

Tennyson and the Text

TENNYSON
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by
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This 1992 study of Tennyson evolves its themes from the weaving figure of The Lady of Shalott, which becomes a kind of parable for the author and his texts. Taking its derivation from the Latin texere, 'to weave', Professor Joseph's focus on poetic texture and a sense of textuality leads to a consciousness of his own critical and interpretative weaving, while revealing a pattern in the fabric of Tennyson's work. This procedure brings together a theory of perception, developed in the first part of this study, with an analysis of the gendering of Tennyson's characters in the second part, and engages with the methodologies of deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and gender theory. The weaving metaphor also opens up a key theoretical issue regarding Tennyson's poetics: is the textual shuttle managed by the controlling hand of a historically definable author, or is the poetic weaver 'cursed' like the Lady of Shalott to suffer a mystifying doom at the 'unseen hand' of an all-pervasive textuality that occludes authorial intention?

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目录:

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