her comfort zone in *The Childhood*, by getting up close to her infant subjects and composing at ease. Unlike her more rigid representations

of the *Idylls*' adult subjects. No doubt, this illustration feels especially refreshing in this series. It is sincere and spontaneous, at the same time as feeling familiar with the story told within; an older sister caring for her younger. Tennyson's 'The End' dealt with this theme as Alice prepared herself to die, giving advice to Effie on how to look after her family's garden. Her legacy, symbolised here by the flowers, represents femininity, with its beauty and purity of youth, at the same time as enclosing the fragility of time passing. The older sister passes on beauty and youth to the other, who actually enjoys the better focus, detail and contrast visually, where our eye essentially pauses to gaze. This image has got great movement in it, in the collodion swirls fixed in the background and the motion implied in the opposite directions of the girls' looking. This reflects different thoughts in their own early meditation, and the elapse of time, as a result the thought of beauty being frugal and temporary.

4.4.4.2 *The Princess*

Cameron illustrates this poem about Princess Ida's in three illustrations in her volume two. As we know, the poem tells the story of erudite princess founder of the first women-only university. Her story is naturally an insignia of women's rights and their choice in High Education, and therefore a strong feminist claim. Not to surprise, Cameron choses to illustrate it and include her interpretation with the rest of the heroines in the *Other Poems* section of *Illustrations*.

Following Tennyson's lyrical format of the poem, a medley of cantos and random songs, Cameron extracted three short songs as excerpts to illustrate her portraits. The first excerpt narrated by the prince's telling of the moment he finds the Princess at the university:

She stood,
Among her maidens, higher by the head,
Her back against a pillar, her foot on one
Of those tame leopards. Kittenlike he roll'd
And pawed about her sandal. I drew near;
I gazed.

(Canto III verses 158-63)

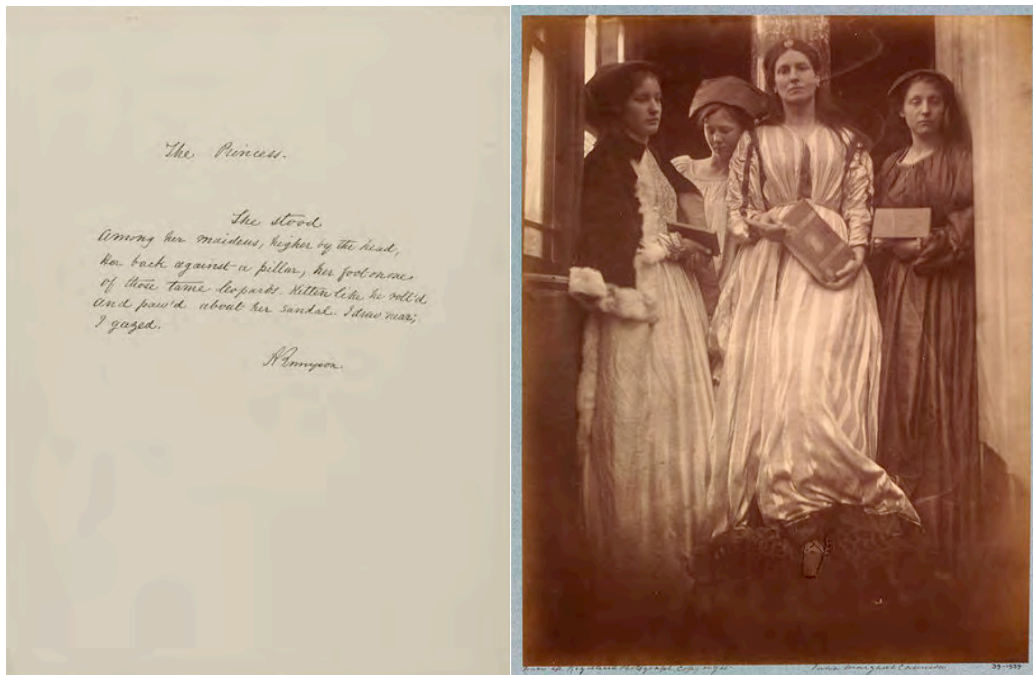


Fig. 144 'The Princess' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron,
The Princess, 1875 (photographed).

Cameron represented this university scene with a group shot which featured a poised Princess fronting Lady Blanche, Lady Psyche from Tennyson's poem, and one more supporter. To make this scene convincing and realistic to Tennyson's text, they all end up carrying books in their hands, and wearing what looks like university bonnets. And the artist has remained close to Tennyson's text, with her usual searching for detail to authenticate her story. Thus, namely, the princess is not only standing in front of a column, showing a frontal view of the book – Cameron clearly making it stand out here –, but also placing her foot on her pet leopard, "tame" and "kittenlike" as described by Tennyson. And rather than *placing*, Cameron has been *drawing*. As it can be appreciated on the Princess's foot in the image, she had intervened her glass negative to force the shape of her sandal. This is Cameron at the top of the crest in her pursuit of textuality.

Cameron's representation for 'The Princess' is still an offbeat group picture within *Illustrations*. First of all, the four subjects appear in full body, one of them, as the focus, staring intently into the camera, represents Princess Ida. The others, crossing gazes in self-meditation and own differing inner thoughts. The *Illustrations* viewer begins to notice at this point Cameron is switching to a more distinctive style of photography in this *Other Poems* section.



Fig. 145 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Five Wise Virgins*, 1864 (photographed).

This portrait of Ida and her followers brings it closer to Cameron's early image of *The Five Wise Virgins*, part of a set to represent the parable of the five Wise and five Foolish Virgins in the bible. Both compositions, the Princess' and the wiser of the Virgins' shared scale, repetition of femininity features, i.e.: abundance of ropes, hairs tided back and covered, crossed gazing between subjects, and of course a framed and centred-focus lead maid.

In the *Illustrations* group picture, the Princess stares vacantly into the camera with a royal air, categorically setting her apart from her companions. She bears the gravity of the image, and with it its photographic emphasis, standing in the centre, slightly in front, framed by the column and the rest of the women. She enjoys most of the contrast, because she is fully dressed in light clothing.

The sense of repetition in this image comes with the four women standing in a row, displaying themselves and filling up the frame, as if to create a multitude. By looking in different directions they produce the effect of movement and minds thinking, all apart from the Princess, keeping it still.

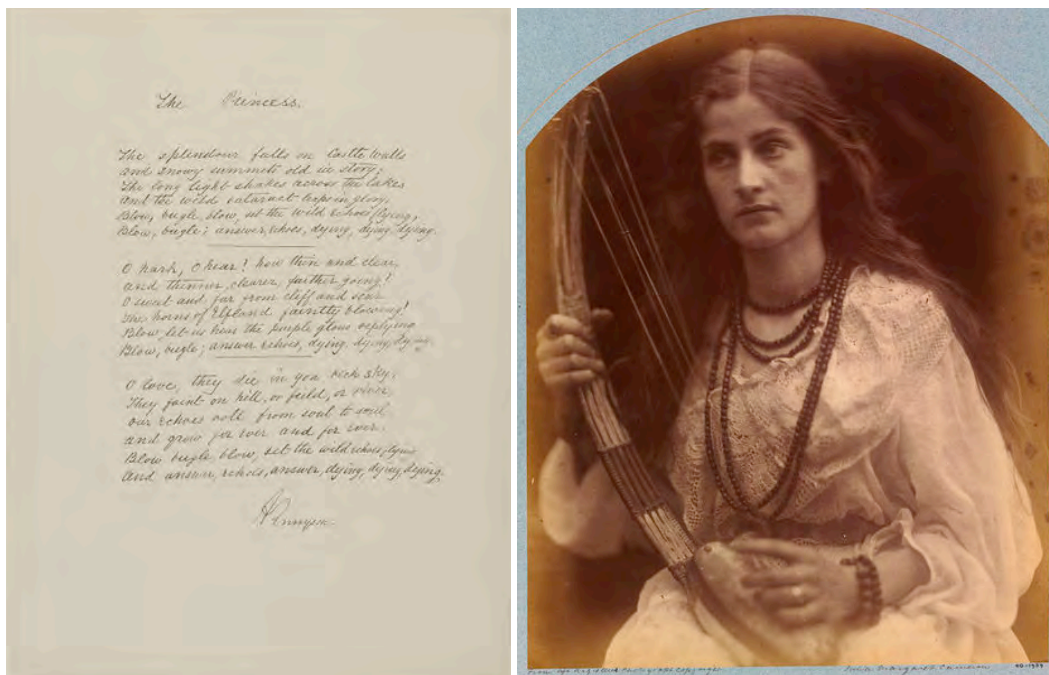


Fig. 146 'The Princess' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron,
The Princess, 1875 (photographed).

Cameron must have surprised the reader of *Illustrations* by her choice of theme to represent her second illustration for 'The Princess,' after the previous group picture with such a specific narrative. In this one, the subject matter stares into space in the direction of the musical instrument she is holding; a harp, rather than a wind instrument as the lyrical sound in the extracted poem might suggest. For the reader, this illustration is not only too generic but only confusing, as we find the harp reference in the first stanza of the final extract for the Princess' story, later on; 'Tears, Idle Tears.' There, in verse 3, the reader find the "smote her harp."

In this second illustration, the harp gets all the focus in the image, highlighted in full detail and contrast, and also being pointed to by the model's hand and looking. Cameron has served herself photographically of yet another symbolic attribute; a musical instrument, which like in *And Enid Sang*, aids to beautify the female model with knowledge of the Sister Arts, in this case music.

This portrait of the Princess was the only one that made it to the Miniature edition, as a slightly different print version, but Cameron must have felt it represented well this poem and story as a whole, and could stand alone as an image and as an illustration. The unrelated text that accompanies this image is the song 'The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls,' that became very famous after having been added to the third edition of 'The Princess' (1850).¹²⁵

The splendour falls on castle walls
 And snowy summits old in story:
 The long light shakes across the lakes,
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

¹²⁵ tspace.library.utoronto.ca/html/1807/4350/poem2184.html Accessed 21 May 2017.

O hark, O hear! How thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river:
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

In the frame of the poem, this song ended up giving a break to the plot of 'The Princess.' Here describing the picturesque surroundings of a castle, sound is clearly heard in the poem, with Tennyson's echoing reflected in the alliterations and repetitions throughout. This lyrical theme is the only point in common with Cameron's illustration.

And, something very akin happens in the third part for 'The Princess,' also illustrating a song, 'Tears, Idle Tears':

Then she, 'Let some one sing to us: lightlier move
The minutes fledged with music:' and a maid,
Of those beside her, smote her harp, and sang.

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

"Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

"Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

"Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.'

(Canto IV verses 18-40)

This extract acts as yet another interlude in the midst of the story. After the first stanza that as mentioned refers to the harp music, this poem talks about the narrator's sadness when looking at the fields in Autumn, the season of change, when "the days that are

no more," repeats at the end of each stanza. An idea Tennyson had represented also in 'The May Queen.'



Fig. 147 'The Princess' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.

Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Princess*, 1875 (photographed).

Cameron's choice of illustration for this song is again an odd one. Not completely unrelated to its melancholic tone, used by the narrator when singing, it has a bleak and nostalgic mood to it, with a May Prinsep gazing reflectively into the camera and wearing dark clothing. Hers is a striking full-body single portrait by Cameron, where the focus continues to stay on the instrument, which appears centred and in full detail in the composition. The bottom half of the image, with the clothing and drapery of the model, enjoys this focus resulting in gorgeous detail of her medieval-like attire. This feels appropriate to a princess, of whom we are unsure is being represented here. The portrait of this woman being represented, I find particularly modern and contemporary due to its square and blunt composition. In the end, it concludes a story, which it has been difficult to grasp for the reader.

Both Tennyson's poem and Cameron's illustrations prove challenging to follow. Only their first illustration made sense in the story, with a second and third too-generic ones detached from both text and initial story. I am inclined to believe that Cameron's aim in 'The Princess,' the longest poems in her *Other Poems* section, was above all, the creation of beautiful imagery and to continue her visual path in *Illustrations* of following women with the same aesthetics and femininity. Like Tennyson's medley and random recollection of ideas, scenery and songs, as the author of the photobook, she felt she had the freedom to do the same for her Princess.

4.4.4.3 Mariana

After a series of three illustrations in each of 'The May Queen' and 'The Princess', Cameron opts for illustrating the next poem more austere with just one image dedicated to represent 'Mariana.' She was both Tennyson's and Shakespeare's heroine and a casualty of love, left behind in isolation.

Cameron chose to illustrate the first two stanzas of 'Mariana in the Moated Grange,' which dealt skillfully with the character's seclusion as we see in this extract:

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at morn or eventide.
After the flitting of the bats,
When thickest dark did trance the sky,
She drew her casement-curtain by,
And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
She only said, "The night is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

(Verses 1-24)

Here Tennyson introduces the main themes of the poem; abandonment and time passing. Its first stanza deals with abandonment, which is represented by vivid visual descriptions of Mariana's surroundings. In particular the state of neglect of her garden outside, to which the subject has only got access through her window view. Rhetoric devices such as "crusted", "rusted", "broken", "weeded" and "worn" are used to describe it.

The second stanza deals with time passing and how Mariana in total sadness wastes her life away. This is also conveyed with wonderful garden imagery from the poet. Namely, her tears are compared to early morning dew that cannot stop trickling down and prevents our heroine from admiring the sunset. At the end of each day, she draws the curtain – metaphorically her casement – and retrieves home.

By repeating and alternating: "My life is dreary / My night is dreary, He cometh not," she said; She said, 'I am aweary, aweary, I would that I were dead!'" Tennyson contributes to

the idea of time wasting away, and the monotony and solitude that comes with it. Mariana finally refuses to accept her reality and wishes to better die.

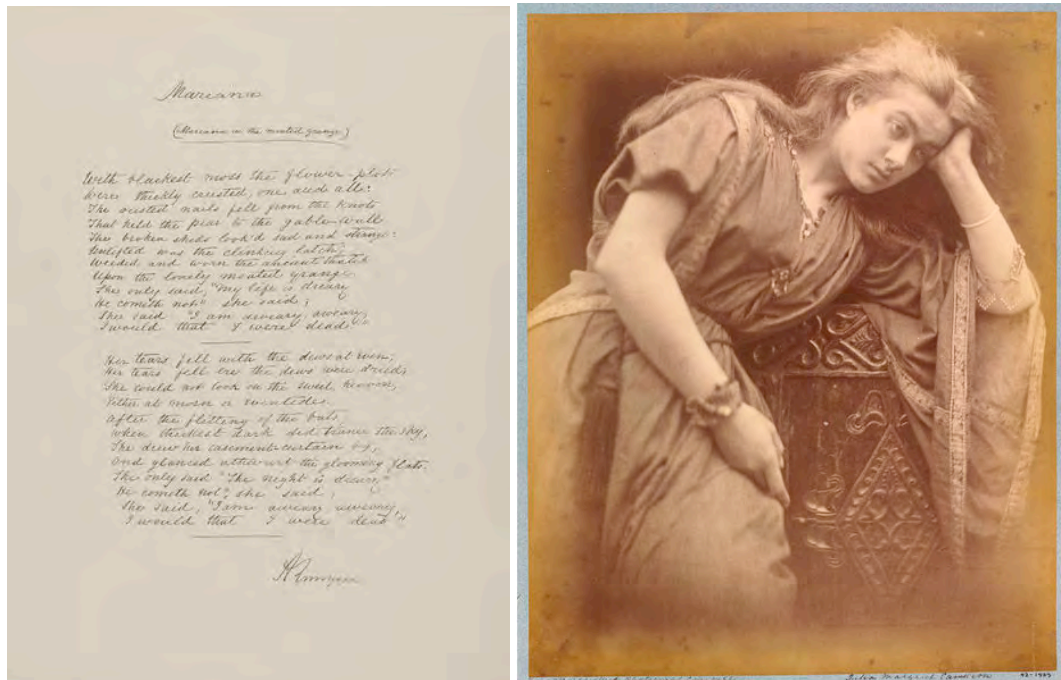


Fig. 148 'Mariana' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Mariana*,
 ca. 1874-1875 (photographed).

Cameron chose to illustrate these two ideas from Tennyson's narrative with a sorrowful sight of her heroine contemplating melancholically into space. In her representation, she characterised solitude and elapsing time in a still-life manner of human emotions. In *Mariana*, Cameron situated herself artistically in her favourite territory, the representation of the female's innermost.

We have seen in chapter two other Marianas in painting and illustration, and there were two more by Valentine Prinsep¹²⁶ in 1888 and John William Waterhouse¹²⁷ circa 1897. All of these coincided with the theme of yearning women at windows or in the outdoor, an important textual reference given by Tennyson.

Cameron, however, preferred to represent her heroine in an unsophisticated and remote setting against her usual blank background, looking into space.

¹²⁶ See *Mariana* by Prinsep: english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Prinsep.Mariana.html Accessed on 12 Feb. 2017.

¹²⁷ See *Mariana in the South* by Waterhouse: johnwilliamwaterhouse.com/pictures/mariana-south-1897/ Accessed on 12 Feb. 2017.

This created unity with the rest of her work in *Illustrations*, and perhaps might have had its precedent in Peach Robinson's representation of this character:



Fig. 149 Henry Peach Robinson, *Mariana*, 1858.

Whereas both versions share the indoor settings to reflect the heroine's authentic isolation and solitude, and their models pose similarly, they differ critically in intensity and narrative. Cameron's portrait of Agnes Mangles – previously Vivien in her *Idylls* – symbolised greater mourning and grief in the model's posture and gaze. Namely, her body language and facial expression; lounging at ease, head resting on hand, lifeless hanging limbs and dimly looking to infinity thoughtfully, or just a touch bored. Neither of these takes place in Peach Robinson's unengaged model. This looks too spur-of-the-moment.

Through her stock aesthetics and use of focus, Cameron managed to emphasise greatly Mariana's inner state of melancholy and desolation for her abandonment. Her loose untamed hair frames the fairness of her face in soft focus, which compared to the rich detail and wonderful contrast of her clothing and chair beneath, captures momentarily the viewer's eye. He joins in her meditation and wonders what is going through her head in all those hours of anticipation.

The image's tight use of frame and singled and centred subject make it lack in dynamism. This was, most probably, cleverly composed by Cameron as such in order to put across the dull and tedious monotony of its subject. At ease in front of the camera, she forms diagonal lines and angles with her body and extremities, which makes it visually arresting. The viewer, who finds a hint of motion in her fixated contemplation to the left, feels what she is feeling, and sees nothing. Or everything, as when in a meditative state something unimportant catches your attention, in where to dive your thoughts. In this case, Mariana's thoughts are about finding the reasons for her abandonment, and about justifying her love not coming back. She eases her pain thinking, not facing reality.

With *Mariana*, Cameron continued her journey in the representation of heroines from *Other Poems* for her photobook. Here, this subject provided a mundane and domestic woman type that proved equally captivating and drawing as her predecessors.

4.4.4.4 *The Beggar Maid*

Many have said that Cameron was very fond of the legend of the King Cophetua and the beggar maid, so it is not surprising that when she got the chance to illustrate it for volume two, she did just that.

In fact, she had encountered a real-life story of a beggar maid herself. Olsen tells how in 1859, while the Camerons were living in a Putney Heath, London, Julia had been approached by an Irish beggar and her pretty daughter. She took pity of them and gave them shelter, found a job for the mother, and ended up adopting the little girl. This girl was Mary Ryan, who would end up combining her housemaid duties with regular modelling for the lady of the house's allegoric photographs (190-1).

Years later, Ryan would end up falling for Henry James Stedman Cotton, the son of wealthy East India Company shareholders. He had first seen her in one of Julia's photographs, rather than a window as in the legend, and after conventionally pursuing her for a period of time, they both married with Cameron's consent. This fairy tale was something Cameron was unmistakably proud of, and described it as a real-life idyll in her *Annals*:

Entirely out of the 'Prospero and Miranda' picture sprung a marriage which has, I hope, cemented the welfare and well-being of a real King Cophetua who, in the Miranda, saw the prize which has proved a jewel in that monarch's crown. The sight of the picture caused the resolve to be uttered, which, after 18 months of constancy, was matured by personal knowledge, then fulfilled, producing one of the prettiest idylls of real life that can be conceived, and, what is of far more importance, a marriage of bliss with children worthy of being photographed, as their mother had been, for their beauty, but it must also be observed that the father was eminently, handsome, with a head of the Greek type and fair ruddy Saxon complexion.

She also photographed Ryan in 1864 in *My "beggar-maid" now 15!* (Cox and Ford 124), and years later showed off the couple's love in several poetic portraits:



Fig. 150 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1867. Left.



Fig. 151 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1867. Right.



Fig. 152 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Group from Sordello by Browning*, 1867. Left.



Fig. 153 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Affianced*, July 1867. Right.

Cameron normally used fictional couples in her images – except for real affianced models in *Gareth and Lynette* –, always asking them to act. The models of these candid images, Ryan and Cotton, would have made the perfect King Cophetua and beggar maid, but the reason is unknown. The following photograph proves that Cameron did not consider them as the royal couple and used alternative models and settings more unsuccessfully than her famous illustration.



Fig. 154 Julia Margaret Cameron, *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*, copyright July 10, 1867.

Olsen thinks that the newlywed couple were just simply not available at the time of her representation, after having married in August, 1 1867 in the local Freshwater church and moving to India, where Cotton held a post in the Indian Civil Service (196). There is, however, evidence that Cameron did think about the connection between these two stories, the fictional and the real Cophetuas, and in the same year of those photographs she did some test shoots of Cotton himself as King Cophetua (Cox and Ford 316).



Fig. 155 Julia Margaret Cameron, *H. J. S. Cotton as King Cophetua*, 1867.

It was, of course, due to his aristocratic positioned that Cotton was photographed in the style of the rest of her Famous men appearing with the characteristic honourable gaze, seated in profile and wearing dark clothes against a black background to suspend his immortal head and record his inner greatness. Or as she had herself described in her *Annals*, his “fair ruddy” outer features. Perhaps his greatness was too great for the real part.

Cameron included Tennyson's short and to-the-point poem with no underlining next to her illustration:

'The Beggar Maid'

Her arms across her breast she laid;
She was fairer than words can say;
Bare-footed came the beggar maid
Before the king Cophetua.
In robe and crown the king stepped down,
To meet and greet her on her way;
'It is no wonder,' said the lords,
'She is more beautiful than day.'

As shines the moon in clouded skies,
She in her poor attire was seen;
One praised her ankles, one her eyes,
One her dark hair and lovesome mien.
So sweet a face, such angel grace,
In all that land had never been.
Cophetua sware a royal oath:
"This beggar maid shall be my queen!"

Here, Tennyson relates the moment when the King goes out in the street and sees the maid, finding her 'fairer' and more beautiful than he had imagined, but in poor attire and bare feet. The poem is a first-person account by the King filled with feelings and impressions, and served as an inspiration to several artists, including the stunning and grand painting by Burne-Jones, as seen in chapter two (fig. 34).

Furthermore, there was an absolute fascination for representing beggars and ragged children during Victorian times, in art, in literature – famously Dickens – and also in photography. Keen photographers would dress up middle-class children in costume of rags to make exotic images (Wynne 34-49). Charles Dodgson (a.k.a. Lewis Carroll), who admired Tennyson greatly was also inspired by this poem, and set the trend with his *Beggar Maid* when photographing a young Alice Liddell – later his muse and main character in his novels.



Fig. 156 Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, *The Beggar Maid*, 1858. Left.

Fig. 157 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Pomoda*, 1872. Right.

The intensity and regarded sensuality of this image has been a talked about subject in the whole discussion of Dodgson's obscure infatuation and unhealthy relationship with the young Liddell,¹²⁸ whom years later and during her summer holidays in Freshwater Cameron also photographed. Liddell, twenty at the time, modelled for her in the role of saints, goddesses and other literary characters, but the one that stood out following on Dodgson's precise composition was that one of Roman queen of the fruitful *Pomoda* (fig. 157).

Although Cameron was not recreating the Tennysonian beggar in this portrait of Liddell, one feels she is closely revisiting Dodgson's earlier pose and gesture of hand on hip, as if begging for money, leaning on wall and gazing the camera with womanly intensity.

Thus, Cameron did not use Ryan, nor Cotton, nor Liddell, nor any of her earlier models in her *Beggar Maid*. Instead, she made use of an unknown man and an unknown woman, so far unrecognisable in the rest of her work. There is something odd and impersonal about Cameron's illustration of the story, not only for the characters being anonymous, something the *Illustrations'* viewer is not used to, but for the alienating aura between the King and beggar's appearance. Her representation is unlike anything she had photographed for this individual story before, or, all the more so, anything in her work.

Photographed in full body and as part of a stage performance, the viewer instantly feels the subjects are indeed representing for Cameron's act. This manner of representation is significantly unusual, considering how tangible and real this story must have felt for the photographer.

¹²⁸ BBC documentary "The Secret World of Lewis Carroll" (2015).

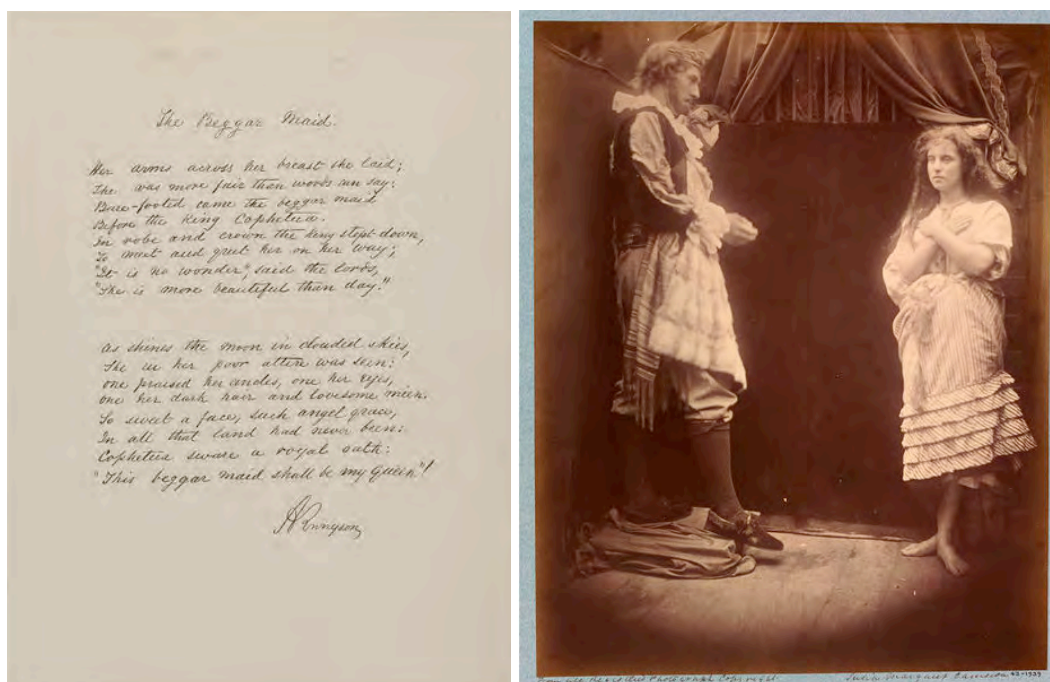


Fig. 158 'The Beggar Maid' from vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.
 Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Beggar Maid*, 1875 (photographed).

Its theatricality has been elevated to the maximum level; the spotlight effect achieved in Cameron's glass house, the stool propping the King and the thick drapery and stage set, all contributing to it. And it is in particular the pose and gesture of the actors/models of choice that make it more withdrawn and distant than in the rest of the stories in *Illustrations*. As a single image, it feels hard to relate to. It feels cold and aloof overall, and perhaps staged, close even to Landy's *tableaux* for *The Seven Ages of Man*, as seen (fig. 98 and fig. 99). Granting characters in Cameron's do not overperform but rather *under*-perform.

With all things considered, on the other hand, this image is flawless in its composition and lighting. Cameron's eye for detail provided its textual context by undressing and bare-footing the poor maid and overdressing and stepping-up the King in order to represent their difference in status. In particular, the arrangement of the maid's clothing is dazzling, my personal and absolute *punctum* in this image; with the tilted skirt going up, reminding the viewer of Dodgson's beggar portrait – or if not familiar with it, the recognisable iconography of the poor child in rags at the time.¹²⁹ Her skirt reveals bare feet and mirrors the knee tightening of the King's trousers. This is the perfect *punctum* of the image and what exceedingly represents their poles apart social position.

Their different heights and spotlight on the two form a perfect circle. Cameron's judgement on lighting, clothing and different elevations of her models was not another one that set out to *pauperise* and *infantilise* our beggar maid. She had been taken out from all

¹²⁹ As a late example; in 1877 Barnardo's was reprimanded by a court of arbitration for using photographs of ragged children in the urban landscape in its publicity to represent poverty in childhood, one of the greatest social issues in the early Victorian era. Deborah Wynne calls it "the power of rags," and cites Seth Koven saying that: "The Barnardo boy or girl became fixed in the British cultural imagination as a synonym for the ragged child, trapped forever in the spectacular and iconic poverty of torn clothes, bare feet, and unkempt hair" (133, qtd. in Wynne 47).

feminine attributes and beauty of the rest of the *Other Poems* heroines; focus, clothing, hair, pose, main stage and so on. It seems almost as if Cameron had worked here in reverse; rather than accentuating femininity in the beggar maid, she had played it down. She still appears though in a pensive gaze, looking through the King, engaging with the viewer about her poorly situation and status, these taken to an extreme by Cameron.

The curtains that dress the background are rich in texture and detail, and as mentioned, Cameron had not used this type of drapery in *Illustrations* before. Compared to the others, this set looks neat and well-arranged. The curtains form the festoon in a graceful curve and mid parting, typical of theatres.

The lighting recreates the “moon in clouded skies” effect from Tennyson’s line 9, providing a general overall detail in the scenery and contributing to the stage-like effect. The whites appear luminous, and this make the actors – specially the female one, as Cameron likes to normally do – stand out from the backdrop, even in her underwear clothing.

The representation is static with generally not much going on. The maid’s blank face and the King looking in profile at her, does not convey half of the feelings that the King is supposed to be going through.

The focus of this image commanding most of the viewer’s attention is – really – on the floor, leg positioning, bare feet and background. It is almost as Cameron had looked only at the first half of the poem, leaving the interaction and conversation completely out of it, making this representation disaffecting and dissatisfying. The King does not look love struck at all, and the maid’s gaze with her hands crossed is all too blank. There was far more worship and admiration in the portraits of Cotton’s and Mary Ryan, and enticing and artistic beggarship in both of the portraits of Alice Liddell.

4.4.4.5 Maud

After the story of the ‘Beggar Maid’ in volume two, Cameron intercalated the deaths of Elaine of Astolat and King Arthur, as pictured before, and her illustration for ‘Maud; A Monodrama’ then followed.

Her heroine is a fragile woman unable to confront her family and status and pursue true love. It is possible that Cameron may have seen a connection between the maid and knight stories of love and marriage gone wrong, and final death, with the story of Maud.

Weaver says that Tennyson gave Cameron an inscribed copy of *Maud and Other Poems* on July 25, 1855 (*JMC 1815-1879* 53), as a sign of friendship as the edition officially came out on Moxon 3 days later (Ricks 336). From it, Cameron chose to illustrate the moment Maud is called into the garden by her lover, narrator of the story, and moments before the fight between him and her malevolent brother take place. The excerpt contains the last two stanzas before the end of part I with the famous “Come into the garden, Maud:”

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;

She is coming, my life, my fate;
 The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near;"
 And the white rose weeps, "She is late;"
 The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear;"
 And the lily whispers, "I wait."

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
 Were it ever so airy a tread,
 My heart would hear her and beat,
 Were it earth in an earthy bed;
 My dust would hear her and beat,
 Had I lain for a century dead,
 Would start and tremble under her feet,
 And blossom in purple and red.

(verses 908-23)

To represent his excitement and anticipation as Maud finally steps out in the garden, Tennyson used in his poems repetitions, brief and broken sentences, swift contrasts and pleasant alliterations to build up and emphasise the moment and to create a pace and rhythm.

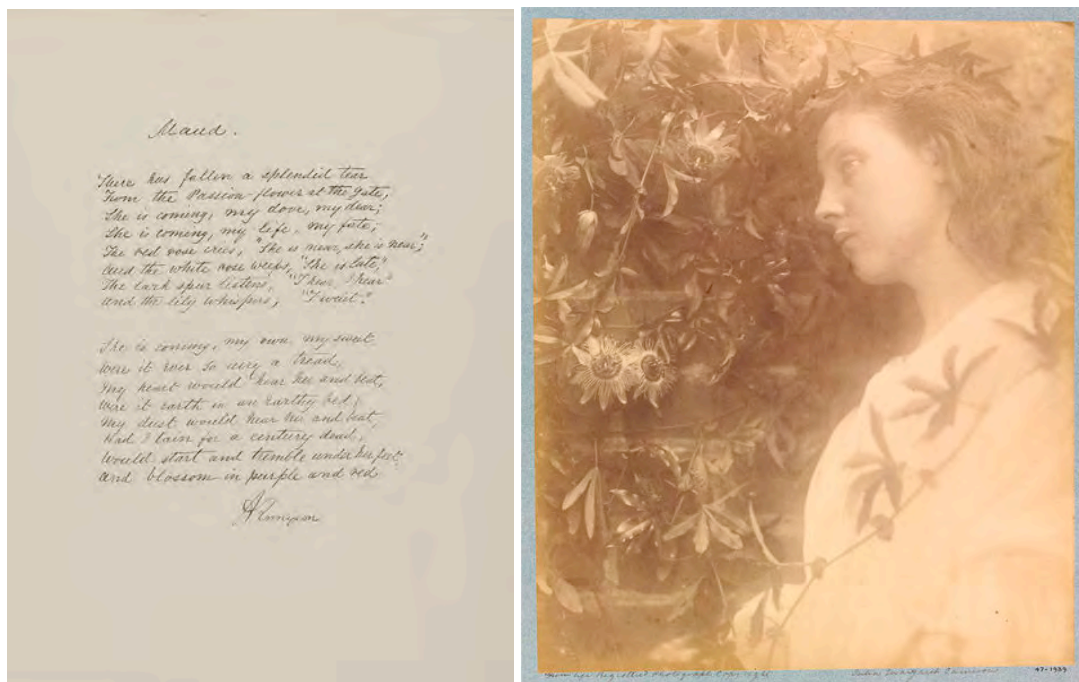


Fig. 159 'Maud' from Vol. II of *Illustrations*, 1875.

Left: Printed page of handwritten poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *Maud*, 1875 (photographed).

Cameron's representation of this moment could not be more different. Hers is a calming scene of tranquility and meditation, with a pensive Maud resting her troubled head on the garden wall. As the norm in *Other Poems*, Cameron continues to focus on her female character's inner thought, this one with maudlin – quite literally – delicate beauty in an idyllic nature setting. By now, the reader of *Illustrations* has learnt that Cameron enjoyed selecting Tennyson's more idyll-like extract for her representation of women. This being part of her vision in *Illustrations*.

In all her representations of Maud – and there were a few in total –, Cameron used the same methodology of depicting her heroine pensive and troubled.



Fig. 160 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Maud by moonlight*, 1864-1865. Left.

Fig. 161 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Passion Flower at the Gate*, 1866. Right.

Additionally, there had been *The Rosebud Garden of Girls* (as seen in fig. 1), a group picture of four young contemplative girls inspired from section 22 of ‘Come into the garden, Maud,’ representing a bunch of rosebuds in the orchard as the ideal of femininity. And *A Study for Maud*, to be seen next in fig. 170.

As usual with her portraits in *Illustrations*, Cameron’s interpretation of Maud had followed a path of photographic exercising, and this evidence shows that she pursued its depiction thoroughly, with different versions and models. Two of them had been Mary Hillier, and she recorded of her in her *Annals*: “This last autumn her head illustrating the exquisite Maud.”

This last *Maud* represented the utmost meditation, pain and solitude in a peaceful image possibly taken outdoors. We can guess it is an actual garden wall, probably Dimbola, or its surroundings, with its layers of brick popping through the climbing plant. Most of the texture and detail in the image has been given to the vertical garden and wall, which also happens to enjoy the focus in Tennyson’s florally-descriptive poem. It feels as if Maud is a supporting character of this wall, being slightly soft and a touch overexposed when receiving most of the light in her white clothing and complexion in Cameron style. The most relevant element of this image is, therefore, the wall and Maud’s head resting on it, which is where Cameron has set her focus range, leaving the rest softly-focused.

This *Maud* is more intimate and dear than any of the others, as Cameron remained closer to her subject. The maid is confined and imbued in the garden, being part of it. Cameron’s floral theme is certainly a thematic in many of her images. They convey everything female; beauty, delicacy and temporality.

Here she surrounds her subject with flowers and nature, and goes a step closer in her textuality by representing line 2 of the poem “From the passion-flower at the gate” with real *Passifloras* creeping up the wall and subject. Apparently, this type of flower was very popular in Victorian gardens.¹³⁰

Cameron excelled in her devotion for detail, make her images engage with text. If Tennyson used in the passionflower as a symbol of passion and physical torment,¹³¹ we can only guess, but she certainly composed her image around it to make it the protagonist. Mary Hillier’s eye leads the viewer’s attention towards it on the garden wall, and Cameron placed on Maud’s shoulder, bringing the garden theme to the forefront.

4.4.4.6 The Gardener’s Daughter

The final story of *Illustrations* continues with the theme of beautiful floral subjects. Gernsheim listed in his appendix for *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life* an illustration for Tennyson’s *The Gardener’s Daughter Or, The Pictures* exclusively for the Miniature edition, which seems like an appropriate title to conclude her state-of-the-art book of illustrations. In them, photographic reflections of different epitomies of beauty and femininity.

In her *The Gardener’s Daughter*, Cameron illustrated the moment the narrator of the poem first envisions brown-haired Rose, immediately becoming love struck.

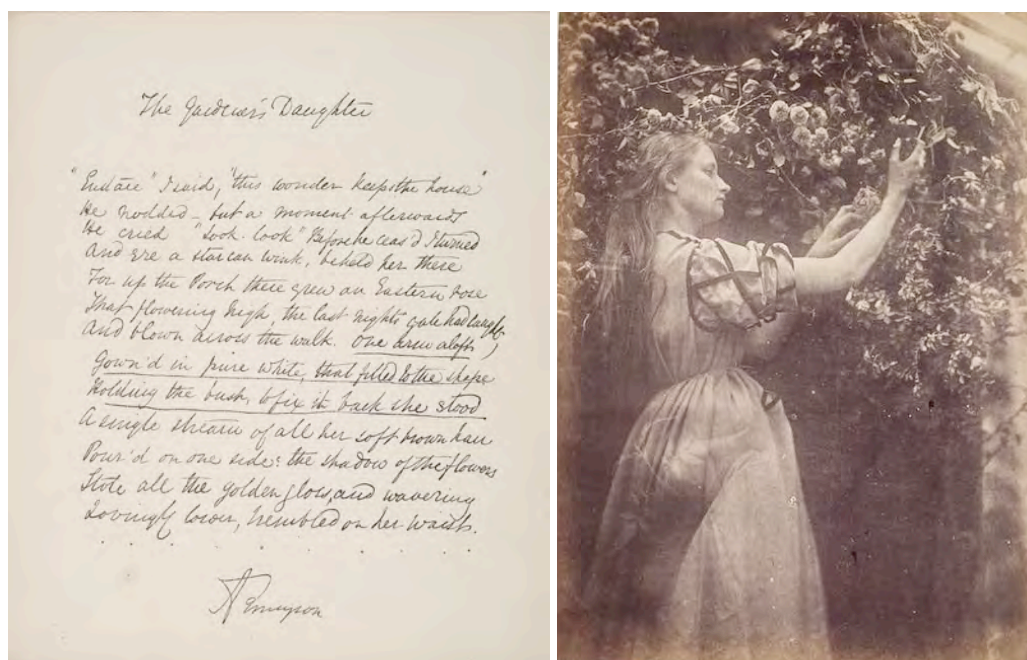


Fig. 162 'The Gardener's Daughter from *Illustrations*' Miniature Edition, 1875, Julia Margaret Cameron Trust, Isle of Wight. Left: Printed page of handwritten and underlined poem. Right: Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Gardener's Daughter*, 1874 (photographed).

¹³⁰ Wikipedia. Accessed 26 Jan. 2017.

¹³¹ The passionflower symbolises the Passion of Christ and the last few hours before his crucifixion.

Including the following extract, which contained some underlining:

“Eustace”, I said, “this wonder keeps the house.”
He nodded, but a moment afterwards
He cried, “Look! look!” Before he ceased I turn’d.
And, ere a star can wink, beheld her there.

For up the porch there grew an Eastern rose,
That, flowering high, the last night’s gale had caught,
And blown across the walk. One arm aloft
Gown’d in pure white, that fitted to the shape
Holding the bush, to fix it back, she stood,
A single stream of all her soft brown hair
Pour’d on one side: the shadow of the flowers
Stole all the golden gloss, and, wavering
Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist

(verses 118-30)

The description in this fragment is colourful and a real poetic joy, with Tennyson using his familiar flora allegory to represent women. For instance, hair being represented by nature when Tennyson refers to Rose’s brown mane as: “single stream”, “poured”, “wavering” and “trembled,” giving a beautiful sense of movement. An element Cameron certainly picks up when she let the model’s hair fall down to her waist in perfect photographic view. As examined, Cameron uses loose hair as an element to represent unrestrained femininity in her aesthetics. Unfortunately, in this occasion Rose’s hair gets a little lost in the foliage.

Previously to this final image in *Illustrations*, Cameron had already worked on this story as early as 1867, when she photographed a young Mary Ryan as the ‘Gardener’s Daughter’:



Fig. 163 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Gardener’s Daughter*, 1867.

She had photographed her at the garden in Dimbola, in the usual dreamy white clothing, flowing hair and profile pose. Sun falling directly onto her petite frame, burning her

fairness slightly and creating a great contrast between her and the garden bush, dotted with tiny spots of white flowers also exposed to the glorious light. In this setting, leaves and branches appear in great detail, adorning the background with a natural entry to the garden that gives a sense of perspective composed in the frame by Cameron, and referred to by Tennyson later on in his poem; “The wicket-gate, and found her standing there,” verse 208 when describing how the enamoured narrator comes back to see Rose months later. This shows Cameron was also following text in this portrait.



Fig. 164 Frank Stone, *Gardener's Daughter*, 1850.

There is certain parallelism in the composition between Cameron's 1867 *Gardeners' Daughter* and this one by Stone used also as an illustration for one of Tennyson's book of poems. In Stone's painting the perspective is created by the trees and little path, where at the end of it the two admirers observe the girl. In Cameron's photograph the sense of perspective is created by the garden arch in the background, giving also a sense of being observed, even where there is no other human figure apart from Ryan.

Tennyson's poem became very famous at the time, inspiring more imagery of the beautiful gardener:



Fig. 165 John Calcott Horsley, *The Gardener's Daughter; or The Pictures*, 1857. Left.

Fig. 166 Edward Henry Wehnert, *The Gardener's Daughter*, 1860.

Both of these illustrations represent Rose in her porch front view too, but never achieving the closeness and natural view of Cameron's second version of *Gardener's Daughter* for the Miniature. Her underlining and inclusion of text next to it meant that Cameron this time was being more specific and had decided to represent a different moment in the story; the first time the narrator sees Rose and finds the inspiration for his art. Even though Cameron's early and late representations of Rose are not too dissimilar in style, they are moments apart in the story, and Cameron conveyed that with distant and perspective in her images.

The second illustration being used in the Miniature image offers a more confined and detailed view of Cameron's subject matter, a model yet unknown, photographed this time indoors and in her glass house – it is difficult not to notice its little window on the top right corner – perhaps to also represent the idea of the porch. There, plenty of natural lighting floods the image. Although this falls onto the girl's face, this lighting is diffuse and unable to recreate the contrast from outdoors. By comparing her two portraits, one can see how Cameron was technically able to create a more balanced and restrained lighting effect in her glassed studio, as if passed through a filter, becoming easier to control in the image. This comes at the cost of contrast between the subject and the foliage.

To represent the garden and, more specifically this one in the porch, a wall of roses has been hung from the ceiling and wall of the glass house, to create a full blooming effect. Propping young women in light clothes in front of self-made foliage is nothing we have not yet seen in Cameron's work, both in and out *Illustrations; Gareth and Lynette, Maud, Pomoda* and many more. The following three examples show how Cameron was keen on the theme and tried it on numerous occasions, perhaps until finally achieving the desired result in the miniature's *Gardener's Daughter* and, possibly *Maud*:



Fig. 167 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Unknown woman*, 1870-1874. Left.

Fig. 168 Julia Margaret Cameron, *Unknown woman*, 1870-1874. Right.



Fig. 169 Julia Margaret Cameron, *A Study for Maud*, ca. 1875.

Although this portrait of Mary Hillier would become a study for Maud, I believe it directly contributed to creating the second *Gardener's Daughter* too, and indeed *Maud*.

The likeness of all three pictures speaks for itself; all subjects in profile, wearing white or pale clothing as a single means to achieve contrast with the little light, hair streaming down to their waist as a symbol of femininity and absorbed gaze. The photographic tactics and style that Cameron followed for her miniature *Gardener's Daughter* would have been very similar. She sought to represent peace and intimacy in familiar and domestic nature, and could only achieve that in her glass house.

Cameron filled the background space up with vegetation in abundance, all concentrated at the top, leaving an empty dark spot at the bottom of it that would make the slender human figure stand out. The repetition of foliage, flowers and leaves reinforces the natural theme, and functions as the symbol of the garden, naturally, the centre stage in Tennyson's poem. The action of gardening the tangled-up branches and leaves is represented by the gardener's delicate hands pruning it. After perusing around the image, the viewer notices the girl's action of the hands, given enough contrast and detail by the photographer. Her hazy human figure and gaze direct him to her gentle movement in her hands, where the emphasis of the image lies, directly referencing Tennyson's poem and Cameron's underlining (verses 124-6): "arm aloft", "holding the bush", to "fix it back." Cameron continues being textual.

As we survey this portrait, we notice a delicate shadow of what looks like a tiny leaf on the gardener's skirt. This is another example of Cameron's experimental and tactile approach in her photography and direct interventions on the negative. The viewer of *Illustrations* has already witnessed this in her Elaines with the nestling or the background moon. In this case, she imprinted her image with a leaf with the photogram technique, taking us back to the early beginnings of photography in the leaf plate in *The Pencil of Nature* (see fig. 20), and to her own beginnings in her print of Kate Dore's fern portrait (see fig. 58). The result was not skillful and perhaps unnecessary, but proved afresh Cameron's desire of experimentation and originality in her photographic *modus operandi*, and the embracing of her flaws in the making of *Illustrations*.

To sum up this analysis, Cameron decided to upgrade her original *Gardener's Daughter* in 1975 by replacing its outdoor more comprehensive representation with a more textual and secluded view of her female subject. To do that, she gave her the glass-house treatment and brought it technically and aesthetically in line with the rest of her *Illustrations'* women. In the new *Gardener's Daughter*, the viewer feels more engaged with her, wistful and unaware she is the object of love. Her beauty is that of a domestic flower, destined to be admired and harvest at the gardener's wish.

4.4.5 End Page

In the inside back cover of the Miniature, Cameron stuck a newspaper cutting of a review from the *Morning Post* of her volume one of *Illustrations*. This had been published on January 11, 1875 with the title: "Mrs. Cameron's New Photographs."

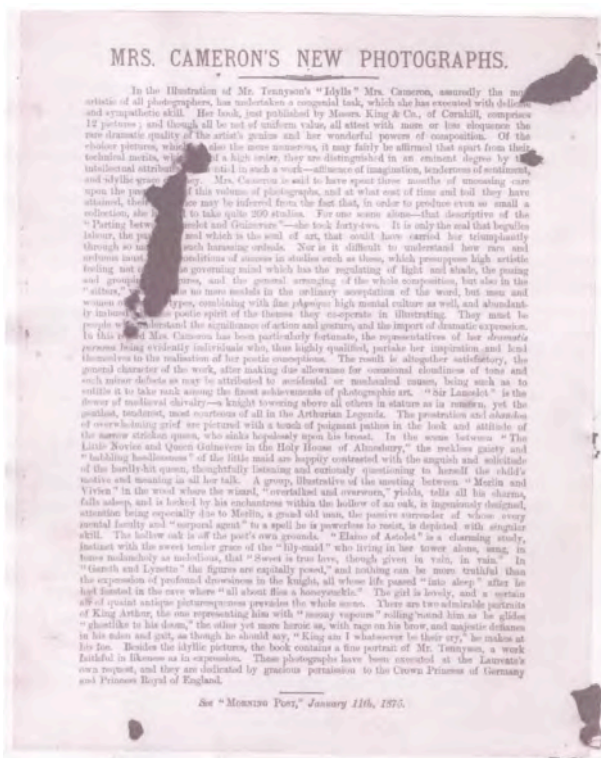


Fig. 170 Loose page with the "Mrs. Cameron's New Photographs" review in the *Mornington Post*, January 11, 1875, from *Illustrations' Miniature Edition*, 1875.

Herewith its full transcript:

MRS. CAMERON'S NEW PHOTOGRAPHS

In the illustration of Mr. Tennyson's "Idylls", Mrs. Cameron, assuredly the most artistic of all photographers, has undertaken a congenial task, which she has executed with delicate and sympathetic skill. Her book, just published by Messrs King & Co., of Cornhill, comprises 12 pictures; and though all be not of uniform value, all attest with more or less eloquence the rare dramatic quality of the artist's genius and her wonderful powers of composition. Of the choicer pictures, which are also the more numerous, it may fairly be affirmed that apart from their technical merits, which are of a high order, they are distinguished in an eminent degree by the intellectual attributes all-essential in such a work – affluence of imagination tenderness of sentiment, and idyllic grace of fancy. Mrs. Cameron is said to have spent three months of unceasing care upon the preparation of this volume of photographs, and at what cost of time and toil they have attained their excellen[ce] may be inferred from the fact that, in order to produce even so small a collection, she has had to take quite 200 studies. For one scene alone – that descriptive of "The Parting between Lancelot and Guinevere" – she took forty-two. It is only the zeal that beguiles labour, the passionate zeal which is the soul of art, that could have carried her triumphantly through so many and such harassing ordeals. Nor is it difficult to understand how rare and arduous must be the conditions of success in studies such as these, which presuppose high artistic feeling not only in the governing mind which has the regulating of light and shade, the posing and grouping of figures, and the general arranging of the whole composition, but also in the "sitters", who must be no mere models in the ordinary acceptance of the world, but men and women of peculiar types, combining with fine *physique* high mental culture as well, and abundantly imbued with the poetic spirit of the themes they co-operate in illustrating. They must be people who understand the significance of action and gesture, and the import of dramatic expression. In this regard, Mrs. Cameron has been particularly fortunate, the representatives of her *dramatis personae* being evidently individuals who, thus highly qualified, partake her inspiration and lend themselves to the realisation of her poetic conceptions. The result is altogether satisfactory, the general character of the work, after making due allowance for occasional cloudiness of tone and such

minor defects as may be attributed to accidental or mechanical causes, being such as to entitle it to take rank among the finest achievements of photographic art. "Sir Lancelot" is the flower of mediaeval chivalry – a knight towering above all others in stature [and] in renown, yet the gentlest, tenderest, most courteous of all the Arthurian Legends. The prostration and *abandon* of overwhelming grief are pictured with a touch of poignant pathos in the look and attitude of the sorrow stricken queen, who sinks hopelessly upon his breast. In the scene between "The Little Novice and Queen Guinevere in the Holy House of Almesbury," the reckless gaiety "babbling heedlessness" of the little maid are happily contrasted with the anguish and solicitude of the hardly-hit queen, thoughtfully listening and curiously questioning to herself the child's motive and meaning in all her talk. A group, illustrative of the meeting between "Merlin and Vivien" in the wood where the wizard, "overtalked and overworn," yields, tells all his charms, falls asleep, and is locked up by his enchantress, within the hollow of any oak, is ingeniously designed, attention being especially due to Merlin, a grand old man, the passive surrender of whose every mental faculty and "corporal agent" to a spell he is powerless to resist, is depicted with singular skill. The hollow oak is off the poet's own grounds. "Elaine of Astolat" is a charming study, instinct with the sweet, tender grace of the "lily-maid" who living in her tower alone, sang, in tones melancholy as melodious, that "Sweet is true love, though given in vain, in vain." In "Gareth and Lynette" the figures are capitally posed, and nothing can be more truthful than the expression of profound drowsiness in the knight, all whose life passed "into sleep" after he had feasted in the cave where "all about flies a honeysuckle." The girl is lovely, and a certain air of quaint antique picturesqueness pervades the whole scene. There are two admirable portraits of King Arthur, the one representing him with "moony vapours" rolling around him as he glides "ghostlike to his doom," the other yet more heroic as, with rage on his brow, and majestic defiance in his mien and gait, as though he should say, "King am I whatsoever be their cry," he makes at his foe. Besides the idyllic pictures, the book contains a fine portrait of Mr. Tennyson, a work faithful in likeness as in expression. These photographs have been executed at the Laureate's own request, and they are dedicated by gracious permission to the Crown Princess of Germany and Princess Royal of England.

See "MORNING POST," January 11, 1875.

This editorial reviewed Cameron's photographic work in volume one of *Illustrations*, published only a month earlier. Not much is mentioned about how her illustrations functioned alongside the text of the most famous poet at the time in Britain, just her photography. Today, there are many scholars who suggest that Cameron was the author behind this review, and wrote it herself.¹³²

It is more than obvious that this newspaper piece is positive and highly praising of Cameron with descriptions such as "most artistic," "genius," "wonderful powers of composition," and of her work in *Illustrations*; "altogether satisfactory", "finest achievements of photographic art" and "admirable." Not a modest word is pronounced about either of them; and even when referred to her weakest points – her permanent out of focus and lack of clarity in most of her tones –, the journalist (*she*) casually describes them as "minor defects" and a necessary "allowance", attributing them sometimes to accidental technical errors. Here, Cameron justifies the brevity of her *Idylls* series as being very time consuming, high in cost and extremely demanding in the number of negatives needed for a single successful photograph; no fewer than forty-two in *The Parting's* case.

¹³² Hinton says that at the time of this article, there was another review in the *London Times*, and that "Joanne Lukitsch is not alone in suspecting that Julia had a hand in the content of both reviews" (*Illustrations* 5).

Indeed, the article feels hers. It somehow corresponds to her positive tone, and informal and descriptive style; as seen in much of her correspondence with others, and in photographic particular, her *Annals of My Glass House*.

Given the amount of specific detail on the number of studies incurred, the hollow oak taken from Farringford for *Vivien and Merlin*, and the Poet's personal request for the frontispiece portrait; one can only think that only the author of these photographs could have provided such factual information directly. It is doubtful that she had been interviewed about it by one of the newspaper's correspondents.

Chronologically, this piece must have been written in the thick of *Illustrations* production – with volume two and the Miniature in process – and as Cameron began to reflect on her photography and work. This was the year, she left for India, and in the proximity of her beginning to write *Annals*. Her unfinished biography and this review share both style and subject matter.

In the former, she wrote passages about the long and hard process she endured to achieve successful photography: "Many and many a week in the year '64 I worked fruitlessly, but not hopelessly", and continued, "I longed to arrest all beauty that came before me, and at length the longing has been satisfied. Its difficulty enhanced the value of the pursuit." Much resonating what she had written in her review in the *Morning Post* about the "unceasing care upon the preparation of this volume" and the "cost of time and toil" she had undergone for *Illustrations*. This is what Cameron must have been pondering about her latest work during that last year of her photography. Indeed, an important substantiation.

Thus, this article in the *Morning Post* culminated the last edition of *Illustrations* and in being Cameron's own personal account of the work she included in it. And for these alone, its value as manuscript is immense; since the story she once started in *Annals* was incomplete, unfinished for unknown circumstances, and without a mere mention to her *Illustrations* there. With little imagination, this article could be the missing jigsaw on *Illustrations* in her unfinished autobiography.

It is invaluable for the Material Culture point of view, as it is unique and rare. Cameron, included a cutting of it in each of the four copies of the Miniature, as if to give credibility to her work in *Illustrations*. She stuck it onto the page, letting the printed text of the article stand out – the rest of the text in the Miniature edition is *all* handwritten, printed – and speaks for itself. Or better to be rephrased as: she lets speak it herself. It carries no imagery in it, but delicate and indirect important relevance for the analysis of *Illustrations*. This article is part of it too, and Cameron made it too the moment she pasted it onto the page of *Illustrations*, likewise the rest of her prints.

Finally, in my opinion, the value of this record should not be disregarded for its lack of journalistic anonymity, but on the contrary revalued. As an important autobiographical proof of the making of *Illustrations*, and most important, for its impregnation of Cameron's energetic

and assertive persona. It should be regarded as a modern Press Release from the artist herself, who truly believed in her work, and proclaimed it to the media and her public. This is a common practice in today's art communications, and shows Cameron was once again ahead of her time.

4.5 Legacy

The Pre-Raphaelites dedicated some of their best work to Tennyson – Mrs. Cameron some of her worst.¹³³

Helmut Gernsheim, 1948

Fortunately, a lot has changed since this statement. And nowadays, we are witnesses of a new chapter in the understanding and study of *Illustrations*. Its reading, like Cameron's work, is in continuous evolution.

From a general and obvious point of view, *Illustrations* leaves an immense photographic legacy in and out of its pages. Cameron underwent through a staggering – at times far-fetched – photographic journey for its making, accomplishing a lot in very little time. The extent and bounty of the work she produced for *Illustrations* clearly reflects that, which at times has left art historians speechless when trying to solve these days the mysteries of its different print versions, editions and numerous variations across it. Their main interrogations are accurate information on its printing, page order and the main purpose on its Miniature edition. These unexplained facts and the endless speculations on the reasons behind some of Cameron's choices leave scholars a great scope for further study and specific examination of *Illustrations*. And the beauty of its versatility is that it allows for these to pertain to numerous types of disciplines and studies.

Illustrations restated Cameron's aesthetics and artistic vision in many of the aspects of her female portraiture; or as she called it, her Fancy subjects. For this reason, only, *Illustrations* makes a first-class and comprehensive representation of this portion of Cameron's work, and proves that through sheer work and trial and error – as seen in this thesis –, she succeeded in following no one's rules but hers when representing women.

This effectively brings us to the vast theme of femininity in *Illustrations*, nowadays the most recent approach taken in its studying. Cameron shared some momentum with other female photographers and artists at the time, but since Woolf first wrote about her, she has embodied to the title of the pioneer female photographer of all times, and with it the one of a feminist artist. Rightly so, she succeeded in a male-dominated art, copyrighting and selling her images when other female novelists as the Brontës and Marian Evans – *nom de plume* George Elliot – at the time took pseudonyms “to make their mark.” This says a lot about “redoubtable” photographer Cameron (Gerhard “Poetic and Photographic” 44). These days, upon recent observation of her work in *Illustrations* proves that is a story of femininity and

¹³³ Julia Margaret Cameron: Pioneer of Photography 60.

feminism from cover to cover, with portraits of women that have both originally contributed to photography, as well as to the story of *Idylls*. And this is mainly because through her lenses, Cameron saw the women of *Idylls* and *Other Poems* as true selves and feeling subjects, parted from the male-dominated legend and the lives they were living. She represented them as beautiful individuals, not as wives, maids, objects of desire or instruments for their men's goals. She gifted them with value and represented what they were thinking and what they were feeling and seeing. Their truth was Cameron's truth, no matter if right or wrong. Her portraits were not attached with a moral tag, as Tennyson's were. And the modern reader of *Illustrations* has inherited all of these.

MacKay says that her work for *Illustrations* was certainly "controversial during her lifetime," but her subjects are now vibrant and breathing, and are part of a "lively debate today" (17). And I emphasise the word *today*, as the debate continues and this thesis hopes to be part of it.

Her random portraits of Fair women and Fancy subjects had always been regarded as photographically superior to those of *Illustrations*, but *today*, the former cannot alone represent Cameron's femininity legacy, and *Illustrations* indeed can. The women within it have got more layers and substance than any others ever being depicted by Cameron, and *Illustrations* offers a narrative of these women for women *today*.

And the first women to pick on this were Cameron's next generation of female artists, painters and illustrators, specialised in "decorative arts," also called "feminine arts." We are not able to say, for sure, if *Illustrations* reached them directly, as unsure of the diffusion and transmission power of the photobook. But we can recognise Cameron's women from *Idylls* and *Other Poems* in some of the work they produced. In particular, we need to mention the paintings and illustrations of Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale (1872-1945) who illustrated *Poems* from Tennyson in 1905 and *Idylls of a King* in 1911, Jessie M. King (1875-1949) who in 1903 dedicated three out of four of *The Broadway Booklets* to Arthurian content from Tennyson and also illustrated William Morris's *The Defence of Guinevere*; and finally Art Nouveau Emma Florence Harrison (1877-1955) who in 1912 illustrated Tennyson's *Guinevere and Other poems* and in 1914 *The Defence of Guinevere*. Their work looked at the female Arthurian and Tennysonian characters with similar sensibility to Cameron's, thus representing her most immediate legacy, a legacy that continues today. In this section, we are only able to see a small fraction of their wonderful work.

Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale illustrated a deluxe edition of the original four *Idylls* with twenty-one watercolours illuminating excerpts from Tennyson (Lupack 128). Her painting, in particular her detailing, richness in colour and medieval theme choice was influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, and her aim was to revive their style. Like Cameron, she enhanced text by including verses as titles to narrate her illustrations, and stayed close to the text of the story of the Arthurian women.

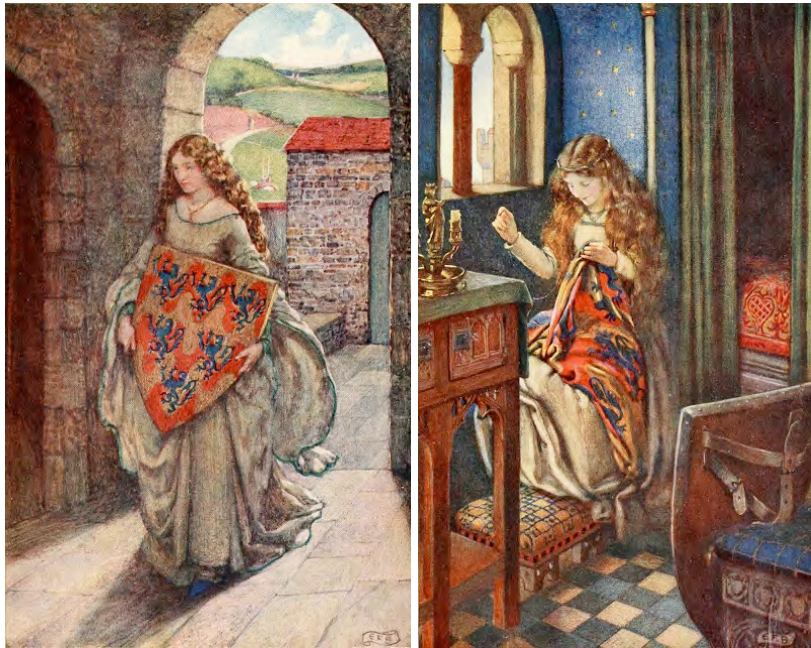


Fig. 171 Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale, *Then to the tower she climb'd* for *Idylls of the King*, 1911. Left.

Fig. 172 Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale, *Elaine* for *Idylls of the King*, 1911. Right.

Previous to that she had illustrated *Poems* in 1905 with intricate detailed black and white drawings, including eighteen full pages and fifty-five smaller decorations (*Ibid.*). Her work showed a great skill in line drawing and again a shared artistic fascination for the stories of these women.



Fig. 173 Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale, *Maud* for *Poems*, 1905. Left.

Fig. 174 Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale, *The Gardener's Daughter* for *Poems*, 1905. Right.

Scottish illustrator Jessie M. King also focused on the world of the make-believe, fantasy and legend in her work. In particular, she continued with Cameron's and other female illustrator's legacy of introducing Arthurian book illustrations to readers (Lupack 95). Citing Aubrey Beardsley, well-known contemporary illustrator also interested in Arthurian subjects, Lupack says he described her as "perhaps the finest black and white artist of the period" (*Ibid.*). King was both attracted to Pre-Raphaelite and Art Nouveau arts, and her reworkings of the Arthurian subjects reflect that fact.



Fig. 175 Jessie M. King, *Strip off the case and read the naked shield*, title page for 'Elaine,' *The Broadway Booklets*, 1903. Left.



Fig. 176 Jessie M. King, *None with her save a little maid a novice*, title page for 'Guinevere,' *The Broadway Booklets*, 1903. Right.

All of these, I believe, proves that in her time Cameron may have contributed to fix and engrave Tennyson's stories in the collective mind, as others like Doré, Vere Boyle and the pre-Raphaelites had done. And as the latter, Cameron did that best by representing women in an imaginative manner. We could say that she continued in photography what the Pre-Raphaelites had started in painting. In a way, Cameron took their relay after their early dissolution and passed it to future generations of painters and illustrators who shared her female view, extending the Pre-Raphaelite movement until the twentieth century, over 50 years later since it had been formed. That in itself is a legacy.

From a narrative point of view Cameron's legacy in *Illustrations* is immense too. She left us an alternative narrative to some of Tennyson's work in an original photo illustrated book with devised an inspiring and innovative intersection of photos and poems.

Gerhard says that Cameron's exploration of her out-of-focus "parallels the optics of Tennyson's poetry." What he calls Tennyson's "bifocal perceptual osculation between the minute particulari[s]ation of objects and hazy evocation of the 'far, far away'" is reflected perfectly in Cameron's photographic interpretation ("Poetic and Photographic" 47).

Throughout the analysis of *Illustrations*, we have seen Cameron continuously focusing and giving significance to small text detail to introduce subtleties to her plot and give a personal reading of the story. “Cameron matched his focal experiments in the new art form of photography” (Gerhard *Tennyson and the Text* 85). Their creative tandem was superb, and Marylu Hill situates Cameron in the same “shadowy space” as Tennyson in *Idylls*, when representing things and people in the book “between the poles of reality and illusion” (445).

In terms of her narrative, Cameron’s visual discourse was extremely rich too. She approached each idyll and poem in a different manner, and each volume and edition equally, personalising them like albums and giving them each a different history, an incredibly intense experience for the reader. She filled each print, idyll and book with anecdotes, mistakes, stories, and rhetoric subtleness. It is clear that she lived photographically through her characters, and by doing all this she managed to keep them relevant to the viewer. She left their readings up to him too.

This today translates *Illustrations* into an evolving subject matter, fortunately changing dramatically since Fry and Gernsheim first looked at it. In *Illustrations*, Cameron offered a different set of discourses for each reader, the feminist, a feminine, the artistic, the photographic, the textual. Maybe all together in one. The reader of this thesis should now make up his own mind and admire the *Illustrations* book on his own.

THE PLATES

Illustrations to Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Other Poems.
Volumes I and II, and extra plates for the Miniature Edition.

ILLUSTRATIONS
TO TENNYSON'S
IDYLLS OF THE KING,
AND OTHER POEMS.

BY
JULIA MARGARET CAMERON.

HENRY S. KING & Co.,
65, -CORNHILL, AND 12, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.
1875.

Dedicated
by gracious permission
to
Her Imperial and Royal Highness
Victoria
The Crown Princess of Germany and Prussia
and Princess Royal
by
Julia Margaret Cameron

Fresh Water Gate, Isle of Wight.

Plate II Dedication Page [Fig. 100]

TO MRS. CAMERON.

Lo! Modern Beauty lends her lips and eyes
To tell an Ancient Story! Thou hast brought
Into thy picture, all our fancy sought
In that old time, with skilful art and wise.
The Sun obeys thy gestures, and allows
Thy guiding hand, whene'er thou hast a mind
To turn his passive light upon mankind,
And set his seal and thine on chosen brows.
Thou lov'st all loveliness! and many a face
Is press'd and summon'd from the breezy shores
On thine immortal charts to take its place
While near at hand the jealous ocean roars
His noblest Tritons would thy subjects be,
And all his fairest Nereids sit to thee.

CHARLES TURNER. (*Tennyson.*)

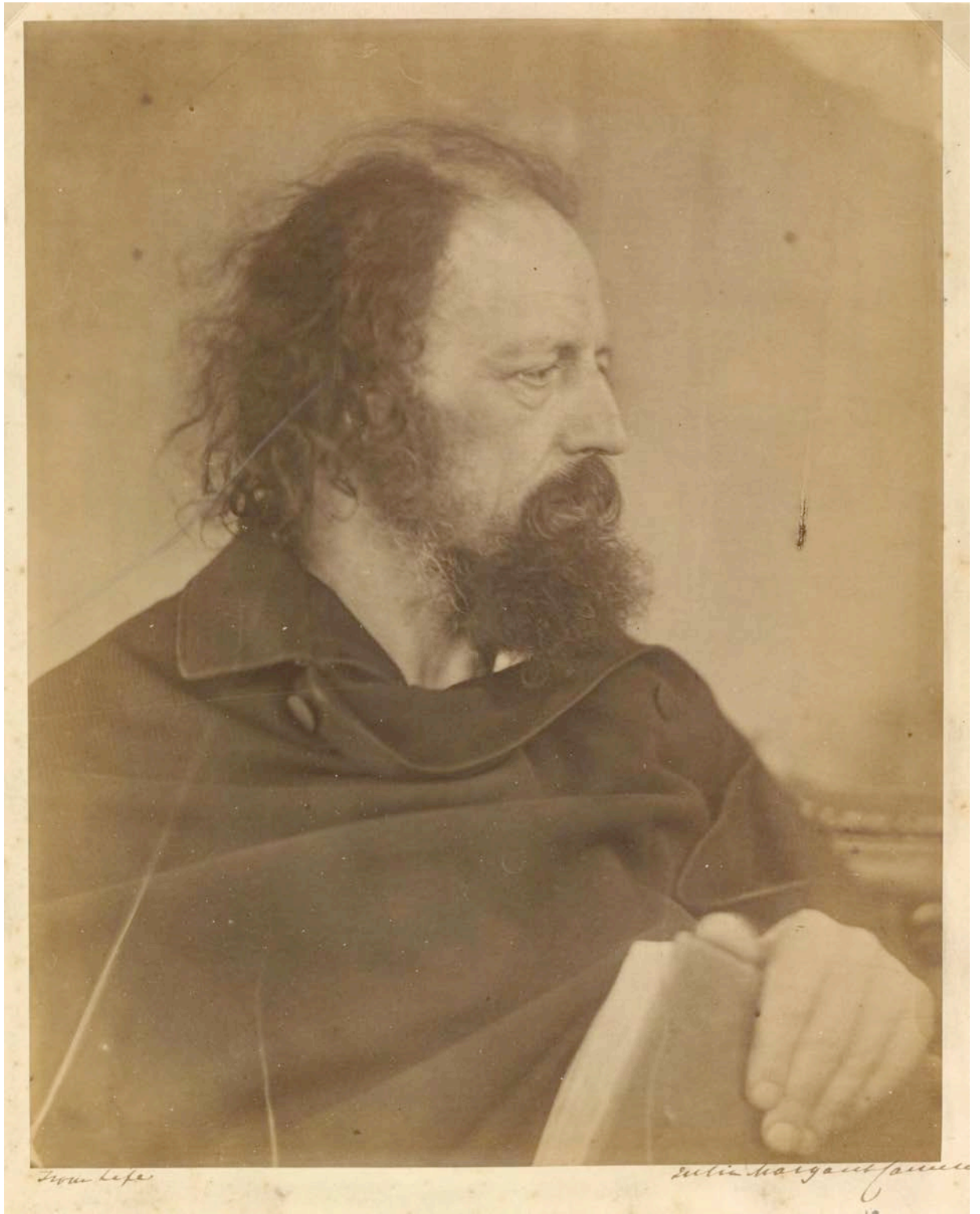


Plate IV *The Dirty Monk* [Fig. 102]

Gareth and Lynette.

And then when turning to Lynette he told
The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said
'Ay well — ay well — for worse than being fool'd
Of others, is to fool one's self — a cave,
Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and drinks
and forage for the horse, and flint for fire,
But all about it flies a honeysuckle.
Seek till we find' and when this sought and found,
Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
Past into sleep; on whom the maiden gazed.
Sound sleep he thine! sound cause to sleep hast thou.
Wake leisty! Secur I not, as tender to him
As any mother? Ay, but such a one
As all day long hath rated at her child,
And vext his day, but blesses him asleep —
Good Lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle
In the hush'd night, as if the world were one
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!

A. H. H. H. H.

Plate V 'Gareth and Lynette' [Fig. 105]



Plate VI *Gareth and Lynette* [Fig. 105]

Geraint and Enid.

And thou, put on thy worst and meanest dress
And ride with me! and Enid ask'd amazed,
'If I did err, let Enid learn her fault!
But no, I charge thee, ask not, but obey!
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
A faded mantle and a faded veil,
And moving toward a cedaric cabinet,
Wherein she kept them folded reverently
With sprigs of summer laid between the folds,
She took them, and array'd herself therein,
Remembering when first he came on her
Dress in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey to her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

A. L. L. L.

Plate VII 'Geraint and Enid [Fig. 107]



Plate VIII *Geraint and Enid* [Fig. 107]

Geraint and Enid.

So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,
'Here by God's grace, is the one voice for me.'

He chanted the song, that Enid sawy was one
of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang:

'Turn Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

'Turn Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

'Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
For man is man and master of his fate.

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.'

A. H. M. J. J.



Plate X *Geraint and Enid* [Fig. 108]

Merlin and Vivien

..... he was mute
So dark a forethought roll'd about his brain,
As on a dull day in an Ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long sea wall
In silence: wherefore, when she lifted up
A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and again
'O Merlin do ye love me?' and once more,
'Great Master do ye love me?' he was mute.
And lisome Vivien, holding by his heel,
Writhed toward him, slid up his knee and sat,
Reared his ankle turned her hollow feet
Together, curved an arm about his neck,
Creeping like a snake; and letting her left hand
Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
Made with her right a comb of pearl to part
The locks of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes:

A. Tennyson.

Plate XI 'Merlin and Vivien' [Fig. 110]



Plate XII *Vivien and Merlin* [Fig. 110]

Merlin and Vivien

For Merlin overtalk'd and overworn,
Had yielded, told her all the charms and sleight.

Then in one moment, she put forth the chains
Of woven spells and of waving hands
And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
And lost to life and use, and name and fame.

A. Henryson

Plate XIII 'Merlin and Vivien' [Fig. 112]



Plate XIV *Vivien and Merlin* [Fig. 112]

Lancelot and Elaine

Elaine the fair, Elaine the loveable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east,
Guarded the sacred Shield of Lancelot;
Which first she placed where Morning's earliest ray
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam;
Then fearing lest a soiled fastness'd for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.

A. Cunningham

Plate XV 'Lancelot and Elaine' [Fig. 113]



Plate XVI *Elaine* [Fig. 113]

Lancelot, and Elaine

So in the tower alone the maiden sat;
His very shield was gone; only the case,
Her own poor work, her sappy labour, left.
But still she heard him, still his picture form'd
And grew between her and the pictured wall.

And in those days she made a little song,
and call'd her song 'The Song of Love and Death,'
and sang it: sweetly could she make and sing.

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain,
and sweet is death who puts us dead to pain:
I know not which is sweeter, no not I.

'Love art thou sweet? then bitter death must be;
Love thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

'Sweet Love that seems not made to fade away,
Sweet Death, that seems to make us to-day,
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'I fain would follow love if that could be;
I needs must follow death who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die!'

Alamyson.



Plate XVII 'Lancelot and Elaine' [Fig. 114]



Plate XVIII *Elaine* [Fig. 114]

The Holy Grail.

But she, the wau sweet maiden, shone aways
Clear from her forehead all that wealth of hair
Which made a silken mat-wood for her feet;
And out of this she plaited broad and long,
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam;
And knew the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,
Saying, my knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
I, maiden, bound thee, maiden, bind my belt.
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,
And break thro' all, till one will crown thee King
Far in the spiritual city

A. H. M. S. G.

Plate XIX 'The Holy Grail' [Fig. 121]



Plate XX *Sir Galahad and The Pale Nun* [Fig. 121]

Guinevere.

And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd
And still they met and met. Again she said,
"O Lancelot if thou love me get thee hence
And then they were agreed upon a night
(When the good King should not be there) to meet
And part for ever. Passion-pale they met
And greeted:

A. Lennyson.

Plate XXI 'Guinevere' [Fig. 124]



Plate XXII *The Parting of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere* [Fig. 124]

Guinevere

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week unknown among the men &
Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name, nor sought,
Wrapt in her grief for herself or for knight,
But communed only with the little maid
Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness
Which often turn'd her from herself; but now
This night a rumour wildly blown about
Came, that Sir Mordred had usurped the throne
and leagu'd with him the heathen, while the King
was waging war on Saucelot. Then she thought,
'With what a hate the people and the King
'Must hate me'; and bowed down upon her hands
Silent, until the little maid who brook'd
No silence, brake it uttering 'Late! so late!
'What hour I wonder now? and when she drew
No answer by and by began to hum,
In air the men had taught her 'Late! so late!'
Which when she heard the Queen look'd up and said
'O maiden if indeed thou wilt to sing
'Sing, and embolden my heart that I may weep
When at full willingly saw the little maid.

Late, late, so late and dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late, but we can enter still
Too late, too late, we cannot enter now.

No light had we, for that we do repent
And learning this the Bridegroom will repent
Too late, too late, we cannot enter now.

No light so late, and dark and chill the night
O, let us in that we may find the light
Too late, too late, we cannot enter now.

Have we not heard the Bridegroom is so sweet
O, let us in tho' late to kiss his feet
No, no! too late! we cannot enter now.

So sang the novice.

Alamyson

Plate XXIII 'Guinevere' [Fig. 128]



Plate XXIV *The Little Novice with the Queen Guinevere in the Holy House at Almesbury* [Fig. 128]

Guinevere.

And while he spake to thee his helm was lower'd
To which for crest the golden dragon cling
Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
Which there was all angels, but she saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turn'd; and more and more
The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
And gray, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.



Plate XXVI *King Arthur* [Fig. 129]

The Passing of Arthur

Then spake the King: My house hath been my doom
But call not thou this Traitor of my house
Who hath but dwell beneath one roof with me.
My house are rather they who sware my bows
Yea, even while they brake them, own'd me King
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour
When all the purport of my throne hath fail'd
That quick or dead thou holdest me for King.
King, Am I, whatsoever be their cry;
and one last act of King-hood shall thou see
Yet ere I pass! And uttering thus the King
Made at the man.

R. Thompson



Plate XXVIII *The Passing of Arthur* [Fig. 130]

ILLUSTRATIONS
TO TENNYSON'S
IDYLLS OF THE KING,
AND OTHER POEMS.

BY
JULIA MARGARET CAMERON.

HENRY S. KING & Co.,
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1875.

Dedicated
by gracious permission
to
Her Imperial and Royal Highness

Victoria
The Crown Princess of Germany and Prussia
and Princess Royal
by
Julia Margaret Cameron

Fresh Water Gate, Isle of Wight.

Plate XXX Dedication Page [Fig. 100]

TO MRS. CAMERON.

Lo! Modern Beauty lends her lips and eyes
To tell an Ancient Story! Thou hast brought
Into thy picture, all our fancy sought
In that old time, with skilful art and wise.
The Sun obeys thy gestures, and allows
Thy guiding hand, whene'er thou hast a mind
To turn his passive light upon mankind,
And set his seal and thine on chosen brows.
Thou lov'st all loveliness! and many a face
Is press'd and summon'd from the breezy shores
On thine immortal charts to take its place
While near at hand the jealous ocean roars
His noblest Tritons would thy subjects be,
And all his fairest Nereids sit to thee.

CHARLES TURNER. (*Tennyson.*)



Plate XXXII *Alfred Tennyson* [Fig. 103]

The May Queen.

You must wake and call me early, call me early, Mother Dear,
To-morrow 'll be the happiest time of all the glad New Year;
Of all the glad New Year, Mother, the maddest merriest day;
For I'm to be Queen of the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

There's many a black black eye they say, but none so bright as mine;
There's Margaret and Mary, there's Kate and Caroline;
But none so fair as little Alice in all the land they say,
So I'm to be Queen o' the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

I sleep so sound all night, Mother, that I shall never wake,
If you do not call me loud when the day begins to break
But I must gather knots of flowers, and beds and garlands gay,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

As I came up the valley whom think ye should I see,
But Robin leaning on the bridge beneath the hazel tree
He thought of that sharp look Mother, I gave him yesterday—
But I'm to be Queen o' the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

He thought I was a ghost, Mother, for I was all in white,
and I ran by him without speaking, like a flash of light
They call me cruel-hearted, but I care not what they say,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

They say he's dying all for love but that can never be;
They say his heart is breaking Mother— what is that to me?
There's many a bolder lad 'ill woo me any sum mer day,
and I'm to be Queen o' the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

Little Effie shall go with me to-morrow to the green,
And you'll be there too Mother, to see me made the Queen;
For the Shepherd lads on every side 'ill come from far away,
and I'm to be Queen o' the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The honey-suckle round the porch has wov'n the wavy bowers
and by the meadow-trenches blow the faint sweet cuckoo flowers
and the wild marsh-margold shines like fire in swamps and hollows gray;
and I'm to be Queen o' the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The night winds come and go Mother, upon the meadow-grass,
and the happy stars above them seem to brighten as they pass;
They will not be a drop of rain the whole of the live long day,
and I'm to be Queen o' the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

All the valley Mother 'll be fresh and green and still,
and the cowslip and the crowfoot are over all the hill,
and the rivolet in the flowery dale 'ill merrily glance and play,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.
So you must wake and call me early, call me early, Mother Dear,
To-morrow 'll be the happiest time of all the glad New Year;
To-morrow 'll be of all the year the maddest merriest day,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.



Plate XXXIV *May Queen* [Fig. 133]

If you're waking call me early, call me early, Mother dear,
For I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-year
It is the last New-year that I shall ever see,
Then you may lay me low in the mould and think no more of me.
To night I saw the sun set: he set, and left behind
The good old year, the dear old time, and all my peace of mind;
And the New-year coming up, mother, but I shall never see
The blossom on the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree.

Last May we made a crown of flowers: we had a merry day;
Beneath the hawthorn on the green they made me Queen of May;
And we danced about the may-pole and in the hazel-coppes.
Till Charles' Wain came out above the tall white chimney-tops.

There's not a flower on all the hills: the frost is on the pane:
I only wish to live till the snow drops come again:
I wish the snow would melt and the sun come out on high:
I long to see a flower so before the day I die.

The building rook 'ill caw from the windy tall elm-tree
And the tufted plover pipe along the fallow lea,
And the swallow 'ill come back again with summer in the wave,
But I shall lie alone, mother, within the mouldering grave.

Upon the chancel-casement, and upon that grave of mine,
In the early early morning the summer sun 'ill shine,
Before the red cock crows from the farm upon the hill,
When you are warm-asleep, mother, and all the world is still.

When the flowers come again, mother, beneath the waning light
You'll never see me move in the long gray fields at night;
When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow cool,
On the out-grass and the sword-grass, and the bulrush in the pool.

You'll bury me, my Mother, just beneath the haw-thorn shade,
And you'll come sometimes and see me where I am lowly laid.
I shall not forget you, mother, I shall hear you when you pass,
With your feet above my head in the long and pleasant grass.

I have been wild and wayward, but you 'll forgive me now;
You'll kiss me, my own mother, and forgive me ere I go;
Nay, nay, you must not weep, nor let your grief be wild,
You should not fret for me, mother, you have another child.

If I can I'll come again, mother, from out my resting-place;
Tho' you'll not see me, mother, I shall look upon your face;
Tho' I cannot speak a word, I shall harken what you say,
And be often, often with you when you think I'm far away.
Good night, good night, when I have said good night for evermore,
And you see me, carried out from the threshold of the door;
Don't let Effie come to see me till my grave be growing green:
She'll be a better child to you than ever I have been.

She'll find my garden-tools upon the granary floor:
Let her tattle 'em: they are hers: I shall never garden more:
But tell her, when I'm gone, to train the rose bush that I set
About the parlour-window and the box of mignonette.

Good night, sweet mother: call me before the day is born.
All night I lie awake, but I fall asleep at morn;
But I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-year,
So, if you're waking, call me early, mother dear.

A. Myson



Plate XXXVI *New Year's Eve* [Fig. 136]

I thought to pass away before, and get alive I am;
 and in the fields all round I hear the bleating of the lamb.
 How sadly I remember rose the morning of the year!
 To die before the snow-drop came, and now the violets here.
 O sweet is the new violet that comes beneath the skies,
 and sweeter is the young lamb's voice to me that cannot rise,
 and sweet is all the land about, and all the flowers that blow,
 and sweeter far is death than life to me that long to go.
 It seem'd so hard at first, Mother, to leave the blessed sun,
 and now it seems as hard to stay, and yet His will be done!
 But still I think it can't be long before I find release;
 and that good man the clergyman has told me words of peace.
 O blessings on his kindly voice, and on his silver hair!
 And blessings on his whole life long, until he meet me there!
 O blessings on his kindly heart, and on his silver head!
 A thousand times I blest him as he knelt beside my bed.
 He taught me all the mercy, for he show'd me all the son.
 Now, tho' my lamp was lighted late, there's one will let me in:
 Nor would I now be well, Mother, again if that could be,
 For my desire is but to pass to Him that died for me.
 I did not hear the dog howl, Mother, or the death-watch beat,
 there came a sweeter token when the night and morning met:
 But sit beside my bed, Mother, and put your hand in mine,
 and Effie on the other side, and I will tell the sign.
 all in the wild March-morning I heard the angels call;
 It was when the moon was setting, and the dark was over all;
 The trees began to whisper, and the wind began to roll,
 and in the wild March-morning I heard them call my soul.
 For lying broad awake I thought of you and Effie dear,
 I saw you sitting in the house, and I no longer here;
 With all my strength I pray'd for both, and so I felt hegn'd
 and up the valley came a swell of music on the wind.
 I thought that it was fancy, and I listen'd in my bed,
 and then did something speak to me - I know not what was said:
 For great delight and shuddering took hold of all my mind,
 and up the valley came again the music on the wind.
 But you were sleeping, and I said, "It's not for them: it's mine!"
 and if it comes three times, I thought, I take it for a sign.
 and once again it came, and close beside the window-bars,
 Then seem'd to go right up to Heaven, and die among the stars.
 So now I think my time is near, I trust it is. I know -
 The blessed music went that way my soul will have to go.
 and for myself indeed, I care not if I go to-day,
 But Effie you must comfort her when I am past away.
 and say to Robin a kind word, and tell him not to fret;
 There's many a worthier than I, would make him happy yet.
 If I had lived - I cannot tell - I might have been his wife;
 But all these things have ceased to be, with my desire of life.
 O look! the sun begins to rise, the heavens are in a glow -
 The sun shines on a hundred fields, and all of them I know -
 and there I move no longer now, and there his light may shine -
 Wild flowers in the valley for other hands than mine.
 O sweet and strange it seems to me that ere this day is done
 The voice that now is speaking may be beyond the sun -
 For ever and for ever with those just souls and true -
 And what is life that we should moan? why make we such ado?
 For ever and for ever all in a blessed home,
 and there to wait a little while till you and Effie come -
 To lie within the light of god as I lie, up on your breast -
 "Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Plate XXXVII 'The Conclusion' [Fig. 139]



Plate XXXVIII *The Conclusion* [Fig. 139]

The Princess.

She stood

*Among her maidens, higher by the head,
Her back against a pillar, her foot on one
Of those tame leopards. Kitten like he roll'd
And paw'd about her sandal. I draw near;
I gazed.*

A. Myson.



Plate XL *The Princess* [Fig. 144]

The Princess.

The splendour falls on castle walls
and snowy summits old in story;
The long light-shakes across the lakes
and the wild cataract-leaps in glory,
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
and thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying
Blow, bugle; answer echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill, or field, or river;
our echoes roll from soul to soul,
and grow for ever and for ever.
Blow bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

A. C. Swinburn.



Plate XLII *The Princess* [Fig. 146]

The Princess-

Then she "let some one sing to us: lighter more
The minutes pledged with music:" and a maid,
Of those beside her, smote her harp, and sang.

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
and thinking of the days that are no more.

"Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which beddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

"ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

"Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
on lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in life, the days that are no more!"

A. Annison



Plate XLIV *The Princess* [Fig. 147]

Mariana

(Mariana in the moated grange.)

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crested, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the peas to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the creaking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead."

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at morn or eventides.

After the flitting of the bats,
When thickest dark did trance the sky,
She drew her casement-curtain by,
And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
She only said "The night is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead."

R. Emerson



Plate XLVI Mariana [Fig. 148]

The Beggar Maid.

Her arms across her breast she laid;
She was more fair than words can say:
Bare-footed came the beggar maid
Before the King Cophetua.
In robe and crown the King stepped down,
To meet and greet her on her way;
"It is no wonder," said the lords,
"She is more beautiful than day."

As shines the moon in clouded skies,
She in her poor attire was seen:
One praised her ankles, one her eyes,
One her dark hair and lovesome mien.
So sweet a face, such angel grace,
In all that land had never been:
Cophetua swore a royal oath:
"This beggar maid shall be my Queen!"

A. R. W. W. W.



Plate XLVIII *The Beggar Maid* [Fig. 158]

Lancelot and Elaine.

"O sweet Father, tender and true,
Deny me not," she said — ye never yet
Denied my fancies — this, however strange,
My latest —: Lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it; I shall guard it even in death.

.....
and therefore let our dumb old man alone
go with me, he can steer and row, and he
will guide me to that palace, to the doors."

She ceased: her father promised; whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood,
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hands,
and closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat. —

But when the next sun brake from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
Full summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the life long creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face,
So those two brethren from the chariot took
and on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
and kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her
'Sister, farewell for ever', and again
'Farewell sweet sister', parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood —
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter — all her bright hair streaming down —
And all the coverlet was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
all but her face, and that clear-featured face
was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

A. Tennyson

Plate XLIX 'Lancelot and Elaine' [Fig. 117]



Plate L *Lancelot and Elaine* [Fig. 117]

Lancelot and Elaine.

..... and the barge,
on to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.
.....

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
Came gilt with knights; then turn'd the tongue-less man
Down the half-face to the full eye, and rose
And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.
So Arthur bad the meek Sir Percivale
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;
and reverently they bore her into hall.
Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
and Lancelot later came, and mused at her,
and last the Queen herself, and pitied her;
But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:

'Most noble Lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
I, some time call'd the maid of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
I loved you, and my love had no return,
and therefore my little love has been my death;
and therefore to our Lady Guinevere,
and to all other Ladies, I make moan.
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial:
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
as thou art a Knight peerless.'

Thus he read;

and ever in the reading, lords and dames
wept, looking often from his face who read
To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
so touch'd were they, half thinking that her lips,
who had devised the letter, moved again.

Arncliffe



Plate LII *Death of Elaine* [Fig. 120]



Plate LIV *The Passing of Arthur* [Fig. 131]

Maud.

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the Passion-flower at the gate,
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near,"
And the white rose weeps, "She is late;"
The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear"
And the lily whispers, "I wait."

She is coming, my own, my sweet,
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

Alfred
Arncliffe



Plate LVI *Maud* [Fig. 159]

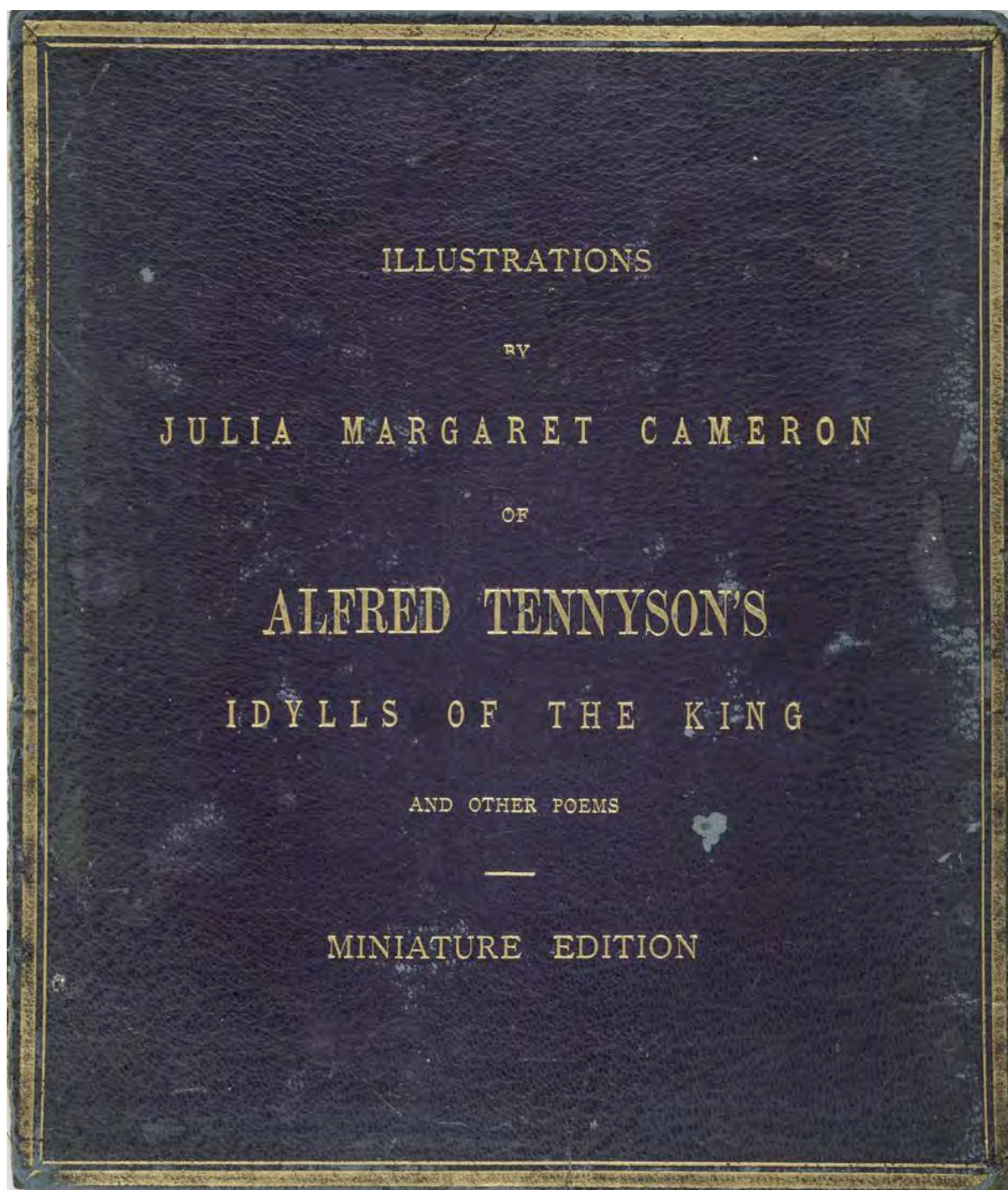


Plate LVII 'The Miniature Edition'

Sonnet

by Charles Turner (Tennyson)

To Mr. Cameron.

Lo! Modern Beauty lends her lips and eyes
To tell an ancient Story. 'Thou hast brought
Into thy picture, all our fancy sought
In that old time with skilful art and wise,
The sun obeys thy gestures, and allows
Thy guiding hand, whene'er thou hast a mind
To turn his passive light upon mankind,
And set his seal, and thine on chosen brows.
Thou lovest all loveliness! and many a face
Is press'd and summon'd from the breezy shores
On thine immortal charts to take its place
While near at hand the jealous Ocean roars
His noblest Tritons would thy subjects be
and all his fairest Nereids sit to thee



Plate LIX *The Childhood of Alice and Effie* [Fig. 140]

Guinevere

See Lancelot and Elaine

Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose again
And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

Amory



Plate LXI 'Guinevere' [Fig. 122]

The Gardener's Daughter

"Eustace" I said, "this wonder keeps the house"
He nodded - but a moment afterwards
He cried "look, look" before he ceased I turned
And ere a star can wink, beheld her there
For up the porch there grew an Eastern Rose
That flowering high, the last night's gale had caught
And blown across the walk. One drew aloft
Gown'd in pure white, that fell to the shape
Holding the bush, to fix it back she stood
A single stream of all her soft brown hair
Pour'd on one side: the shadow of the flowers
Stole all the golden gloss, and wavering
Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist.

A. M. P.



Plate LXIII *The Gardener's Daughter* [Fig. 162]

MRS. CAMERON'S NEW PHOTOGRAPHS.

In the illustration of Mr. Tennyson's "Idylls" Mrs. Cameron, assuredly the most artistic of all photographers, has undertaken a congenial task, which she has executed with delicate and sympathetic skill. Her book, just published by Messrs. King & Co., of Cornhill, comprises 12 pictures; and though all be not of uniform value, all attest with more or less eloquence the rare dramatic quality of the artist's genius and her wonderful powers of composition. Of the choicest pictures, which are also the more numerous, it may fairly be affirmed that apart from their technical merits, which are of a high order, they are distinguished in an eminent degree by the intellectual attributes essential in such a work—affluence of imagination, tenderness of sentiment, and idyllic grace of fancy. Mrs. Cameron is said to have spent three months of unceasing care upon the preparation of this volume of photographs, and at what cost of time and toil they have attained, their excellence may be inferred from the fact that, in order to produce even so small a collection, she has had to take quite 200 studies. For one scene alone—that descriptive of the "Parting between Lancelot and Guinevere"—she took forty-two. It is only the zeal that beguiles labour, the passionate zeal which is the soul of art, that could have carried her triumphantly through so many such harassing ordeals. Nor is it difficult to understand how rare and arduous must be the conditions of success in studies such as these, which presuppose high artistic feeling not only in the governing mind which has the regulating of light and shade, the posing and grouping of figures, and the general arranging of the whole composition, but also in the "sitters," who are no mere models in the ordinary acceptance of the word, but men and women of all types, combining with fine *physique* high mental culture as well, and abundantly imbued with the poetic spirit of the themes they co-operate in illustrating. They must be people who understand the significance of action and gesture, and the import of dramatic expression. In this regard Mrs. Cameron has been particularly fortunate, the representatives of her *dramatis personæ* being evidently individuals who, thus highly qualified, partake her inspiration and lend themselves to the realisation of her poetic conceptions. The result is altogether satisfactory, the general character of the work, after making due allowance for occasional cloudiness of tone and such minor defects as may be attributed to accidental or mechanical causes, being such as to entitle it to take rank among the finest achievements of photographic art. "Sir Lancelot" is the flower of mediæval chivalry—a knight towering above all others in stature as in renown, yet the gentlest, tenderest, most courteous of all in the Arthurian Legends. The prostration and *abandon* of overwhelming grief are pictured with a touch of poignant pathos in the look and attitude of the sorrow-stricken queen, who sinks hopelessly upon his breast. In the scene between "The Little Novice and Queen Guinevere in the Holy House of Almesbury," the reckless gaiety and "babbling heedlessness" of the little maid are happily contrasted with the anguish and solicitude of the hardly-hit queen, thoughtfully listening and curiously questioning to herself the child's motive and meaning in all her talk. A group, illustrative of the meeting between "Merlin and Vivien" in the wood where the wizard, "overtalked and overworn," yields, tells all his charms, falls asleep, and is locked by his enchantress within the hollow of an oak, is ingeniously designed, attention being especially due to Merlin, a grand old man, the passive surrender of whose every mental faculty and "corporal agent" to a spell he is powerless to resist, is depicted with singular skill. The hollow oak is off the poet's own grounds. "Elaine of Astolet" is a charming study, instinct with the sweet tender grace of the "lily-maid" who living in her tower alone, sang, in tones melancholy as melodious, that "Sweet is true love, though given in vain, in vain." In "Gareth and Lynette" the figures are capitally posed, and nothing can be more truthful than the expression of profound drowsiness in the knight, all whose life passed "into sleep" after he had feasted in the cave where "all about flies a honeysuckle." The girl is lovely, and a certain air of quaint antique picturesqueness prevades the whole scene. There are two admirable portraits of King Arthur, the one representing him with "moony vapours" rolling round him as he glides "ghostlike to his doom," the other yet more heroic as, with rage on his brow, and majestic defiance in his mien and gait, as though he should say, "King am I whatsoever be their cry," he makes at his foe. Besides the idyllic pictures, the book contains a fine portrait of Mr. Tennyson, a work faithful in likeness as in expression. These photographs have been executed at the Laureate's own request, and they are dedicated by gracious permission to the Crown Princess of Germany and Princess Royal of England.

See "MORNING POST," January 11th, 1875.

Plate LXIV "Mrs. Cameron's New Photographs" [Fig. 170]



Plate LXV 'Back Cover'

'CONCLUSION'

O, sweet and strange it seems to me, that ere this day is done
The voice that now is speaking may be beyond the sun, –
Forever and forever with those just souls and true, –
And what is life, that we should moan? Why make we such ado?¹³⁴
Sir Alfred Tennyson, 1833

The main motive to write this thesis was a strong desire to get back in touch with photography and, at this time in our digital era and image saturation, to be able to find meaningful imagery and learn how to read it. I knew of Cameron's well-known portraits from an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery back in 2003 while studying photography in London. I only remember having found her work then mesmerising. Little did I know that the seeds were sown then and this thesis would give me the opportunity years later to go beyond her images and teach me how to dissect them along with her method and photographic style. This thesis has allowed me to find the textual and contextual means to look at her work differently, certainly in a deeper and more meaningful manner.

James N. Wood's quote – used in my introduction for "Final Observations on the Corpus" – describes how in art history this is a pretty common happening. In this case, by studying just one aspect of Cameron's career; her work in *Illustrations*, I have gained a much better understanding of her whole work, and this took place by reading and grounding her photobook in the context of her life and times. As it has been seen, this context has come in the form of important documentation, not only textual when referring to my analysis and reading her photographs within the book, but also from a lot of material outside the photobook. Bibliographic research on her life, the era and those who knew her, most relevantly Tennyson, have all allowed me to assemble exciting material that became the backbone of this thesis, which was mainly possible thanks to the field work and visits to Freshwater and the Victoria and Albert Museum where I was able to speak to several experts.

To look at the era when she lived, the customs and moods of the Victorian period and the important publications and artistic happenings in the areas of photography, illustration and painting have thrown some light into my reading of *Illustrations* too. These facts have answered many of the questions implicit in Cameron's images and excerpts that could not be solved. Going through the journey that Cameron herself went through for each reinterpretation of Tennyson's idyll or poem has been fascinating, and provided my research with curious stories that formed part of my interpretation.

When Cameron picked up a camera in her late 40s as a mere amateur, she could not foresee what this event would bring to her life, the photographic medium of her time and to the modern viewer today. The reader of this thesis has been able to bear witness to the story

¹³⁴ Verses 147-50 from 'Conclusion,' from Tennyson's 'The May Queen.'

of a pioneer woman photographer with an incredible drive and skill to absorb and follow the innovations, photographic trends and conventions of her time and peers, who additionally had an enviable artistic swagger and self-assurance that made them her own.

Truthfully, Cameron was a cultivated woman who, thanks to her circumstances and social status, had been educated into art and literature, but also worked very hard to keep herself fully-aware of her time and era and to stay close to a number of people with extraordinary artistic expressions. I say work hard, but actually, it was easy for her, as it was an innate gift. We see it in her work, populated with a great deal of influences from all different directions. She used in her work what inspired her, but not imitated or measured up against. She outdid and reinterpreted the work she admired, making her a photographer like no other in her time. *The Photographic Journal* read few years after her death:¹³⁵ “Her practice cut clean across the accepted traditions of the time, and it is small wonder that she received scanty appreciation from photographers and had little following in her day.”

This, of course, refers to the two characteristics that set her apart from the rest and that formed her unique style; her idealism and her aesthetics. And both came from the same photographic technique; her soft and out-of-focus. She was mostly criticised for it by the photographic press and by the professionals of her time, but this did certainly not inhibit her. In this thesis, we have described how this technique was not accidental, but embraced by her, and I am very much inclined to believe today that she knew that her disobedience of this photographic cannon would later define her. Her statement at the opening of this thesis clearly proves that.

And it is precisely this understanding of her technique of soft-focus that somewhat solves the theoretical question of realism vs. idealism in her photography. Her work took place during pictorialism – as her peer H. P. Robinson named it –, highly-defined photography and scientificism, but she preferred to battle her own crusade of creating high art with her photography. And her out-of-focus was certainly a means for it. Therefore, in principle, Cameron’s photography belongs to the idealism take on photography. However, it may be confusing to think that, together with her strong drive towards idealism she really intended to represent the real selves of her subjects and she wished to focus on women by highly detailing her features and thinking. That is, she wanted to remain close to her source – literature, myth or legend. This is why she felt artistically at home with the discourse of Pre-Raphaelites and her high detailing of truth.

I am aware that the definitions of reality and truth are not identical, but I do believe that in photographic terms they are very close. This can be understood, perhaps, by making reference to Roland Barthes’s theory of the *there* in his *Camera Lucida*. He says the camera captures reality at the same time as having an implicit “madness,” and here is where the

¹³⁵ From the Preface of the first publication of Julia Margaret Cameron’s *Annals of My Glass House* in *The Photographic Journal*, 1927, p. 296.

tension is created. I refer to him for one more time in this conclusion, as he defines the slippery notion of photographic reality, which I believe can extend to Cameron's:

The Photograph has become a bizarre 'medium,' a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a model's 'shared' hallucination (on the one hand *it is not there*, on the other *but if has indeed been*): a mad image, chafed by reality. (115)

In my opinion, this statement provides some kind of conclusion to the realism vs. idealism debate on Cameron's reality of her Fancy subjects and her *Illustrations*. By touching on the illusion and subconscious of her characters, a total subjective and non-existing state of reality, she represented the reality that these women, as individuals, faced in the legend and myth they were living. Mike Weaver supports this when he says that Cameron's art "lies in the space between idealist fiction and realist fact" (*JMC 1815-1879* 26).

As a great aestheticist, Cameron emphasised with her particular approach of photographic focus certain aspects in beauty of her subjects and characters. Sometimes, these were close to textual reality, sometimes a little afar. We have learnt that with her aesthetics she provided them with meaning and gave them a strong emotional and feminine charge, an aspect of her photography very much in vogue nowadays. In our reading of *Illustrations*, we noticed that as she went through her characters in the photobook, their story became more individualised for each, starting with her characters of *Idylls* and ending with those of *Other Poems*, these full of intensity and self-absorption, totally engaging with the viewer.

Generally, Cameron's portrayal of femininity is certainly an interesting issue nowadays, which makes her a totally relevant subject lending itself to studies like this one and others more specifically in the field of Feminine studies. In his prologue for *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men & Fair Women*, Tristram Powell tells about that the poet Edward Lear – with whom Cameron did not get on while staying in Freshwater in the 1860s – described the photographer as porting of a "feminine perception." (10) There is no doubt that Cameron liked to be surrounded by women and liked to work with them. The fact that she came from an all-woman family with a strong matriarchal sense contributed to that porting. Her correspondence with her only daughter shows Cameron adored her and enjoyed a great harmony and understanding with her, in comparison with the rest of her children. In fact, she adopted a few more daughters. Her closest friends were Annie Thackeray, her sister Sara Prinsep, her niece Julia Stephen and finally, Emily Tennyson. Cameron's relationship with all of them was one of complicity and she supported them and alleviated their worries daily, something very different from her venerating and professional relation with her men. Thus, it comes as no surprise that she represented them differently and split her photography between these two obvious groups of subjects. She represented her women with great beauty, which meant love and sensibility for her, and as equal. And she represented men with a more distant admiration of their intellectual greatness.

Her reinterpretations of *Idylls*, for instance, was precisely based on this shift of attention: she concentrated on a set of leading women and ignored the features of brave men. Her personal crusade here was, as we have witnessed, to highlight the lives of the first, their domestic problems, their thinking and their yearning. If we consider all this within the context of her life, and of a changing Victorian society beginning to wake up to the women's rights moment, we will then realise that Cameron, a "feminine rather than a feminist artist" (*Weaver JMC 1815-1879* 14), was simply offering their side of the story, and that this is Cameron's special feminist stance. Women with no filters, equally and naturally beautiful.

Femininity, of course, could be one of the themes running across her *oeuvre* in her Fancy subjects as well as in *Illustrations*, but so could her pursuit of narrative, or her portrayal of nostalgia and sense of loss or separation. All these different interests that make her work solid and consistent throughout. Our reading of these "myths," (Barthes *Camera Lucida* 28) will bring out a better understanding.

Her self-assured style and the personalised touch in her images – her people, her glass house, her handprints, her interpretations and, her particular *Illustrations* – have also contributed to this consistency. Other factors contributing to her artistic coherence are her soft focus and aesthetics, her emotionally charged female subjects and her love for painterly images. All in great need of consideration, especially when, as a woman she was trying to succeed both artistically and financially in a male dominated medium. Harsher than deserved criticism was tagged onto her for this gender aspect, as discussed with Weiss in my interview. The fact that with her idiosyncratic photography she managed to be the first photographer to have her work hanging in an art museum and from international exhibition halls was rather annoying to some men artists and critics. Besides, she got the endorsement of the greatest and most important men of her time. And she achieved all this by herself, and when critics were hard on her, she remained faithful to her artistic vision, vindicating it in her most creative portraits of *women*. I see her representations of women as more transgressive and adventurous than the rest of her work.

All of Cameron's heroines somehow came from literature, which proves her knowledge and interest in it. She lived for and breathed literature in her life, her most important friends were writers in their own right, and she even wrote herself. She was not only a published author but also an avid writer of correspondence. Thus, the testaments and testimonies she left in her written legacy are also essential *pre-texts* – as cited Mieke Bal in *Reading Rembrandt* (20) – to understand her *oeuvre* and work in *Illustrations*. Her unfinished *Annals*, her self-written review in the *Morning Post*, her personal letters, and the annotations she dotted her prints with, have all being able to give me a valuable textual context in this thesis, which regards Cameron as a writer herself as well as a narrative image-maker. In both roles, she is being autobiographical in a way, conveying a refreshing and personal tone.

Sylvia Wolf says that in her work Cameron was most successful when "there is no

need to illustrate the story because the tale is one her audience already knows" (*JMC's Women* 53). This is clearly the case of much of her pure literary photography, and in indeed of *Illustrations*. Here, she was ingenious enough to choose from Tennyson's women, his most prominent and celebrated ones from his leading four characters in *Idylls*, and his Queen of May, Beggar Maid and Maud. She wanted to guarantee an easier reading of her imagery, at the same time as fully engaging with the reader with unique portraits that left some aspects to his imagination. Proof of this is that Cameron trained her reader to learn about the stories of these women. She did that by first underlining her text excerpts at the beginning of her photobook, in the first volume of *Illustrations*, and by the end in her follow-up volume, her textual sourcing was left more openly to the viewer. There she included whole poems or poems that either did not have much to do and did not correspond directly with her image. Therefore, as the photobook progressed, her art became more and more driven by her women and by her wish to produce painterly images that represented them. We can conclude that she had stayed closer to Tennyson's words at the beginning.

Overall, this thesis wishes to serve as a great advocate for the magnificent piece of Victorian memorabilia that *Illustrations* represents. This photobook embodies many themes, subjects and personal aspects of the era, which on their own make it enthralling in itself. Moreover, *Illustrations* was, for Cameron, the biggest – and probably the only – commissioned job of such a magnitude that she ever worked on. Since its origins, she saw it as a project and, as such, she shot an excessive number of negatives from the start with just Tennyson's Cabinet edition in mind. She could not cease it here, and had later to continue it with her story being told image by image. Cameron breathed and lived for *Illustrations* during this time, and most probably regarded it as her last photographic venture. With it, she attempted to create a blueprint in the history of photo-illustration and also in her own work. Powell said of Cameron that:

No other early photographer, except perhaps Fox-Talbot, has conveyed so clearly the excitement of experimenting with the camera, and the attempt to make full use of the characteristics inherent in what must have seemed a magical new medium." (10)

Illustrations is a clear reflection of this statement. Cameron's photography in it is both creative and innovative from idyll to idyll, from poem to poem, and even from volume to volume. Her latest changes of mind, last-minute additions, variants in underlining and different print versions reflect this state of mind with her experimentation. All this in a timespan of less than a year, when Cameron photographed, printed, laid-out and published her three editions. In them, she attempted the outstanding instead of the mediocre, and by trying to make a difference in the illustrative market, from which she had fed from and learnt from her predecessors, she failed commercially. She was not being practical enough and naively played the part of photographer, investor, editor and publisher, all at the same and with no previous experience in the last three roles. What she hoped to be a great success, like Tennyson's own and other illustrations of *Idylls*, brought about her own ruin.

Another point for discussion is whether she represented and illustrated Tennyson's story suitably. We have seen how Cameron did not strictly share the same moralistic view of *Idylls*. The reader probably did not think she did represent them befittingly, and without documentation on this point, we can only guess and judge it by the reached volume of sales of the photobook. We also hear that the copies of *Illustrations* were not as precious to their owners as Cameron would have liked them to be. They were being deconstructed and page-separated as Dr. Hinton told me in the interview. It seems as if Cameron's photograph pages in *Illustrations* seemed to have acquired more value than its text pages, probably because actual prints were very valuable at the time and because having Tennyson's poems handwritten, excerpted and signed by Cameron's own hand did not add enough value to them.

There is a part of me who wishes to hold on to the "Totality-of-Image" next to text concept, as claimed by Barthes in *Camera Lucida*. In my opinion, and as at first sight, Cameron's photographs in *Illustrations* left little room for Tennyson's story of King Arthur and the other poems excerpted, and therefore could stand in their right in the reader's mind. Personally, it proved hard to walk away from her interpretations of her female characters and then try to understand anything different in Tennyson's text. Her images depicted more soulful characters when compared to Tennyson's, and these representations had stayed in my mind from the moment I first saw the Miniature, even while reading Tennyson's text. And I would like to think that the reader felt this way too, and found her images overpowering and therefore more valuable on their own.

Without Cameron, the work of photographers such as Nan Golding, Diane Arbus, Sally Man and Cindy Sherman, who also questioned the identity of their photographic characters, might never have existed today. Carol H. MacKay cites curator Anne Noggle saying that in female twentieth century photography:

[W]omen are photographing women: deliberately and provocatively they are aiming their cameras at women as individuals, rather than as models or symbols. They are zeroing in on the essence. The results are head-on encounters with real people, projecting an identity of self. As a generalization, it is not so much a drastic change in subject matter as it is a more thoughtful and expressive look at the women being photographed. (55)

With all of these, both *Illustrations* and Cameron's women portraits prove to be versatile and modern subjects for studying in the future. Personally, I see this thesis as the beginning of my academic and research life in this and other fields, which call for further research.

Many are the topics for research and discussion in *Illustrations*, and I have felt very excited to be part of it in the last few years. I find myself still at the tip of the iceberg, with so many fronts open. The obvious one is the "mysterious Miniature," as I have decided to call it, which originated this whole thesis, and still does not possess enough definitive conclusions. It seems critical to find out the exact reason why Cameron produced this rare edition just months before leaving England for good. How did she exactly produce it, what was her exact

order and story?

And then, it is the underdog of the *Illustrations* photobook, the “powerful portraits,” as I may call it too, of the *Other Poems* section in *Illustrations*. They offer a great diversity and colourful range of personalities and heroines from Tennyson. Such is the likes of Maud and Mariana, or The Princess, both in a group and with the string instrument, and the May Queen holding the viewer’s gaze confidently. All of these are flesh and bone and not the whimsical, more overacted and far-fetched characters avoiding eye contact with the viewer in *Idylls*. And yet, these portraits of *Other Poems* do seem to have been overlooked by numerous scholars. Their stories, although being individualised are also very powerful visually.

The scholarly work on all *Illustrations*’ editions should be continued and I would like to be part of this extraordinary poetic photobook in all senses; in the accompanying text within it, in the story of its characters, and in the journey of its artists. The original photobook might not have been perfect then, but it represents today a great point for discussion in many disciplines.

Finally, to conclude my thesis, I would like to quote the same author with whom I started my thesis. Susan Sontag said that “to take a good photograph, runs the common claim, one must already see it. That is, the image must exist in the photographer’s mind at or before the moment when the negative is exposed” (117). I do believe that Cameron’s photographs in *Illustrations* went through this mental process, whether they came to her from Tennyson’s words, the people she knew or the influences she received. She had already seen her photographs before she exposed them, and these were certainly *softly* focused.

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APPENDIX I

Victorian Timeline

CURRENT AFFAIRS	SISTER ARTS	CAMERON	TENNYSON
1815		Jun, 11: Julia Margaret is born in Calcutta	
1817	The Dulwich Picture Gallery opens		
1818	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>	Julia Margaret is sent to Europe	
1819	Herschel discovers the <i>Hypo</i> fixer		
1824	The National Portrait Gallery opens		
1827			Tennyson enrolls Cambridge University
1830			<i>Poems Chiefly Lyrical</i> Tennyson travels to the Pyrenees
1831	East India Company loses monopoly		He leaves Cambridge
1832			<i>Poems</i> – includes 'The Lady of Shalott'
1834		Julia Margaret returns to Calcutta from Europe	
1835	Fox Talbot records first <i>Calotype</i> of Lacock Abbey		
1836		Julia Margaret meets Herschel in South Africa	
1937	Jun, 20: Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom and Ireland is crowned (aged 18)	Dickens, <i>Oliver Twist</i> . First Daguerreotype is taken in France.	

1938			She marries Charles H. Cameron	
1839		Jan: Daguerre announces the invention of the <i>Daguerreotype</i> . Fox Talbot announces the invention of the <i>Calotype</i> .		
1840	Queen Victoria marries Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. New Zealand becomes a British colony.			
1842		<i>The Illustrated News</i> is founded		<i>Poems</i> – includes 'Morte d'Arthur.'
1844		Fox Talbot, <i>The Pencil of Nature</i>		
1845	Queen Victoria buys Osborne House, Wight	Fox Talbot, <i>Sun Prints of Scotland</i>		
1846				<i>Poems</i>
1847		E. Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> . C. Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> .	Cameron, <i>Leonora</i>	<i>The Princess</i>
1848	Marx and Engels, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>	The P.R.B. and The Arundel Society are founded	The Camerons move to England. Cameron meets Henry Taylor and G.F. Watts.	
1850		G.F. Watts begins his <i>Hall of Fame</i>	Cameron meets Tennyson	<i>In Memoriam A.H.H.</i> Poet Laureate. He marries E. Sellwood.
1851	Great Exhibition, London	Photographs are on display at the Exhibition		<i>Poems</i>
1852	South Kensington Museum opens	F. S. Archer develops the wet collodion process		
1853		The Photographic Society of London is founded		The Tennysons move to Freshwater, Wight

1854	The Crimean War bursts out	Fenton, first war photographer. Coventry Patmore, <i>The Angel in the House</i> .		
1855	Abolition of newspaper stamp duty			<i>Maud, and Other Poems</i>
1856	Treaty of Paris ends war. Second Industrial Revolution.			
1857	Indian Mutiny. Science Museum opens. The Divorce Act.	The Pre-Raphaelites decorate the Oxford Union Building and first exhibit in Russell Place, London. The Manchester Art Treasures exhibition.		The "Tennyson Moxon" illustrated edition
1858	The East India Company dissolves	Exhibition Society of Artists, the Hogarth Club is founded by the P.R.B. The South Kensington Museum holds first photo exhibition. Thomas Wright, <i>Morte d'Arthur</i> (new ed.).		Member of the Hogarth Club
1859	National Post Box service is introduced	Darwin, <i>The Origin of Species</i> . <i>Once a Week</i> begins publication.	Member of the Arundel Society	<i>Idylls of the King</i> – includes 'Enid,' 'Vivien,' 'Elaine' and 'Guinevere'
1860	New Copyright Act	Wilkie Wynfield photographs some Pre-Raphaelites	Cameron buys house in Freshwater	
1861	Prince Albert dies	Stuart Mill, <i>The Subjection of Women</i>		'May Queen', illustrated edition by E. V. B.
1862	The International Exhibition, London (annually)			
1863	First underground railway, powered by steam, opens in London		May: Rejlander visits Dimbola. Dec: Cameron receives first camera.	Watts paints Tennyson's portrait
1864			Jan: Cameron photographs Annie Philpot, entitling it 'My First success.' She produces the <i>Watts</i> album. She registers her	<i>Enoch Arden</i>

			images at the Fine Arts Registers of the Public Record and enters agreement with Colnaghi, London. Member of the Photographic Societies of London and Scotland. She exhibits at the International Exhibition.	
1865		Lewis Carroll, <i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	Cameron exhibits at the South Kensington Museum and the International Exhibition, Dublin. First solo exhibition at the French Gallery, London. Bronze Medal in Berlin.	
1866			Gold Medal Award, Berlin. Silver Medal at the Hartley Institution, Southampton. Solo exhibition at Colnaghi's Gallery.	
1867			Honourable mention at the Paris exhibition for "artistic photography"	Doré's <i>Idylls</i> – includes 'Elaine,' 'Vivien' and 'Guinevere' folio books
1868			Solo exhibition at the German Gallery, London. Cameron gets second agent in London, William Spooner	Doré's <i>Idylls</i> – includes 'Enid' folio
1869	Suez Canal opens	Peach Robinson, <i>Pictorial Effect in Photography</i>	Bronze Medal and exhibition in the Netherlands	<i>The Holy Grail and Other Poems.</i> The Tennysons leave Wight as permanent residence.
1870	The Married Women's Property Act		Exhibition at the French Photographic Society, Paris. Midland Counties Exhibition of Art and Industrial Products, Derby.	
1871	Royal Albert Hall is inaugurated		London International Exhibition	<i>Idylls</i> (3 rd ed.) – includes 'The Last Tournament.'

1872		London International Exhibition	<i>Idylls</i> (4 th ed.) – includes ‘Gareth and Lynette.’
1873		Universal Exhibition of Vienna, with medal for her “Artistic Studies.” She exhibits at Colnaghi gallery. Oct: Cameron’s daughter dies.	
1874		Aug: She starts photographic work for the Cabinet Edition. Dec: <i>Illustrations to Tennyson’s Idylls of the King and Other Poems</i> (vol. 1)	<i>The Cabinet Edition of the Works of Tennyson</i>
1875		May: <i>Illustration</i> (vol. 2) The ‘Miniature Edition.’ Cameron instructs the Autotype Company, London, to print from her negatives. Oct, 21: The Camerons move to Ceylon.	
1876	Telephone is invented by Alexander Graham Bell. First telephone call is made. May, 1: Queen Victoria becomes Empress of India.	‘On a Portrait’ Cameron begins to write <i>Annals of my Glass House</i> Sept: Carbon copies of her <i>Idylls</i> shown at the Photographic Exhibition of Great Britain. Medal at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.	<i>Harold</i>
1877	The first Wimbledon tournament is first played	Sept: ‘The Parting of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere’ illustrates cover of <i>Harper’s Weekly</i>	
1878		Brief visit of the Camerons to England	
1879		Jan, 26: Julia Margaret Cameron dies (aged 63)	

APPENDIX II

In Conversation with Dr. Hinton

Dr. Brian Hinton M.B.E. is Chairman and Honorary curator of the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust and President of the Farringford Tennyson Society. During my stay in the Trust in August 2015 I recorded these two conversations with him. Herewith their transcript:¹³⁶

BRIAN HINTON [BH]: The connections with Bloomsbury... They wrote the first book on Mrs. Cameron in 1926. It was published by the Hogarth Press, which was Mrs. Virginia Woolf's press. We've got an original. Then, firstly there was a key book written by Gernsheim which came out, I think in the late 40s. That was the first serious critical book on Mrs. Cameron which started the interest in her again. In the 1960s, she became very fashionable. She was rediscovered by a lot of fashionable young photographers in swinging London. David Bailey once told me that he had dozens of her photographs, original prints. Patti Smith, who sat at this table [café at Dimbola in the JMC Trust], and her then friend Robert Mapplethorpe were brought together for a love of Mrs. Cameron's work. And if you read *Just Kids*,¹³⁷ it talks about their share love for Mrs. Cameron which is why Patti, who was delightful, came here to follow in her footsteps.

MARIA BELLIDO [MB]: She is a photographer as well...

BH: Yes! She has given us some wonderful Polaroids she took. Absolutely wonderful. And she gave a performance at Farringford based on Tennyson and Mrs. Cameron. Annie Leibovitz has been here to take photographs of this house, cause it's so important, because Mrs. Cameron is now seen as the great pioneer portrait photographer. But loads of the *avant-garde* painters, photographers, writers... are very inspired by Mrs. Cameron, so she is more and more influential now than she has ever been. And because it's her 200th birthday, you just missed it unfortunately, we had an international conference with three days of talks on her work. Very interesting work. A young Bangladeshi photographer has gone out on our behalf to Sri Lanka at this very moment, to take photographs for an exhibition here later in the year to explore her links with Sri Lanka... Let's take it on. In 1992, permission was given to demolish half of this house. In 1960, it had been divided into two separate houses. A small band of people, "old ex-hippies" we were called... True! [he laughs] ... We had all been to the Isle of Wight Festival in 1970, and of course seen Jimmy Hendrix. It all links up! [he laughs] We got together as a protest group to save the house, and at the last minute, literally the last minute, we stopped the demolition. We bought the house, half of it, and we then bought the other half. When I took the speech to get the money, I said I wanted us to copy Charleston in Sussex,

¹³⁶ Interview presented in spoken discourse, literally transcribed and slightly edited to facilitate its readability.

¹³⁷ A memoir written by Smith, published in 2010 and documenting her relationship with Mapplethorpe.

which is where Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant lived,¹³⁸ and of course they were all inspired by Mrs. Cameron! Because Mrs. Cameron was Vanessa's great-aunt. So, just as this house was to be demolished, it was saved at the last minute by the family, who I know. We then based ourselves ten years later on Charleston, which is both a museum and an art centre, and not many places are both. And we are, and they are, and it was their idea. And we acknowledged that we took the idea from them. So, as a result, we set up to be a museum of Mrs. Cameron, and of photography in general, and the Freshwater Circle, including Tennyson of course, and of cultural events, which includes the 1870 Isle of Wight festival which is why we have the big room. The man who puts out the new ones [concerts] gives us half of our... Half of our income comes from his generosity. So, when he asked if he could put a Jimmy Hendrix [a statue of it] in the front garden, we said please do. But he is going to be in a Victorian garden! So, we were saved in 1994, the whole house, we established galleries, the café, a library, we have exhibition of internationally famous photographers, painters, we have concerts. We had a CD recorded here, upstairs in the gallery. A psychedelic rock album, launched by a professor of English at Portsmouth University who are research partners. They are the great experts on the Freshwater Circle, and are the academics at Portsmouth, across the water. And their professor launched his rock record here! So, we are very forward looking, but also, of course our main aim is to promote the memory of Mrs. Cameron.

[...]

BH: ...for instance, the first book illustrated in the Kelmscott Press by William Morris.¹³⁹ If you look at the illustrated books of the time, far fewer numbers of books actually have photographs. Most of the illustrators of the Gift books of that era were etchings, woodcuts and colour prints. You think of Doré, he did some wonderful ones of the separate *Idylls*, and then you look at Mrs. Cameron's and the Henry S. King production and it does look a bit handmade. I was surprised to be told that Henry S. King was definitely a well-known publisher of such things, because when you look at the original...she should have actually had Tennyson's poems set in type. She had written them and underlined them; the exact passages, and you understand her doing that and that she is actually saying these are the passages I am reinterpreting. But the fact that she hadn't... If she would have got Tennyson to write them out, it [*Illustrations*] would have had some interest, but the poem in itself writing is... She had such a bad handwriting! And of course, most people at the time would buy the book, take out the original photographs and then throw the rest of the book away! They framed up the photographs, and who could blame them really! That's why they [volumes 1 and 2 of *Illustrations*] are so rare.

MB: How many copies of the large volumes are there?

¹³⁸ Currently the Charleston Trust and the Bloomsbury Home of Art and Ideas. Bell and Grant moved there in 1916 and lived and worked during the Great War.

¹³⁹ Morris founded Kelmscott Press in 1891. He published there his own work as well as the reprints of mediaeval writings that he believed should be made popular. He detested the mechanisation of illustrative art, and used for his print runs traditional and manual printing methods, designing his own typeface and making his own paper.

BH: This is a game...no one quite really knows. They are quite common in research libraries, and there are quite a few of them around. But they very rarely come up on the open markets, so there can't be that many that are left. But how many they were actually printed...I don't know, you'll have to ask a scholar in the field. I really don't know. And then, of course, it is the Miniature *Idylls* which is charming in its own right. There was an expert who wrote a chapter in Colin and Ford's *Complete Works*. She¹⁴⁰ worked at the National Media Museum in Bradford, and she is now being made redundant to everyone's disbelief. But she wrote brilliantly about the small *Idylls*, it's the best thing on. How they came to be done, and again, very few of them, I think she thinks there're twenty or ten at the most. And of course, most of them are unbound, so you are not even sure what order they came in. So, you have the two volumes of the *Idylls*, the two big volumes, and then you have them in one volume half size, with a new print, the Guinevere standing, which is not in either of the big ones. It's endless work, I mean as a subject for a PhD is great because you have so much to talk about!

MB: And I find that everything is connected and overlapping...

BH: Of course, it is!

MB: I think all the versions, and editions and volumes are a good reflection of how Cameron was; energetic, impulsive...

BH: Oh absolutely! More than energetic! She was a workaholic! But you see all the Bloomsbury people, and too my friend Julian Bell,¹⁴¹ have worked very hard. There is a really concerted hard work in them. He works a lot. He goes to his studio and works 8 hours a day, and you can see that in Mrs. Cameron, can't you? That determination. She had incredible energy, and again she could take criticism and just rode through it.

Another thing to look at is the celebrated and big edition of what we call the Moxon Tennyson, where all the Pre-Raphaelites painters participated. It's beautiful! There was a talk about this at a separate conference I went to saying how Moxon the publisher, almost lost all his money. Because of this [edition]. He spent so much money hiring all these top artists. All was done in woodcuts and wood engravings, and they had to do the original work. You are talking about Millais and all of the leading Pre-Raphaelites. But the book itself! I have a third edition, signed by Mrs. Cameron. A presentation copy. As a collector one finds these things, tracks them down and buys them. In the end, they will all come here, but not yet. Now, you can quote me on this [he laughs]: "Dr Hinton has an original copy of the Moxon Tennyson which is presented by Mrs. Cameron in her handwriting". It has got: *From Julia Margaret Cameron to...* I think we found him to be a painter or a poet living in Liverpool. So, she knew about the Moxon Tennyson because she actually presented a copy of it. But not a first edition, which would have cost me at least £5-8,000. The one I bought was still a lot of money but it wasn't a

¹⁴⁰ Philippa Wright, curator of photographs at the National Media Museum from April 2005-April 2013.

¹⁴¹ Accomplished painter and writer, grandson of Vanessa Bell, thus great-great grandson of Julia Margaret Cameron.

first edition. I knew it would cost me a couple of thousand pounds with the Cameron inscription...

MB: But that is the best feature in your copy...

BH: Oh yes, I wouldn't sell it for the world. But it's just interesting that she actually knew about it [the Moxon Tennyson] because she presented her copy to someone with her approval.

MB: This proves that she actually knew about all the Pre-Raphaelite illustrations in the Moxon. This is an evidence. It has been suggested, and you mention it in your scholarly edition of the miniature of *Illustrations*,¹⁴² that her Elaine with the shield might have been inspired by Hunt's 'Lady of Shallot'.

BH: Well, it's a latest edition not the first edition¹⁴³, but obviously, she presented it when she was in England, and she did her *Idylls* at the end of her time. I can't remember the date, I'm sorry, or I don't know if it's been even dated, but it might have been at the same time. She might have bought the Moxon Tennyson, of course it's certainly earlier than her work of *Idylls of the King*, but this was latest edition and cheaper one obviously. But it's a lovely hard bound edition. It's so interesting to compare this to her interpretation.

MB: I think it's a valuable comparison, and it makes sense because the stories of the two maids [Elaine of Astolat and Lady of Shallot] are very similar and share many resemblances.

BH: Yes. Of course, her interpretation is different to the Pre-Raphaelites' interpretation. There was an exhibition in the Lincoln Gallery on Tennyson's centenary in 1992 where they had the original plates, the actual reverse etching plates for the Moxon Tennyson, and actually it was fascinating to see. And to see the Lady of Shallot in reverse on an etching printing plate was extraordinary. The most wonderful of images.

MB: Were these the original drawings or plates?

BH: Well, either someone made an etching from the actual painting or... I don't think Millais made an etching...

MB: Yes, I think someone else did the etchings for him.

BH: Yes, they did it after all for Mrs. Cameron's [for the Cabinet edition]. Yes, I can't imagine Millais would have had the time! He was making a fortune out of huge paintings. He was a rich artist, why would he bother to... Unless he loved doing... I don't think he did. So, I think

¹⁴² Hinton *Illustrations* 50.

¹⁴³ The Moxon Tennyson was first published in 1857.

he would have done his drawings or sketching, which they would then be turned into these plates, woodcuts. I have got a feeling, well the one I saw was actually steel, rather than wood. It was so exquisite to look at it! Behind glass. It is fascinating how she [Cameron] reinterpreted and remade all these into her own imaginative world.

MB: Well, it helped also that she loved poetry...

BH: Absolutely. And wrote it!! And of course, wasn't it Tennyson's brother, Charles Tennyson Turner who wrote a poem about Mrs. Cameron? It all connects through. Do you know that Tennyson could get *very angry*, and he was very angry and very opposed to the Moxon Tennyson? And do you know why? Because he said, and you'll have to find the actual words, he said; I have this imaginative vision of my poems, and I don't like seeing other people interpreting my poems for the public in a different way. I want my poems to actually produce their own pictures rather than other people to hijack. He was quite opposed to illustrated versions, but not Mrs. Cameron's, just in general to illustrated versions of his poetry.

MB: True, he was probably right to be so possessive, and I don't know much yet about his illustrated books...

BH: I have a huge collection of Victorian and Edwardian illustrations... [he laughs] ...

MB: ...and some illustrations don't have much to do with the poem.

BH: Well, they change the view! I love and I collect every first edition by Arthur Rackham,¹⁴⁴ who was an early 20th century artist. Because the great vogue of all these books was before the first World War, picture books which are now very collectable. And whatever Rackham illustrated turned into a view of Rackham, which was very gothic, with goblins and spiky frightening trees. You can tell Rackham's illustration a mile away! He illustrated at least 50 books but in all of them, even *The Wind in the Willows* which is a very pastoral English book, he made them spiky, slightly threatening, slightly sinister. He brought them into his own style. They are very fine. I have at least 50 books illustrated by him. And Edward Gorey,¹⁴⁵ the American illustrator, very strange and eccentric graphic artist from New York. He died in 2000. All the books he illustrated were made part of his universe about danger, caricature and threat. So, any great artist is going to remake his books into his own imagination.

MB: That's true.

¹⁴⁴ Arthur Rackham (1867-1939), English book illustrator of many of the classics of English and European literature. Amongst them reworking the original King Arthur stories.

¹⁴⁵ Edward Gorey (1925-2000), known for his absurd and slightly disturbing narrative scenes in Victorian and Edwardian settings. He memorably illustrated 1985's edition of Woolf's *Freshwater: A Comedy*.

BH: But Mrs. Cameron some way, she opened things up. Her interpretation of *Idylls* is very open. And funnily enough, it's been very unfashionable to have illustrated versions of adult books. Children's books have been fine, but it was almost seen as, if you had an illustrated adult book, it was going to be either science fiction or genre of some form. Serious literature tended not to, although in Dickens, absolutely the opposite! Dickens, and I don't know about continental writers, but certainly Dickens, or Cervantes, sure would certainly have illustrations in their text. But it became very unfashionable to actually have artwork in a novel, in particular novels. It's now been quite a rebirth of people loving books that had a contemporary artist illustrating fiction. The Folio Society in England, or rare books or special presses concentrate on actually having and bringing together beautiful typography and artwork using plates in the text. This is a whole world!!

[OUR CONVERSATION ENDED HERE]

APPENDIX III

Interview with Marta Weiss

Weiss is Curator of Photographs, Word & Image Department in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. At the time of our interview in London, December 7, 2015, she had curated touring exhibition *Julia Margaret Cameron* on show in London from Nov 2015 – Feb 2016, and authored the exhibit's catalogue, *Julia Margaret Cameron: Photographs to electrify you with delight and startle the world*.

Herewith the transcript of my interview with her:¹⁴⁶

MARIA BELLIDO [MB]: Hi Marta. Congratulations. I have got to say, the exhibition is so nice, and the catalogue is so amazing. Even if I have read the catalogue and studied it, coming to see the exhibition has been a much more rewarding experience.

MARTA WEISS [MW]: Yes, it's like everything in real life. And have you seen the show across the street too?¹⁴⁷

MB: Yes. So, they both complement each other.

MW: Yes, absolutely.

MB: Did you agree to do it at the same time?

MW: Sort of. I'm delighted they complement each other. It didn't work out for us to collaborate more closely, so what ended up happening is that we had to complement each other. So, that's great.

MB: That's good. And it's brilliant for me. Absolutely. So, I've split the interview into three sections. One of them is about your exhibition. Obviously, I wrote these [my questions] before I came to see the exhibition so some of the things might be redundant, or you might have already explained. So, about the exhibition: What have you included in there? I know that it has been fragmented into 6 parts, which is really good, but I'd like to hear your opinion on this matter.

MW: The idea of the exhibition is to give an overview of Cameron's career but also to tell the story of her development as an artist through the collection in the V&A, and in particular to highlight her very special relationship with the South Kensington Museum and Henry Cole,

¹⁴⁶ This interview is presented in the manner of a spoken discourse, as it has been literally transcribed from my conversation with Weiss. It has been slightly edited at times to facilitate its readability.

¹⁴⁷ *Julia Margaret Cameron: Influence and Intimacy*, exhibition at the Science Museum, London (November 2015 – March 2016).

the founding director of the South Kensington Museum, which is of course now the V&A. So, the exhibition is organised around four of her letters that are from our collection. And it turns out I was able to put those letters into chronological order and then also create a narrative for the exhibition. The first three sections of the exhibition run chronologically and give you a chronological survey of her career while also looking at the themes that come out in those letters, and then the last section of the exhibition looks more at her process and techniques, and in particular the questions of her so-called mistakes and flaws. So, that's how I chose to structure the exhibition, around the letters in order to tell that story.

MB: And it's great to see her development as an artist, something very distinctive of her career, I find. How do you see that development, not only in her work, but also from housewife to socialite to a pioneer photographer?

MW: She moved in extremely artistic circles and I think that the story that Cameron herself told about how she took up photography was very dramatic. In her version, she was given a camera aged 48 as a gift from her daughter and son-in-law and then within a month... "Boom!" She is an artist! And it just kicks off from there. And I think that that's a really attractive story and dramatic, but I think it's more nuanced than that. I think it wasn't necessarily this dramatic a shift as she tried to make it sound. And I don't think you would give somebody a camera on a whim in those days. And clearly, we know that she was involved in photography before, and there's been relatively recent research on that in the past ten to twelve years. And in this exhibition, as you know, there's a photograph that we just recently discovered in the collection that shows her glass house studio [Weiss refers to 'The Idylls of the Village' or 'The Idols of the Village,' see fig. 59 in the thesis]. It's a photograph taken on her property probably by Rejlander, but possibly with her collaboration. So that's another clue in building up that story of what her involvement was in photography and her artistic activities before she owned a camera. So, I think it's important to think about, or to try and learn, what was going on, as it might not have been as dramatic as she made it.

MB: Also, I was quite surprised to hear that she had taken classes from David Wilkie Wynfield...

MW: Yes, she said that she'd learnt from him. She says that in a letter, I think, to John Herschel. And then Rejlander is the other photographer that she can be linked with before she gets her camera. Because there are definitely photographs that Rejlander took that Cameron printed. And she writes on them carefully, and some are included in an album she gives to her sister: "photographs of my own printing" before she has her camera. So, these are the two photographers that she could be most concretely linked with.

MB: Going into her style now. To you, what do her pictures convey to the viewer nowadays? She is a very current photographer, and very popular in the last hundred years. What do you think they convey to the viewer nowadays?

MW: Well, I think that there are a number of things that are incredibly modern about Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs that make her very appealing to viewers today. One is the full close-up style, with the very dramatic lighting that gives a lot of the close-up heads a kind of sculptural quality, so they seem to sort of emerge out of the darkness not just into the space of the photograph but kind of into in our space. There's an immediate scene of power to them that I think it's really compelling. And the other thing, is the tactile nature of her photographs and that there are these traces of her process and her hand in them. And I think that, maybe today, even more so than ever, with the growth of digital photography, and the fact that we are now surrounded by so much super sharp, super sleek photography and highly finished digital photography, I think that gives an even more poignant appeal to these photographs so clearly made by hand, that have these physical traces of the artist's hand.

MB: Definitely, I agree. Also, and that is maybe more for the *Idylls* section, the fact that she seemed to be working towards a project, something very common for the photographer/artist nowadays. The fact that she was working on a project and then packaged it and then published it in a book...

MW: Yes, I haven't really thought about that aspect of her before. Or made that comparison before. I don't know, you'd have to think a little bit about comparing them to other photographers of the time. Think about whether there might be other examples of that. But take Roger Fenton, for example, he went to the Crimean war and then published his photographs as a portfolio, or Francis Frith, with his photographs of Egypt and the Holy Land. I mean, I think there are other photographers making self-conscious sorts of series, but I'm not sure. I'd have to think about that. I am not sure if it would be correct to argue for a kind of uniqueness of it in her own time. But, certainly, I can see that it might be fruitful to make comparisons to contemporary photographers. So, I think you can certainly make comparisons, but I'm not sure that there weren't other people doing things that you could compare to. It's something to which I haven't given enough thought. If you want to make a case for that, you might look more into other projects like that, that other photographers did do at the time but then try and see what might have been different about theirs.

MB: Well, that leads to my next question, what is it that distinguishes her work from her peer photographers?

MW: Well, Henry Cole, writing about her, 18 months after she'd started photography, says that, he's going to be photographed "in her style". And it's remarkable but I think really true that she had a style of her own. I mean like nobody else. In fact, I think the photographer

whose work resembles hers the most, perhaps, is David Wilkie Wynfield... By the way, there's a painting by him. Did you notice that there were paintings at the tops of those galleries?

MB: Were there?

MW: One of them is by David Wilkie Wynfield. And then another one is by Toby Prinsep... No, not Toby Prinsep, his son...

MB: Valentine?

MW: Yes, Valentine Prinsep,¹⁴⁸ exactly. So, one of the things that is exciting about having that exhibition in those galleries is that those galleries date from the mid 1860s and are decorated by people, by artists whom Cameron was associated with. So, about what distinguishes her? I think her portraiture was really new. That it wasn't just about recording the outside, the external features of her subjects, but she really wanted to try and get something of their inner character across. And as people noticed at the time, her photographs weren't literally sharp, but they left things to the imagination. And I don't think there is any photographer who really looks, just stylistically, like her. She just stands apart completely.

MB: Yes, the out-of-focus, you talk about it and the technical mistakes. Sometimes I wonder if they were intended, or if they were disregarded, or if she didn't give too much thought about them. She was just very assertive about her personal style. You mention all three in a way.

MW: One second, just one more point on the last thing we were saying, sorry. Even my 6-year-old daughter can recognise, I mean, granted she's seen a lot of Julia Margaret Cameron at home...[laughs]...while I've been working on this. But she can recognise a Julia Margaret Cameron across the room. I've taken her, I don't remember where it was, in a gallery where there were loads of different photographers and she could say: "that one is by Julia Margaret Cameron". If a six-year-old child... It's just a small indication of how unique and distinctive her vision [Cameron's] is. So, about the flaws and so on. Well, as you know, one of the big pieces of research that came out of the work that I did to prepare this exhibition, was the discovery of a large group of photographs in the collection that we now know belonged to G.F. Watts. That we didn't know before.

MB: This finding is amazing.

MW: Yes, it was very exciting. And I had a great research assistant, called Erika Lederman, who did great work. And also, we had the help of our colleagues in the V&A archives. So, all those people together really helped solve some of the mysteries. It has been a bit of a

¹⁴⁸ Valentine Cameron Prinsep (1838 – 1904), Julia Margaret Cameron's nephew and pre-Raphaelite painter.

revelation, because I intended from the start to have a section that was about her process. The section that I ended up calling: "*Her mistakes were her successes*" – I had even selected photographs for it. I wanted to show her so-called flaws at their most extreme. So, I had selected some of the photographs that I now know once belonged to Watts, and that puts a completely different light on it. Because we know that Watts said to her: "don't send me your finished prints. Send me your defective unmounted impressions," and there are others. I'm still researching it now actually, because I think there's more work to be done about their relationship and the things that come up in the letters between them. So, I think we cast a new light on those so-called flawed photographs by Cameron, because they make you realise that you need to understand the context more. On the one hand, there are photographs that she sold to the museum that have these kind of swirls, because the chemicals weren't applied evenly, or bits of collodion missing, or black patches, or things scratched away on them. So, it seems that to a certain extent she was accepting of it, maybe she embraced it? It's hard to know. Because she didn't really talk about it – I haven't found anything where she talks about it herself. She definitely talks directly about focus, about the question of focus, which is another aspect of her work that was very controversial in her time, but I've never, so far, come across anything explicitly saying: "I like it when it's smudgy..." or something like that. So, we just have to kind of read into it. But I can say that Watts advised her to try to be neater, and said: "I can see through the mess, in a way, because I'm an artist, and I understand what you're doing, but to sell your work you have to make them tidier". So, it's clearly something she must have been aware of. It's also something certain contemporary audiences adore and contemporary critics have written about the importance of touch in her photographs and how evocative it is, and how she is sort of post-modern by showing her process embedded into the work itself, but I think, you have to take it with a grain of salt, or just think about it a little bit more critically. What did she think she was doing? And I think it's still open-ended. And what I hoped to do is just to draw attention to that, and to open up the question, and of course, there's also another element: her letter to Henry Cole about the cracking.¹⁴⁹ That's more evidence that shows that she wasn't satisfied with everything. So, she was continually experimenting, sometimes struggling, but trying to improve. And I don't think we can say that she didn't care. She did care. She was trying to do the best she could. But sometimes, she had a very exuberant personality and it's clear that sometimes she saw something in an image that probably blinded her to other things, or didn't matter. And at other times maybe she thought: "Oh, that's quite good. And it's a bit smudgy..."

MB: I agree. She compromised.

MW: Yes.

¹⁴⁹ In her book, Weiss tells there is evidence in Cameron's correspondence to Henry Cole where she complains about a "honey comb crack" appearing on the surfaces of her negatives. Most probably due to the type of photographic chemicals used at the time. Cameron blamed this effect on the faulty state of the chemicals, whereas members of the Photographic Society in London attribute it to the damp climate of the Isle of Wight, where she worked (39-40).

MB: And she was labeled as an amateur at her time, for all this. Was it a bit harsh you think?

MW: When you say 'amateur', you have to be a bit careful, I think with that phrase, because I think that word is a bit controversial in relation to Cameron. Because in her time you would have divided photographers into amateur and commercial photographers. So, she was definitely a non-commercial photographer. She was somebody whose social class would have been above being in trade. That would have been beneath her. And so, I think she would have been considered an amateur photographer in that way, because the meaning that word had at the time, which is different, I think, from the implications that that word has got now. But on the other hand, she did want to earn money from her photography, so I think she was trying to kind of forge a new position for herself that didn't really exist before, which is the professional art photographer, so it's like being an artist today. She still wanted to earn money from it and she wanted her work in public collections. She wasn't doing it just simply for her own pleasure for nobody to see, but she definitely wasn't doing it solely for the money. It's not that she had a commercial studio where rich clients could come in. Maybe you mean...

MB: I meant it more, being criticised for her lack of technique, or not having a perfect technique...

MW: Right. Fine. So, you just mean her so-called "slovenly technique", and so on. So, what's the question, sorry?

MB: If that labelling, or that way of calling her, was a bit harsh...

MW: ...for her sort of incompetence...

MB: Yes. You touched in your book that she was a lady and...

MW: Yes, exactly. I definitely think there's a sexist tone to a lot of it. And the harshest criticism came quite early on, and I think that a little bit of it was jealousy, but I think part of what got on the nerves of some of her contemporaries and other photographers at the time, and people who were writing on the photographic journals, is that she was being praised in the more general press; places like the *Athenaeum* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. And then Henry Cole was collecting her work and exhibiting it in the South Kensington Museum. These photographers, they were like: "...Aaargh, why is this woman who doesn't know how to use a camera being given all this attention, and being praised?" So, I think that was part of the initial reaction against her and the earlier view, but that kind of died out a little bit even during the course of her lifetime. And then, even by the time of her obituaries in the photographic journals she's already being praised for having a unique vision and so on. So, yes, I do think

that critics were too harsh earlier on, but it's also, obviously, an important part of how she worked and what her vision was.

MB: You mention that she was given opportunities that other photographers might not have been given. Sometimes when I read some of the letters she wrote to Henry Cole I felt that she was a bit pushy with her photography...

MW: Oh yes, she was very pushy! I mean she was being pushy with loads of people, not just with Henry Cole. She was always writing to people like Herschel and Watts saying: "Oh, would you write a letter to *The Times* saying how great my photographs are?" And sometimes Watts would say: "Oh, quite divine." And she then reproduced it herself on her prints, or her mounts and things. So, yes, she definitely wasn't shy about promoting herself, which again is something that, I think, still rubs up people the wrong way, even today, especially when a woman does it! I think it's part of it.

MB: Going into her influences. I realise that there are so many influences on Cameron...

MW: On her? Or the influences that she's had on other people?

MB: When I see her work, I see studies "in the manner of..." She was being influenced by so many things, and there are so many connections that I feel I should be touching when I talk about her. At the time she was photographing, there were the realism and the idealism movements and I think she was sort of touching both. What is your view on this; do you think she leaned more towards the masterpieces or towards the Pre-Raphaelites' style, subject matters, etc.?

MW: I think that I see the influence of old masters more than anything else in her photographs, and I think that her photographs have a superficial resemblance to pre-Raphaelite painting, but they are really really different. Because, of course, one of the things that the Pre-Raphaelites loved was sharp focus and precision. And everything in a pre-Raphaelite painting is meticulously...well, photographic in a way! In a different way. And it has that sharpness that is the complete opposite of Cameron's. So, I think that people make the comparison a lot, but because you've got flowing hair, and Arthurian legend, and the drapery... But actually, I think they are very different from each other. So, in a way, you might say that both Cameron and the Pre-Raphaelites had the same influences but there are two different ways of working towards them. I think the artist of her time that her work most resembles in a way is Watts. Because Watts has a very soft focus way of painting, and he painted a lot of allegory, and he also made something called the Hall of Fame, his own Hall of Fame, where he selected great men of his time that he wanted to depict. So, in the same way

that Cameron pursued Herschel, and Carlyle¹⁵⁰ and all these men whom she sort of worshipped, and Tennyson, and Henry Taylor, etc... Watts did the same when creating what he called the Hall of Fame that he then gave to the National Portrait Gallery. So, I think if you were looking for contemporary influences I would look more towards him than the Pre-Raphaelites. That's my view.

[...]

MB: I am researching, as you know, the work Cameron produced for Tennyson's *Idylls of the King and Other Poems*. The exhibition contains a few of them – Did something change in Cameron's work when photographing *Idylls*?

MW: I mean, one thing that stands out about the *Idylls* is that she's attempting to make a series, which is something, as I said in the book, that she hasn't really tried since the very beginning when she took the 'Fruits of the Spirits,' which is a series of nine. This is her next ambitious series being undertaken. So, they stand out in that way. I'm not sure. I feel I'd have to spend more time with them, thinking about it more, to answer whether I think they are different from her other type of photographs. Or, thinking about the ones we have on display... She does both. There's a fair number of one figure with a sort of prop, or something, but she did other photographs like that as well. Sorry, I'm sort of thinking aloud about it. I'm not sure that, without thinking about it more, or looking at it closely...I don't see an immediate difference between either the group staged photographs or the individual ones, where it's a moment from a story with a prop. Like 'May Day' where she's holding flowers, or she has flowers on her head?

MB: A crown of flowers...

MW: But she's doing something with the flowers?

MB: Ah! 'May Queen'. One of them is dying and another one is holding flowers...

MW: You know them better than I do...[laughs]...Or with 'King Arthur'. She's got both, the sort of heroic king on his own, and the super theatrical one with him; 'The Death of King Arthur wounded lying in the barge'. So, yes, that's my short answer, that I don't see a huge difference, except for the seriality of it, and the fact that she's kind of undertaking this big project of photographs that have to do with each other. And then of course, she is accompanying them by text. So, it's more explicit, keeping a textual connection than in any other work. So, there are things where she writes a little quotation on them, or she's got a little verse on it, or some of them make reference to Milton. They have just one or two lines on quotation, and here it's obviously much more extensive. So, that's a big difference too.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Carlyle (1795 – 1881), Scottish philosopher and writer.

MB: The project [*Idylls*] wasn't meant to be as big as it got, because she started doing some illustrations, and only three were chosen as woodcuts, and then she went into photographing more of them. So, apart from choosing a different medium from other illustrations they have been produced for Tennyson's *Idylls* and *Other Poems*, are you aware of other illustrations, have you looked at them? What's different?

MW: I mean, only as far as other people have written about them. It's not something I've really researched directly. I've read Carol Armstrong and I've read other things. I know, there's at least one article by an English professor, I can find out if that's something you've never come across. And I can picture comparisons with Gustave Doré and people like that, but it's not something I have really researched. But one thing I can say I researched a little bit, because as you know we have both volumes in our collection and one of them, I think it might be slightly incomplete. They were both in bad shape, and so, they had been rebound in the 20th century at some point.

MB: Have they been rebound in the right order?¹⁵¹

MW: Well, I can't tell you right now. And our conservators have kept track of what they've done. So, if you really want to know more, they might be able to help you with that, I can put you in touch with them. So, basically, they'd been rebound, and they were not in good condition. The way they were bound was damaging them, so, for this exhibition they were disbound, each page was conserved. We've got two volumes. The first volume was rebound and that's on display, and then the second volume we will rebind it after the show is over. But since they're already out, we decided to take advantage of them being loose and show them that way. Cause it's so hard. Otherwise you kind of only show one page! We did want to make sure they were going in the right order, and so we did a lot of research into copies of the *Idylls* in all different collections and I'd be happy to show you what I have got on that upstairs. But one of the things that struck me is that the underlining is different in some of them.

MB: I've noticed that too...

MW: So, and that's something, I'm even, a bit shocked in a way that Carol Armstrong, she's one of my professors, actually, I studied with her...that she is all about the *word* and the *image*, but she never reproduces any of the pages with the writing on it, and I made sure to do that on our catalogue, as you've seen. And to reproduce the whole page, as well as the image, but also even the blue paper is in the picture too.¹⁵² Not just the image, so you can see the whole thing. Although, of course, I do fake it a little bit, as I did show them side-by-side.

¹⁵¹ During my stay at the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust in the Isle of Wight I had come across a copy of volume I of *Illustrations* that had been disbound and then rebounded in an incorrect order. Therefore, with this question, I therefore reflect to the possibility that the V&A archivists faced the dilemma of which order to follow when rebinding the two volumes Weiss is referring to.

¹⁵² Weiss refers to reproducing on her book the full page of *Illustrations'* photograph pages, including the outer blue framecard and gold gilt.

As you know in the real thing, there's text and then there's the image. But actually, I'm surprised that Carol Armstrong doesn't actually show you. She just transcribes it [the text of Tennyson's poem]...I guess that the book [Armstrong's] came out before she was at Princeton [University], where she taught, and they have *Idylls* in the library there... But I think the ones she was referring to when she was writing *Scenes in A Library* are from the [J. Paul] Getty Museum but I believe (and this is from the top of my head) it seems that they had different underlining. But I'm glad you've noticed that, and that's good. Because I remember looking at this and thinking somebody should track this and figure it out. And then, we were also looking at different ways they were bound in order for our conservators, to bind them in a way... You know in terms of how the title was printed, and so they can do it in a way that is consistent with the original.

MB: Talking about Text and Image. How do you think Tennyson's text reads next to Cameron's illustrations and vice versa? If you look at Gustave Doré's illustrations, he did the same; an image and then underneath he put a little extract of the...

MW: Yes, well, that's a very common...well, except that's a little extract. Hers was...some of them vary, of course, but there are big ones. Again, it's not something that I feel I've given a lot of original thought to. Read other people on it, but I do think it's remarkable, and it's something I do point out to people and show around in the exhibition, that she basically appropriates the text of the most famous poet in the world and puts it in into her own writing. The power shouldn't be underestimated. And she's using her own excerpts, and then she's kind of editing it, inappropriately.

MB: And she signs them as well...

MW: Yes. I think that goes way back to the photograph of the glass house at the beginning of the show. On the back of that, it's in the catalogue, she signs it, she gives it a title and she dedicates it to Watts. I don't know whether that's her own photograph or, we don't know... Did Cameron print that photograph but did Rejlander take it? Did she take the photograph with Rejlander's camera? Was he teaching her?... Did she pose it but then he took it? ...We don't know, but in any case, she claims it for her own in a way. I don't think it's completely unrelated to this appropriating that she's doing later on.

MB: One more question; do you think Cameron understood Tennyson's vision when illustrating his book?

MW: I don't know. I don't know if I understand Tennyson's vision. So, I'm not sure that I can say whether or not she did! [laughs] She certainly thought he was great. And she spent a lot of time with him and was very good friends with him and heard him reciting his poems all the time. So, I'd, based on that, say yes, because she was so imbued with his poetry. And I think

he was a very important figure for her. But that's a kind of historic answer, rather than my own analysis of it. It's not something that I have researched. It's not something I have really given deep thought to, to give you my own reading of it.

MB: I thought his vision was like: "go on, photograph this, do something really different." That's the way I understand it. And I think she did!

MW: Oh, that vision... Sorry, I see, when I was answering that question, I thought you were asking me: "did she understand his vision, as in did she understand his poems and what he was saying in his poems...?" But you were saying: "did she understand what he was asking her to do, when taking those photographs..." Is that what you mean?

MB: Yes.

MW: OK. I still don't know, sorry...[laughs]... You're the one writing the PhD, you tell me! [laughs]

MB: I think she did something different. And she loved it, and that's why she went on and photographed 25 more images! And I think she understood his poetry as well, but she added lots of things with her images, and she went on to pinpoint one line, one word from the text. So that's very different...

MW: Aha. I mean, I think Carol Armstrong, I haven't read that text for a while, but she compares, for example, the 'Lily Maid of Astolat' to H. Peach Robinson's...

MB: You mean one of the Moxon's illustrations?

MW: No, this is another photographer. It's actually something I covered a little bit in my PhD, because there are some other illustrations of Elaine. And in fact, there's an article if you want to look at it. There's a chapter that I wrote in a book, called *Acting the Part: Photography as Theatre* and edited by Lori Pauli. It was a book from the National Gallery of Canada,¹⁵³ and it includes some other Elaines, because there were some other photographers who made Elaines.

So, you might be interested. So that's just something you might think about comparing how other photographers depicted scenes from the *Idylls*...

MB: I'm also thinking about comparing them to other illustrations...

MW: Right!

THE END.

¹⁵³ "Staged Photography in the Victorian Album," pp. 81-100.

