

## ‘Queer’ Balin in Tennyson’s “Balin and Balan”<sup>※</sup>

Mitoko Hirabayashi

‘A curious phrase recurs again and again’ in “Balin and Balan,” one of Alfred Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*, ‘a phrase which is absolutely central to’ the poem<sup>1</sup>. The recurrent phrase is ‘spear-stricken from behind’, which Hallam Tennyson interprets as symbolic of slander<sup>2</sup>. Most critics of Tennyson have accepted his annotation unsuspectingly<sup>3</sup>. The phrase ‘spear-stricken from behind’, however, may implicitly suggest a certain sexual position of passivity, by which Arthur’s knights, particularly Balin are obsessed and threatened. His obsessive preoccupation reveals his anxiety about the male subject position. It would seem that Balin has a strong fear of feminization, that is, of being an object of penetration. But this haunting vision also reflects his psychic ‘excess which erupts within heterosexual economy’ as an agent of the action<sup>4</sup>. In this sense, the phrase has a significant implication of the collapse of sexual difference.

“Balin and Balan,” the last-written idyll, composed during 1872 and 1874, was published in 1885 as the fifth idyll in *Idylls of the King*. This idyll, with which the whole *Idylls* was completed, seems to reflect not only Balin’s but also Arthur’s and Tennyson’s anxiety about male subjectivity. Perhaps the phrase ‘spear-stricken from behind’ represents such anxiety. Some might question the legitimacy of a queer reading of such canonical works. But I would like to argue its legitimacy, ‘when the sexuality of their authors seems to encourage’ such reading. In this I am following Kaja Silverman’s position<sup>5</sup>. First let me justify the queer reading of *Idylls* as a whole, before examining the particular idyll “Balin and Balan.”

Until recently Alfred Tennyson’s critics and biographers have denied the existence of any sexual connotation in the emotional connection between two males in *In Memoriam*, but it is now recognized that he had a strong emotional desire for Arthur Hallam. For example, Christopher Croft remarks that Tennyson’s homosexual desire is encoded in his figuration of heterosexuality. Richard Dellamora, considering the realities of male friendship and sexuality—including homosexuality—among the members of the Apostles of Cambridge, also affirms that ‘the situation of [Tennyson] is affected by [his] knowledge of the possibilities of genital activities between males,’ and reads erotic sentiment in Tennyson’s aesthetic rhetoric. *Idylls of the King*, his other great work, has been also recently discussed in terms of gender and sexuality<sup>6</sup>. For example, Linda

Shires, pointing out masculine authority and the death of the male as one of the themes of *Idylls*, remarks that a feminized masculinity cannot survive in the gender rigid kingdom. Margaret Linley, on the other hand, particularly focusing on "the Dedication," "To the Queen," and on "Guinevere," argues that the imperial marriage represents bourgeois domestic values while it threatens the division of gendered sexuality. Although both of these critics discuss male anxiety in the *Idylls*, their discussions remain at the stage of gendered heterosexuality. Ian McGuire, reading 'homoerotic overtones' in the demon (and Balin) piercing from behind, also fails to transcend gender opposition by linking this homoeroticism only to the male sadism (McGuire, p.393)<sup>7</sup>. Even very recently, Clinton Machann has discussed the problematics of male sexuality without any consideration of homosexual possibilities<sup>8</sup>. Probably the epic form of *Idylls* and its content of Arthurian legend may obstruct a subversive reading. Mikhail Bakhtin links epic to the concept of nation. Apparently it functions to protect tradition and inheritance in order to promote unification of society. The revival of the Arthurian legend in the Victorian imperial age must have been needed for national identity and to project a national hero or ideal manhood<sup>9</sup>. However, given that the setting of Tennyson's *Idylls* is a homogenous male society with a rigid masculine code and compulsory heterosexuality, there can be no surprise that some anxiety may emerge among the knights. The anxiety may be that of 'deviancy' or male-male love in a repressed guise.

From the beginning of *Idylls*, the hegemonic masculinity is dubious. In Malory's version, Arthur proves his regal power by the masculine power of pulling a sword out of a marble stone. In contrast, Tennyson's Arthur must depend for sovereign power on the sword 'Excalibur,' mysteriously given by the Lady of the Lake. Besides, his obscure origin implies another lack of his authentic regal power. His origin is only narrated as hearsay. King Leodogran, after having heard two narratives, cannot but be satisfied with that of Arthur's sister Bellicent. In short, both the power of phallus as agent of symbolic order and paternal authority are absent from Arthur's origin, which must call on female sources<sup>10</sup>. Thus Arthur's kingdom is founded on unmanned ground, or a fictional ground. It is also significant that not only Arthur's but also other knights' father-figures are strikingly either absent or ambiguous in Tennyson's version. The lack of a father-figure would explain their anxiety about male subjectivity in the context of normative heterosexuality, because it might have thwarted the formation of a positive Oedipus complex involving identification with the father and erotic desire for the mother. Perhaps it would open the possibility of undermining the rigidity of same-sex identification and,

as Jessica Benjamin remarks, of encountering a more flexible interaction between identification and object of desire<sup>11</sup>. After all, the absence of a father as agent of authoritative subjectivity is a characteristic element of *Idylls*.

Arthur's sexuality is also dubious. Although Arthur's 'deviancy' or 'queerness', is gradually revealed, it is noteworthy that Guinevere is the first to have perceived it. When Arthur came to her father, Leodogran, she 'marked not' him as a male because he did not wear any arms ("The Coming of Arthur," ll.51-54). Considering that armor symbolizes masculine identity in gender rigid chivalry, Arthur's unarmored body is an empty sign, which Guinevere unsurprisingly did not register, because she lives in the context of gendered sexuality.

From the beginning, Arthur's strong feeling for Lancelot is emphasized: 'his warrior whom he loved/ And honour'd most' ("The Coming of Arthur," ll.124-125); 'For each had warded either in the fight, /Sware on the field of death a deathless love'(ll.130-131). Here their bond seems to be strengthened by Guinevere's mediation in terms of the homosocial and heterosexual plot, although this is a rather strange triangular relation of a married couple and a man. Perhaps this strangeness could be explained by Arthur's 'asexuality', which is revealed in the episode when Vivien attempts to seduce him: 'the King/Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by'("Merlin and Vivien," ll.158-159). Arthur's indifference is not only towards other women but also towards his wife. In fact, Guinevere intuitively perceives Arthur's lack of interest in her and complains of it to Lancelot: "He never spake word of reproach to me/ He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,/ He cares not for me" ("Lancelot and Elaine," ll.124-126). Most critics agree on Arthur's 'asexuality' and take it as feminine quality, considering that Victorian females were ideally regarded as spiritual beings. However they discuss Arthur's lack of sexuality only in the heterosexual context, calling him 'feminized', and tend to neglect homosexual possibilities. That Arthur is not aroused by women's sexuality does not necessarily mean that he totally lacks sexuality. Is there no possibility that his affection towards Lancelot is sexual? In fact the text does not tell us anything. But how much can we rely on the text literally? How can we explain Arthur's distress and his claim of love for Guinevere after the disclosure of her adultery, if he is truly 'asexual'?<sup>13</sup> Perhaps we should 'recover the moment of indeterminacy' for 'the interpretive challenge,' as Alan Sinfield insists, because the idea of homosexuality 'was in the process of becoming constituted' at that moment<sup>14</sup>.

Some scholars like Debra Mancoff would strongly question the notion of Arthur's

queerness, for Arthur's kingdom ostensibly reflects the gender-rigid Victorian society. Although Tennyson's characterization of an Arthur of blameless purity articulated a Victorian ideal of manhood, I would like to point out that it also evoked uneasiness about him among Tennyson's contemporary readers such as Swinburne. In fact, Swinburne charged the poet with making Arthur less than a man<sup>15</sup>. Arthur's sexuality did not seem to be in accordance with 'normal' male gender in heterosexual ideology, even if 'Arthurian legend was revived as part of this quest for the timeless model for manhood (Mancoff, p.257)'.

In the sense that he cannot be assimilated either to masculinity or to femininity, Arthur would be not 'blameless,' but responsible for the fall of the kingdom. Perhaps we could say that in spite of Arthur's decreased interest in Guinevere, his love for Lancelot would have continued as long as there were no sexual relation between Lancelot and Guinevere. The split in Arthur who embodies the authoritative discourse and nevertheless dismantles male subjectivity, that is to say, the split of the narrative and representation, leads the whole structure of brotherhood to fateful destruction.

We can see the best example of this split in the twin brothers Balin and Balan. It is important to note that the idyll was composed during 1872 and 1874 after Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* was published in 1855. *Leaves of Grass* seemed to provide English writers with a new standard of explicit sexual expression<sup>16</sup>. According to his letter to Whitman (12 July, 1871), Tennyson was sent some of Whitman's works by a friend, and possibly *Leaves of Grass* may have been one of them. Actually he bought the Centennial Edition of the poem and sent the cheque to Whitman in 1876<sup>17</sup>. It is certain that homosexuality of somatic experience had been infiltrated into Victorian culture and discourse by the time Tennyson wrote "Balin and Balan."

Tennyson's transformation of Malory Book II is intriguing. Such alterations as making the knights twins instead of mere brothers, characterizing Balin in terms of extreme violence instead of valorous manhood, the symbolic use of a spear, the added characters of Guinevere and Lancelot and Vivien, all seem to become signifiers of homosexuality in the idyll. Balin's violent passion would be particularly significant as what Judith Butler calls 'psychic excess.' Once he nearly killed a thrall and was exiled by Arthur. His extreme passion is expressed repeatedly in such words as 'violence,' 'madness,' 'wrath,' 'rage,' and associated with the devil or beasts. It is interesting that the additional epithet in his name, the "Savage" was given as a sign of '[t]hy too fierce manhood' (l.71) by Arthur who officially holds the masculine order in the kingdom.

Inevitably such interpellation becomes Balin's 'self-identity' if he has any<sup>18</sup>, and he even uses 'this rough beast upon [his] shield, /Laugued gules, and toothed with grinning savagery' (ll.192-193) as his emblem. It is also noteworthy that his uncontrollability of passion is compared not only to that of wild animals or the devil but also to a more racial 'otherness.' Tennyson transforms Garlon's black face in Malory's story into Balin's in the scene where the latter loses his temper. By this alteration, the racial issue of Garlon is erased from this idyll, and instead Balin's unrestrained passion as the inferior human, compared with normative white males, is emphasized. Thus Balin self-critically ties himself to such external 'otherness.' When he was unable to control himself and struck Garlon, Balin despised himself:

[...] here I dwell  
Savage among the savage woods, here die—  
Die: let the wolves' black maws ensepulchre  
Their brother beast, whose anger was his lord. (ll.478-481)

After all, the 'fierce manhood' in him, displaced unto 'otherness' in the narrative, is the cause of his disaster, followed by the fall of the kingdom of hegemonic masculinity.

Although Balin's 'fierce manhood' is displaced in various guises, the most important guise is 'a demon' that '[strikes] a spear from behind.' In this context, it is important to note that a spear in Tennyson's idyll occurs frequently and becomes a leitmotif. I am indebted for this point to J.M.Gray's essay, although he only views a spear as representing Balin's proclivities to violence and does not discuss it as a sexual symbol<sup>19</sup>. Let me describe briefly when and how a spear appears in the poem. First Arthur's spear smites twin brothers at the fountain. Then the ambassador mentions Pellam's holy spear in his chapel and a woodman's report of a demon in the wood, who with a spear 'strikes from behind.' Soon Balin goes to the wood and 'the shadow of a spear' is shot 'from behind him (l.318).' Balin, in fury, throws his lance/spear. At Pellam's hall, after Balin strikes Garlon, he is pursued by twenty spearmen and escapes to Pellam's chapel, where he finds the holy spear: 'the longest lance his eyes had ever seen' (l.405). Then, leaning on the spear, he vaults over the casement on to the earth. Finally he kills his brother Balan with this spear.

It seems certain that a spear has a strong connotation of the masculine sexual organ. In this context Pellam's characterization in the idyll is significant. Pellam, once 'a

Christless foe' (l.94) of Arthur, now professedly leads a pure life, eschewing all women:

He boasts his life as purer than thine own;  
 Eats scarce enow to keep his pulse abeat;  
 Hath pushed aside his faithful wife, nor lets  
 Or dame or damsel enter at his gates  
 Lest he should be polluted. (ll.101-105)

Misogynous Pellam, resembling Samson the abbot in Carlyle's fictional monastery<sup>20</sup>, emulates asexual Arthur as an exemplar of Christian manhood. So the holy spear in Pellam's chapel, with which Christ was pierced, is not only a symbol of man's sin, or we could say the male's sin of aggression, but also a symbol of his castration. Besides, his worship of it shows his ambivalent feelings of abhorrence and desire for the penis. A spear as a symbol of the penis is implicitly described in the expression of Pellam's 'feeble cry' when the spear is taken away by Balin later. At this moment, certainly Pellam seems to be castrated and to assume a feminine position. In contrast to this, Balin is described as 'defil[ing]' the holy spear 'with earthly uses' (ll.415-416), suggesting a homosexual act. A spear as sexual symbol and as a symbol of man's violence is a key to the identification of the demon in the woods. The report of Pellam's strange life is immediately followed by the account of the demon. Arthur's servants, returning from Pellam's hall, find a dead knight in the woods:

[...]in those deep woods we found  
 A knight of thine *spear-stricken from behind*,  
 Dead, whom we buried; more than one of us  
 Cried out on Garlon, but a woodman there  
 Reported of some demon in the woods  
 Was once a man, who driven by evil tongues  
 From all his fellows, lived alone, and came  
 To learn black magic, and to hate his kind  
 With such a hate, that when he died, his soul  
 Became a Fiend, which, as the man in life  
 Was wounded by blind tongues he saw not whence,  
*Strikes from behind.* (ll.117-128 my italics)

As stated earlier, Hallam interpreted the lines 126-128 as 'symbolic of slander.' In this sense the slandered man became a demon in death to revenge by an act 'symbolic of slander.' However, considering that Hallam obsessively tried to defend his father as the respected Poet Laureate in his annotations, we would not necessarily rely on this. Indeed the fact that he is concerned to give this 'innocent' interpretation may suggest his subliminal awareness of the problem. Rather we should depend on what the text discloses literally and symbolically.

It is obvious that a spear 'striking from behind' could imply a sexual act particularly between males. We could say that the scandal of the demon is the male homosexual act, embodying man's aggression. And such 'deviancy' must be expelled from society. Nevertheless the threat from outside of the boundary would still hang over them. This phrase, with slight variations, is repeated five times in the idyll. Balin's preoccupation with it seems to reveal his anxiety about male subjectivity. It is also important to note that soon after Balan, 'double' of Balin and an embodiment of normative masculinity, hears about the report of the demon, he sets out in quest of it. Balan certainly plays the role of expelling his brother's 'fierce manhood' when he advises Balin on his departure:

Let not thy moods prevail, when I am gone  
Who used to lay them! hold them outer fiends,  
Who leap at thee to tear thee; shake them aside,  
Dreams ruling when wit sleeps! yea, but to dream  
That any of these would wrong thee, wrongs thyself. (ll.137-140)

Regarding Balin's psychic excess as 'outer fiends,' Balan goes on to repress them in the displaced image of the demon. The description of Balin's extreme passion of 'fierce manhood' imitates the sexual image of the demon's attack, where Balin would assume a posture of feminine receptivity. Thus Balin's aggressiveness here paradoxically feminizes him. Balan's mention of dreaming would be also suggestive as a site of emergence of repressed desire.

Without Balan, Balin becomes unstable in Camelot where 'courtesy/ Manhood, and knighthood' (ll.155-156) are required. After Balan leaves, Balin sees Lancelot, as a kind of substitute, representing Balin's social self. Balin adores Lancelot. But his adoration suddenly changes into his masochistic self-humiliation in confronting Lancelot's ideal

manhood: 'These be gifts, /Born with the blood, not learnable, divine,/ Beyond *my* reach'(ll.170-172). Lacking the 'gentleness' of ideal manhood because he was conceived in his father's wrath (l.278), Balin's identification with Lancelot is foreclosed:

[...]as a boy lame-born beneath a height,  
 That glooms his valley, sighs to see the peak  
 Sun-flushed, or touch at night the northern star:  
 For one from out his village lately climbed  
 And brought report of azure lands and fair,  
 Far seen to left and right; and he himself  
 Hath hardly scaled with help a hundred feet  
 Up from the base: so Balin marvelling oft  
 How far beyond him Lancelot seemed to move[...] (ll.161-169)

This foreclosure of identification drives him instead to desire Lancelot, a kind of narcissistic object-choice, as love for what he would like to be, or perhaps love for Balin who was once part of Balin and is now lost, although temporarily. This convergence of identification and desire upon the same object is one of the psychic conditions which Freud associated with homosexuality. Freud remarks that 'a person will love in conformity with the narcissistic type of object-choice, will love what he once was and no longer is, or else what possesses the excellences which he never had at all' (101)<sup>21</sup>. This would explain Balin's desire for Lancelot as substitutive satisfaction for the non-fulfillment of his ideal ego.

However his desire is suddenly displaced onto his worship of Guinevere. Since Lancelot worships the Queen, so does Balin:

[...]But this worship of the Queen,  
 That honour too wherein she holds him—this,  
 This was the sunshine that hath given the man  
 A growth, a name that branches o'er the rest,  
 And strength against all odds, and what the King  
 So prizes—overprizes—gentleness. (ll.175-180)

Just as aggressiveness is feminized, so gentleness seems to be masculinized. Here



apparently Balin imitates Lancelot's male subjectivity through the displaced act of worship of Guinevere. Balin's male subjectivity, in other words is established only in imitation of Lancelot's gentleness. The displacement is yet further displaced on to the Queen's representation—her crown. Arthur permits Balin to bear the crown as a substitute for '[the] rough beast [...] toothed with grinning savagery' (ll.192-193) on his shield, remarking '[t]he crown is but the shadow of the King, /And this a shadow's shadow' (ll.199-200). Indeed Balin's displaced fetish of the crown is nothing but 'a shadow's shadow' of his desire for Lancelot. The shield with the crown implies his submission to the order and worship of the Queen. In this sense, the shield as a cultural signifier of heterosexuality would protect Balin from the scandal of homosexuality. Thus Balin's tie with Lancelot is mediated by Guinevere.

During Balan's absence, Balin not only reveals his adoration for Lancelot but also encounters the unseen demon. Balan's absence, in other words, is responsible for the encounter in the emotional logic of the narrative. This clearly reflects Balan's role as checking his brother's 'psychic excess.' When Balin happens to see the amorous meeting of Guinevere and Lancelot, his stability is suddenly disrupted. This conflict and subsequent rage could be explained as the product of his repressed desire for Lancelot, and his disillusion. Soon Balin 'sharply caught his lance and shield[...and] mad for strange adventure, dashed away' (ll.282-284). Although his carrying spear and shield with the crown and his quest show his official manhood, his encounter and behavior in the wood disclose his equivocal male subject position. The wood appears to be saturated with misogynist fears of female sexuality, but it is outside of Balin's libidinal economy:

So marked not on his right a cavern-chasm  
Yawn over darkness, where, nor far within,  
The whole day died, but dying, gleamed on rocks  
Roof-pendent, sharp; and others from the floor,  
Tusklike, arising, made that mouth of night  
Whereout the Demon issued up from Hell.  
He marked not this, but blind and deaf to all  
Save that chained rage, which ever yelpt within. (ll. 307-314).

His total indifference to the abhorrent 'vagina dentata'-cave is contrasted with his preoccupation with his inner passion, which is transposed to the demon. As if

corresponding to his passion, 'the shadow of a spear /Shot from behind him' (ll.317-318). Here Balin, an object of the fiend's attack, assumes the woman's position as sexual receptacle. However his immediate response to it emulates the demon: this time it is Balin that penetrates the unseen demon from behind with his spear. This action seems to reveal his homosexual libido as well as homosexual panic. Moreover the shift of Balin's sexual positions in this scene subverts the unequivocal polarity of gender.

When Garlon talks about the scandalous relation between Guinevere and Lancelot in ridicule of Balin, saying 'hast thou eyes...ye men of Arthur be but babes,' Balin retorts with evidences of his masculine adulthood:

[...] 'Eyes have I  
That saw today *the shadow of a spear,*  
*Shot from behind* me, run along the ground;  
Eyes too that long have watched how Lancelot draws  
From homage to the best and purest, might,  
Name, manhood, and a grace[...]' (ll.367-372. My italics)

The phrases of 'a spear [shooting] from behind' and of his adoration for Lancelot are juxtaposed: both are what Balin 'saw,' and both implicate his homosexual disposition. First, he, in speaking of the demon, avows a receptive sexual position. Then, articulating Lancelot's manhood as substitution of his ego ideal, Balin seems to disclose his gay subjectivity. After all, his discourse, which is supposed to endorse his masculine adulthood, actually negates the normative masculinity.

Balin's desire for Lancelot is strangely displaced onto the worship of Guinevere. The shield with the crown reflects both his narcissistic (homosexual) desire and his ostensible (heterosexual) worship. Therefore when he hears of their adulterous relation from Vivien and finally believes it, the shield inevitably loses both implications at once. It has been generally accepted that the adultery between Lancelot and Guinevere was responsible for Balin's madness, since it was regarded as a heinous crime according to nineteenth-century domestic morality. Indeed adulteress Guinevere and slanderer Vivien are certainly to be blamed for the primary cause of destruction of the kingdom in the *Idylls*. However, given that his male subject position, which results from foreclosed identification and desire, has been based on Lancelot as ego ideal, Balin's madness may be seen as an 'identity crisis,'<sup>22</sup> caused by loss of the object of identification and also of

desire. Inevitably he negates both male subjectivity and gay subjectivity. It would be hardly surprising that Balan cannot recognize Balin without the special emblems: the first shield with a wild beast reflects his 'psychic excess,' and the second one with the crown guarantees his heterosexual identity.

If the vision of '[striking] from behind' strangely symbolizes Balin's disposition, the same vision also invites his death by Balan: Balan, checking Balin's 'psychic excess,' takes him as a demon. Hereupon all otherness such as that of a wild beast or a fiend is concentrated in Balin. In the sense that Balin as the demon is quelled, Arthur's kingdom would be protected from a threat of '[striking] from behind,' a fear of homosexuality. However, since this quest also entails Balan's death, Balin's psychic excess destroys the brother, the split self. 'Pellam's holy spear/ Reputed to be red with sinless blood' becomes '[r]eddened at once with sinful.'(ll.548-549). If 'sinless blood' means Christ pierced with the spear, the 'sinful' blood should be Balan's. Did Tennyson assume Balan was sinful? It is true that the adjective 'sinful' is associated with fratricide according to the narrative. Nevertheless, this confusion of the syntax seems to disclose Tennyson's dissatisfaction with Balan. Inevitably this predicts destruction of the homogenous kingdom. Yet Tennyson also presents the vision of homosexual satisfaction, of fulfillment of the ego ideal at last. Balin and Balan embrace together in their death. In death, Balin seems to have restored to him what he lost at birth: gentleness in the guise of Balan. Balin with his aggressive but feminized position and Balan with his masculine gentleness transcend the gendered categories only in death.

\*This essay was first published in Japanese in *Studies in English Literature*, 80-1(2003).

Notes:

1. I 'have borrowed' the introductory sentence of the chapter four in Kaja Silveman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p.157. In that chapter she discusses Henry James's phrase 'going behind' in his "Preface" to the New York edition of his novels. Her quotation of this phrase gave the impetus for my essay.
2. Christopher Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. vol. 3 (Longman,1987), p. 379.
3. For example, J.M. Gray in *Tennyson's Doppelgänger: "Balin and Balan"* (*Tennyson Society Monographs*, no.3 [Lincoln: The Tennyson Society, 1971]), which is the most fully and detailed examination on the idyll, bases his discussion on Hallam's annotation. So far as I know, there is not critic who suspects this annotation.

4. Judith Butler, in her influential queer theory of 'performativity' ("Imitation and Gender Insubordination," *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss [New York and London: Routledge, 1991]) remarks "it is this [psychic] excess which erupts within the intervals of those repeated gestures and acts that construct the apparent uniformity of heterosexual positionalities, indeed which compels the repetition itself, and which guarantees its perpetual failure"(p.24).
5. See Silverman, p.374.
6. Christopher Croft, "'Descend, and Touch, and Enter": Tennyson's Strange Manner of Address," *Gender*, 1(1988): 83-101; Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill and London: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990), p.17.
7. Linda Shires, "Patriarch, Dead Men, and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*," *VP* 30 (1992): 401-409; Margalet Linley, "Sexuality and Nationality in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*," *VP* 30 (1992): 365-386; Ian McGuire, "Epistemology and Empire in *Idylls of the King*," *VP* 30 (1992): 387-400.
8. Clinton Machann, "Tennyson's King Arthur and the Violence of Manliness," *VP* 38 (2000): 199-226. In his essay Machann carelessly misreads "Balin and Balan" in several places: he takes Balan as Balin's older brother; he assumes that Balan knows Balin's worship of Guinevere and his new emblem of her crown.
9. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin and London: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981), p.13. Several critics point out anti-epic aspects in *Idylls*: for example, Amanda Hodgson in "The Highest Poetry": Epic Narrative in *The Earthly Paradise* and *Idylls of the King*," (*VP* 34[1996]: 341-352) remarks that 'numerous voices' in each idyll are in contrast to the monologic unity; Colin Graham in *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire and Victorian Epic Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1998) argues that Tennyson dares to 'contort Bakhtinian epic distance' between the past and the present in order to disclose 'flaws' of imperialism (p.47).
10. Although Elliot L. Gilbert in "The Female King: Tennyson's Arthurian Apocalypse," (*PMLA* 98 [1983]: 863-878) also discusses the relation between Arthur's regal legitimacy and female power, he takes the lack of authority, Arthur's 'discontinuity,' as positive, relating to the feminine.
11. Jessica Benjamin, "An 'Over-Inclusive' Theory of Gender Development," *Psychoanalysis in Contexts: Paths between Theory and Modern Culture*, eds. A.Elliott and S.Frosh (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).
12. References to Tennyson's poetry given in the text are based on *The Poems of*

*Tennyson*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Christopher Ricks.

13. It is hardly surprising that the problematics of male sexuality in *Idylls* evokes some homosexual Arthurian stories. James Noble introduces Marion Zimmer Bradley's attempt to transcend gender in her Arthurian novel *The Mists of Avalon* (New York: Knopf, 1982). According to Noble, in spite of her representation of Lancelot as latent homosexual, Bradley forecloses the possibility and ends it with patriarchal homophobia ("Feminism, Homosexuality, and Homophobia: in *The Mists of Avalon*," in *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend*, eds. Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley (New York: States Univ. of New York Press, 1994), pp.288-296.
14. Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century* (New York: Cassell, 1994), p.8.
15. Algernon C.Swinburne, *Under the Microscope* (1872), in *Tennyson: Critical Heritage*, ed. John D. Jump (New York and London: Routledge, 1967), p319.
16. See Dellamora, pp.44-45.
17. *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, vol. III, 1871-1892, eds. Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 9.
18. I hesitate to use the term 'identity,' because it is liable to essentialism, to which queer theory strongly objects. Besides, Balin is changing his subject positions during the idyll, as my essay clarifies. However, in order to explain Balin's narcissistic homosexuality, the concept of 'identity' is still valid.
19. See Gray, pp.10-11. As for Balin's violent passion, Marion Shaw (*Alfred Lord Tennyson* [New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988]), naming 'turbulent and unmoderated masculinity' (p.97), Shires, 'schizophrenia of masculinity' (p.408), McGuire, 'homoerotic sadism' (p.389) and Machann, 'madness/unregulated male violence' (p.210) respectively discuss in terms of the relation between problematics of male sexuality and male violence. Although they are insightful and seem consistent with my point, my 'queer' reading is distinguished from their reading.
20. Thomas Carlyle, "The Ancient Monk" in *Past and Present*, ed. Richard D. Altick (1843; New York: The Gotham Library, 1965).
21. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XIV, trans., James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), p.101.
22. As I explained in no. 17, I also use the term 'identity crisis' here with some qualification of his narcissistic homosexuality.