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TENNYSON'S *THE PRINCESS* AND THE CULTURE OF COLLECTION

By Jill Marie Treftz

The Princess (1847),[1] WHICH Tennyson himself famously dismissed as "only a medley" (qtd. in Hallam Tennyson 2.71), presents itself as a cacophonous tangle of poetic experimentation and narrative diversity. Even the frame narrative of *The Princess*, which ostensibly provides a rationale for the tonal discontinuities of the fantastic tale of gender, education, and sexual dominance that comprises its internal story, creates further confusion by establishing seven largely unidentifiable[2] narrators, an unclear number of intercalary singers, and a poet-speaker whose supposed efforts to compile and record the tale end not in a cohesive narrative, but in a text that moves "as in a strange diagonal" between burlesque and heroic, comic and tragic, narrative and lyric (Conclusion 27).

Critical attempts to justify this "strange diagonal" have naturally relied heavily upon the details laid out in the frame narrative, and have helpfully traced the poem's engagement with the social, scientific, and aesthetic discourses of the 1830s and 1840s, but no one has yet considered *The Princess*'s debt to the nineteenth-century fascination with collection.[3] Collecting, in *The Princess* as in actual Victorian society, is profoundly entangled with the discourses surrounding education, natural history, gender, and colonialism, each of which helps to justify the passion for collecting by offering a scientific, or at least quasi-scientific, rationale for what might otherwise be construed as a purely consumerist and even decadent pursuit. Even in its form, as a "medley" – a lyrical collection – *The Princess* actually mirrors and anticipates the poem's engagement with the cultures of collecting, which can be traced in both the frame and the internal narratives, and which is immediately foregrounded in the poem's Prologue by the private collection showcased in the manor at Vivian-place. The collection at Vivian-place and the various collections portrayed in the poem (which include the physical and intellectual descriptions of Princess Ida's university, the mode of Ida's attempt to educate women, and the male characters' attitudes towards Ida herself) themselves represent a broader Victorian interest in cultural and scientific acquisition and reaffirm the importance of these acquisitions to the establishment and survival of British national identity and the imperial power that relies upon it. The role of collection in the interior narrative, where acquisition is explicitly linked to gender norms, serves to highlight the role collection plays in preserving the domestic social order upon which British[4] national and imperial identity rests. In its preoccupation with collection, *The Princess* thus reflects the historical and social anxieties of its cultural moment and celebrates the connections between the culture of acquisition and British identity in the mid-nineteenth century.

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In "Of Other Spaces," his discussion of heterotopias, Michel Foucault opens with the reminder that "the great obsession of the nineteenth century was . . . history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past" (22). One way that history was realized was through collection and the museums in which acquisitions were housed – among which we must include Vivian-place and, in some ways, *The Princess* itself. Because collection is so deeply connected to the discourses and practices of science and natural history in the nineteenth century, this article is particularly indebted to readings of *The Princess* that engage with its scientific and historical foundations. John Killham connects the evolutionary discourses of Ida and her fellow scholars with other examples of scientific discourse in Tennyson's poetry, and directly ties these discourses to prominent scientific writings of the 1830s and 1840s (particularly to the works of Charles Lyell and Robert Chambers, the anonymous author of *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*). Similarly, G. Glen Wickens demonstrates Tennyson's familiarity with the scientists and scientific discourses of natural history in the 1830s and 1840s, and traces in *The Princess* Tennyson's desire to reconcile those theories with his religious faith. However, while Wickens offers a good overview of the ways in which *The Princess* engages with several of the most important scientific arguments of the 1830s and 1840s, and even touches briefly upon the symbolic importance of the "jumbled" collection of objects displayed at Vivian-place, he does not actively interrogate the ways in which the existence and the composition of the collection indicates an ongoing act of imperial-scientific progress and conquest, nor does he recognize the collection's value to the internal narrative.

Critical discussion has firmly established that *The Princess* is a text haunted by the presence of the past; Manfred Dietrich's "Unity and Symbolic Structure in Tennyson's *The Princess*" notes that the details provided in the frame narrative, including the collection at Vivian-place and the festival on the lawn, "present us with a microcosm of the mid-Victorian age and society" (183). Dietrich designates the various collections in the text (which he does not recognize as collections) as "fantastically trivial yet profoundly universal" (183), tying the Victorian present to the past as a way for Tennyson to discuss social and literary change, but does not connect the composition or presence of the collections to the shape of Tennyson's poetic experimentation in the poem itself. Henry Kozicki's *Tennyson and Clio: History in the Major Poems* (1979) focuses his analysis of *The Princess* on competing narratives of history in a society experiencing rapid socio-cultural change. Kozicki describes the poem as a palimpsest, though he focuses on genre as a way of decoding that palimpsest, arguing that, as an idyl, *The Princess* possesses "the idyl's ability to fuse past and present," through which "history becomes palimpsest. The past is never lost. Its remains exist physically and its archetypal forms continue to animate the present. But the present can grasp the meaningfulness of the past only through the perspectives that focus the historical memory" (60).[5] Again, however, Kozicki's analysis of the palimpsestic nature does not fully explore the connections between representations of historical memory and the way that history is created and interpreted by the collection.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick pinpoints the sweeping ideological biases of the frame narrative, showing that it "assumes . . . with a confidence that is almost assaultive . . . that science, or technology, is the legitimate offspring of patronage and connoisseurship, that all these pursuits are harmonious, disinterested, and nationally unifying, that the raison d'etre of the great landowners is to execute most impartially a national consensus in favor of these obvious desiderata" (125). Like Sedgwick, I find the frame narrative "almost aggressively topical,"

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but whereas Sedgwick tackles the sweeping presumptions of the frame as part of Tennyson's mythologizing of Victorian gender relations, I argue that those relations are in fact yet another symptom of the poem's investment in collection – in other words, the traffic in women that Sedgwick analyzes is actually a fundamental part of the culture of acquisition in which *The Princess* participates.

The breadth of topics that Sedgwick identifies in the frame narrative has been tied directly to discussions of the poem's genre, most of which also light on the Vivian-place collection as a textual precursor to the final form of the poem itself. For instance, Hester Davenport argues convincingly that Tennyson's artistic choice of the "medley" in fact mimics a specific architecture style that was growing in popularity – and with which Tennyson was familiar – in the 1840s. Similarly, Eileen Tess Johnston insists that the poem's "genre, style, imagery, characterization, plot and narration can all best be understood in relation to medley. Medley is the formal realization of the poem's central vision of human potentiality, both the individual's and society's, and lends itself to the celebration of those qualities Tennyson wished to affirm: variety, inclusiveness, energy, receptivity, and harmonious order" (549). However, where Johnston sees the medley as a celebration of harmonious order, I argue that the medley's similarity to the museum highlights the poem's troubling embrace of Victorian hegemonies. Thus, I align my argument more closely with that of Katherine Frank and Steve Dillon, who point out that "the . . . blending of male and female in moderate, 'plastic' fashion is the truest disguise for the desire to create control. The qualities of 'playfulness,' 'moderation,' 'medley,' hermaphroditism, and even catalepsy are all the more insidious for not appearing tyrannical and fascistic" (236).

I am interested in how *The Princess* is underwritten with cultural narratives that might have been more legible to a nineteenth-century audience than they are to readers today. In particular, the recurring images of collections, collecting, and collectors throughout the text demand that we consider how Tennyson's "medley" is, itself, a collection whose content and presentation are an ideological structure built to support and showcase the social and national values of its author. Informed by theories of collecting proposed by Walter Benjamin ("Unpacking my Library"), Jean Baudrillard ("The System of Collecting"), Susan Stewart (*On Longing*), and Naomi Schor ("Collecting Paris"), this article will begin with an overview of the role collection and acquisition play in reinforcing social and cultural hierarchies in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, then show how *The Princess* explores collections, collectors, and collecting in its affirmation of those hierarchies in Tennyson's vision of modern England.

Part I: The Museum and Collection Theory

FOUCAULT ARGUES THAT MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES, which he classifies as "heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time," are almost entirely the product of nineteenth-century Western culture. Though this argument is naturally an oversimplification of historical record,[6] his description of the project of these museums provides a cogent summary of the nineteenth century's goals in terms of the acquisition of knowledge:

> . . . the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of

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> perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity. (26)

Foucault's concept of the museum as heterotopia – as a site rich with multiple meanings and reflective of various other sites and relationships – provides a useful framework for examining the interplays between science, Empire, English national identity, and the cultures of collecting in nineteenth-century Britain, which interplays then offer new insight into the story and structure of *The Princess*.

The British were the great collectors of the nineteenth century.[7] Although *The Princess* primarily engages with the amateur collectors of the period,[8] even those dilettante collectors were deeply embedded in the larger imperial-scientific culture that supported institutions like the Royal Geographic Society, the Geological Survey of Great Britain, and the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew. Robert A. Stafford observes that science and the collections that supported it "[provided] the nation with information of utilitarian value as well as cultural capital worth of Britain's status as a great imperial power," thus ensuring its continued importance and relevance in a society preoccupied with, in Stafford's words, "retrenchment and reform" (1).[9] For the nationally-minded British subjects whose work carried them outside of England and Scotland, the act of collecting became one way of ordering the world according to the modes of British thought and British morality.

As part of this push for imperial expansion, and the cultural and intellectual "advancements" that came with it, the nineteenth century witnessed the creation of multiple modern museums – Foucault's heterotopias. Objects and curiosities (animal, vegetable, mineral – and occasionally human) from the corners of the globe were brought to England – and usually to London – as a way both to highlight British sovereignty and to bring pieces of the far-flung Empire back "home." While this acquisitive impulse pre-dates the Victorian era and the height of British imperialism, the Victorians were particularly successful in presenting these collections as part of a coherent narrative of cultural dominance and imperial triumph. Carla Yanni, for instance, argues that "in publicly funded museums, nature became a medium through which to represent the state. London was the capital city, the center of the British Empire, and her museums were a source of imperial authority. The collections were material evidence of the vastness, wealth, and potential of the empire" (5). The emphasis on "vastness, wealth, and potential" is replicated throughout the collections of the nineteenth century, from the British Museum to the Great Exhibition to the items displayed in private homes like the fictional Vivian-place.

The place of non-Western cultures in this empire was signaled by the inclusion of their artifacts among the fossils and taxidermied animals of natural history museums. Yanni notes that "some natural museums equated non-western people with nature itself: people were presented as close to nature, or natural" (15). Museums and the scientific culture behind them thus reinforced a hierarchical narrative in which Western cultures, and particularly English culture, represented both a social and a scientific pinnacle from which the non-Western and the natural were to be examined. This narrative, as we shall see, is replicated in Ida's university, where she relies upon established social and ethnic hierarchies while she seeks to topple those related to gender.

The museum as it developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has its origins in the work of private collectors; behind the museum, then, is the culture of collecting. Just as museums and collecting in nineteenth-century Britain are tied to social dominance, so, too,

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are theories of collecting linked to issues of interpersonal power. For Benjamin, "ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to things" (492); for Baudrillard, the collector is driven by the need to "symbolically transcend the realities of an existence before whose irreversibility and contingency he remains powerless" (17); and for Stewart, who distinguishes between the souvenir and the collection, the act of collecting can be either an attempt to authenticate an idealized past (the souvenir) or to dehistoricize by decontextualizing a series of objects (the collection) (151–52). As we can see, while theorists of collection offer different justifications or definitions of the acquisitive impulses that drive the collector, the end result for each is the same – the act of collection is an attempt to define and control one's place in a potentially unstable world.

Part II: Reading the Vivian-Place Collection

THE FRAME NARRATIVE OF *THE PRINCESS* materializes Kozicki's historical palimpsest by placing the (then) present-day and ultra-modern Mechanics Institute festival on the grounds of a "Grecian house" (an architectural distinction that almost certainly dates the house and grounds of Vivian-place to the mid-eighteenth century), which stores hundreds of thousands of years' worth of relics, and is built alongside four-hundred-year-old Abbey ruins. To put it more simply, Vivian-place as depicted in *The Princess* is itself a palimpsest, and it contains a proto-museum that interprets the past for the use of the present.

The Vivian-place collection, according to the poem's speaker, begins outside the hall itself, where:

> . . . on the pavement lay
> Carved stones of the Abbey-ruin in the park,
> Huge Ammonites and the first bones of Time;
> And on the tables every clime and age
> Jumbled together; celts and calumets,
> Claymore and snow-shoe, toys in lava, fans
> Of sandal, amber, ancient rosaries,
> Laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere,
> The cursed Malayan crease and battle-clubs
> From the isles of palm; and higher on the walls,
> Betwixt the monstrous horns of elk and deer,
> His own forefathers' arms and armor hung. (Prologue 10–24)

The narrator's companion, the young Walter Vivian, goes on to describe his ancestors' arms and armor to his friend, linking those relics to significant moments in English history: "And 'this,' he said, 'was Hugh's at Agincourt; / And that was old Sir Ralph's at Ascalon" (Prologue 25–26), thus completing the catalogue of pieces that comprise the proto-museum at Vivian-place with a return to a solidly English past.

Although this eclectic collection most resembles the *Wunderkammern* of pre-eighteenth century Europe, the diversity of the artifacts represents Britain's growing imperial interests in an increasingly global society. That this "jumble" of "clime and age" has been gathered together in an English country manor quietly illustrates the centrality of the aristocratic English gentleman in the narrative of Victorian expansion. Anastasia Filippoupoliti, who

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aligns the culture of collection with "nineteenth-century gentlemanly culture," argues that "the types, uses, and significances of objects [collected] reflected the philosophical world view of the collector" (54). Thus Sir Walter Vivian's collection reveals a world view that promotes a progressively Anglocentric narrative of history, in which Englishness is celebrated as the pinnacle of human culture and achievement – or, as Isolde Karen Herbert puts it, with this collection, Vivian-place becomes "an imperialist's version of a 'palace of art'" (147).

What is the significance of each of these objects? Most are primarily anthropological or ethnographic in nature, representing early British attempts to understand/catalogue the "native" or "savage" peoples of the historical and geographical fringes of the known world. Kozicki's analysis of this passage posits that this "jumble" of artifacts anticipates the layered structure of the poem itself, arguing that "the poem holds its medieval core within a frame of vital, living interests and this core in turn envelops other, more ancient time frames. These mirrorings are suggested by the 'Laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere' on the table so Vivien [*sic*] place . . . crowded with remains from 'every clime and age / Jumbled together" (60). I would take Kozicki's claim a step further, and suggest that the Vivian-place collection not only mirrors the various layers of the text, but, as Tennyson himself hinted,[10] actually previews much of the internal narrative and the poem's final form, so that detailed analysis of the contents of the collection provide a way of navigating the meaning of the text as a whole.

The speaker's "catalogue" of the Vivian-place collection begins and ends with specifically *English* historical relics – the ruins of the Abbey and the weapons of the Vivian ancestors. Each of these relics represents not only English history, but more specifically moments in English history that proved crucial in the establishment of English religious, national, and imperial resilience and dominance. The ruined Abbey alludes to Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, an act that would help to define the Protestant and anti-Catholic nature of English government and politics for centuries to come. The Dissolution also enabled the creation of estates like Vivian-place, or, rather, the form in which such estates exist by the nineteenth century. By transferring Church lands into lay ownership, the Dissolution of the Monasteries ultimately helped to create the system of squireage that so defined the English countryside in the subsequent centuries.[11]

The weapons whose history Walter Vivian describes to the narrator represent some of the earliest instances of English imperial ambition – and foreshadow the necessity of British resilience. On the one hand, both battles were English victories on foreign soil – Agincourt in France and Ascalon in the Holy Land.[12] However, while both Agincourt and Ascalon were victories, they were victories in wars that the English forces would go on to lose dramatically. Yet the establishment of the weapons in the house at Vivian-place underscores the fact that though England won neither war, the country and its people survived – the weapons hang not in the halls of conquerors an ocean away, but in the home of their wielders' direct descendants. Even if imperial ambition leads to failure, this collection suggests, it is only a temporary failure in the grander historical project of the nation and its burgeoning empire.

Between these uniquely English relics are gathered an assortment of miscellanea ranging from the prehistoric to the modern, with the exotic and the ordinary, the functional and the decorative side by side. As Herbert notes, "This appropriation of universal time and space is a reductive process which domesticates images of the 'Other' by trivializing them into commodities" which "replicate in miniature the Empire's global power" (147). Indeed, the presentation of the collection is perhaps even more pathological than Herbert recognizes; its arrangement follows a faint chronology, which begins with fossils and ends with hunting

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trophies, and which in between very, very loosely tracks the trajectory of British imperialism through collection and commerce, expanding outward from Europe to the Americas, Asia, and eventually the South Pacific before returning back to England in the closing lines, thus bracketing the "Other" in a frame of conquest.

The first items named, "Huge Ammonites and the first bones of time," are the fossils, representing pre-human history and, more importantly, the rediscovery of that history by scientifically-inclined modern gentlemen.[13] The prehistoric "celts" in the next line move the viewer from paleontology to archaeology, from pre-human history to prehistory.[14] The celts and the items listed after them are archaeological relics, representing the remnants of dead or (supposedly) dying societies – calumets (or "peace pipes") and snow-shoes are Native American artifacts; claymores are Highland swords; and the toys in lava are relics from Pompeii or Herculaneum.[15] That the artifacts of Native American and Highland cultures are lumped in with toys and followed in the catalogue by "fans / Of sandal" (probably referencing the Chinese folding sandalwood fans that reached Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) positions them as trivialities, not to be taken seriously as anything except commodified curios, whose presence in an English manor house is enabled by Britain's expanding role in international trade.

International trade may also be the source for the amber mentioned next on the list. "Amber" is curiously passed over in the catalogue; it is the only organic substance mentioned without any descriptive elaboration – compare "Huge Ammonites" and "Laborious orient ivory sphere" or even "fans of sandal" to the simple mention of "amber." This brevity may simply be a function of familiarity, since amber, like the aforementioned celts, is not an uncommon archaeological find in the British Isles, and it is possible (though unlikely, given its placement on the list) that the amber included here is meant to be unworked amber – that is, a geological, rather than archaeological, object, perhaps foreshadowing Ida's brief geological discourse in Part 3 of the poem.

The significance of the amber may lie in the "ancient rosaries" mentioned next; presumably, this refers to antique Christian prayer beads, which until the Reformation were often made of imported Baltic amber.[16] Thus the brief mention of amber may simply be a way of linking related items that, like the sandal fans and ivory spheres of the previous and next lines, are faintly exotic trifles carried to England through the power of commerce. That the rosaries, amber or not, are now part of a proto-museum collection, and thus seen as curiosities rather than devotional objects, further underscores Vivian-place's Protestant alliances. In other words, the rosaries, like the carved stones and the ruined Abbey, are merely the relics of an antique society's ancient superstitions.

The *OED* offers an alternate, if somewhat less likely, meaning of "rosary" that provides a related and equally intriguing interpretation of this passage. Per this definition, a "rosary" is a thirteenth-century silver penny minted in Europe that was declared illegal in England by Edward I in 1299; there were two versions of this coin, and the "rosary" version displayed a bust wearing a garland (usually of roses) around its head. The *OED* notes that although the coins, which were used in international trade, were not originally intended to replace or devalue English-minted currency, they did affect its value, which led to Edward's outlawing of the coins. Though it is admittedly more likely that Tennyson intends his readers to understand "rosaries" as prayer beads, either of these readings may align with the Vivian-place collection's promotion of British cultural triumph. As prayer beads, the rosaries' position in the collection underscores the established dominance of the Church of England,

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and as antique counterfeit currency, they represent the economic resilience and continued survival of English commerce and international trade.

This focus on trade and the embrace of trivial luxuries particularly inform the presence of the next object catalogued, the "laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere," which refers to the ornate, hand-carved nested spheres, also known as "devil's work balls," that captivated British audiences when they were displayed at the Crystal Palace in 1851. According to Catherine Pagani, the media response to these delicate curiosities was revealing of attitudes towards Chinese culture and individuals; "their ability to create such intricate objects demonstrated that 'the Chinese are capable of wasting any amount of time upon any triviality'" (157–58). At Vivian-place, however, in the decade before the Great Exhibition, the ivory spheres, like the sandal fans of the previous line and the "cursed Malayan crease and battle-clubs / From the isles of palm" (Prologue 20–22) of the next, serve as another example of the fascinating, exotic civilizations the English gentleman can encounter, study, and, if possible, obtain, catalogue, and conquer.[17]

That the weaponry laid out on the table is ancient Scottish, Malayan, and South Pacific highlights the distinction Sir Walter Vivian sees in its worth compared to that which is displayed on the wall. While the Vivian ancestors' weapons, presumably carried home in triumph, adorn the walls, the claymore, the kris, and the battle-clubs lie out on tables to be handled – the conquered weapons of conquered peoples. These objects illuminate the continuum linking anthropology to imperial conquest by demonstrating the ways that the tools of the conquered become trophies and curiosities in the homes of the conquerors.[18] As I indicated above, by classing weapons with toys and curios, these symbols of war are feminized, made into delicate playthings and separated from the triumphant masculinity of the English weaponry and the trophies that weaponry has brought to Vivian-place.

The final items named in the narrator's catalogue are neither English relics nor "exotic curiosities." Instead, they are the ultimate relics of physical conquest – "monstrous horns of elk and deer" (Prologue 24) hung on the walls with the family weaponry. Recognizing that these "monstrous horns" are trophies not just of the hunt but of total environmental dominance is made rather more disturbing when we also recognize the fact that the internal narrative of the text – the story of the Princess herself – enacts the same ritual of acquisition and conquest that has created the Vivian-place collection. Ida, as we shall see in the next two sections, is both a collector herself and a coveted collectible, and is perceived by the most acquisitive characters in the poem as a trophy to be captured and, to put it crudely, "mounted" in the patriarchal hall. As a whole, the Vivian-place collection anticipates Ida's fate – both *objets d'art* and subdued weaponry are laid out together as trophies of patriarchal English dominance, just as Ida, the poem's most desirable object and its fiercest warrior, will become the jewel of the Prince's personal collection.

Part III: Ida as Collector . . .

IN HIS LECTURE "UNPACKING MY LIBRARY," Benjamin suggests that the collector is driven not by the utility of the items he (for Benjamin, as for most theorists of collection, the collector is always male[19]) acquires, but by the sense of control and possession that he gains when those items are gathered together in the collection:

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> [The collector's] existence is tied . . . to a very mysterious relationship to ownership . . . also, to a relationship with objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value – that is, their usefulness – but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate. The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a magical circle in which they are frozen as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them. (487)

Although Benjamin is speaking specifically of book collectors in this talk, the pathology of the specific collector can be (and has been) generalized to collectors as a whole. Baudrillard similarly describes the collector as "sultan of a secret seraglio" (12), and Schor suggests that (for Baudrillard, at least) "the paradigmatic collector – as in the novel by the same name[20] – is a man whose extreme castration anxiety leads him to a pathological need to sequester the love object or loved objects" (257). Each of these visions of the collector are made visible in Ida, who collects ideas, art, and finally people in order to secure her access to knowledge and power.

Schor notes that "collection-theory . . . is shot through with sexual, indeed sexist metaphors" (254), but the very masculinity of those metaphors is vital to Tennyson's construction of Ida as collector in *The Princess*. Ida's acquisitiveness, particularly when she begins to acquire women for her collection, must be read in light of her adoption of a masculine demeanor. Ida's acquisitiveness becomes increasingly monstrous until she reaches a pinnacle (marked by her seizure of Aglaïa) and order is restored only when Ida is subdued by accepting her "appropriate" place in the gender hierarchies – that is, when she ceases to be a collector, and becomes that which is collected.

The instability and apparent contradiction in Ida's role as collector/collected echoes the broader ambiguity of her character as a whole. In a text that strikes a "strange diagonal" across pairs of seemingly irreconcilable opposites, Ida is its most conflicted and seemingly contradictory figure. In her self-appointed role as head and founder of the University, Ida is above all else a collector – of knowledge, of art, and of women. But in her social and political role as princess (and it is her title, not her name, that adorns the poem) and as a woman herself, Ida is ultimately an object to be acquired, analyzed, and displayed.

Ida begins her collection before we ever see her – her first known acquisition is her father's summer-palace, in which she founds the university, but she wastes no time in establishing an art collection that, to paraphrase Filippoupoliti, reflects her world view (54). When the Prince and his companions arrive at Ida's palace in female disguise, their first encounter with the university is through this art collection, which celebrates women's achievements and subtly warns potential trespassers of the threat of women's violence. The first items named in the collection are the sculptures displayed outside the castle walls, which include "a woman-statue . . . with wings" (1.207) and "a bust of Pallas for a sign / By two sphere lamps blazon'd like Heaven and Earth / With constellation and with continent / Above an entry" (1.219–22). These first carvings establish the theme of Ida's collection and the larger theme of the university. The unidentified winged woman is almost certainly Nike, who was both the winged goddess of victory and a divine charioteer, which explains why the statue rises "from four wing'd horses" (1.208). The bust of Pallas that guards the entrance to the university of course represents Pallas Athena, and thus chastity, separation, and intellectual wisdom for Ida and her followers. Perhaps more significantly, both Nike and Pallas Athena are war goddesses, a fact that neither the Prince nor his friends pauses to consider, though they know they enter the university under the threat of death.

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Images of female warriors dominate the art collection that Ida asks her new "scholars" to examine. As she points out her collection, Ida acts as collector and critic – as any dedicated collector must necessarily be. She calls upon her putative pupils to "Look our hall! / Our statues! – not of those that men desire, / Sleek Odalisques, or oracles of mode, / Nor stunted squaws of West or East" (1.60–64).[21] As a collector/critic, Ida rejects those sculptures which do not fit the exacting standards of her collection. Her collection is dependent upon a reading of femininity as morally and intellectually triumphant, and she allows for no representations of femininity that undermine her larger goal.

Specifically, Ida rejects, first, the hypersexualized femininity associated with the luxury and exoticism of the harem. Tennyson's gloss of "Odalisques" simply describes them as "female slaves of the harem," but this reading gives little insight into what, precisely, Ida has decreed unfit for her university's art collection. The odalisque is, of course, traditionally portrayed as a half-naked woman reclining on her side, arranged for the pleasure and desire of the (male) viewer.[22] The odalisque is thus not only a sexualized figure, but one whose physical appearance places her in a distinctly submissive and purely decorative mode. The definition Tennyson provides underscores this submissiveness by using the word "slaves," thus apparently distinguishing the odalisque from other inhabitants of the harem – a crucial distinction, given the harem-like nature of Ida's university, which I will expand upon shortly.

Ida's next rejection, "oracles of mode," seems like an odd inclusion between "odalisques" and "stunted squaws," but here it seems clear that Tennyson's (or the narrator/speaker's) own social and cultural milieu has intervened in the story. There is little obvious sense of a temporal setting for the internal story beyond its apparent pseudo-medievalism, but the "oracles of mode" Ida mentions are fashion icons, probably meant to invoke women such as the Countess of Blessington or other famed beauties of the 1830s and 1840s, whose images would often appear as engravings in the popular "Keepsake" annuals of the period. Ida does not reject oracles *per se*, but oracles of fashion, which were becoming an increasingly feminized preoccupation by the late 1840s. In other words, she rejects trivial worldly distractions that might endanger her scholars' intellectual gains, and that allow outsiders (specifically men) to see women and their interests as unimportant and insignificant.

The "stunted squaws of West and East" line, like the initial rejection of odalisques, is a second critique of the British fascination with the "exotic" landscapes of the "Orient" and, presumably, the American frontiers. "Squaw," of course, is a word (now a slur) laden with associations with American cultural landscapes, but here apparently also applies to residents of the Indian subcontinent. The adjective "stunted" constitutes a rejection of the popular image of these women as exotic and desirable commodities by highlighting their supposed physical and mental inferiority to Western women. Using the word "stunted" anticipates Lady Psyche's lecture in the next section, which situates Western civilization as the pinnacle of development for women; Tennyson, speaking through Ida and Psyche, thus reinforces a common narrative of Western cultural superiority in which Western women were seen as being privileged over their non-Western sisters, because Western women were supposedly permitted the exercise of their intellectual and moral faculties.

Ida's rejection of the "East" and of the eroticization of Asian and Native American femininity thus should not be construed as a rejection of the imperialistic impulses that create such fetishes – particularly not as such a rejection on the part of her creator, Tennyson. Rather, by rejecting non-Western constructions of femininity, Ida (and, by extension, Tennyson), is

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able to highlight the apparent cultural superiority of Western civilization – and specifically *British* civilization,[23] over that of an orientalized and homogenous "East," which both Princess and poet associate with oppression.

Instead of odalisques, fashion icons, or "stunted squaws," Ida's collection features Classical or Biblical figures – women of the "great" Western civilizations, including:

> . . . she
> That taught the Sabine how to rule, and she
> The foundress of the Babylonian wall,
> The Carian Artemisia strong in war,
> The Rhodope that build the pyramid,
> Clelia, Cornelia, with the Palmyrene
> That fought Aurelian, and the Roman brows
> of Agrippina. (2.62–71)

In addition to focusing on proto-feminist figures here, Ida's taste clearly runs towards representations of Classical women – women associated in some way with Western civilization (and its implicit pinnacle, the British Empire). Only those women who are most visibly "Western" – Clelia, Cornelia, and Agrippina (all Romans) and Rhodope (who was supposedly Greek) – are named without qualifiers. Artemisa is identified as "Carian" (the Carians claimed Anatolian – western Turkish – descent), while the Palymyrian Zenobia and Babylonian Semiramis are not even given names, but rather identified totally by their (Middle Eastern) countries of origin. The sole exception to this naming scheme is Egeria, the nymph who supposedly "taught the Sabine how to rule," and who, despite being associated with Rome through the Sabine Numa Pompilius, is refused a firm identity, probably because it is not the Sabines who are credited with founding Rome itself, and who are thus more closely allied with the other unnamed "barbarian" women of Ida's list.

Tennyson identifies each of these figures by name in his footnotes, which rather pointedly highlights Ida's elisions of those names. For those who are named but whose actions are not described (Clelia, Cornelia, and Agrippina), Tennyson adds quotations and citations from classical histories that clarify Ida's unstated intent, elaborating on the deeds of the named women, though not upon those whose names Ida does not give.[24]

The implicit hierarchy of this taxonomy of historically important women reflects the earlier arrangement of the collection housed at Vivian-place. Just as the Vivian-Place collection privileges English artifacts both in location and by identifying the provenance only of those artifacts that are most emphatically English (that is, the ancestral Vivian weapons), Ida only identifies by name those figures whose contributions to society are most strongly associated with the Greco-Roman Western tradition from which England claimed spiritual and intellectual descent.

For the Prince, Florian, and Cyril, and the reader with them, Ida's lecture is followed immediately by a similar proto-feminist "collection," this time in Lady Psyche's introductory lecture. Like Ida before her, Psyche takes her listeners on a whirlwind tour of world history that privileges "Western" treatment of women, while acknowledging that no society has truly offered them space for their talents. Psyche traces the condition of women from evolution through the Greeks, the Etruscans, the Persians, Romans, Franks, Chinese, and Muslims, pausing only to acknowledge "some respect, however slight / paid to women" by

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the (presumably European) age of chivalry (2.108–20).[25] As in Ida's speech about her art collection, Psyche only identifies by name those (Western) women whose accomplishments can be truly celebrated under Ida's cultural hierarchy:

> . . . albeit their glorious names
> Were fewer, scattered stars, yet since in truth
> The highest is the measure of the man,
> And not the Kaffir, Hottentot, Malay,
> Nor those horn-handed breakers of the glebe,
> But Homer, Plato, Verulam; even so
> With woman: and in arts of government
> Elizabeth and others; arts of war
> The peasant Joan and others; arts of grace
> Sappho and others vied with any man. (2.141–48)[26]

Here, again, is the privileging of Europe over the rest of the globe; the men and women named all belong to Western tradition and, with the socially-mobile exception of Joan of Arc, to the upper classes. The "measure of the man" is not taken from "horn-handed breakers of the glebe," but from the educated and the elite.[27]

The university's curriculum reinforces the importance of the educated elite by imitating the format of the Oxbridgean classical education, with studies in:

> . . . all
> That treats of whatsoever is, the state,
> The total chronicles of man, the mind,
> The morals, something of the frame, the rock,
> The star, the bird, the fish, the shell, the flower,
> Electric, chemic laws, and all the rest,
> And whatsoever can be taught and known; (2.357–63)

Though the Prince celebrates this "collection" of knowledge, saying, "Why, Sirs, they do all this as well as we" (2.367), Cyril rejects the women's learning as *merely* a collection – a compilation of old ideas that creates nothing new. "'They hunt old trails,' said Cyril 'very well; / But when did woman ever yet invent?'" (2.368–69). Cyril's dismissal of the women's scholarship recapitulates the Victorian maxim that only men could create, while women could only mimic. Though the Prince and Florian do not necessarily accept Cyril's argument, the construction of the text itself, as I will discuss in the final section of this article, affirms it. In *The Princess*'s completed form, the men "create" the story, while the women sing the intercalary lyrics, and given the way song is treated throughout the text as a non-spontaneous art form, we can infer that the women are not meant to be singing original lyrics.

Not only does Cyril voice the objections of Tennyson's own time period, but he affirms the link between masculinity and collection in the speech that follows his rhetorical question, in which he composes a muddled paean to Psyche and, more importantly, the three castles that she owns. Cyril simultaneously expresses his desire for Psyche and her possessions ("dear are those three castles to my wants, / And dear is sister Psyche to my heart" [2.395–96]) and suggests that only his being dressed as a woman prevents him from declaring those desires:

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"And much I might have said, but that my zone / Unmanned me" (2.398–99). Yet Cyril here only expresses a desire for things that Ida, a woman, has already obtained: a castle and the possession of Lady Psyche. Cyril's speech, with its acquisitive impulses rendered impotent by his feminine clothing, underscores the perversity of Ida's success as a collector. She has succeeded only because she has usurped a masculine position and abandoned her "rightful" place.

Although Ida's various collections are ostensibly a rejection of women's confinements to the harem and other bounded feminine spaces, her university is actually the best illustration of Baudrillard's aforementioned assertion that "There is a strong whiff of the harem about [collection], in the sense that the whole charm of the harem lies in its being at once a series bounded by intimacy (with always a privileged final term) and an intimacy bounded by seriality. Surrounded by the objects he possesses, the collector is pre-eminently the sultan of a secret seraglio" (12).[28] Though she rejects statuary that reflects men's desires, in a profoundly literal sense, Ida *is* the sultan(a) of a secret seraglio – she collects women. The inmates of her harem may be "sweet girl-graduates" (Prologue 142) rather than odalisques or concubines, but like the women of the Orientalist fantasy harem, Ida's followers are forbidden to interact with any men or to leave the confines of their luxurious home (2.56–58). This stricture is even enforced by the hyper-masculine "eight daughters of the plow" (4.259) who function as the eunuch guards of Ida's scholastic harem.

Of course, Ida's college owes as much to the medieval convent as to the harem, as we can see in the statutes by which her students agree to abide: "Not for three years to correspond with home; / Not for three years to cross the liberties; / Not for three years to speak with any men" (2.56–58). The prohibitions here are arguably more reminiscent of the vows of the novitiate than the seraglio, if only because the students enter into them of their own volition – at least initially. However, when the Prince and his companions eavesdrop on their fellow scholars, it is *not* wholly clear that those scholars follow Ida voluntarily. The disguised men hear women who "murmured that their May / Was passing: what was learning until them? / They wished to marry; they could rule a house; / Men hated learned women" (2.439–42). The apparent ambivalence of these women offers an explicit contrast to the passions of Ida, Blanche, and Psyche, forcing us to ask how they came to be among Ida's scholars. And they are *Ida's* – even Psyche, Ida's most beloved disciple and, initially, her teacher, admits that she belongs not to herself, but to Ida: "how should I, / Who am not mine, say, live?" she asks, when her brother and his companions ask her to protect them from Ida's wrath (2.204–05).

Indicators of Ida's tyranny are everywhere, but her status as collector of women is made most obvious when she acquires Psyche's infant daughter, Aglaïa. Even before Ida claims her, Aglaïa is portrayed as a desirable commodity. Cyril, captivated by Psyche, refers to Aglaïa as "the sweetest little maid / That ever crow'd for kisses," clearly seeing in the child a way to the mother (2.260–61). Similarly, Florian, attempting to persuade his sister not to report him or his companions to Ida, swears "by the bright head of [his] little niece" (2.266). And although Ida's original intent is to expose the child, thus punishing Psyche by proxy, she instead opts to "take it to [her]self" (4.343) and raise the (temporarily) motherless child as a follower of her intellectual creed. In the eyes of the poem's men (and the masculine Ida), the infant Aglaïa becomes a proxy for her mother. Cyril can hold and kiss the child when he would rather kiss the mother; Florian can lay claim to his family relationship to his niece

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in lieu of that to his sister; and Ida, having lost her most trusted friend in Psyche, can take Aglaïa unto herself as a replacement.

When Aglaïa is brought before Ida following the revelation of the Prince and his men and Psyche's subsequent disappearance, she is described in terms that make visible her value as an object of desire: "Half-naked as if caught at once from bed / And tumbled on the purple footcloth, lay / The lily-shining child" (4.266–68). The first two lines of this description are decidedly erotic – to the point where the word "child" comes almost as surprise following "lily-shining." Reinforcing the commodity value of the desirable female child, next to Aglaïa kneels Melissa, the proxy-daughter full grown, "Bowed on her palms and folded up from wrong, / Her round white shoulder shaken with her sobs" (4.269–70). Melissa's guilt, like Aglaïa's guileless beauty, is eroticized in the narrator's description of her "round white shoulder," which simultaneously draws attention to Melissa's beauty and her erotic vulnerability.

Aglaïa and Melissa, positioned at the feet of the seemingly merciless Ida, who is surrounded by her "eight daughters of the plow," are at that moment the most important symbols of Ida's absolute power. The baby's and Melissa's partial nudity are explicitly contrasted to Ida's splendor – though her clothing is not noted, there is a "single jewel on her brow" and her handmaidens stand on either side of her, "combing out her long black hair" (4.254–57). Ida literally holds over Psyche's and Blanche's daughters the power of life and death; having claimed them as prizes of her private war, these female bodies are Ida's to do with as she pleases.

And yet, despite this power, it is, in the end, Ida who becomes the text's most desirable commodity, and is the final object "collected" in the text. The sultana towering over Aglaïa and Melissa becomes the vulnerable object of desire by the poem's end. Ida's fall from collector to collected is precipitated by her appropriation and subsequent loss of Aglaïa, whose symbolic value as an object of exchange deserves much fuller treatment than I can give to it here. Just as Psyche comes to reject her ideologies upon losing her daughter, so Ida, too, capitulates only after she has briefly mothered and then relinquished the child.

Part IV: . . . and as Collectible

IF IDA IS THE POEM'S MOST VISIBLE COLLECTOR, the Prince, in perverse imitation of his father, is its most successful. In terms of their response to Ida, the Prince and his father exist on either side of a dichotomy suggested by Baudrillard:

> Any given object can have two functions: it can be utilized, or it can be possessed. The first function has to do with the subject's project of asserting practical control within the real world, the second with an enterprise of abstract mastery whereby the subject seeks to assert himself as an autonomous totality outside the world. The two functions are mutually exclusive. Ultimately, the strictly utilitarian object has a social status: think of a machine, for example. Conversely, the object pure and simple, divested of its function, abstracted from any practical context, takes on a strictly subjective status. Now its destiny is to be collected. Whereupon it ceases to be a carpet, a table, a compass, or a knick-knack, and instead turns into an 'object' or a 'piece.' (8)

While I disagree that "the two functions are mutually exclusive," and acknowledge this division of social versus subjective status does not map precisely onto relations between

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individuals, Baudrillard's categories of objects provide a useful framework through which to understand the responses of the Northern King and the Prince to Ida. Although Ida is clearly *not* an object, *per se*, she, like all of the other women in the text, is primarily viewed as an item to be acquired. For the King, Ida represents possession – she is decorative in purpose, and any utility she might possess derives entirely from her subjective status as a "piece" in the King's collection – that is, his obedient household. For the Prince, on the other hand, Ida serves a perversely utilitarian function. The Prince, who is the poem's romantic soul, idealizes Ida not merely as a symbol of his own triumph, but as one-half of an entity with social value – the married couple. In enshrining the idea of Ida as his betrothed and wife, the Prince places upon Ida a predominantly social function, rather than the subjective status of "object" that his father attempts to force upon her. Ultimately, however, for both men, Ida matters little as an individual; her desirability is based entirely upon her collectible value.

Thus, though she rules her own small kingdom with an iron fist, Ida is primarily (again, perhaps, like the rulers of those "exotic" lands that would become the "jewels" of the British Empire) an object of curiosity to be "collected" and catalogued. The Northern King's desire to possess Ida (although, of course, Ida ostensibly "belongs" to his son) at any cost brings the sexual quality of acquisition and possession to the forefront of the text. Nearly all of the King's references to Ida are wrapped up in the language of sexual dominance and possession.

The King's first attempt to claim Ida for his son is a precise illustration of what Sedgwick calls "the male traffic in women – the use of women by men as exchangeable objects, as counters of value, for the primary purpose of cementing relationships with other men" (123). Ida is a commodity to be traded for "furs / and jewels, gifts, to fetch her" (1.41–42). This gift, a bride-price, is passed from king to king, with the Prince and Princess uninvolved in the process – thus imitating their proxy wedding in their infancies. Ida's response (or, rather, Gama's response on his daughter's behalf) is "a great labor of the loom" (1.43), a silent answer that speaks volumes. Since his daughter has refused her "proper" role as a commodity, Gama sends a tapestry, traditionally the work of noble women, as a feminine gift that ironically highlights Ida's unfeminine refusal to acquiesce to the demands of men.

The King's response to the tapestry is characteristically violent, and rendered more disturbing by the fact that the tapestry here stands in for Ida:

> . . . [he] rent
> The wonder of the loom thro' warp and woof
> From skirt to skirt; and at the last he sware
> That he would send a hundred thousand men,
> And bring her in a whirlwind. (1.60–64)

The violence of his response to the "wonder of the loom" echoes his shredding of Gama's letter in the previous line, but the text dwells on the former violence in way that emphasizes it above the destruction of the letter. By describing the destruction as "from skirt to skirt," Tennyson calls attention to the feminization of the tapestry, and the disturbingly gendered form of violence that the King has perpetrated upon it – to rend the tapestry "from skirt to skirt" clearly suggests rape, an implication borne out by nearly all of the King's subsequent speeches in relation to Ida. He not only threatens to "send a hundred thousand men / And bring her in a whirlwind," but vows, when his son offers to retrieve her himself, that "we ourself / Will crush her pretty maiden fancies dead / In iron gauntlets" (1.86–88). This final

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line stresses the King's personal acquisitiveness towards Ida. Though it is his son and not he who has been personally spurned, the King's rage looks much more like the destruction of personal, rather than political, hopes.

The phrase "crush her pretty maiden fancies" is vaguely and ominously suggestive of the violence of lepidoptery. Though no self-respecting butterfly collector would ever crush the insect that she sought to collect, the King fully intends to strip Ida of her freedom and confine her to his realm, "crushing" her will and pinning her with "iron gauntlets," as opposed to (or, perhaps, as a metaphor for) the wedding ring his son would offer. In two separate speeches in Part V, the King advises his son that the only way to obtain Ida is through violent conquest. In the first, he couches the acquisition in the language of hunting:

> Man is the hunter; woman is his game:
> The sleek and shining creatures of the chase,
> We hunt them for the beauty of their skins;
> They love us for it, and we ride them down. (5.147–50)

Though this speech is marginally less violent than his earlier threats towards Ida, the image of hunter and game takes us back to the Prologue and the "monstrous horns of elk and deer / Mounted on the wall" (23–24) and foreshadows the tumult of the coming tournament. Moreover, while the King's earlier threats were made from his own castle, when he makes this speech he stands almost literally at Ida's doorstep, threatening war. His intemperate speech is clearly meant to call back for both the reader and the storyteller the "wild king" who sought to conquer the "miracle of woman" whose history in the family chronicle inspired that of Ida (Prologue 35–49).

The King's second advice speech to his son is even less aggressive, but its rhetoric is perhaps more disturbing, if only because in this speech we see, perhaps for the first time, the Prince in his father, as this speech anticipates some elements of the Prince's reconciliation speech to Ida (7.265–79). While the King's earlier speech draws on metaphors of hunting, this speech focuses on domestication, or taming; after a long defense of the doctrine of separate spheres, he concludes:

> . . . she's yet a colt –
> Take, break her, strongly groomed and straightly curbed
> She might not rank with those detestable
> That let the bantling scald at home, and brawl
> Their rights and wrongs like potherbs in the street. (5.445–49)

Baudrillard traces the collector's possessiveness to a primitive fear of castration; the violence of the King's domination fantasies certainly seem to indicate that he fears Ida as much as he detests her system. His assertion that "Man to command and woman to obey; / All else confusion" (5.440–41) uncritically replicates the nineteenth-century doctrine of separate spheres, and though his son gives lip service to a more equal view of gender relations, the King's view ultimately prevails, in that only when Ida and her women take on caregiving roles is the "confusion" surrounding the college and the tournament resolved.

This overlap between the Prince's deceptively moderate point-of-view and the extremism of his father is particularly evident in their shared view of Ida's potential utility (through

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which they violate Baudrillard's assertion that the collected object and the utilitarian object do not overlap) as potential wife and mother. For the King, the ultimate "taming" of Ida will come with pregnancy; the Prince's potential virility will transform Ida from wild to domesticated creature, or, as the King says, "A lusty brace / Of twins may weed her of her folly. Boy, / The bearing and the training of a child / Is woman's wisdom" (5.453–56).

His resistance to his father's violence does not absolve the Prince of his culpability in the culture of collection that dominates the text. Indeed, as Sedgwick notes, "far from forging a new order or a new dialectic he is merely finding for himself a more advantageous place within the old one" (123). And that place is actually his father's place[29] – in a far quieter and more insidious manner, the Prince surpasses both his father and Ida to become the ultimate collector. It is the Prince who most fervently desires to collect Ida – both to collect upon the bargain that bound them together, and to add her to his life. Though the Prince is ostensibly less willing than his father is to bring Ida back at any cost, he repeatedly disregards her desires in his quest, and is instrumental in stripping her of her power by dismantling her own "collection."

The Prince's confession of his desire to Ida, couched as it is in a defense of his transgression of her boundaries, privileges his childlike need to possess Ida over her own desire for independence and actually enacts (in a less overtly threatening form) his father's patriarchal and imperialist agenda.[30] Despite his assertion that "not to pry and peer on your reserve" (4.399) did the Prince infiltrate the university, he has done precisely that. Indeed, the Prince's whole scheme has been entirely to penetrate Ida's defenses in order to acquire her and thus make *himself* whole. The Prince insists that he is "not a scorner of your sex / But venerator" (4.402–3), and then describes to Ida his youthful desire for her:

> . . . my nurse would tell me of you;
> I babbled for you, as babies for the moon,
> Vague brightness; when a boy, you stooped to me
> From all high places, lived in fair lights,
> Came in long breezes rapt from inmost south
> And blown to inmost north; at eve and dawn
> With Ida, Ida, Ida, rang the woods. (4.407–13)

Though this speech is meant to be an explanation and an excuse for the Prince's actions, its real purpose is to show the centrality of Ida, or, rather, of the desire for Ida, to the Prince's entire existence. Despite the fact that – or, more accurately, *because* – he claims to venerate women, he fails to see Ida as a whole being unto herself, instead seeing her, and women in general, as objects necessary to the completion of a man's life and selfhood. Yet like the chivalric knight he models himself upon, the Prince sees his desire for Ida as enslavement to her – he says that his is "From the flaxen curl to the gray lock a life / Less mine than yours" (4.406–7), thus implicitly transferring responsibility for himself to Ida, suggesting that it is she, the collected, who owns him, the collector.

The Prince's desire for Ida creates an emptiness in his sense of self – he insists that:

> I cannot cease to follow you, as they say
> The seal does music; who desire you more
> Than growing boys their manhood; dying lips

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> With many thousand matters left to do,
> The breath of life; O more than poor men wealth,
> Than sick men health – yours, yours, not mine – but half
> Without you; with you, whole . . . (4.435–41)

This sense of lack and his belief in his need to possess Ida for completion is reiterated in the consequences of their union, wherein the Prince is no longer subject to his cataleptic fits. Only when he has successfully reformed – and thus acquired – Ida can the Prince tell the style from the substance. He tells her that "My haunting sense of hollow shows: the change, / This truthful change in thee has kill'd it" (7.328–29). The change, of course, is Ida's acknowledgement of her own femininity, and her implicit acceptance therein of her status both as the object of the Prince's desire and as the missing piece of his coherent self.

The Prince's "haunting sense of hollow shows" is perceptible awareness of a constant lack of completeness in his world. Only when he acquires the final "piece" to his personal collection, a reformed and feminized Ida, who replaces the miniature and the lock of hair that to this point have stood in for her, can he see the world as complete in itself. In other words, though he is less aggressive and more compassionate than his father and Ida, it is in the end the Prince who is the text's most desperate collector, because the Prince's entire conception of the world and of himself depends upon his ability to obtain Ida. His world is hollow as long as his collection is incomplete.

Part V: Curating the Collection

In "Unpacking My Library," Benjamin notes that "if there is a counterpart to the confusion of a library, it is the order of its catalogue. Thus the life of the collector manifests a dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order" (487). This "dialectical tension" is strikingly reminiscent of the poet-narrator's position in the concluding section of *The Princess*; tasked by the young Walter Vivian to take the story of the internal narrative and "[dress] it up poetically" (Conclusion 6), the narrator finds himself in the position of Benjamin's book collector, caught between oppositional poles. The narrator wonders how he is to "bind the scatter'd scheme of seven / Together in one sheaf" (Conclusion 8–9), and thus create an organized narrative while caught between those poles – not just disorder (the fragmented story and songs) and order (the final collection), but between the generic and tonal desires of the other storytellers and singers. The male narrators of the tale demand a "mock-heroic gigantesque" tale; the female lyricists argue for "true-heroic – true-sublime." Caught between two possible interpretations – two taxonomies of meaning – the narrator admits that "to please them both, / And yet to give the story as it rose, / I moved as in a strange diagonal, / And maybe neither pleased myself nor them" (Conclusion 10, 20, 25–29). Thus, the poet's role in the text resembles that of curator: he is at once the chief collector and the primary interpreter of the motley assortment of voices before him.

Significantly, the contributions of the women – the intercalary songs – are ultimately excluded from the coherent narrative; only those songs that are (presumably) composed and sung by the male speakers who are ventriloquizing female speakers (or, in the case of the Prince and Cyril, sung by male speakers who ventriloquize male speakers ventriloquizing female speakers) are made part of the central "whole." As Frank and Dillon note, "The principal contrast that begins the poem, then . . . and which is carried through the entirety of

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the poem, is the contrast of masculine narration to feminine or feminized object" (238). As I suggested briefly in my discussion of the Vivian-place collection, the content of the women's songs reflects the items displayed in that collection. The songs are sentimental lyrics whose content emphasizes women's experiences of warfare and conquest. Whereas the main body of the poem expresses a male journey towards conquest, the songs speak of absent husbands ("Sweet and low"), lost children ("As through the land"), fallen lovers ("Home they brought her warrior dead"), and home as inspiration ("Thy voice is heard"). "The splendour falls on castle walls," though at first glance an outlier, is as invested in images of mourning and death as the other four songs.[31] Positioned to give "breathing space" (Prologue 235) to the male storytellers, the women's contributions to the tale are reduced to objects of curiosity, situated outside the narrative, just as the "jumble" of items laid out upon the tables in Vivian-place are separated from the honored and ordered ancestral weaponry upon which rests the foundations of the nation.[32]

The "strange diagonal" that the narrator describes as his organizing principle thus reflects the mediation between exclusion and inclusion that determines, finally, the position of the "Other" in both the Vivian-place collection and in *The Princess*. Excluded from positions of power, but embraced as necessary objects to create a unified whole of the masculine self or society, the subtle subjugation of feminized people and societies allows the poem to appear to celebrate progress while ultimately upholding the status quo. This position is reified in the Conclusion's brief geopolitical digression, which is framed as a discourse between the narrator and another of his school friends, the Tory member's elder son. Added to the Conclusion in 1850 and inspired by the attempted revolution in France in 1848, these forty lines constitute a meditation on the stability of England versus the chaos of the Continent, in which the Tory member's son cries out:

> God bless the narrow sea which keeps her[33] off
> And keeps our Britain, whole within herself,
> A nation yet, the rulers and the ruled –
> Some sense of duty, something of a faith,
> Some reverence for the laws ourselves have made,
> Some patient force to change them when we will,
> Some civic manhood firm against the crowd – (Conclusion 51–53)

From this paean to Britain, the Tory member's son shifts to an anxious reflection on the social and political revolutions that "topple kingdoms," and which he finds "too comic for the solemn things they are / Too solemn for the comic touches in them, / Like our wild Princess with as wise a dream / As some of theirs" (Conclusion 65–70). This equivalence of Ida's university and its questioning of established social hierarchies with violent political uprisings is briefly contained by the narrator's rejection of his friend's arrogant nationalism. The narrator reminds his friend:

> . . . ourselves are full
> Of social wrong; and maybe wildest dreams
> Are but the needful preludes of the truth:
> For me, the genial day, the happy crowd,
> The sport half-science, fill me with a faith. (Conclusion 72–79)

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Yet this rebuttal, while it gently rebukes the jingoistic conservatism of the Tory member's son, does not actually dismantle the celebratory nationalism of his speech. Instead, these lines, coupled with the following verse paragraph's portrait of Sir Walter Vivian, actually reinforce the central point at the heart of that speech. Britain is for both the narrator and the MP's son a nation with "Some sense of duty, something of a faith, / Some reference for the laws ourselves have made," and, most importantly (when Sir Walter is added to the picture), "Some civic manhood firm against the crowd" (Conclusion 54–57). Sir Walter is the Tory member's son's image of Britain anthropomorphized, brimming at once with sturdy masculinity, civic responsibility, and intellectual progressiveness:

> No lily-handed Baronet he,
> A great broad-shouldered genial Englishman,
> A lord of fat prize-oxen and of sheep,
> A raiser of huge melons and of pine,
> A patron of some thirty charities,
> A pamphleteer on guano and on grain,
> A quarter-sessions chairman, abler none;
> Fair-haired and redder than a windy morn; (Conclusion 84–91)

Sir Walter is not only the possessor (and likely the collector) of the Vivian-place collection, but here he is himself a collection of ideal traits, the English gentleman-patriarch who makes possible the "genial day, the happy crowd" of the narrator's speech. Unlike Ida, whose sex alone would disqualify her from sharing Sir Walter's position, this ideal gentleman does not merely, to paraphrase Cyril, "hunt old trails" (2.638), but helps to carve out new ones by promoting invention and discovery alongside acquisition.

The narrator's shift to the socio-political in these final few speeches appears to be a strange move away from the conclusion's beginning, where he apologizes for his inability to "bind the scattered scheme of seven" (Conclusion 8) together in a way that pleases everyone. Yet if we look at the narrator's final task as an act of curation, the political digressions that dominate the conclusion become not digressions, but reinforcements of the importance that collecting and collections play in the establishment and security of British national identity. The Tory member's son idealizes a Britain whose people are both reverent and willing to enact patient change, and though the narrator supposedly rebukes him by pointing out that Britain, too, is "full of social wrong" (Conclusion 73) both young men agree that there is in the national character, represented by Sir Walter, an ideal marriage of the past and the future. Most importantly, Sir Walter, who promotes and upholds the hierarchies seen in the Vivian-place collection, also upholds the social structures that reinforce and build upon those hierarchies. The narrator's speech to his friend, like the Prince's final address to Ida, and like the collections and museums I have discussed throughout this article, is hegemony masked in the discourse of progress. Ideologically, the collection exists in part to provide a way of understanding and controlling (that is, curating) the world according to the collector's world view. Thus, *The Princess: A Medley* (that is, "A Collection") is not a "scattered scheme," but a cohesive text with a coherent and identifiable agenda. In other words, *The Princess* is not "*only* a medley," but *eminently* a medley, a collection for and by a nation of collectors.

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NOTES

1. Throughout this paper, I am referring to the "final" 1851 version of *The Princess*.
2. In several manuscript versions, the storytellers are identified before each begins his section, but Tennyson did not include those descriptions in any of the printed versions of the text.
3. The past several decades have seen a veritable explosion of scholarship on *The Princess*; prior to the late 1980s, it was largely overlooked. One of the few exceptions was Killham's *Tennyson and* The Princess (1958), which remains the only book-length treatment of the poem. Unsurprisingly, since its resurgence in critical popularity, *The Princess* has become one of the most controversial poems in Tennyson's canon, with critics strongly divided on the political intent of the story and Tennyson's treatment of gender. These critics generally fall into one of three camps: those who read the poem as conservative or reactionary, those who read it as feminist or, at least, pro-equality, and those who argue that it attempts (frequently unsuccessfully) to maintain a moderate position between these two poles. In the first category we find, to name just a few, Millett, Eagleton, Sedgwick, Hall (who says *The Princess* "captures patriarchy in action" [46]), and Frank and Dillon. In the second category, Joseph argues that the marriage of Ida and the Prince "presages a future golden age founded in the right relationship of man and woman," while Johnston says that the two are "two halves of a potentially ideal individual" (552). Watson claims that the poem demonstrates Tennyson's "serious support for the androgynous ideal" (63), and Clapp-Itnyre argues that Tennyson's treatment of the women's lyrics highlights the poem's feminist intent. Those who situate the poem along its self-proclaimed "strange diagonal" tend to fall on one or the other side of this conservative/progressive divide. For instance, Herbert and, more recently, Buchanan suggest that the poem attempts (with varying degrees of success) through its frame narrative to contain the radical ideologies presented in the internal story. Tucker describes *The Princess* as "a textbook Victorian compromise" in which "neither the rallying of Victorian feminism nor the patriarchal status quo was sufficient stimulus to commitment" (351–52), which echoes Ricks's statement that "what is wrong with *The Princess* stems from its innumerable evasions" (182). Though most criticism on *The Princess* focuses on issues of gender and genre, its engagement with science, art, and education has led to several fascinating interdisciplinary studies, including Millhauser, Wickens, Wright, Davenport, and of course, Killham.
4. Throughout this paper, "British" should be assumed to be largely exclusive of the Irish.
5. See also Rieger.
6. The library as a kind of comprehensive archive of global knowledge is a concept that dates back to at least the Classical period. The Library at Alexandria, the great libraries of Baghdad, and even the collections of medieval monasteries are possible examples of this. Similarly, though it may be splitting hairs to point it out, the British Museum, the great model of the modern museum, was founded in the mid-eighteenth century. Foucault's claims that "in the seventeenth century . . . museums and libraries were the expression of an individual choice" and that "the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time . . . belongs to our modernity" (26) are in direct conflict with the historical record that shows comprehensive archives established by institutions and individuals well before the mid-nineteenth century. The British Museum's founding in 1753, made possible by Sir Hans Sloane's bequest of his private collections to the nation, was not an anomalous event, but rather the extension of an established mode of gathering and preserving general knowledge. By dismissing curiosity cabinets and *Wunderkammern* as the "expression[s] of individual choice" rather than attempts at creating a general archive, Foucault ignores the continuity of collection history, in which curiosity cabinets are merely smaller versions of the comprehensive archives accumulated by collectors like Sloane or Sir John Soane.
7. Several dated but thorough histories of collection informed this article, including Rigby and Rigby, and Conrad. For scholarship on Victorian natural history, see Merrill. For the history of museums, particularly in the nineteenth century, see Bennett.

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8. Although the leisure classes were the only ones readily able to spare the time and money required to amass large dilettante collections, thus largely confining the most significant acts of collection and display to the upper classes, working-class scientific societies, such as those depicted in the Mechanics' Exhibition in the Prologue and Conclusion to *The Princess*, offered opportunities for scientific and mechanical exploration by members of those classes traditionally shut out of higher education. Meanwhile, among the middle classes the passion for acquisition grew to almost epic proportions, a phenomenon recorded in neologisms like "pteridomania," Charles Kingsley's term for the "fern-fever" that seized Victorian amateur botanists beginning in the 1830s. (See Allen, Boyd, and Whittingham for further analyses of this phenomenon.) However, despite the democratizing impulses of popular science and popular mechanics, the twin projects of natural history and collection cannot be separated from their imperial context, particularly given the fact that it was largely monied and nationalist interests that spurred the kinds of international acquisitions that are commonly seen in museums and in private collections like that of Vivian-place. Further discussion of the social politics of museum cultures and the rise of museum poems can be found in Black.
9. Stafford's study of the scientific career of Sir Roderick Murchison stresses the symbiosis of imperial expansion and scientific exploration for England in the mid-nineteenth century.
10. Tennyson claimed "there is scarcely anything in the story which is not prophetically glanced at in the Prologue" (Hallam Tennyson, 1.251), and yet the specific *items* in the Vivian-place collection remain curiously overlooked as part of these "prophetic glances."
11. See Dickens.
12. Agincourt, of course, was the triumphant battle fought on St. Crispin's Day in 1415 and led by Henry V, which led to a (temporary) English victory during the Hundred Years' War. Ascalon refers to the city of Ashkelon, which played a pivotal role in the First and Second Crusades and a minor one in the Third Crusade. There are two Battles of Ascalon – in 1099, the Crusader forces successfully overpowered the Egyptian forces who held the city, thus ending the First Crusade. The city was totally lost in the Siege of Ascalon in 1153. However, according to Ricks's notes in *The Poems of Tennyson*, the reference in the text here is probably to the Third Crusade, during which the forces of Richard I captured the ruins of the city, which had been destroyed by Saladin, and constructed a citadel atop those ruins (744n). The Third Crusade does make the most sense thematically, as it is the only relevant battle headed by English forces.
13. Despite the importance of women fossil hunters like Mary Anning, it was, of course, men who took the credit for these discoveries.
14. Celts are the hatchet tools recovered from the archaeological ruins of early societies from around the globe.
15. The fact that the Vesuvian artifacts are toys underscores the sentimental response of British literati to the discoveries at the two cities – poets and travelers alike were captivated by the lava-locked bodies of the volcano's victims, particularly those that were the bodies of children or those of mothers vainly attempting to shield their infants. The choice of toys as a sentimentalizing device also foreshadows the pivotal importance of the child Aglaïa in the internal narrative of *The Princess*.
16. Nations along the Mediterranean were a common destination for Baltic amber in ancient Europe, and by the fifteenth century, the harvesting of that amber was severely restricted by the Teutonic Knights, who controlled the amber trade for rosaries until the Reformation. Ley offers a brief overview of the history of the amber trade in Europe, while Beck and Shennan lay out the geological and archaeological significance of amber artifacts found in the British Isles. Even in the nineteenth century, as Beck and Shennan's research shows, the scholarly consensus determined that most British amber finds were made of imported Baltic amber (27).
17. Kozicki points out that the "laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere" also hint at the poem's multilayered structure and mirrored characters: "The prince in the middle shell of the poem's time frame is, in the outer shell, the speaker of the poem, the seven-headed narrator, Sir Walter manqué, and the archetypal

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'great Sirs' of all England. Beyond this, in the circumambient 'real' present, he is Edmund Lushington about to marry Cecilia Tennyson, he is Tennyson himself estranged from Emily Sellwood, and he is also those friends since Cambridge days who often told such tandem stories. Receding into time, the prince is Sir Ralph . . . " (60). Similarly, Kozicki argues, Ida is represented by or represents various characters both within the poem itself and in its author's life.

18. See, for further discussion, Colley.
19. Cf. Schor 254, 257.
20. John Fowles, *The Collector* (1963).
21. Pattison notes the frequent appearance of statues in the poem, and argues that they "stand as metaphor for the bad metamorphosis brought about by the Princess's fixed attitudes and rigid adherence to a principle not fully in accord with the plastic impulses of nature" (97) — in other words, for Pattison, the statuary represents Ida's rigidity and the doom of her project, because "Tennyson insists that revolt against form and convention is as rigid and fragile an undertaking as the continuing, mindless practice of those modes" (98).
22. See, for instance, Jean August Dominique Ingres, "La Grande Odalisque," 1814.
23. Unacknowledged in Ida's rejection of the odalisque and "oracles of mode" is a quiet and subtle jab at the French that is replicated by the Tory member's eldest son in the closing lines of the frame narrative. Although the English were certainly guilty of experiencing and promoting the perverse combination of fascination and disgust that marks Orientalist literary trajectories, the Orientalism of the mid-nineteenth century is deeply rooted in the French colonization of North Africa. "Odalisque" and its counterpart, "arabesque," are both French words.
24. Throughout the poem, we get glimpses of the artwork with which Ida has decorated her university; there are statues of the Muses, and in the private chamber where the Prince recuperates, there are murals depicting women's protests of Roman laws.
25. Sedgwick notes that the poem's "emphasis on a chivalric code in which women are 'privileged' as the passive, exalted objects of men's intercourse with men, is part of the point of drawing a genealogy straight from the Victorian bourgeois family to the medievalistic courtly tradition" (124). The fact that even the feminist Psyche cites the age of chivalry as a positive time for women underscores Tennyson's investment in promoting the chivalric code as a positive model for gender relations.
26. This speech provides a fascinating *terminus a quo* for the setting of *The Princess*. While much of the interior story seems decidedly medieval in tone and content, and the setting is determinedly amorphous, the combined references to Sir Francis Bacon ("Verulam") and Elizabeth I mean that the story cannot take place before 1618. These are the only references to post-medieval figures in the entire text.
27. See also Sedgwick's critique of the class dynamics in *The Princess* for a further explication of Ida's elitism (126–27).
28. See also Benjamin, who describes the purchase of a book as follows: "One of the finest memories of the collector is the moment when he rescued a book to which he might never have given a thought, much less a wishful look, because he found it lonely and abandoned on the market place and bought it to give it its freedom — the way the prince bought a beautiful girl in *The Arabian Nights*. To a book collector, you see, the true freedom of all books is somewhere on his shelves" (489–90).
29. See also Millett: "He really is his father's boy" (79).
30. Again, I refer to Sedgwick, who brilliantly unpacks the angel-in-the-house language with which the Prince idealizes Ida and says that the Prince, by exploiting this dialectic, is ultimately allowed to "retain the privileged status of baby . . . along with the implicit empowerment of maleness" (123).
31. Cf. Bergonzi, "Feminism and Femininity in *The Princess*," where he argues that the songs are "reassurances to the reader that the *Ewig-Weibliche* [eternal feminine] will still dominate" (46).
32. See also Clapp-Itnyre and Buchanan for further discussion of the position of the songs in relation to the rest of the text.
33. France.

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