UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA ÉCOLE DES GRADUÉS

THE IMPORTANCE OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE TO THE ORIGIN OF THE ROUNDEL AND HIS USE OF THIS FORM

by F. Lorraine McMullen

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ottawa as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Ottawa, Ontario, 1967

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis was prepared under the guidance of Professor Frank Tierney, M.A., of the Department of English. Gratitude is here expressed for Professor Tierney's help and interest.

CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Lorraine McMullen was born in Ottawa on July 27, 1926. She received the Nursing Diploma from Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, P.Q. and Registered Nurse Certificate in 1947. Miss McMullen received the Bachelor of Science degree (Public Health Nursing) and Certificate in Public Health Nursing from the University of Ottawa in 1948. She received the Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Ottawa in 1963.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		page
	INTRODUCTION	vi
I.-	THE DERIVATION AND DEFINITION OF THE ROUNDEL	1
	1. The Derivation of the Roundel from the Rondeau	1
	2. Definition of the Roundel	5
	3. Summary and Conclusion	18
II.-	THE ORIGIN OF THE ROUNDEL	20
	1. Swinburne's Early Interest in French Language and Literature	20
	2. Swinburne's Use of French Forms	26
	3. Interest in the French Forms in the 1870's	30
	4. Critics Conclude that Swinburne Originated the Roundel	33
	5. Reasons Suggested for Swinburne's Use of the Roundel Form	35
	6. Summary and Conclusion	38
III.-	ROUNDELS OF SWINBURNE AND CRITICAL REACTION TO THEM	40
	1. Roundels Written by Swinburne	40
	2. Critical Reaction to A Century of Roundels	45
	3. Summary and Conclusion	54
IV.-	AN EXAMINATION OF SINGLE ROUNDELS	56
	1. An Examination of "Dead Love" and "'Had I Wist'"	56
	2. A Survey of Five Roundels	79
	3. Summary and Conclusion	90
V.-	AN EXAMINATION OF ROUNDEL SEQUENCES	95
	1. An Examination of the Three Roundel Sequence "A Dialogue"	96
	2. An Examination of the Seven Roundel Sequence "A Baby's Death"	107
	3. A Survey of Other Roundel Sequences	121
	4. Summary and Conclusion	131

TABLE OF CONTENTS v

Chapter page

CONCLUSION 137

APPENDIX 145

BIBLIOGRAPHY 147

INTRODUCTION

The roundel is a variation of the French rondeau used by Swinburne. The purpose of this thesis is to define the roundel, to determine its origin, and, by an examination of roundels written by Swinburne, to evaluate his use of the roundel as a poetic form.

To arrive at a definition of the roundel, the development of the rondeau, from which the roundel derives, will be discussed briefly. Following this, the poem "The Roundel" will be analysed. In this roundel Swinburne discusses the nature of the roundel. The conclusions derived from this examination will determine a tentative definition of the roundel.

Factors which led to the origin of this form will be explored - these factors will include Swinburne's personal background, his growing interest in French literature and French forms, the increasing interest in England in French forms. Critical reaction to Swinburne's first roundels published in 1883 in A Century of Roundels will be reviewed.

In order to arrive at an evaluation of Swinburne's use of this form seven single roundels and two sequences (one of three and one of seven roundels) will be examined,

and a brief survey made of others. As a result of this examination a conclusion will be reached regarding the themes, tones, tempos, objective correlatives, imagery, meters, and literary devices which are effectively used in the roundel form by Swinburne.

CHAPTER I

THE DERIVATION AND DEFINITION OF THE ROUNDEL

In this chapter the rondeau form will be briefly discussed. Because it is from this form that the roundel originates, the various developments of the rondeau comprise the background of the roundel. This discussion will be followed by the examination of the roundel which seems, by its form and content, to express Swinburne's own view of the roundel form. A tentative definition of the roundel will be arrived at through this examination.

1. The Derivation of the Roundel from the Rondeau

The form from which Swinburne's roundel is derived is the rondeau. The rondeau began as a dance song and "has its roots in the primitive past of the French folk".[1] The word rondel, the earlier form of the word rondeau, means a song used as the accompaniment to a ronde or round dance.[2] L. E. Kastner also states this origin of the rondeau in A History of French Versification.[3] Cohen discusses the

---

1. Helen Louise Cohen, Lyric Forms from France, New York, 1933, p. 50.

2. Ibid., p. 51.

3. L. E. Kastner, A History of French Versification, Oxford, 1903, p. 249.

history of the French forms in "Their History and Use," an introductory chapter of her book Lyric Forms from France. She states that the earliest literary rondels are those of Guillaime d'Amiens and Adam de la Halle, thirteenth-century French poets.[1] Cohen refers to Deschamps' Art de Dictier which states that the rondeau became differentiated into three kinds. One was the earliest form of eight lines which has been known as the triolet since the end of the fifteenth century. The second form of rondeau, used in the fourteenth century only, consisted of thirteen lines in three stanzas: the first stanza consisting of a three-line refrain, the second of two lines plus the first two lines of the refrain, the third of three lines plus the complete refrain. The rhyme scheme was A,B,A / a,b,A,B / a,b,a A,B,A or A,B,B / a,b,A,B / a,b,b, A,B,B. The third type, called the double rondeau, consisted of sixteen or seventeen lines rhyming A,B,B,A / a,b,B,A / a,b,b,a A,B,B,A, or A,B,C,D / a,b,c, A,B / a,b,c,d, A,B,C,D.[2] In the fifteenth century, in general, refrains grew shorter to usually two lines or one line. Sometimes only the first phrase or even

---

1. Cohen, op. cit., p. 51.
2. Ibid., pp. 52-53.

the first word was repeated. Finally, the rondeau of thirteen lines with two unrhymed refrains became the standard form.[1]

In discussing the rondeau in England, Cohen reports that the rondeau is first found in English literature in Chaucer's works,[2] and was called by him roundel. He wrote a triple roundel called "Merciles Beaute". A fourth roundel occurs at the end of the "Parlement of Foules". The rhyme scheme and structure of the four are similar: thirteen lines divided into three stanzas, the first stanza consisting of three lines, the second of four lines of which the last two are a repetition of the first two lines of the first stanza, the third stanza of six lines of which the last three are a repetition of the entire first stanza. There are two rhymes only. Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate each wrote rondeaux similar to Chaucer's in structure.[3]

In his "Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse" in Latter Day Lyrics, Dobson defines the triolet, rondel and rondeau. The rondel he states is a poem of fourteen lines

---

1. Ibid., p. 57.
2. Ibid., p. 66.
3. Ibid., p. 66.

with two rhymes. It is written in three stanzas rhyming a, b,b,a / a,b,a,b / a,b,b,a,a,b with the initial couplet forming the seventh and eighth lines and the thirteenth and fourteenth.[1] The rondeau he explains as "... a modification of the Rondel. It is made up of thirteen lines with two rhymes and two unrhyming refrains, generally the first half of the first line, sometimes only the first word. As in the Rondel, the lines fall into three groups, a first of five lines, a second of three (and refrain) and a third of five (and refrain). The usual sequence of the rhymes is a,a,b,b, a; - a,a,b (and refrain); - a,a,b,b,a (and refrain)".[2] Dobson further states that most modern rondeaux are in eight-syllable lines. Dobson also mentions a shorter rondeau of ten lines and two refrains - a,b, b,a: - a,b (and refrain); a,b,b,a (and refrain) used occasionally by Marot, Villon, and Voiture.[3]

---

1. Austin Dobson, "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse", Latter Day Lyrics, London, 1878, p. 338.

2. Ibid., p. 340.

3. Ibid., p. 341.

2. Definition of the Roundel

The roundel used by Swinburne is a variation of the rondeau pattern. The roundel is characterized by "its eleven-line form and the presence in the fourth and eleventh lines of a refrain taken, as in the rondeau, from the first part of the first line." [1] The rhyme scheme (using B to indicate the refrain) is a,b,a,B / b,a,b / a,b,a,B. Unlike the rondeau, in which there are two rhymes allowed, exclusive of the refrain, the refrain is itself one of the two rhymes allowed in this form, rhyming with the second, called the b rhyme. In its two uses the refrain is indented. The form divides into three stanzas. The first stanza consists of three lines and the refrain. The second stanza consists of three lines. The third and final stanza consists of three lines and the refrain.

Swinburne referred to the roundels at least twice in his letters. In a letter to Edmund Gosse dated March 28, 1883 he stated: "I am too busy with verse-making just now to revert to the criticism of Barnavelt,[2] which I may take

---

1. W.F. Thrall, A. Hibbard, C.H. Holman, A Handbook to Literature, New York, 1961, p. 433.

2. Barnavelt is a tragedy written by the Renaissance dramatist John Fletcher.

up again in The Athenaeum when I have completed a little book of songs, now nearly ready for publication, which till then occupies me more pleasantly than prose."[1] The "little book of songs" is, of course, Century of Roundels. In a letter to Edward Burne-Jones April 4, 1883, Swinburne said: "I have got a tiny book of songs or songlets, in one form and all manner of metres - from 4-syllable to 18-syllable lines - just coming out, of which Miss Rossetti has accepted the dedication. I hope you and Georgie will find something to like among a hundred poems of nine lines each, twenty-four of which are about babies or small children".[2] Thrall, Hibbard, Holman in A Handbook to Literature refer to the roundel as an eleven line poem;[3] however, the roundel in this thesis will henceforth be referred to as a nine line poem with two refrains, since this has been Swinburne's definition.

In order to arrive at a more complete definition of the roundel, one of the roundels in A Century of Roundels will be analysed, in which the subject of the poem is the roundel. Because the logical sense of the poem comprises a discussion of what is involved in making a roundel, this would seem to be Swinburne's explanation in both a theoretical and a practical way of the roundel form; and can be

---

1. Cecil Y. Lang, ed., Algernon C. Swinburne Letters, Vol. 5, New Haven, 1962, p. 11.
2. Ibid., p. 13.
3. Thrall, op. cit., p. 433.

taken as an example, a basis for the discussion and evaluation of other roundels.

THE ROUNDEL

A roundel is wrought as a ring or a starbright sphere,
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure his ear
A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught -
Love, laughter, or mourning - remembrance of rapture or fear -
That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us hear
Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,
A roundel is wrought.[1]

This poem may be scanned as follows:[2]

˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ /
A roundel is wrought as a ring or a starbright sphere,
˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ /
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,
˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure
˘ /
his ear
˘ / ˘ ˘ /
A roundel is wrought.

---

1. A.C. Swinburne, A Century of Roundels, London, 1883, p. 63.

2. In all scansion in this thesis the following symbols will be used:
/ indicates a stressed syllable
˘ indicates an unstressed syllable
˝ indicates a secondary stress
⌒ indicates a hovering accent

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught -
Love, laughter, or mourning - remembrance of rapture
or fear -
That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us
hear
Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,
A roundel is wrought.

Verse one: A roundel is wrought as a ring or a star-bright sphere,

In this first verse the poet uses two similes to express the circular movement of thought in the roundel. As a ring could mean merely as a circle but in its context the effect of associating it with starbright sphere brings to mind the idea of a ring as a band of precious metal worn on the finger. In starbright sphere is the association of circular with a luminous quality and brightness, and the evocation of other worldliness or mystery of the star. The verse length is five feet. The meter is anapestic with the substitution of an iambic as the first and the fifth foot. Alliteration occurs of r in roundel, wrought, ring, starbright, sphere and s in starbright and sphere, slowing

the movement. There is a brief pause at the end of the verse, coinciding with a sense pause and punctuated by a comma.

Verse two: With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,

The poet associates with the making of a roundel the notion of delight and also the concept of sound which must be artfully created in such a way that the sound will appear to be unsought. The verse is again five feet in length with the first and last feet iambic and the other three feet anapestic. Alliteration of c in craft and cunning tends to further stress these words, and the alliteration of s in sound and unsought and long vowels in these two words slow the movement towards the end of the verse which concludes with a pause marked by a comma after unsought. Such diction as craft of delight, cunning of sound contributes to a light tone.

Verse three: That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure his ear

In verse three is expressed the result of having made a roundel as outlined in the preceding two verses: it will cause pleasure to the hearer. Heart, as used in this verse, brings with it the connotation of emotion, therefore the

implication that it is to the emotions that the poem is directed. To pleasure his ear reinforces the idea of pleasing sound, as in verse two, as part of the pleasure brought by the roundel to the hearer. Alliteration of h in heart and hearer stresses the importance of the hearer. The meter is anapestic pentameter, the evenness of the meter contributing to a smooth tempo. The thought is continued by means of enjambment to the refrain. The tone remains light because of the diction and the logical sense.

Refrain: A roundel is wrought.

The refrain consists of the repetition of the first two feet of the first verse. The refrain, in this instance, completes the thought of the third verse - the hearer will smile if a roundel is made in such a way as to please him. The alliteration of r in A roundel is wrought unites with the r sounds of verse three in heart, hearer, pleasure, ear to create a further unifying effect. A period concludes the first stanza.

Verse four: Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught -

In this verse, beginning stanza two, the poet initiates the metaphor of the roundel as a jewel. The jewel may be formed of all or of aught -, this implies that the roundel

may be made of profound or of light matter. The musical quality is reiterated: it is a jewel of music. The meter of this verse is anapestic except for the first foot which is iambic. The vowel a produces assonance and alliteration in all and aught, and the same sound is repeated in carven to give a melodious quality to the verse. The tone is light, as a result of the musical quality and the logical sense of the verse. The punctuation at the end of the verse is a dash, in keeping with the logical sense, since the thought introduced in this verse is to be interrupted with an explanation of the various materials of which a roundel may be made, and then continued in verse six.

Verse five: Love, laughter, or mourning - remembrance
of rapture or fear -

In this verse the poet lists some of the materials from which a roundel may be made. There is a pronounced pause marked by a dash after mourning, thus separating into two groups the suggested materials. The first group suggests emotions causing either joy or sorrow; the happier emotions receive more stress by the hovering accent over Love, laughter and the alliteration of l. The second group of materials, following the dash, consists of recollections of the past: there is the connotation of happiness and

delight in rapture, of the unpleasant or sad in fear. The alliteration of r tends to stress the longer word rapture rather than fear in the recollections. The verse concludes with a dash which interrupts this listing of the various possible materials of which a roundel may be made, and verse six returns to the metaphor initiated in verse four.

Verse six: That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of thought.

The jewel of verse four now becomes an ear-ring carven of whatever material one may fancy. To hang in the ear of thought continues the metaphor of the jewelled ear-ring. Also the ear of thought unites the two basic ingredients, sound quality and matter: with ear is associated the sound quality and with thought the matter or thought content necessary in a roundel. Fancy has connotations of imagination but also of whimsy or caprice which contributes to a light tone. The alliteration of f in fancy and fashion and the assonance produced by the vowel a in fancy, fashion, and hang contribute to a euphonious sound. The meter is anapestic with the first and fifth foot iambic. The verse ends with a period, suitably concluding the stanza because the logical sense of the stanza is complete with the end of verse six.

Verse seven: As a bird's quick song runs round, and
the hearts in us hear

The circular movement of the roundel is here compared to the song of a bird in a simile with connotations of beauty and music. In keeping with the thought expressed in the simile, the movement is fast from the beginning of the verse to the comma after round in keeping with the logical sense. This is caused by the short vowels a, i, ui and by the meter in which the first anapestic foot is followed by two shorter iambic feet. The second section of the verse following the caesura, and the hearts in us hear, again stresses the emotional appeal by the word heart, by repetition of almost the same words as verse three, heart of the hearer, and by the alliteration of h in the stressed syllables heart and hear. The appeal is made more personal by the use of the pronoun us, whereas verse three had used the third person, the hearer. The sense unit which begins after the caesura continues by means of enjambment into verse eight.

Verse eight: Pause answer to pause, and again the same
strain caught,

The sense unit continued from verse seven continues to the caesura marked by a comma after pause. The trochaic foot followed by the anapestic foot in Pause answer to pause causes a hurrying over the three unaccented syllables to the

accented longer syllable pause. This and the comma, combined with the repetition of the long vowel sound au in pause, cause a pronounced stop at this caesura. And again the same strain caught continues the theme of the similarity of the roundel to the bird's song; same strain refers to the circular structure of the roundel. Alliteration of s draws attention to same strain. The line is end-stopped, punctuated with a comma. The alliteration of a in answer, and again and of s in same, strain contribute to the euphonious effect. The assonance produced by the vowel sound a in same, strain, also contributes to the smooth verse flow.

Verse nine: So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,

The poem continues with a further reiteration of the circular movement of the roundel. Device denotes the necessity of craft in order to make the roundel, and refers back to verse seven; the craft necessary in the making of the roundel returns, as the bird's song, to the same strain. Two similes are used which add to the conception of the roundel all the connotations associated with pearl and tear. Besides roundness, one associates with pearl the idea of beauty, purity, great value. With tear is the connotation of sorrow. The movement is slower in round as a pearl with

the longer vowels of round and pearl, and faster with the last two words or tear, just as the movement in the roundel may be slow or fast. The consonants c in device, whence and r in or, tear produce consonance which contributes to the musical quality of the verse.

Refrain: A roundel is wrought.

The refrain concludes the poem and completes the two similes of verse nine comparing the roundel to a pearl and to a tear. The pause marked by a comma concluding verse nine causes the reader to read this refrain with a little more stress than in the initial refrain when the refrain was united by enjambment to the preceding verse. The alliteration of r and the similarity of the vowel sounds ou in roundel and wrought create a euphonious effect. Wrought has connotations beyond merely making - of perfection, elaboration, careful fashioning - which contribute to the overall theme of the essential nature of the roundel.

In "The Roundel" the nature of the roundel is defined. The musical quality and the circular structure of the poem are stressed in stanza one which also refers to the necessity of craft. That the poem may contain serious or light matter is expressed in the second stanza which outlines the wide variety of material which may go into the making of a

roundel. The third stanza returns to the thought of the first, the circular movement and the music of a roundel, but it expands the meaning by the use of the three similes as a bird's quick song, as a pearl or tear. A period concludes each stanza and a transition in thought occurs at the beginning of each stanza.

The refrain keynotes the theme. Taken from the first part of verse one it is repeated twice, following verse three and following verse nine. In both instances it completes the meaning of the preceding verse. Verse three and the refrain convey the thought that the hearer will be pleased if the roundel is skillfully made to give pleasure to his ear. Verse nine and the refrain conclude the poem with the return to the thought introduced in verse one of the circular movement of the roundel, but now the idea is richer in meaning because of the intervening verses, and it is also made more meaningful by the addition of two similes.

The tone of this roundel is light. This is contributed to by the diction, imagery and melodious sound. None of the imagery is heavy - starbright sphere, jewel of music, bird's quick song, pearl, tear. In the choice of diction, words associated with happiness - craft of delight, cunning of sound, smile, pleasure, love, laughter - far outweigh the

suggestion of sadness in the two words mourning and fear. The meter used is the pentameter line with primarily the anapestic foot but with some substitution of iambic feet. Each line, with the exception of the refrain, is of the same length. The refrain consists of two feet - one iambic foot followed by one anapestic. Extensive use of alliteration, assonance, and consonance contribute to the musical quality of the sound. The figures of speech include five similes which are simply stated and the metaphor which comprises the second stanza.

From this analysis of the poem, "The Roundel", the characteristics of the roundel can be deduced. It has a nine-line form divided into three stanzas with the first stanza having three lines and refrain, the second three lines, the third three lines and refrain. There are two rhymes only. The refrain, taken from the first part of the first line rhymes with the b rhyme. Each line, with the exception of the refrain, is of the same length. The thought in each stanza is complete and each stanza is concluded by a period. The refrain completes the thought of stanzas one and three. The circular movement and expansion of the theme are apparent in this roundel. The circular movement is stated in the logical sense of the poem at the

beginning of stanza one and again in stanza three. The necessity of craftsmanship and of achieving a melodious effect in a seemingly effortless way is expressed in the first stanza. As outlined in stanza two any of a variety of emotions or reflections on the past may be expressed in a roundel. Figures of speech, similes and a metaphor, are used. Alliteration, assonance, and consonance are used extensively. The objective correlative pattern is formed of a variety of images: a ring and a starbright sphere in stanza one; jewel in stanza two; bird's quick song, pearl, tear in stanza three - all contribute to the tone and theme of the poem.

3. Summary and Conclusion

The evolution of the rondeau from which the roundel is derived has been discussed. "The Roundel", in which Swinburne develops the theme of the nature of the roundel, has been examined. As a result of this examination, a definition of the roundel has been arrived at : the circular structure of the roundel, the refrain in both its uses completing the thought initiated in the previous verse, the variety of imagery of which the objective correlative pattern may be formed, the figures of speech and literary devices which may be used in the expression of theme and tone.

As expressed by the logical sense of this particular roundel, any of a variety of emotions and reflections, either serious or light, happy or sad, may provide the theme and tone for a roundel; a musical quality must be achieved in a seemingly effortless way; and craftsmanship is necessary in the making of a roundel. The qualities of a roundel which are expressed in the logical sense of "The Roundel" and those of which the poem, itself, is an example seem to be the qualities Swinburne considers essential to the roundel form. In chapters four and five further roundels will be examined to evaluate how successfully Swinburne was able to incorporate these characteristics in his expression of a variety of themes and tones, using a variety of meters and subject matter in the roundel form.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN OF THE ROUNDEL

In this chapter the origin of the roundel will be explored. First, Swinburne's early interest in French language and literature will be discussed. This will be followed by section two, Swinburne's use of French forms in general. Section three will deal with the interest in England in French forms in the 1870's. Section four will discuss the conclusion of critics that the roundel was originated by Swinburne as a variation from the rondeau pattern. Section five will explore the reasons which have been suggested for Swinburne's use of this form.

1. Swinburne's Early Interest in French Language and Literature

Algernon Charles Swinburne was born in London, England, in 1837, the eldest son of Capt. Charles Henry Swinburne and Lady Jane Henrietta, fourth daughter of the Earl of Ashburnham. Swinburne's interest in France and French literature was acquired from both sides of the family. Lady Jane had been partly brought up in France and Italy, and "... certainly had a genuine taste for French and Italian literatures with which she was conversant".[1] As a

---

1. Georges Lafourcade, Swinburne, New York, 1932, p.9

result, in his childhood Swinburne was taught French and Italian by his mother. At Eton he won the Prince Consort's prize in French; later, at Oxford, he took the Taylorian scholarship for French and Italian.[1] On his father's side, roots in France are evident as far back at least as early eighteenth century. Lafourcade refers to the loyalty of the Swinburnes to the Stuarts. The Swinburnes had "for a long time a tradition with them to have one of their younger sons as a page at the Court of St. Germain".[2] Lafourcade refers also to "the granting, immediately after the Restoration of a baronetcy to John Swinburne, 'the auld earle of Capheaton'".[3] Whether the Swinburnes had actually been exiled is not clearly established. However, in 1756 the governor of Bordeaux wrote that "among the English subjects who were allowed to stay in the town during the hostilities was one 'Edw. Swinburne du Northumberland, fils cadet du baronnet John Swinburne, d'une famille catholique et zelée pour les Stuarts'".[4] Edward's son, John Edward,

---

1. T. Earl Welby, A Study of Swinburne, London, 1926, p. 37.
2. Lafourcade, op. cit., p. 3.
3. Ibid., p. 3.
4. Ibid., p. 4. [Translation: 'Edward Swinburne of Northumberland, younger son of the baronet John Swinburne, of a family Catholic and zealous for the Stuarts'.]

Swinburne's grandfather, was born in Bordeaux and educated in France. Sir John Edward was an important influence on Swinburne. Lafourcade states that "... Swinburne formed an idealized conception of his grandfather which haunted him throughout his life; Sir John Edward became a kind of standard to whom Swinburne successively compared Landor, Mazzini, and Hugo, when he met them personally".[1] Sir John Edward had rejected the Roman Catholic religion of his family and became a liberally minded Member of Parliament for Launceston, Cornwall in 1788.[2] "Lastly," reports Lafourcade, "he combined this new religious and political attitude with literary and artistic tastes which had not so far been very conspicuous in the family. Sir John Edward had constituted at Capheaton a library of eighteenth century French literature ...".[3] Thus, from both sides of the family it is evident that Swinburne was given an interest in France and in the French language and literature.

Swinburne's interest in French and in the medieval writers is demonstrated by his attempts at a poetical version

---

1. Ibid., p. 6.
2. Ibid., p. 6.
3. Ibid., p. 7.

of Boccaccio in 1858,[1] his translation of Villon in 1861, two skits on French treatment of English life, "La Fille du Policeman", written in 1861.[2] In 1861 he read Beaudelaire's Fleurs du Mal and immediately wrote a review of it for The Spectator in which he stated that Beaudelaire "had more delicate power of verse than almost any man living, after Victor Hugo, Browning, and (in his lyrics) Tennyson".[3] In this review Swinburne also demonstrated his awareness of Théodore de Banville who was important in reviving in France at this time many of the old French forms. Of de Banville, Swinburne stated "... the graceful, slight, and somewhat thin-spun classical work of M. Théodore de Banville hardly carries weight enough to tell across the channel; indeed, the best of this writer's books, in spite of exquisite humourous character and a most flexible and brilliant style, is too thoroughly Parisian to bear transplanting at all".[4] Later it will be shown that Swinburne imported the French forms and originated the roundel from the rondeau using most

---

1. Welby, op. cit., p. 47.
2. Ibid., p. 51.
3. A.C. Swinburne, "Charles Beaudelaire", Victorian Poetry and Poetics, ed. Houghton and Stange, Boston, 1959, p. 658.
4. Ibid., p. 657.

often a heavier tone and slower tempo.

Théodore de Banville's influence in the revival of interest in the rondeau is attested to by L. E. Kastner: "In the latter part of the seventeenth century and during the whole of the eighteenth, the rondeau was quite neglected - again revived by some of the Romanticists, notably Alfred de Musset and Théodore de Banville".[1] According to Cohen, Austin Dobson was influenced by de Banville, as he stated in a note to her: "Sometime between 1873 and 1877, I chanced on the Odes Funambulesques of Théodore de Banville, whose essays in this kind gave me the hint I wanted".[2] Thus, it is interesting to note here Swinburne's awareness of de Banville's works at least eleven years prior to the date of de Banville's influence on Dobson.

Swinburne's facility in the French language is attested to by his creation of two French poets, Felicien Cossu and Ernest Clouet, whom he criticized in The Spectator and whose French verses (written by himself) Swinburne quoted and criticized for their immoral tone. This hoax was discovered and ended Swinburne's writing for The Spectator.[3]

---

1. Kastner, op. cit., p. 256.
2. Cohen, op. cit., p. 83.
3. Samuel C. Chew, Swinburne, Boston, 1929, p. 49.

Nevertheless, this creation of French poets and their verses demonstrates Swinburne's proficiency in the French language.

It seems evident from Swinburne's facility in the French language, his early admiration for the nineteenth century poets of France as well as for the fifteenth century Villon, and his interest in the medieval, that he is among the first of the nineteenth century English poets to draw attention to French literature and the French forms. Houghton and Stange point this out in their introduction to Swinburne in their anthology Victorian Poetry and Prose:

> One of the most important aspects of English poetry at the end of the century was the almost naive discovery of French literature. Swinburne must be credited with having turned his contemporaries toward this vitalizing influence. A modern critic, M. Henry Peyre has said, "... of all English poets, Swinburne is the one who has best known and most admired our country and our literature".[2]

---

1. W.E. Houghton and G.R. Stange, "Algernon Charles Swinburne", Victorian Poetry and Poetics, Boston, 1959, p. 626.

2. Swinburne's Use of French Forms

In his first volume Poems and Ballads, Series One published in 1866 Swinburne produced two poems to which he gave the name "Rondel". These demonstrate his early interest in the form and his interest in experimenting with it. His two poems are similar to the rondeau in using the partial line rather than the whole line (as is customary with the rondel) as the refrain.

The first "Rondel" appearing in this volume consists of fifteen lines and three refrains divided into three stanzas. The refrain consists in the first two feet of the first line, repeated at the end of each stanza. The rhyme scheme is a,a,b,a,b, B/c,c,b,c,c, B/d,d,b,d,b,B. B. indicates the refrain.

RONDEL

These many years since we began to be,
What have the gods done with us? What with me
What with my love? They have shown me fates and fears,
Harsh springs, and fountains bitterer than the sea,
Grief a fixed star, and joy a vane that veers,
These many years.

With her, my love, with her have they done well?
But who shall answer for her? Who shall tell
Sweet things or sad, such things as no man hears?
May no tears fall, if no tears ever fell,
From eyes more dear to me than starriest spheres
These many years!

But if tears ever touched, for any grief,
Those eyelids folded like a white-rose leaf,
Deep double shells where through the eye-flower peers,
Let them weep once more only, sweet and brief,
Brief tears and bright, for one who gave her tears
These many years.[1]

The second "Rondel" consists of ten lines and two refrains divided into two stanzas. The refrain is repeated at the end of both stanzas. The rhyme scheme is as follows, with C indicating the refrain which is the first two feet of the first line: a,a,b,b,c,C/ d,d,e,e,c,C.

RONDEL

Kissing her hair I sat against her feet,
Wove and unwove it, wound and found it sweet;
Made fast therewith her hands, drew down her eyes,
Deep as deep flowers and dreamy like dim skies;
With her own tresses bound and found her fair,
Kissing her hair.

Sleep were no sweeter than her face to me,
Sleep of cold sea-bloom under the cold sea;
What pain could get between my face and hers?
What new sweet thing would love not relish worse?
Unless, perhaps, white death had kissed me there,
Kissing her hair?[2]

Considerable research has been done on these poems by Georges Lafourcade. Lafourcade states that the first "Rondel"

---

1. A.C. Swinburne, Collected Works, Vol. 1, London, 1904, p. 85.

2. Ibid., p. 128.

("These many years") is "un type assez regulier du Rondeau (et non pas du Rondel qui est une forme tout à fait differente)".[1] Lafourcade believes, though without definite proof, that this poem was probably written in 1863.[2] The second "Rondel" ("Kissing her hair") Lafourcade states "est beaucoup plus irregulier et n'a que dix vers. On trouve pourtant d'anciens rondeaux de ce type".[3] Lafourcade suggests as probable sources Villon, Charles d'Orléans, possibly Musset, E. Deschamps, and modern poets.[4] This second "Rondel" Lafourcade believes written before 1862 because it was included in a list of poems Swinburne made of his early poetry, and suggested in a letter to his publisher, Chatto, July 20, 1876, be printed separately.[5]

Kastner refers to a twelve line rondeau which developed in the fifteenth century and was known as the "rondeau simple". Of this form Kastner states, "The 'rondeau simple'

---

1. Georges Lafourcade, La Jeunesse de Swinburne, Tome II London,1928, p. 454. [The French may be translated as follows: a sufficiently regular model of the rondeau (and) not of the rondel which is a form entirely different).]

2. Ibid., p. 423.

3. Ibid., p. 454. [The French may be translated as follows: is more irregular and has only ten lines. One finds however, old rondeaux of this type.]

4. Ibid., p. 454.

5. Ibid., p. 420.

of twelve lines is not found later than the early part of the sixteenth century".[1] Dobson also refers to an early ten line rondeau rhyming a,b,b,a/ a,b, (and refrain) / a,b,b,a (and refrain) which, Dobson states, was used occasionally by Marot, Villon, and Voiture.[2]

Of importance is the fact that as early as 1862 Swinburne demonstrated his interest in the rondeau form and in experimenting with it in these two poems.

Poems and Ballads: Second Series was published in June 1878. Here, an even greater interest in exotic forms and French poets is demonstrated. Of these poems, Lafourcade comments:

> Nearly all of them exhibit a perfection of forms, or more exactly a subtlety of music unmatched in the poems that preceded them. Swinburne's calmer inspiration gives him a mastery of rhythm, an understanding of the technique of harmony, which makes some of his work of this period comparable to that of Spenser or Keats. He delights more particularly in two highly elaborate forms: the sestina and the ballade. [3]

---

1. Kastner, op. cit., p. 254.

2. Austin Dobson, "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse", Latter Day Lyrics, London, 1878, p. 341.

3. Lafourcade, Swinburne, p. 226.

Harold Nicolson lists as included in this volume:

> ... several translations from the French, eleven from Villon and one from Victor Hugo, which serve merely to illustrate his unrivalled skill in this form of literary activity. His scholarship is represented by two poems in Latin, and three in French, while among the purely metrical exercises I should include ... the "Sestina", and the double Sestina entitled The "Complaint of Lisa." [1]

Therefore, it is apparent that in the 1860's and 1870's Swinburne was very much aware of and was experimenting with a variety of forms including the rondeau, the sestina, double sestina, ballade. At the same time, as Nicolson points out above, he was demonstrating his skill in translating French poems and in writing in French.

3. Interest in French Forms in the 1870's

Interest in the French lyric forms in England was increased six years before Swinburne's A Century of Roundels by Edmund Gosse's article "A Plea for Certain Exotic Forms of Verse" which appeared in Cornhill Magazine in July 1877. That Swinburne was in the forefront of this movement is attested to by Gosse's letter to Swinburne enclosing his

---

1. Harold Nicolson, Swinburne, London, 1926, p. 155.

article and asking for Swinburne's opinion and corrections, if necessary.

29 Delamere Terrace
July 5, 1877.

My dear Swinburne,-

I send you the no. of the Cornhill containing my plea for rondeaux and ballades, and adorned with your exquisite ballades of which I become more and more enamoured. You will, I hope, be interested in the scheme and the purpose of the article, though there may be one thing and another which will meet with your disapproval. I shall take it as a specially friendly favour if you, who are so learned in the history of verse, will point out to me any sins of omission or commission in my historical part. In every case write to me about it, for I am half in despair. In all this battle for form and for pure literature we fight as a mere handful against the whole army of Philistia.

Yours ever,

Edmund W. Gosse.[1]

The following year, further impetus was given to this interest in French forms by the publication of Latter Day Lyrics, a collection edited by W. Davenport Adams and including a section devoted to French forms. Adams explains in the "Preface" to this edition, "Another feature of the

---

1. Evan Charteris, The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse, London, 1931, pp. 99-100.

present work is the attention paid, for the first time, to the late re-introduction into English poetry of old French measures. Some English specimens of these have been selected, and form the third book of the 'Lyrics'".[1]

Latter Day Lyrics is important, also, because of the "Appendix" consisting of an Article "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse" by Austin Dobson,[2] in which Dobson discusses the triolet, rondeau, rondel, and villanelle, explaining these forms and their development, and encouraging their use with the following remarks:

> What is modestly advanced for some of them (by the present writer at least) is that they may add a new charm of buoyancy, - a Lyric freshness, - to amatory and familiar verse, already too much condemned to faded measures and outworn cadences. Further, under the assumption that merely graceful or tuneful trifles may be sometimes written (and even read), that they are admirable vehicles for the expression of trifles or "jeux d'esprit". They also have a humbler and obscurer use. ... what better discipline, among others, could possibly be devised for "those about to versify" than a course of Rondeaux, Triolets and Ballades? [3]

---

1. W. Davenport Adams, "Preface", Latter Day Lyrics, London, 1878, p. VI.

2. Austin Dobson, "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse", Latter Day Lyrics, London, 1878, p. 336.

3. Cohen, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

Gosse, recalling the upsurge of interest in French forms in England in the 1870's, gives as a main reason the general desire for a more disciplined form, and gives much of the credit for encouraging this interest to Théodore de Banville, according to a letter he wrote to Cohen in 1911 which is quoted in Lyric Forms from France:

> But the desire for the support of a more rigid and disciplined metre was in the air, and we all independently and simultaneously seized upon the French forms of which Banville gave the precise rules in his Petit Traité ... I know that I wrote at that time a letter of adoring inquiry, and received in return a long letter of sympathy and advice from Théodore de Banville.[1]

Swinburne knew de Banville and his works as early as 1862 and had been experimenting with some of the French forms from that time. We can conclude that he would receive further impetus from the general upsurge of interest in French forms resulting from the writings of Gosse and Dobson in 1877 and 1878.

4. Critics Conclude that Swinburne Originated the Roundel

One of the many important facts about both Gosse's "A Plea for Certain Exotic Forms of Verse" and Dobson's "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse" is that in their

---

1. Ibid., p. 82.

description of these forms they make no reference to a form such as Swinburne's roundel. These authorities give reason to conclude that Swinburne devised the form to which he gave the name roundel. This fact seems to be generally assumed by the critics. Early reviewers of A Century of Roundels make this assumption. James Ashcroft Noble, reviewing A Century of Roundels in The Academy states, "Mr. Swinburne's 'roundel' ... is not precisely identical with any example that I have seen either of the old rondel, or of the rondeau which was a modification of it, but is apparently a form of his own ..."[1] W.P. Ker in The Contemporary Review mentions, "Mr. Swinburne has chosen not to put on the mask of any of the old writers of rondeaux; he has invented a model of his own, with variations of his own, and he does not keep to any range of ideas, such as used to be thought suitable for the rondeau's 'scanty plot of ground'".[2]

Cohen states: "He [Swinburne] used the Middle English designation, roundel, to describe a variation of the

---

1. James Ashcroft Noble, "A Century of Roundels", The Academy, No. 581, June 23, 1883, p. 430.

2. W.P. Ker, "Contemporary Record-Poetry", The Contemporary Review, XLIV, Sept. 1883, p. 467.

rondeau which he himself devised".[1] Samuel C. Chew agrees that the roundel "... is a tiny poem in a forme fixe of Swinburne's own invention, a modification of the rondeau, ..." .[2] In A Handbook to Literature the roundel is stated as, "a variation of the French rondeau pattern, generally attributed to Swinburne ...".[3] We are thus led to conclude that the roundel was originated by Swinburne following his experimentation with a variety of French forms, including the rondeau.

5. Reasons Suggested for Swinburne's Use of the Roundel Form

In his brief reference to the roundel in his letters, Swinburne does not state his reasons for using this form.

Edmund Gosse states as Swinburne's reasons for using the roundel form that he wanted the self discipline of a rigidly fixed form. "After a considerable interval, during which he[Swinburne] refrained from writing verse, largely because he felt that his excessive fluency had been carrying him too loosely on a wild, prosodic gallop, Algernon

---

1. Cohen, op. cit., p. 87.

2. Chew, op. cit., p. 279.

3. W. F. Thrall, A. Hibbard, C. H. Holman, ed., A Handbook to Literature, revised edition, New York, 1960, p. 433.

returned to poetry in the month of January, 1883. He determined, for the sake of self-discipline, to abandon for a time his broad and sweeping measures, and to curb his Pegasus with a rigidly fixed form. He chose the rondeau ..."[1]

Cohen states that Swinburne began A Century of Roundels in the middle of January, 1883. By the sixth of February he had completed twenty, by the ninth twenty-four, on the tenth three more, and by the end of March the manuscript had been completed. Cohen states, "The half sheets of note paper on which they were written show almost no sign of correction".[2] However, Edmund Gosse contradicts this statement: "The MSS, now in the British Museum, written on half-sheets of notepaper, were sent to the printers, and, when returned from the press, were presented to Miss Isabel Swinburne. These bear very little mark of correction, and may be considered as almost improvisations. [These are the manuscripts to which Cohen refers.] But the originals, now in Mr. Wise's possession, are a tangle of alterations and corrections".[3] Welby states much the same reason as Gosse

---

1. Edmund Gosse, The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne, London, 1917, p. 243.

2. Cohen, op. cit., p. 88.

3. Gosse, The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne, p. 244.

for Swinburne's writing the roundels: "In 1883, in an attempt to check his excessive facility he [Swinburne] composed, in a form which was a compromise between that of the rondeau and that of the rondel, A Century of Roundels, which he dedicated to Christina Rossetti".[1] Samuel C. Chew uses almost the same words as Gosse, "One hundred of these little pieces [roundels] were written with too swift facility by way of disciplining the loose fluency of the Pindaric manner which had of late engaged the poet's attention".[2] Harold Nicolson merely accepts Gosse's statement, "Edmund Gosse informs us that A Century of Roundels was written by Swinburne for the purpose of self-discipline and in the realisation that his flowing Pindaric facility was getting somewhat out of hand".[3]

These critics have ascribed to Swinburne a personal reason for writing in the roundel form at this time - a reason having to do with his own tendencies and a seeming need to "curb his Pegasus with a rigidly fixed form". However, there are other factors which must also be considered.

---

1. Welby, op. cit., p. 151.
2. Chew, op. cit., p. 279.
3. Nicolson, op. cit., p. 171.

It does seem that a combination of circumstances rather than one particular reason led to Swinburne's use of the roundel at this time - 1883. He had been for many years interested in the French lyric forms and had, himself, written ballades, sestinas, rondeaux. His interest in these forms was augmented by his association with Gosse and Dobson. With Gosse, in particular, he had kept in contact after his withdrawal from London life to a tranquil semi-retirement at Putney in 1879. This communication is evident from his correspondence during these years.[1] Quite possibly, as Gosse, Chew and Welby state, Swinburne now was attempting "to check his excessive facility". With his metrical brilliance and ingenuity, Swinburne now turned to a French lyric form with which he had briefly experimented many years earlier and devised this shorter variation, the roundel. That he found it to his liking seems evident since he wrote one hundred poems in this same form in 1883, and continued to use it upon occasion in later years.

6. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter Swinburne's interest in French language and literature has been traced from his childhood to the origination of the roundel form from the rondeau. It has

---

1. Lang, ed., op. cit., Vol, 5,6.

been found that from both sides of his family Swinburne was given an early interest in French language and literature. His early fluency in the French language and interest in current French writers such as Beaudelaire and de Banville have been noted. Swinburne's early experimentation with the rondeau form and subsequent experimentation with other French forms, such as the ballade, sestina, double sestina has been discussed. Impetus was given to Swinburne's interest in French forms by the enthusiasm expressed by Gosse and Dobson in 1877 and 1878. When A Century of Roundels was published in 1883 critics considered the roundel to be a new form, a variation of the rondeau, devised by Swinburne, and this conclusion is still accepted. Swinburne, himself, has not given a particular reason for using the roundel form at this time. Critics have suggested a personal reason, an attempt to curb his fluency; however, one must keep in mind Swinburne's longstanding interest in and experimentation with French forms, his recognized technical ingenuity and craftsmanship, and the current interest in England in French forms at that time.

CHAPTER III

ROUNDELS OF SWINBURNE AND CRITICAL REACTION TO THEM

In this chapter it is proposed to note the roundels written by Swinburne and the volumes in which they were published. The critical reaction to the roundels will be discussed. This will include the reaction of critics when A Century of Roundels was first published and reviewed in a number of journals, also, the comments of later critics who, in writing of Swinburne's life and works, have commented briefly upon his roundels.

1. Roundels Written by Swinburne

A Century of Roundels published in 1883 contains the first roundels published by Swinburne. This volume is made up entirely of one hundred and one roundels including the "Dedication to Christina G. Rossetti" which is written in the form of a roundel. There are thirty-nine individual roundels. The remaining roundels are written in roundel sequences. The sequences vary in length from two roundels to eight. There are four sequences of two roundels; these are "In Harbour", Time and Life", "One of Twain", "On an Old Roundel". There are eight sequences of three roundels; these are "Recollections", "A Dialogue", "Past Days", "The Death of Richard Wagner", "Étude Réaliste", "A Ninth

Birthday", "Not A Child", "Eros". There are two sequences of four roundels - "Autumn and Winter" and "Babyhood". There are no sequences of five or six roundels. There are two sequences of seven roundels,"A Dead Friend" and "A Baby's Death". There is one sequence of eight roundels, "In Guernsey".

Several roundels are found among Swinburne's later works. In A Channel Passage and Other Poems are "A Roundel of Rabelais",[1] a single roundel, and in the same volume two sequences: "At a Dog's Grave"[2] comprised of three roundels, and "Clasp of Hands"[3] comprised of three roundels. All of these follow exactly the regulations regarding length, rhyme scheme, and refrain initiated in A Century of Roundels. In this volume there is also one other poem entitled "Roundel" with the subtitle "From the French of Villon".[4] This poem of ten lines and two refrains observes the requirements of the rondeau form rather than the roundel form.

---

1. A.C. Swinburne, Collected Works, Vol. 6, London, 1904, p. 396.

2. Ibid., p. 400.

3. Ibid., p. 403.

4. Ibid., p. 395.

This is in fact a translation of the same rondeau by Villon which Dante Gabriel Rossetti had translated, "Lay, ou Plustot Rondeau", and to which Swinburne had referred in his roundel "On an Old Roundel" in A Century of Roundels. In this poem, which is a rondeau, Swinburne has the same number of lines and the same rhyme scheme used by Villon.

Among Swinburne's Posthumous Poems is a single roundel "Sairey Gamp's Roundel" which, as the footnote to the poem explains, Swinburne had sent to his sister Isabel on Feb. 19, 1883 - when he was composing the roundels for A Century of Roundels.[2] There is also a poem entitled "Autumn Roundel"[3] but this poem of twelve lines and two refrains is closer to the form of a rondeau.

Published in New Writings by Swinburne is a sequence of ten roundels entitled "Rondeaux Parisiens",[4] which Lang states "have never been published but were privately printed by Gosse and Wise in 1917, with a preface signed by the

---

1. Cohen, op. cit., p. 56.

2. A.C. Swinburne, Complete Works, Bonchurch Edition, Vol. 6, New York, 1904, p. 355.

3. Ibid., p. 346.

4. C.Y. Lang, ed., New Writings by Swinburne, Syracuse, 1964, pp. 22-26.

latter".[1] These are important as demonstrating the use of the roundel for satire. They were known to Georges Lafourcade who stated:

> Those very fine vituperative pieces are open to one chief objection: the irony is at once violent and so veiled that one is at times in doubt whether the author condemns French "cant" or actual English vices ... . For this, and for many other reasons, no English review would print the Rondeaux in 1886. But they illustrate as well as explain Swinburne's revulsion of feeling.[2]

In the "Editor's Commentary and Notes" of New Writings by Swinburne are included two other roundels closely connected with "Rondeaux Parisiens": "To Booth and Stead"[3] and "Believe it we must"[4] which had been printed previously in A Swinburne Library (pp. 235-236).[5] "Believe it we must" had occurred as the tenth roundel in the earlier manuscript of "Rondeaux Parisiens" and been cancelled. Also printed

---

1. Ibid., p. 191.
2. Lafourcade, Swinburne, p. 281.
3. Lang, op. cit., p. 194.
4. Ibid., p. 195.
5. Ibid., p. 194.

in this volume is a roundel merely entitled "Roundel"[1] which, Lang states, was published in the Scots Observer, Jan. 25, 1890, p. 269, over Swinburne's name and not reprinted or listed in the bibliographies.[2]

Thus, it may be noted that Swinburne's first use of the roundel form was in 1883 in A Century of Roundels which contains both single roundels and roundel sequences. "Rondeaux Parisiens" seems to have been written in 1885 as Lang states that "Swinburne seems to have offered the poems to James Knowles for publication in the Nineteenth Century"[3]. A roundel was published in the Scots Observer in 1890, a single roundel and two sequences are printed in Swinburne's last volume of poetry A Channel Passage and Other Poems in 1904. We can conclude, therefore, that there is a continuity in Swinburne's use of this form from 1883 to his final volume of poetry in 1904. In the following chapters an evaluation will be made of the use made by Swinburne of both the individual roundel and the roundel sequence.

---

1. Ibid., p. 27.
2. Ibid., p. 196.
3. Ibid., p. 191.

2. Critical Reaction to A Century of Roundels

This volume was reviewed in literary journals on its publication in 1883. Also later critics who published volumes devoted to Swinburne and his work have commented upon A Century of Roundels. It is proposed to discuss first the early reviewers' assessments and then the comments of later critics. Among the journals in which reviews appeared soon after publication of the volume are the following: The Athenaeum, The Academy, The Times, The Contemporary Review, The Spectator, Contemporary Literature.

James Ashcroft Noble writing in The Academy expresses an interest in Swinburne's reason for choosing this particular form, and compares the roundel form to the sonnet. He states that Swinburne has demonstrated that a seemingly artificial form may be used to express serious and profound emotion:

> ... the roundel with doubtless a little less weight than the sonnet has, as will be seen, an additional flexibility, which more than compensates. For, though its main structural lines are equally determinate, it allows a metrical freedom from which the sonnet maker is debarred, and many readers will incline to think that Mr. Swinburne, who has never greatly affected the sonnet, has raised a powerful and dangerous rival.
>
> One thing certainly is proved by this Century of Roundels - that these so-called artificial forms are not limited in range to the light and playful motives and the dainty finger-tip touch with which

> they have been for the most part associated. The majority of Mr. Swinburne's roundels are sombre, or at least pensive, rather than gay or trifling; and some of his greatest triumphs are achieved in poems where the thought is weighted and the emotion most profound.
> .....
> ... On the whole, one may say, with no tone of hesitation, that Mr. Swinburne has never produced anything more fully satisfying, more flawlessly beautiful, than these hundred swallow-flights of song.[1]

W. P. Ker comments, in The Contemporary Review, upon Swinburne's invention of a new form and upon the wide range of ideas expressed in the roundels. However, he considers that in some of the roundels the ideas are too profound for the lightness of the meter:

> Mr. Swinburne has chosen not to put on the mask of the old writers of rondeaux; he has invented a model of his own, with variations of his own, and he does not keep to any limited range of ideas, such as used to be thought suitable for the rondeau's "scanty plot of ground". Sometimes he seems rather to overload his light metres - for example, in the poem "On the Death of Richard Wagner". ... There is one authoritative use of grave words in this kind of metre, "On an old roundel translated by D.G. Rossetti from the French of Villon".[2]

The critic (unsigned) in Contemporary Literature remarks upon the fact that in A Century of Roundels

---

1. James Ashcroft Noble, "A Century of Roundels", The Academy, No. 581, June 23, 1883, p. 430.

2. W. P. Ker, "Contemporary Record-Poetry", The Contemporary Review, XLIV, Sept. 1883, p. 467.

Swinburne has given up his usual freedom to use an arbitrary form, and is warm in his praise of the result:

> We do not know whether Mr. Swinburne, like Wordsworth, has felt "the weight of too much liberty", but in this volume he has for the time given up his unchartered freedom and voluntarily subjected himself to the trammels of an arbitrary form. The result is so charming that were it not for the remembrance of certain mighty choruses, unfettered lyrics, and passages of masculine dramatic verse, we might wish that Mr. Swinburne would go on writing "roundels" forever ... this volume ... is full of high imagination, of noble emotion, of varied and exquisite music.[1]

A somewhat less enthusiastic critic (unsigned) in The Spectator expresses the view that the roundel is suited only to light verse and thus to a narrow range of themes:

> But we are sure that we are expressing the feelings of many readers, when we say that the choice in this particular instance does not seem to us a very happy one. A roundel is a pretty and ingenious toy. Constructed with the metrical skill of which Mr. Swinburne is master, it is capable of giving, on occasion, a good deal of pleasure. But the occasion we take it is when it comes as a change, a relief after some poem which requires laborious thought, or which appeals to the deeper emotions ... .
> Here [in the roundel] man is evidently master of what he deals with. He sports with language, twists it and turns it at his pleasure, and so stirs no deeper feeling than the satisfaction with which we regard the skilful exercise of art. Hence there naturally follows a very narrow limitation of the themes with which such poems can properly deal.[2]

---

1. "A Century of Roundels" (literary review), Contemporary Literature, June, 1883, p. 398. (Unsigned article).

2. "Mr. Swinburne's Century of Roundels" (literary review), The Spectator, July 28, 1883, p. 960 (Unsigned article).

The Athenaeum critic, as had The Academy critic, compares the roundels (which he refers to as rondeaux) with the sonnet commenting: "It is of course, impossible to say that a language which has accepted and incorporated into its literature the sonnet is incapable of dealing similarly with the rondeau".[1] It seems that this critic is wondering whether the roundel will become a commonly used form in English poetry. The same critic believes that the important point in assessing the quality of these poems is to decide whether the form is indispensable to the thought and expression, or whether the poet is arbitrarily imposing the artificial form upon the matter:

> For the first time the fitness of the rondeau for modern English verse is now fairly tested. The result can scarcely be held conclusive. Mr. Swinburne employs the form with perfect facility and supplies rondeaux, or roundels as he elects to call them, in verses of different metres. Dainty in workmanship are many of the poems, and likely to be esteemed for felicity of expression as well as for the value of the thought they crystallize. Before, however, they can be pronounced wholly successful they must convince the judgment that the form they bear is indispensable to their value, or is, at least, the best they can be supposed to assume.[2]

---

1. "A Century of Roundels" (literary review), The Athenaeum, June 16, 1883, p. 755. (Unsigned article).

2. Ibid., p. 755.

To this critic the form is seen to have a particular value for Swinburne because his tendency to diffuseness is restrained by it. However, the critic's general conclusion is that the form is inadequate for serious purposes, and that it will not survive except as an "exotic":

> The restraint imposed on him by the vehicle he has chosen is obviously an advantage in one respect. His great faults, diffuseness of expression and looseness of thought, are here held in check by the chains to which he has subjected himself; on the other hand his greatest merits, his rush of emotion and verbal movement, cannot find vent here.
> .....
> For serious purposes, and for a writer of Mr. Swinburne's powers, the roundel must be pronounced an inadequate form of composition. In this country at least it will most probably, in spite of Mr. Swinburne's efforts, remain an exotic, and will not lose the character of naivëte which Boileau assigns to it as a Gallic product. 1

The Times, London, June 6, 1883, devotes over two complete newspaper columns to a review of Swinburne's A Century of Roundels, quoting several examples and expressing admiration at Swinburne's ability to use this form for more serious purposes than would be expected:

> Although cast in a mould usually associated with the lighter forms of French verse, it [the roundel] deals with some of the vital questions affecting humanity with suggestiveness and solemnity. Occasionally we find a pathos and a dignity which are almost without parallel in the author's previous works, and when the difficulty of the setting is remembered, this will be recognized as a very high merit. There are many lines and thoughts which would do honour to any living poet.

1. Ibid., p. 756.

> This serious effort to write the roundel as Mr. Swinburne has written it is, we believe, unique in English literature. Our language is generally regarded as not sufficiently flexible and plastic for the purpose, and no doubt many of our poets have not the necessary nimbleness and dexterity of movement which are essential in the roundel. Mr. Swinburne, however, who has no mean mastery over almost all kinds of rhyme and verse, appears to have overcome these difficulties.[1]

In general, it seems that the first reaction to this form was somewhat mixed. There is general admiration for the dexterity and craftsmanship of the poet. There is a recognition that a wide range of ideas, including the more serious and profound, is dealt with. Critics are divided as to whether the poet has successfully adapted it to a more serious use.

In the twentieth century several critics turned their attention to Swinburne. However, those publishing books concerning Swinburne's life and works seem to have directed little attention to A Century of Roundels. Edmund Gosse, in The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne comments briefly upon the roundels, admiring the variety achieved, and noting, particularly, the many roundels in praise of babies:

---

1. Mr. Swinburne's New Volume" (literary review), The Times, London, June 6, 1883, p. 4. (Unsigned article).

> ... Swinburne showed a marvellous aptitude in combining variety with an exact observance of the essential laws. He composed one hundred of these little poems, which he published in a small quarto, dedicated to his old and beloved friend Christina Rossetti, in the spring of 1883. The roundels were largely, though much less universally than has been said in haste, concerned with the praise of babes, since Swinburne's passion for infancy was now at its height; but they really formed a garland of delicate records of meditation, stored up through many years, and now first enshrined in metrical form.[1]

Georges Lafourcade mentions A Century of Roundels very briefly in his biography of Swinburne: "... A Century of Roundels, which contains, in a metrical form which appears slight and artificial, the lyrical expression of many earnest feelings and ideas".[2] In La Jeunesse de Swinburne, which is concerned with Swinburne's life from 1837 to 1867, Lafourcade refers briefly to the roundels with the one comment: "Dans A Century of Roundels Swinburne a perfectionné a l'extrême la forme du rondeau et introduit de grandes variations prosodiques".[3]

Samuel C. Chew gives a brief assessment of A Century

---

1. Edmund Gosse, The Life of Charles Algernon Swinburne, London, 1917, p. 243.

2. Lafourcade, Swinburne, p. 295.

3. Georges Lafourcade, La Jeunesse de Swinburne, Tome 2, London, 1928, p. 454. [The French may be translated as follows: In A Century of Roundels Swinburne has perfected to the utmost the rondeau form and introduced great prosodical variations.]

of Roundels. His opinion is that the roundels are written with "too swift facility". He is particularly critical of the roundels concerned with babies, but does concede that a few of the roundels have "a quiet charm":

> One hundred of these little pieces were written with too swift facility by way of disciplining the loose fluency of the Pindaric manner which had of late engaged the poet's attention. It is obvious that some remedy more drastic than easy obedience to fixed rules should have been adopted to check the fatal fluency. To read the collection through is an exhausting experience; the studies of babyhood are particularly trying. But several of the poems have something of a quiet charm.[1]

Harold C. Nicolson finds A Century of Roundels "interesting only as a reflection of his early moods at Putney, [where Swinburne lived with Watts-Dunton from 1879 until his death] and as an illustration of the deplorable poetry which, in spite of Hugo's 'L'Art d'etre grand-pere', is generally written about children".[2] Mr. Nicolson goes on to qualify his remarks, admitting, in particular, the value of those roundels written in reflection upon the past:

---

1. Samuel C. Chew, Swinburne, Boston, 1929, p. 279.
2. Harold Nicolson, Swinburne, London, 1926, p. 171.

> Those of them that do not deal with the charms of infants are pleasant enough, and there is real interest in the mood of gentle remorse which inspired such pieces as "In Harbour", "Had I Wist", and "Recollections". Nor can I omit to mention and to praise the exquisite skill and concession of "A Flowerpiece by Fantin".[1]

T. Earle Welby, in A Study of Swinburne merely mentions the volume, A Century of Roundels: "In 1883, in an attempt to check his excessive facility, he composed, in a form which was a compromise between that of the rondeau and that of the rondel, A Century of Roundels, which he dedicated to Christina Rossetti".[2]

I. Evans is critical of the content of the roundels while admitting the technical skill displayed in writing them. He singles out the roundels concerning babies for particular criticism:

> A Century of Roundels (1883) displayed a continuance of technical ingenuity in the mastery of a different form, without a corresponding strength in content. Nature has been supplemented by an interest in baby life: the "libidinous laureate" of Faustine has become the laureate of babyhood. His admiration for Blake led him to believe that he, too, could capture innocence with power, and it is pathetic to watch his failure. [3]

---

1. Ibid., p. 171.

2. T. Earle Welby, op. cit., p. 151.

3. Ifor Evans, English Poetry in the Later Nineteenth Century, London, 1933. p. 83.

In general, it may be said that these critics of the 1920's and 1930's, in their overall assessments of Swinburne's life and works, have little to say about A Century of Roundels. The technical skill required to write a number of poems in adherence to a fixed form is recognized. The roundels concerned with babyhood were most frequently singled out for criticism. Their statements are, for the most part, of a very general nature.

3. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, the roundels written by Swinburne and the volumes in which they were published have been noted. The critical reaction upon publication of A Century of Roundels has been discussed. This reaction was somewhat mixed. Noble, in The Academy, and the unsigned critics in Contemporary Literature and The Times have expressed admiration for the poet's skill and for his adaptation of a seemingly light form for serious themes. W. P. Ker in The Contemporary Review and the unsigned critics in The Spectator and The Athenaeum are less enthusiastic, concluding that the form is inadequate for dealing with serious themes. Critics of the twentieth century - Gosse, Lafourcade, Chew, Nicolson, Welby, Evans - in their assessments of Swinburne's life and works, have devoted

little attention to A Century of Roundels. Their brief comments generally refer to the evident technical skill of the poet and to the fact that babyhood provides the most frequently used theme.

CHAPTER IV

AN EXAMINATION OF SINGLE ROUNDELS

Thirty-nine of one hundred and one roundels in A Century of Roundels are single roundels. In this chapter seven single roundels will be examined. The purpose of this examination is to evaluate the use made of the single roundel form by Swinburne; that is, the various themes which are developed, the different tones expressed, the various meters employed, the objective correlative patterns used, the kinds of imagery, literary devices, and figures of speech made use of, the significance of the refrain, and any variation in structure from the roundel as defined. In the first section the two roundels "Dead Love" and "'Had I Wist'" will be analysed line by line. In the second section, the five roundels "First Footsteps", "A Night-Piece by Millet", Tristan Und Isolde", "Ventimiglia", and "At Sea", will be examined in a less detailed way.

1. An Examination of "Dead Love" and "'Had I Wist'"

The first roundel to be examined is "Dead Love", a single roundel which in A Century of Roundels is numbered LXXXIV:

DEAD LOVE

Dead love, by treason slain, lies stark,
White as a dead stark-stricken dove:
None that pass by him pause to mark
Dead love.

His heart, that strained and yearned and strove
As toward the sundawn strives the lark,
Is cold as all the old joy thereof.

Dead men, re-risen from dust, may hark
When rings the trumpet blown above:
It will not raise from out the dark
Dead love. [1]

The structural form of this roundel conforms to the definition in Chapter I: that is, it consists of nine lines divided into three stanzas and using two rhymes, as follows: a,b,a,B/ b,a,b/ a,b,a,B. The one variation in this roundel is that the b rhyme ending line four is a slant rhyme. The refrain is indented.

The poem may be scanned as follows:

Dead love, by treason slain, lies stark,
White as a dead stark-stricken dove:
None that pass by him pause to mark
Dead love.

His heart, that strained and yearned and strove
As toward the sundawn strives the lark,
Is cold as all the old joy thereof.

1. A.C. Swinburne, A Century of Roundels, p. 84.

Dead men, re-risen from dust, may hark
When rings the trumpet blown above:
It will not raise from out the dark
Dead love.

It can be seen that each verse with the exception of the refrain consists of four iambic feet with occasional variations. The refrain consists of two syllables forming, rather than one iambic foot, a hovering accent.

Verse one: Dead love, by treason slain, lies stark,

In verse one, love, personified, has been killed by the treachery or faithlessness of the loved one. L is alliterated in love and lies; s is alliterated in slain and stark. The alliteration combines with the preponderance of long vowels in Dead, love, trea-, slain, lies, stark to produce a slow, heavy movement. The meter is iambic. The one variation is the hovering accent on the first foot which emphasizes Dead love. The sombre tone is accentuated by the repetition of words with similar connotations - dead, slain, lies stark. There is a pause which is marked by a comma at the end of the verse. Also there are two pauses within the line which are required by the logical sense and are marked by commas. These occur after love and after slain and contribute to the slow movement.

Verse two: White as a dead stark-stricken dove:

In this verse a simile is used to compare love to a dove. Love is said to be like the dove in being white, and in this case both love and the dove, having been struck down, are dead. The tone seems harsher now because of the repetition of dead and stark used in verse one; the hovering accent on stark-stricken and the alliteration of st cause a greater emphasis to be placed on stark-stricken. The juxtaposition of white and dove with dead stark-stricken contrasts innocence, gentleness, and peace usually associated with white and dove,with the harshness and severity of dead and stark and stricken, thus heightening the sorrowful element. The rhythmic effect created by the initial trochaic foot followed by an iambic foot is an acceleration of the rhythm of the first part of the verse as the reader hurries from white over the two unaccented syllables to dead. From dead the rhythm is slower as the accented dead with its long vowels is followed by the hovering accent over stark-stricken and then by the accented longer vowel in dove which concludes the line. The punctuation at the end of verse two is a colon. Since the first and second verse form a complete unit the use of the colon conforms to the sense structure. The sombre tone of the first verse is increased by the comparison of love to

a white dove and a harsher note added by the reiteration of dead and stark, the repetitive effect created by stark-stricken, and the harsher sound of the consonants in these two words.

Verse three and refrain, which complete stanza one, will be dealt with together because, from the point of view of logical sense, they form one unit.

Verse three and refrain: None that pass by him pause
to mark
Dead love.

In these lines, the desolation of dead love is further amplified by the relation of the complete neglect accorded to love by those who pass by him. The trochaic foot introducing verse three stresses None. Alliteration is used in pass and pause. The two unaccented syllables between pass and pause combine with the alliterated p, and the long vowels in pause to increase the emphasis on pause. This word is important because it shows that, not only does no one stop to help, but there is an even more complete and absolute neglect in the fact that no one even hesitates or pauses momentarily on his way. The rhythm moves more quickly in the first part of verse three in which the vowels are short, but it slows with the longer vowels in pause and the

slow movement of the long vowels in the refrain, Dead love. Verse three and refrain continue the personification of dead love, adding to it the picture of the complete lack of concern of all who pass him without a glance. This image adds a more dismal note to the sombre tone.

Verse four: His heart, that strained and yearned
and strove

Here the personification of love is continued and there is a turning to the past and to the yearning and striving of His [love's] heart. The alliteration of the h, the hovering accent, over His heart and the comma after heart combine to emphasize His heart. The long vowels in the remainder of the verse in strained, yearned, strove, and the repetition of the connective and tend to lengthen the line although the verse is only four iambic feet in length. Strained and strove alliterate. The effect of this alliteration combines with the regular rhythm of the last three feet and the lengthened line with its long vowels and linking and's to reinforce the impression of yearning and striving already present in the logical sense of the verse. By means of enjambment the impression of striving is carried over into the next verse.

Verse five: As toward the sundawn strives the lark,

In this verse a simile is used to compare love's yearning and striving to that of the lark; its hopefulness is implicit in the reference to the sundawn towards which the lark is striving, and in the use of the lark as the objective correlative with its connotations of hope and coming day. Alliteration of s in sundawn strives with the hovering accent over sundawn, and with the long i in strives serves to slow down the rhythm causing more emphasis on the word strives. The meter is iambic, regular except for the one hovering accent. The simile in this verse accentuates the striving already emphasized in the previous verse. The tone is more hopeful because of the use of the image of the lark seeking the dawn. The use of the comma at the end of the verse marks the logical sense pause.

Verse six: Is cold as all the old joy thereof.

The subject of Is cold is His heart in verse four. The thought begun in verse four with His heart is now continued in the form of a simile: his [love's] heart is as cold as the joys now are which had been derived from this love. The simile, in this instance, does not compare the coldness of his heart to something completely exterior as in the comparison to the lark in the previous verse.

Rather, it compares the coldness of love's heart now to the coldness now of the joys which once followed from love; thereby reinforcing the concept of the desolation resulting from the death of love with the concept that the joys which are the concomitant of love are also dead. The meter is iambic with the exception of the third foot which is anapestic with a hovering accent over old joy; this variation in the meter causes old joy to be given more emphasis. This verse increases the hopeless and desolate tone with its reminder of former joys and of the fact that these, too, are as dead as the love from which they sprang. The diction in the use of cold and old, with the connotations of neglect with cold and of decay and death with old, contributesto this tone. Also the rhyming of cold and old unites these two concepts. The emphasis on all by assonance and alliteration with as, and on old joy by the metrical variation, and the use of long o sounds in cold, old, joy, thereof also contribute to the hopeless and desolate tone. The period concludes this stanza with a complete pause.

Verse seven: Dead men, re-risen from dust, may hark

This verse, which begins the third stanza, initiates a new idea with its first words, Dead men. The logical meaning requires a sense pause after men and after dust.

These pauses are marked by commas. The use of the hovering accent over Dead men together with the long vowels in these two words and the pause after men which is marked by a comma, focus attention on these first two words of the stanza. The meter of the verse is iambic. Alliteration of r in re-risen emphasizes risen. The pause after dust which is marked by a comma, and the alliteration of dust with the preceding Dead focus attention on dust with its connotation of dissolution of the body, thus contrasting more strongly with the already emphasized re-risen. The tone changes slightly from that of hopeless desolation which concluded stanza two; though still sombre with references to Dead and dust yet the mention of re-risen and hark contribute a more hopeful note. In keeping with the logical sense there is enjambment with the thought continued into verse eight.

Verse eight: When rings the trumpet blown above:

This verse completes the sense pattern initiated in verse seven by referring to the sound of the trumpet which will be heard by dead men as the signal for their resurrection. The meter is iambic without any variation. Rings and trumpet, by both the shorter syllables and the harsher, sharper sound of the r and t, strike a more optimistic and hopeful note which is added to by the connotations of joy,

celebration, or victory, associated with rings and trumpet blown. This is in keeping with the logical sense of the verse which continues the hopeful tone initiated by the preceding verse. Above contributes to the same optimistic tone, with its reference to the trumpet being blown in heaven, and with the usual hopeful connotation associated with above. The b sound links by alliteration above with the preceding trumpet blown. This verse concludes with a longer pause which is marked by a colon.

Verse nine and refrain: It will not raise from out
the dark
Dead love,

It refers to the ringing sound of the trumpet. The tone alters immediately from the more hopeful to a return to the sombre and hopeless one which concluded stanza two. The words not, out, and dark negate the hopeful tone. There is no punctuation ending the verse, and the logical sense is incomplete until the final refrain Dead love is read. The negative statement is heightened by its juxtaposition with the more hopeful one preceding it which referred to the coming resurrection of man; the fact that man can be raised from dust heightens the hopelessness which comes with the realization that Dead love cannot be raised at all. The natural pause which occurs at the end of a line, combined with the alliteration of the d in dark / Dead, contributes

to the emphasis on Dead. The tone with which the poem concludes is a dismal, hopeless one.

This roundel has a primarily sombre, hopeless tone which intensifies as the poem progresses. The imagery used comparing dead love to a dove which has been struck down, and to a lark striving toward the sun contributesto this tone. The two more hopeful notes introduced, with the reference to the lark and to the resurrection of the dead at the trumpet's sound, merely emphasize by contrast the hopelessness associated with dead love. Assonance and alliteration are used frequently to focus attention on key words, to slow the movement and to link ideas.

The three stanzas form three main sense divisions. The first stanza relates the death of love, slain by an act of treason, and adds the further dismal note in that no one shows the least concern about the death of love. The second stanza adds to the desolate tone. Turning to the past to the yearning and striving of love to attain its goal, a simile is used to compare love's striving in the past with that of a lark seeking the dawn. A further emphasis on the hopeless and sombre tone is added by the contrast of the present with the past: love,once striving as hopefully as the lark,now is cold as are also its former joys. In the final stanza a further contrast is used to intensify the

hopeless tone: not even the commanding sound of the trumpet from heaven which will finally cause man's resurrection will revive dead love. Thus each stanza intensifies the sombre, hopeless, and desolate tone and expands the theme of the sadness and hopelessness of a dead love.

The refrain, which consists of the first foot of the first line, intensifies the sombre tone and accentuates the theme each time it is used. Since the theme consists of more than the refrain - the theme is the sadness and hopelessness of a dead love - it is echoed but not completely stated by the refrain, Dead love. The refrain is used in a slightly different way each time. In verse one the words Dead love initiate the theme, Dead love [which] lies stark. The refrain following verse three completes the thought introduced in the preceding verse, that none who pass dead love, who lies slain, pays even the slightest attention to him. This serves to heighten the desolate tone. The second use of the refrain completes the concept introduced in verse nine, that not even the trumpet which raises dead men to life will raise dead love to life. This final refrain, in conjunction with verse nine, gives a note of finality to the hopelessness which is being expressed.

The second roundel to be examined in this section is "'Had I Wist'" which was published in A Century of Roundels and in that volume was given the number IV:

'HAD I WIST'

Had I wist, when life was like a warm wind playing
Light and loud through sundawn and the dew's bright mist,
How the time should come for hearts to sigh in saying
'Had I wist' -

Surely not the roses, laughing as they kissed,
Not the lovelier laugh of seas in sunshine swaying,
Should have lured my soul to look thereon and list.

Now the wind is like a soul cast out and praying
Vainly, prayers that pierce not ears when hearts resist:
Now mine own soul sighs, adrift as wind and straying,
'Had I wist.' [1]

As with the previous roundel analysed, "'Had I Wist'" conforms exactly to the external structure of the roundel: the poem consists of nine lines and two refrains divided into three stanzas. The rhyme scheme is a,b,a,B / b,a,b / a,b,a,B. The refrain 'Had I Wist' consists of the first three words of the first line. The a rhyme is a feminine

---

1. Ibid., p. 4.

rhyme.

The poem may be scanned as follows:

Had I wist, when life was like a warm wind playing
Light and loud through sundawn and the dew's bright mist,
How the time should come for hearts to sigh in saying
'Had I wist' -

Surely not the roses, laughing as they kissed,
Not the lovelier laugh of seas in sunshine swaying,
Should have lured my soul to look thereon and list.

Now the wind is like a soul cast out and praying
Vainly, prayers that pierce not ears when hearts resist:
Now mine own soul sighs, adrift as wind and straying,
'Had I wist.'

Verse one: Had I wist, when life was like a warm wind playing

In this verse, 'Had I wist [known] is followed by a recollection of the past, when life was like a warm wind playing in which a simile is used to express the feelings associated with the past. There is a caesura marked by a comma after wist. The archaic wist gives an aura of the past. The rhythm is fast in the first part of the verse,

slowing with the long vowels and feminine ending of warm wind playing and the hovering accent over warm wind. It is slowed even more by the alliteration of the w in wist, was, warm wind, and of l in life and like, and by the assonance in the vowel sound i in wist, wind, playing. The simile life was like a warm wind playing brings to this recollection of the past connotations of affection and pleasure which it is pleasant to recall. The slowing of the rhythm accentuates this, as if the mind turning to the past stopped to dwell on remembered happiness. The alliteration of li in when life was like accentuates a lilting effect produced by the two regular iambic feet which follow the brief pause at the comma. This contributes to the pleasant impression of the past created by the simile. The tone is one of tranquil, pleasant reflection.

Verse two: Light and loud through sundawn and the dew's bright mist,

In this verse the simile begun in verse one is continued by means of enjambment. There is a joyous tone conveyed in the description now of the wind playing Light and loud through sundawn and the dew's bright mist. In Light and loud are connotations of carefree good spirits. Sundawn and dew's bright mist imply youth and with youth,

cheerfulness and brightness. The meter varies, the verse beginning with two trochaic feet followed by one iambic, one anapestic, and ending with one iambic foot. This results in a quicker rhythm initially, augmented by the short vowels of the first two words. Then the rhythm is slower with the long vowels loud, through, dawn. The tempo increases in the last foot and the verse concludes with a comma, a pause which coincides with the logical sense inasmuch as the simile used to reminisce about the past comes to an end. The effect of the alliteration of l combines with the regularity of the first two feet to give a lilting effect in keeping with the carefree mood implied in the words. The rhyme of light and bright also contributes to this mood. The alliteration of d in dawn and dew causes a slowing of movement and slightly increased stress on dew's. The tone of this verse is light and joyous.

Verse three: How the time should come for hearts to sigh in saying

This verse is a continuation in thought from the first words of verse one, Had I wist . There is a transition from the recollection of the past to a time which is not precisely stated but is probably the present - a time very different in mood from that of verse two. This change

in mood is conveyed by to sigh; hearts implies an emotional basis for the sorrow or regret which causes the sighing. The alliteration of s in sigh in saying and the sound sh in should emphasize this new note of sorrow or regret as do the long vowels and the feminine rhyme which draw out the length of the line. The movement is slower than in the preceding verse. There is in sigh the connotation not only of sorrow but of a passive resignation. There is no punctuation ending the line, but the logical meaning of this verse is completed by the following verse which is the refrain.

Refrain: 'Had I wist' -

The refrain completes the logical sense of the previous verse with the statement in quotation marks of what is being said by the hearts, as they look back to the past and sigh. The dash leaves the statement incomplete in the realistic way in which regret is so often phrased, and also forms a bridge to the further reminiscence of stanza two. The refrain suitably augments the tone of regret of the previous verse which is in sharp contrast to the remembered warmth and carefree pleasure of youth which were expressed in the first two verses.

Verse four: Surely not the roses, laughing as they kissed,

The diction in this verse - roses, laughing, kissed, with the connotations of spring or youth, of beauty, happiness, and love - regains the joyous mood lost in verse three and refrain, except for the stressed not which brings a negation to these symbols of love and happiness, a negation somewhat softened by Surely. There are pauses after roses and after kissed. The rhythm is quicker after the first pause as the reader tends to hurry from the stressed syllable laugh- over the three unstressed syllables to the final stressed kissed. Kissed with its connotations of love and affection is thus stressed. The quickening rhythm contributes to the happier tone of this verse, which is paramount despite the one negating word, not.

Verse five: Not the lovelier laugh of seas in sunshine swaying

The light tone is continued in this verse with the continued mood of happiness which now is reflected in the sound and movement of the sea. Laugh is repeated, emphasizing the joy, and this is further emphasized by the alliteration of l in lovelier laugh. The diction emphasizes the happiness - lovelier, laugh, sunshine. The evenness of the meter, the alliteration of l and s, the feminine rhyme

ending the line without punctuation contribute to the rhythmic swaying motion of the line, reinforcing the image of the swaying sea. The one negative word Not is more prominent here than in verse four, both because of its position as the first word in the verse following a comma ending verse four and because it is not softened by Surely as in verse four. Not adds a foreboding note. Yet the pervading tone is a light one reflecting the joy inherent in the imagery.

Verse six: Should have lured my soul to look thereon and list.

This verse clarifies the meaning of the previous two verses. Not all the pleasure and beauty and joy reflected in the images in verses four and five should have lured him if he had only known. The fact that the roses laughing as they kissed in verse four and the lovelier laugh of seas in verse five are now seen as temptations is clear from the use of the word lured which implies deception, temptation, a decoy or enticement intended to entrap. In this verse the alliteration of l in lured, look, list reinforces this most significant point, placing more emphasis on the accented lure, look, list. List is an archaic word meaning to like or to incline to. Here the speaker recalls the steps whereby he found himself enticed to look upon and to like those pleasures reflected in the sensuous imagery of verses four

and five. The tone alters now, recalling the tone of regret in the refrain, but becoming more melancholy now because of the further recollection in verses four and five of the pleasure and love of the past by which he had been so attracted.

Verse seven: Now the wind is like a soul cast out and praying

With the first word of this verse, Now, we have the first precise reference to the present time. In direct contrast to the description of the past in verse one, when life was like a warm wind playing, in this verse describing the present time, a simile is used to compare the wind to a soul cast out and praying. There is no punctuation after praying, but the thought continues into the next verse with the word Vainly. There is a melancholy lonely tone now in this comparison of the wind to a cast out soul, to one rejected. The image is reversed; whereas previously life was compared to a wind, now the wind is compared to a soul. The tempo is moderate.

Verse eight: Vainly, prayers that pierce not ears when hearts resist:

Vainly completes the phrase begun with the last word in verse seven, praying. The melancholy mood is heightened

by the hopeless situation of the soul cast out now intensified by the uselessness of his prayers. The logical sense of the remainder of this verse - that the prayers (of the cast out soul) are not heard because hearts refuse to listen, introduces a harsher tone. This is further heightened by the primarily short, sharp syllables and the harsher sound of the frequently repeated r. The alliteration of p in prayers and pierce causes some emphasis on pierce. The verse ends with a more pronounced pause punctuated with a colon. With the final words hearts resist is the implication that the heart to which he is pleading refuses to listen. The tempo remains moderate but slowed slightly by the comma after Vainly. The verse is end-stopped, punctuated by a colon.

Verse nine: Now mine own soul sighs, adrift as wind
and straying,

All the connotations associated with the soul cast out and the vain prayers become intensely subjective with the words Now mine own soul sighs. As stanza one had referred more generally to the fact that a time comes for hearts to sigh, the reference now is to mine own soul. The subjective nature of what is stated is emphasized by the archaic mine, rather than my, which lengthens the syllable,

and by own which emphasizes by repetition the same idea as mine. There is a caesura after sighs, which is necessary for the logical sense and also accentuates sighs, as do the alliteration of s and the hovering accent over soul sighs. The vowels, in this first part of the verse, Now mine own soul sighs, are long and intensify, by their sound, the impression of the soul sighing. The last section of this verse, adrift as wind and straying, re-emphasizes the concept of verse seven of the wind like a soul cast out in a simile comparing the soul to an aimless, homeless, and wandering wind. The assonance of the i in adrift, wind, straying contributes to the long drawn out, mournful effect created by this image of the soul aimless and wandering, to whom life now seems without a goal. Tempo, which is assisted by the long vowels and the caesura,remains moderately slow, similar to the previous verse.

Refrain: 'Had I wist'.

The refrain, in quotation marks, is this time spoken by the soul of the speaker and thus reflects his own feelings. The personal note is carried over from verse nine, mine own soul sighs, ... 'Had I wist' thus intensifying the melancholy, regretful tone on which the poem ends.

The speaker has expressed his own melancholy regret

that he could not foresee that the love which brought joy to his youth would end in sorrow. The tone is melancholy, keynoted by the refrain, 'Had I wist' which calls to mind the wistfulness which seems a part of the recollection of the past love and joy.

In summary, the theme is initiated in stanza one - if I had only known, when life was so joyous, that a time of sadness and regret would come. In this stanza the pleasure and happiness of the past are recalled, but the stanza ends on a tone of regret. Stanza one concludes with a dash which provides a transition to stanza two in which the thoughts and feelings expressed in stanza two are a direct outcome of the turning to the past with the refrain ending the preceding stanza 'Had I wist' -. Stanza two emphasizes with sensuous imagery the attractiveness of this love and joy of youth. Stanza three then shifts the tense to the present and to a more personal point of view, causing everything expressed thus far to become a part of the present of mine own soul. This intensifies the melancholy tone on which the roundel concludes. Throughout the roundel there is extensive use of assonance and alliteration which slow the tempo, focus attention on key words, and smooth the rhythm.

There is tension created by the recollections of the

past in a way which at once expresses the love, joy and hopefulness of youth and, at the same time, sees the loss of these now as having resulted in unhappiness and regret. The objective correlative used to express the past is taken from the more sensuous and joyous aspects of external nature, warm wind, sundawn, dew's bright mist, roses, seas, sunshine, thus emphasizing the attractiveness as well as the joy and beauty recalled with the past.

A unifying effect is created by the image of the wind, used first with pleasant connotations referring to the past, warm wind playing, and then with the mournful connotations referring to the present, the wind is like a soul cast out, mine own soul sighs, adrift as wind. The refrain, also, gives a unity to the poem; it keynotes the theme, and each time it is repeated has a greater intensity and contributes further to the tone of melancholy regret. The refrain becomes very personal when used after verse nine, whereas after verse three it was used in a more impersonal way.

2. A Survey of Five Roundels

The following five roundels will be examined in less detail than have the preceding two. The purpose of this survey is to examine the variety of themes, tones, meters, and objective correlative patterns used. Also, in the discussion

of these roundels any variation from the usual pattern of the roundel will be commented upon.

There are five single roundels in which the indentations are different. Instead of only the refrain being indented, in "Before Sunset",[1] "Mourning",[2] "Wasted Love",[3] verses two, five, and eight are also indented; in "First Footsteps"[4] and "Change",[5] verses two, four, six, and eight are also indented. In three of these, "Mourning", "Before Sunset", "First Footsteps" the indented verses are also shorter. In "First Footsteps" verses one, three, five, seven and nine are four feet; verses two, four, six, eight are three feet; the refrain is two feet:

FIRST FOOTSTEPS

A little way, more soft and sweet
  Than fields aflower with May,
A babe's feet, venturing, scarce complete
  A little way.

  Eyes full of dawning day
Look up for mother's eyes to meet,
  Too blithe for song to say.

Glad as the golden spring to greet
  Its first live leaflet's play,
Love, laughing, leads the little feet
  A little way.

---

1. Ibid., p. 66.
2. Ibid., p. 87.
3. Ibid., p. 65.
4. Ibid., p. 55.
5. Ibid., p. 35.

"First Footsteps" pictures a baby taking its first few steps with its mother's help. The tone is affectionate and happy, with images associated with youth and joy, such as dawning day, fields aflower with May, golden spring, first live leaflet's play. The diction augments the tone, Glad, laughing, soft and sweet, Too blithe, song. The refrain, A little way, refers in the first stanza to the short distance ventured by the babe, in the final stanza to the joy and love of the mother as she leads him A little way. The varying length of line combined with all the pauses marked by commas in the first and third stanzas seem to imitate, in the rhythm thus created, the hesitant first steps of a baby.

Although several of the roundel sequences (to be discussed) are devoted to babies or children, this is one of only three single roundels in A Century of Roundels which celebrate small children. The others are "Benediction" [1] and "To Dora Dorian" [2].

---

1. Ibid., p. 47.
2. Ibid., p. 62.

In three roundels, Swinburne used a painting as the objective correlative. These roundels are "A Landscape by Courbet"[1], "A Flower-Piece by Fantin"[2], and "A Night-Piece by Millet". Of these, "A Night-Piece by Millet" will be discussed:

A NIGHT-PIECE BY MILLET

Wind and sea and cloud and cloud-forsaking
Mirth of moonlight where the storm leaves free
Heaven awhile, for all the wrath of waking
Wind and sea.

Bright with glad mad rapture, fierce with glee,
Laughs the moon, borne on past cloud's o'ertaking
Fast, it seems, as wind or sail can flee.

One blown sail beneath her, hardly making
Forth, wild-winged for harbourage yet to be,
Strives and leaps and pants beneath the breaking
Wind and sea. [3]

This roundel celebrates a painting by Millet of the wind and sea. In stanza one, the sweeping onward rush of the wind is conveyed by the rhythm which sweeps on, unpunctuated, until the comma after awhile in verse three. This rhythmic sweep is accentuated by the repetition of

---

1. Ibid., p. 80.
2. Ibid., p. 81.
3. Ibid., p. 82.

and three times in verse one. Stanza one evokes the scene which includes the wind, sea, cloud, moonlight, storm. The wrath of the storm is balanced by the Mirth of the moonlight. Stanza two, although ostensibly describing the moonlight, actually presents the exultant emotion evoked by the scene. This is achieved primarily by means of the diction - Bright, laughs, fierce with glee, glad mad rapture. The assonance of a and internal rhyme in glad mad rapture reinforce the emotional effect. The final stanza, by its description of the storm's effect on the one ship at sea, further expresses the force of the storm, particularly by the long drawn out effect of the repeated and and the alliterated b in verse nine and refrain.

Although this roundel describes the painting by Millet, what is primarily expressed is the effect of this painting on the experiencer. The tone is exultant, glorying in the powerful, sweeping effect of the wind and sea.

Swinburne wrote two roundels under the general heading "Two Preludes"[1]. These two roundels follow the sequence of three roundels "The Death of Richard Wagner"[2] which mourns

1. Ibid., p. 31.
2. Ibid., pp. 28-30.

the death of Wagner and praises the glory of his music. Of the "Two Preludes", "Lohengrin"[1] and "Tristan Und Isolde", the second roundel will be discussed:

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

Fate, out of the deep sea's gloom,
When a man's heart's pride grows great,
And nought seems now to foredoom
Fate,

Fate, laden with fears in wait,
Draws close through the clouds that loom,
Till the soul see, all too late,

More dark than a dead world's tomb,
More high than the sheer dawn's gate,
More deep than the wide sea's womb,
Fate.[2]

This roundel, "Tristan Und Isolde", differs from the great majority of the roundels in the use of commas to mark the ends of stanzas one and two, rather than the complete stop of a period or question mark. As a result, the entire roundel is one sentence. Also, the refrain which is the one syllable word, Fate, is used to introduce the second stanza as well as in the regular three situations - introducing

---

1. Ibid., p. 31.
2. Ibid., p. 32.

verse one, and concluding stanzas one and three. The dominant meter is iambic and the verse length is three feet.

The sombre tone with which the inexorability of fate is expressed is contributed to by the diction - words such as gloom, foredoom, laden with fears, the refrain Fate; and by the sonorous sound created by the recurrence of long vowels, such as Fate, deep, gloom, grows, loom. The extensive use of long vowels plus the lack of any complete pause make the verses seem much longer than their three feet. The final stanza, with the repetitious structure of three final similes, brings the poem to a very forceful conclusion.

Swinburne wrote three roundels under the general title "Three Faces". These are Ventimiglia"[1], "Genoa"[2], and "Venice"[3] Each celebrates the beauty of a woman seen in the city named.

Georges Lafourcade states that the experience referred to in these poems occurred twenty-two years earlier, on Swinburne's first visit to Italy in 1861. Lafourcade quotes a letter from Swinburne to Watts, Jan. 24, 1875,

---

1. Ibid., p. 70.
2. Ibid., p. 71.
3. Ibid., p. 72.

in support of this statement:

> As to women I saw at Venice (14 years ago) one of the three most beautiful I ever saw. The other two were at Genoa and Ventimiglia (Riviera). By her gaze I thought I might address her, but did not considering that we could not have understood each other (verbally at least); so caution and chastity, or mauvais honté and sense of embarrassment prevailed. [1]

Lafourcade adds:

> Si profonde fut l'impression produite par le visage de ces trois femmes qu'il célébra leur beauté dans trois delicieux petits poèmes intitules "Three Faces" publies en 1883 dans A Century of Roundels. [2]

Of these three poems, Ventimiglia" will be examined:

VENTIMIGLIA

> The sky and sea glared hard and bright and blank:
> Down the one steep street, with slow steps firm and free,
> A tall girl paced, with eyes too proud to thank
> The sky and sea.
>
> One dead flat sapphire, void of wrath or glee,
> Through bay on bay shone blind from bank to bank
> The weary Mediterranean, drear to see.
>
> More deep, more living, shone her eyes that drank
> The breathless light and shed again on me,
> Till pale before their splendour waned and shrank
> The sky and sea. [3]

---

1. Lafourcade, La Jeunesse de Swinburne, Tome 1, p. 187.

2. Ibid., p. 187. [The French may be translated as follows: So deep was the impression produced by the faces of these three women that he celebrated their beauty in three delightful little poems entitled "Three Faces" published in 1883 in A Century of Roundels.]

3. Swinburne, A Century of Roundels, p. 70.

In "Ventimiglia" the woman's beauty is contrasted to the sky and sea. Rather than describing the woman to any extent, Swinburne concerns himself with the effect she has on the observer. First, the intense and brilliant heat of the town is expressed: The sky and sea glared hard and bright and blank. This scene is immediately juxtaposed with the first appearance of the girl: Down the one steep street, with slow steps firm and free / A tall girl paced ... . The slow, soft sounds of these lines with the extensive use of alliteration of s and assonance of ee contrast with the hard, sharp sound of r and k in the preceding verse. The two ideas are united in the response of the girl to her setting in verse three and refrain: ... with eyes too proud to thank / The sky and sea.

Stanza two is devoted to intensifying the dreary and emotionless yet intense effect created by sea and sky with such diction as dead flat sapphire, weary Mediterranean, drear to see, devoid of wrath or glee. The endlessness of the expanse is conveyed in the heavily alliterated verse five: Through bay on bay shone blind from bank to bank and the assonance of the next verse which continues without a pause: The weary Mediterranean, drear to see.

In stanza three, the intense vitality of the girl's beauty which is described is heightened by contrast with the preceding stanza. Her eyes More deep, more living contrast with the dead flat sapphire of the weary and drear sea. The final lines bring the contrast to an effective conclusion: Till pale before their splendour waned and shrank / The sky and sea.

The final roundel to be considered in this chapter differs from those preceding in its use of a sustained metaphor and in the prevailingly anapestic meter:

AT SEA

'Farewell and adieu' was the burden prevailing
Long since in the chant of a home-faring crew;
And the heart in us echoes, with laughing or wailing,
Farewell and adieu.

Each year that we live shall we sing it anew,
With a water untravelled before us for sailing
And a water behind us that wrecks may bestrew.

The stars of the past and the beacons are paling,
The heavens and the waters are hoarier of hue:
But the heart in us chants not an all unavailing
Farewell and adieu. [1]

"At Sea" likens life to a sea journey in which we echo the refrain of a home-faring crew as, each year, we bid farewell to the past with Farewell and adieu. The metaphor

1. Ibid., p. 64.

of the sea as the path through life is sustained throughout, with the reference to the future as a water untravelled before us for sailing in verse five, the past as a water behind us that wrecks may bestrew in verse six, and a recognition, in verses seven and eight, that with the passing of time: The stars of the past and the beacons are paling, / The heavens and the waters are hoarier of hue:. The refrain, Farewell and adieu, has a different significance each time it is used. When the words are first introduced in verse one, they refer to the sea chanty of the sailors on their homeward journey. The refrain concluding stanza one initiates the metaphor of life as a sea journey as we echo the same refrain. The final use of the refrain in conjunction with verse nine emphasizes the more optimistic note: But the heart in us chant not an all unavailing / Farewell and adieu.

There is a sea chanty lilt to the rhythm. The meter is anapestic except for the substitution of an iambic foot at the beginning of each verse. The a rhyme is a feminine rhyme. There is much assonance as well as alliteration, which contribute to the musical effect. Assonance occurs in the following: verse one of a in farewell and prevailing, verse two of i in since and in; verse three of i in in and

will, laughing and wailing; verse four of e in each, year, we, and of i in live, sing; verse seven of a in stars and are. Alliteration occurs of both vowels and consonants. In verse one, and also the refrain in which the same words recur, a produces assonance and alliteration in and, adieu; in verse five w alliterates in with, water; in verse six alliteration occurs of w in water, wrecks and of b in behind, bestrew; in verse seven of p in past and paling; in verse eight of h in heavens, hoarier, hue; in verse nine assonance and alliteration are produced by a in an, all, unavailing.

This roundel has a primarily light, optimistic tone, although the speaker recognizes sorrow as a part of life in his reference to wailing and wrecks. The refrain itself has an optimistic note with the well wishing connotations of both farewell and adieu, which is heightened by the final use of the refrain with not an all unavailing in verse nine. The sea chanty rhythm reinforces the sea metaphor and also the light, cheerful tone.

3. Summary and Conclusion

Swinburne has demonstrated that the single roundel may be used to express a variety of themes, and that it is possible to achieve whatever tone is most suitable to the

expression of the theme. Thus we find that "First Footsteps" describes in an affectionate and joyous tone the first few faltering steps of a baby. "At Sea" expresses in a light, cheerful tone the concept of life as a sea voyage. "Dead Love" expresses in a desolate tone the utter hopelessness that love, once dead, could ever be revived. "'Had I Wist'" reflects in a melancholy tone a nostalgic regret for the past. "Ventimiglia" recalls in a reflective tone, the beauty and vitality of a girl seen in startling contrast to the brilliant and vast setting of the Mediterranean. "Tristan Und Isolde" evokes, with a sombre tone, the power and majesty of Wagner's music as it expresses the inexorable movement of fate. "A Night-Piece by Millet" gives expression, with an exultant tone, to the sensations of a viewer of Millet's painting of a storm at sea.

In each roundel, the rhythm and sound created by meter and diction are suitable to the tone and theme. In the roundels discussed, the verse length has varied from three feet to six feet, usually primarily iambic with some substitution of anapestic feet, but in "At Sea" the meter is primarily anapestic with some iambic variation. Frequently a trochaic foot is used as the initial foot in a verse. Feminine rhyme occurs frequently. It is used as

the first, the a rhyme, in three of the roundels discussed - "At Sea", "'Had I Wist'", and "A Night-Piece by Millet".

In each of the roundels alliteration has been used, effectively contributing to the music and rhythm. In each of the roundels discussed here - alliteration occurs in six or seven verses. It is not uncommon for two different consonants to alliterate in the one verse; for example, both l and s alliterate in verse five of "'Had I Wist'", Not the lovelier laugh of seas in sunshine swaying. Assonance, also, is used extensively and also contributes to the musical qualities. This has been noted particularly in the examination of "'Had I Wist'" and "At Sea".

The objective correlatives used by Swinburne vary from a painting to an operatic prelude to the sea to a baby to an Italian city to a poetic form. Much of the imagery used is taken from external nature, as the warm wind, roses, dew's bright mist, seas in "'Had I Wist'"; sundawn, dove, lark, in "Dead Love"; stars, beacons, heavens, waters in "At Sea"; sea, clouds, dawn in "Tristan Und Isolde"; imagery of spring and dawn in "First Footsteps" - fields aflower with May, golden spring, dawning day, leaflets; sea, moonlight, and clouds in "A Night-Piece by Millet"; sky and sea in "Ventimiglia". However, other images are effectively

combined, with those from external nature. "A Night-Piece by Millet" includes in the pictured storm one lone sail-boat battling the wind and waves. "Ventimiglia" includes, besides sea and sky, a tall girl on the one steep street.

In most of the roundels figures of speech are used. Similes predominate: "'Had I Wist'" contains three similes; "Dead Love" two similes as well as the personification of love; "Tristan Und Isolde" concludes with three similes: "First Footsteps" contains two similes and a metaphor. "At Sea" contains the sustained metaphor of life as a sea voyage to which all the imagery in the poem contributes. A personification of the moon is used in "A Night-Piece by Millet".

Two variations from the roundel as defined have been noted. First, in the typical roundel all the verses, with the exception of the two refrain verses, are of equal length; however, it has been noted that in "First Footsteps" verses two, four, six, and eight are one foot shorter than the other verses and are indented the same distance as the refrain. The second variation is the roundel in which there is not a complete pause at the end of each stanza. An example of this is "Tristan Und Isolde" in which commas conclude the first and second stanzas. Other single roundels in which such a variation is found are "Sleep" and

"Benediction" in which a comma concludes stanza two, "Venice", "Lohengrin" and "Aperotos Eros" in which a comma concludes stanza one, "Discord" and "To Doria Dorian" in which semicolons are used to end both stanza one and stanza two.

Thus we can conclude from this examination of single roundels that Swinburne has used the roundel form to express a variety of themes in a variety of tones, as he had stated in his poem, "The Roundel", examined in chapter one. Objective correlatives have been taken from a variety of sources and various meters have been used. The imagery and literary devices used are similar to those used in "The Roundel" which seemed to be his model. Also, the structure has been found to be circular, as in "The Roundel", and the refrain, which in each poem keynotes the theme, has been found to contribute to the theme in a slightly different way each time repeated.

CHAPTER V

AN EXAMINATION OF ROUNDEL SEQUENCES

Of the roundels in A Century of Roundels, sixty-two are written in sequences. These sequences vary in length from two to eight roundels. There are four sequences of two roundels, eight of three roundels, two of four roundels, two of seven, and one of eight roundels. Death, recollections of the past, babies and children are the most common themes dealt with. Nature is the subject of one sequence of eight roundels, "In Guernsey". The god of love is celebrated in the three roundel sequence, "Eros".

In this chapter two roundel sequences, "A Dialogue" and "A Baby's Death", will be examined in some detail. Others will be discussed more briefly. The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the use made of the roundel sequence by Swinburne - to determine the themes developed, the different tones expressed, the various meters employed, the objective correlative patterns used, the kinds of imagery, literary devices, figures of speech used. It is also intended to ascertain any variations made in the roundel when used in a sequence rather than as a single roundel, and to determine to what extent unity is achieved within the sequence.

In section one, the first roundel sequence,"A Dialogue", will be examined. This will be followed by an examination of "A Baby's Death" in section two and then by a brief discussion of the remaining sequences in section three.

1. An Examination of the three Roundel Sequence, "A Dialogue"

"A Dialogue" is a sequence composed of three roundels. In the first roundel Man addresses Death, in the second roundel Death replies, and in the third Man again speaks to Death. The three roundels will be discussed as individual poems and then as a sequence. The first poem in the sequence is as follows:

I.

Death, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee:
Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,
One shelter where our spirits fain would be,
Death, if thou wilt?

No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt,
Imperial: but some roof of wildwood tree,
Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt.

Some low sweet roof where love might live, set free
From change and fear and dreams of grief or guilt;
Canst thou not leave life even thus much to see,
Death, if thou wilt? [1]

---

1. Swinburne, A Century of Roundels, p. 10.

This roundel has the same structural form as the single roundels: nine lines and refrain divided into three stanzas with the rhyme scheme a,b,a,B/ b,a,b/ a,b,a,B. Each verse consists of five iambic feet, but this is sometimes varied with the use of a trochaic foot or an anapestic foot. The refrain consists of two feet, a trochaic foot followed by an iambic. This roundel may be scanned as follows:

/ ⏑ ⏑ / / ⏑ ⏑ / ⏑ /
Death, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee:
⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,
One shelter where our spirits fain would be,
/ ⏑ ⏑ /
Death, if thou wilt?

⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt,
⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
Imperial: but some roof of wildwood tree,
⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt.

⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
Some low sweet roof where love might live, set free
⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
From change and fear and dreams of grief or guilt;
⏑ / ⏑ / / ⏑ ⏑ / ⏑ /
Canst thou not leave life even thus much to see,
/ ⏑ ⏑ /
Death, if thou wilt?

In this roundel Man addresses Death which is personified throughout. In stanza one, Man first expresses his desire of pleading with Death, then states his plea -

that Death spare to man, of all Man's many hopes, one refuge or shelter. The refrain ending this stanza is in the form of a question, Death, if thou wilt? which reinforces the pleading tone with the realization of man's dependence on Death's willingness to do what is asked. In the second stanza, the plea is made more specific. Metonymy is used effectively in dome, sceptre, swordblade. Man does not ask for luxury and power, No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt / Imperial:. The meagreness and simplicity of what he asks is expressed in verses five and six by some roof of wildwood tree,/ Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt. The little he asks for is accentuated by its contrast with the power and glory represented by sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt. In stanza three Man reiterates the plea, but adds significantly to it; he asks that love be a part of the simple life for which he pleads, and that it be a life free of troubles and sorrows. The roundel concludes with the refrain, Death if thou wilt? reiterating the plea that Death leave Man at least the little he has asked for.

Archaic diction is used, such as, thou, wilt, fain, Canst. Alliteration is produced in verse one by w in wilt,

would, with; verse four by d in dome, dews; in verse six by s in sceptre's, swordblade's, and h in heft and hilt; in verse seven by l in low, love, live; and s in sweet, set; in verse eight by g in grief, guilt; in verse nine by l in leave, life. Assonance is produced in verse one by the vowel i in if and wilt; in verse two by a in Canst and have; verse four by o in no and dome, and i in with and gilt; verse six by e in sceptre's heft, by o in sword-, in verse seven by ee in sweet, free, verse eight by ea in fear, dreams, verse nine by ea sound in leave, see. The extensive use of alliteration, assonance, and long vowels contributes to the slow, sonorous movement in keeping with the serious, pleading tone.

The second roundel has the same structural form, and the meter is similar to that of the previous roundel - iambic pentameter with occasional substitution of a trochaic or anapestic foot. In this roundel Death replies to Man:

II

Man, what art thou to speak and plead with me?
What knowest thou of my workings, where and how
What things I fashion? Nay, behold and see,
Man, what art thou?

Thy fruits of life, and blossoms of thy bough,
What are they but my seedlings? Earth and sea
Bear nought but when I breathe on it must bow.

Bow thou too down before me: though thou be
Great, all the pride shall fade from off thy brow,
When Time and strong Oblivion ask of thee,
Man, what art thou?[1]

In stanza one, with a proud and imperious tone, Death questions, Man what art thou to speak and plead with me? He then reminds Man that he does not understand Death's activities, and imperiously orders Man to stop and consider what he is, with the implication in the refrain, verse four, Man, what art thou?, that Man is really insignificant. In stanza two, Death reinforces this by reminding Man that everything Man achieves or creates belongs to Death. This is stated metaphorically in verses four and five: Thy fruits of life, and blossoms of thy bough, / What are they but my seedlings? Death reminds Man of his all embracing power, for when he breathes on anything, on earth or sea, it must bow to him. Stanza three follows with the logical conclusion that, since all this which has been said of Death is so, then Man, too, (as all on earth and sea, mentioned in stanza two) is commanded to bow to Death. However great Man may seem to be, all this shall fade and Man will realize his own nothingness when Time and Oblivion, Death's two cohorts, come to Man with the question expressed in the refrain, Man, what art thou?

1. Ibid., p. 11.

In this roundel, the refrain each time it is repeated has a different meaning. In its first use, following verse three, Death orders Man to stop and realize just what he is, just how insignificant he is. In the final refrain he reminds Man of his coming destruction through Time and Oblivion who will ask him, Man, what art thou? The question formed by the refrain has a very different tone to that in the preceding roundel. Whereas the refrain in the first roundel, Death if thou wilt? has a tentative, pleading tone, the refrain in this second roundel, Man, what art thou? has the proud, imperious tone of one who is commanding rather than asking. In this roundel the personification of Death is continued, and Time and Oblivion are also personified. The archaic diction is continued, with words such as, art, thy, knowest, thou. This diction contributes to the dignified, serious tone. There is, again, extensive use of alliteration and assonance. In verse two, wh produces alliteration in what, where; in verse four b produces alliteration in blossoms, bough; in verse five s produces alliteration in seedlings, sea; in verse six b produces alliteration in Bear, breathe, bow. Assonance occurs in verse one and the two refrains of the vowel sound a in Man what art ... . In verse one further assonance occurs of the vowel sound ea in speak and plead. In verse three assonance occurs of e in behold

and see; in verse five of e in seedlings and sea, in verse seven of ou in thou which is repeated and down; in verse eight of o in from and off, in verse nine of o in strong Oblivion, of. Internal rhyme occurs in verse two with thou and how, in verse nine with, Bow thou ... . As with the first roundel, the assonance, alliteration, and extensive use of long vowels contribute to the slow, sonorous rhythm which, in this roundel, reinforce the majestic, imperious tone in which Death addresses Man.

The third roundel has the same structural form and a similar meter to the preceding two roundels. In this roundel Man addresses Death for the second time:

III.

Death, if thou be or be not, as was said,
Immortal; if thou make us nought, or we
Survive: thy power is made but of our dread,
Death, if thou be.

Thy might is made out of our fear of thee:
Who fears thee not, hath plucked from off thine head
The crown of cloud that darkens earth and sea.

Earth, sea, and sky, as rain or vapour shed,
Shall vanish; all the shows of them shall flee:
Then shall we know full surely, quick or dead,
Death, if thou be. [1]

1. Ibid., p. 12.

In this roundel, Man replies to Death. He has not been intimidated by Death's imperious tone. He concludes that whether or not Death exists forever, whether or not Death can destroy Man, his only real power lies in Man's fear of him. In the second stanza, Man becomes more specific in expressing this conclusion - that Death's power is made of Man's dread of him, that whoever does not fear Death has thereby taken away his power. This concept is expressed in a metaphor - whoever does not fear Death by this very fact removes Death's crown, symbol of his power, thus taking away the cloud that darkens, that is, depresses or discourages, the world. Stanza three ties in the end of the world with Death, first expressing the realization that the universe will disappear and comparing the way this will happen to the way rain disappears. This fact, the coming dissolution of the world, is emphasized in verse eight by a repetition of the same idea in different words, all the shows of them [earth, sky, sea] shall flee:. It is only when this happens that Man will truly know whether Death exists. The roundel concludes with a calm and hopeful tone, in acceptance of the fact that Man does not really know whether Death is the end of all life for him, but, in awareness that once he refuses to fear Death he has removed Death's power over him. And Man accepts the fact that only at the end of the world will he know the

truth.

This roundel, like the previous one, uses metonymy in referring to plucking from Death's head the crown of cloud, the power by which he darkens Man's life. A simile is used in stanza three to compare the final vanishing of the world to the disappearance of rain. The personification of Death and the archaic language of the preceding roundels are continued. The refrain each time has a slightly different meaning. In verse one, when the words Death, if thou be are first used, the doubt as to whether Death is immortal is introduced. In the refrain which concludes stanza one, the statement is changed to doubt as to whether Death exists at all. The concluding refrain, along with the verse preceding it, refers to the end of the world as the moment when Man will surely know whether Death exists. There is, as with the first two roundels, much alliteration. In verse four, m produces alliteration in might and made, o produces assonance and alliteration in out and our. In verse five, th produces alliteration in thee, hath, thine, and h in hath and had; in verse six, c in crown and cloud; in verse seven, s in sea and sky; in verse eight, sh in shall, which is used twice, and shows, and this alliteration is carried over to verse nine with shall and surely. In verse nine dead is followed by Death in the refrain emphasizing the word Death.

Assonance is produced by the ee sound in verse four with fear and thee; in verse six by the ow sound in crown and cloud; in verse seven by the a sound in rain and vapour. The meter is similar to that used in the previous two roundels of the sequence: primarily iambic pentameter, with variations of trochaic and anapestic feet, and with the two foot refrain made up of a trochaic foot followed by an iambic. The rhythm is slow and sonorous. The tone concluding this final roundel is serious, resolute, and hopeful.

The review of A Century of Roundels by James Ashcroft Noble in The Academy singles out this roundel for particular praise, comparing it with Donne's, "Death be not proud":

> The majority of Mr. Swinburne's roundels are sombre, or at least pensive, rather than gay or trifling; and some of his greatest triumphs are achieved where the thought is weightiest and the emotion most profound. I can recall nothing of similar brevity, not even Donne's greatest sonnet utterance, "Death be not proud, though some have called thee", fuller of concentrated and dignified solemnity than this roundel, the last of a sequence of three, entitled "A Dialogue".[1]

The critic (unnamed) of The Times, reviewing A Century of Roundels, selected this sequence as demonstrating that the roundel is a form which can be used for reflection

---

1. J.A. Noble, op. cit., p. 431.

"The three philosophical poems, styled collectively, 'A Dialogue', show that this kind of verse is capable of being made finely reflective".[1]

The structure of the three roundels in the form of a dialogue between Man and Death, together with the theme, the archaic language used, the serious, sombre tone show the influence of the medieval debate between body and soul.

Each of the three roundels is an individual poem, complete in itself. Yet when the three are read together, a logical progression of thought is observed which gives an essential unity to the three. Man pleads, Death answers, Man concludes. The unity is further augmented by the personification of Death which is continued throughout, by the similarity of the archaic diction used; by the consistency of meter and the extensive use of assonance and alliteration which contribute to the slow, sonorous rhythm throughout the three poems. The objective correlative pattern employed in the three poems produces a tone which varies from the pleading of the first to the proud majesty of the second to the calm and hopeful tone of the third; but throughout the tone remains one of serious and sombre reflection in which is expressed the theme of death and man's attitude to death.

---

1. "Mr. Swinburne's New Volume", The Times, p. 4.

2. An Examination of the seven Roundel Sequence, "A Baby's Death"

This sequence of seven roundels lamenting the death of a baby named Michael is in all probability written with Michael, the son of William Michael Rossetti, in mind. The following letter was written by Swinburne to William Michael Rossetti during the period in which he was writing the roundels.

The Pines, Putney Hill, S.W.,
January 26, 1883.

Dear Rossetti

You will let me send you one word - I know you will not feel it intrusive - to say how very truly grieved I am to-night on hearing from Watts of your little baby-boy's death.[1] I had often looked forward to seeing the lovely little pair of wingless angels again, and I feel as if tears were very near my eyes to think that I cannot. I hope the surviving twin is well and strong, and that all the others and their mother and yourself are well. But pray do not give yourself the trouble of noticing this line. Only I could not let the evening pass without a word to assure you of my deep and sorrowful sympathy in your sorrow.

Always affectionately yours,
A.C. Swinburne [2]

---

1. C.Y. Lang, ed. Algernon C. Swinburne Letters, Vol. 5, p. 2. Footnote: Michael Ford Rossetti, born in April, 1881.

2. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

The first roundel introduces the theme, the death of the baby and its effect on those who loved him:

I.

A little soul scarce fledged for earth
Takes wing with heaven again for goal
Even while we hailed as fresh from birth
A little soul.

Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll,
Not knowing beyond this blind world's girth
What things are writ in heaven's full scroll.

Our fruitfulness is there but dearth,
And all things held in time's control
Seem there, perchance, ill dreams, not worth
A little soul.[1]

The meter is iambic tetrameter with the exception of the refrain which is iambic dimeter. There is occasional substitution of an anapestic foot. The roundel may be scanned as follows:

˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /
A little soul scarce fledged for earth
˘ / ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ /
Takes wing with heaven again for goal
˘ ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /
Even while we hail as fresh from birth
˘ / ˘ /
A little soul.

---

1. Swinburne, A Century of Roundels, p. 36.

Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll,
Not knowing beyond this blind world's girth
What things are writ in heaven's full scroll.

Our fruitfulness is there but dearth,
And all things held in time's control
Seem there, perchance, ill dreams, not worth
A little soul.

The first stanza stresses the tender age at which the baby died. Scarcely was he born when he left to return to heaven. The diction - scarce fledged, Takes wing - associates with the baby the idea of a young bird flying to heaven. The early age of death is reiterated in verse three - when we are still rejoicing in his birth. The second stanza expresses sorrow and inability to understand the way of heaven. The metaphor, Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll, effectively conveys a sorrow which is intensified by the slow, even movement of the regular iambic tetrameter meter, by the long vowels in Our, thoughts, sad, bells, toll, and the assonance produced by the o sound in Our thoughts, toll. Stanza three concludes the roundel with the consideration that in heaven a little soul is realized as worth more than all things of a temporal nature.

Considerable use is made of alliteration and assonance. For example, in stanza one the following alliteration and assonance are noted. In verse one alliteration is produced by s in soul and scarce, f in fledged and for. In verse two, wi produces alliteration in wing and with, g in again and goal; in verse three, f in fresh and from. Assonance occurs in verse one produced by the o sound in soul and for; in verse three produced by the e sound in the second syllable of Even and in fresh. The refrain A little soul each time used is given a different significance. In its first use, it refers to a tiny baby scarcely ready for earth, a baby just welcomed at birth; in the final refrain the baby is said to be worth more than all the world of temporal things. The diction is simple and undecorated - takes wing, heaven for goal, bells that toll, little soul. There is little punctuation - a period concludes each stanza. There is no other punctuation in stanza one; stanza two contains one comma and stanza three four commas. This lack of punctuation contributes to an evenness of rhythm. The simplicity of diction combines with the evenness of rhythm to add to the tone of quiet sadness.

There is a tone of tenderness and quiet sorrow in the second roundel:

II.

The little feet that never trod
Earth, never strayed in field or street,
What hand leads upward back to God
The little feet?

A rose in June's most honied heat,
When life makes keen the kindling sod,
Was not so soft and warm and sweet.

Their pilgrimage's period
A few swift moons have seen complete
Since mother's hands first clasped and shod
The little feet.[1]

This roundel begins with a recollection of the brevity of the child's life. There is warmth and sentimentality in the imagery in stanza two by which the baby's feet are compared to a rose in June using words such as honied heat, soft, warm, sweet. Stanza three reinforces the concept of the brevity of the child's life by referring to his life as a pilgrimage of A few short moons. This contributes to the sorrowful tone. The regularity of the meter, which is the same as that of the first roundel, iambic tetrameter with the refrain iambic dimeter, contributes to the quiet tone. The refrain, The little feet, is used with different significance each time. In the first verse it emphasizes the child's youth in that he had never walked; in the third

1. Ibid., p. 37.

verse and following refrain, the helpless dependence of the child and the mystery surrounding death are both involved in the questioning of who led him back to God. The final use of the refrain, in conjunction with the verse preceding it, intensifies the note of sorrow and pathos by alluding to the child's mother and to the recollection of her first clasping her child's tiny feet.

The third roundel introduces a hopeful note mingled with the sadness as the speaker wonders about the little child's life in heaven:

III.

The little hands that never sought
Earth's prizes, worthless all as sands,
What gift has death, God's servant, brought
The little hands?

We ask: but love's self silent stands,
Love, that lends eyes and wings to thought
To search where death's dim heaven expands.

Ere this, perchance, though love know nought,
Flowers fill them, grown in lovelier lands,
Where hands of guiding angels caught
The little hands.[1]

In stanza one, the brevity of the child's life brings the consoling thought that the things of earth which he has not lived to seek are worthless, (expressed in the simile, Earth's prizes, worthless all as sands,). There is a sense of

1. Ibid., p. 38.

mystery in wondering what death has brought to him. The sense of mystery is increased, in stanza two, as the speaker reflects that even love is not able to envision heaven. The repetition of love increases the note of pathos. Stanza three adds a more hopeful tone with the association of the child with lovelier lands, Flowers, and guiding angels. The refrain The little hands is first used in verse one with the reminder of the shortness of the child's life; he had not had the opportunity to seek earthly goods. The refrain following verse three concludes the question introduced in the preceding verse, wondering what death has brought to the child. The final refrain contributes to the association of the child with angels, a thought initiated in verse nine. The meter is iambic tetrameter, with the exception of the refrain which is iambic dimeter. This roundel resembles the previous two in simplicity of diction and evenness of rhythm. There is a quiet, sad, yet hopeful tone.

The fourth roundel is more hopeful and optimistic:

IV.

The little eyes that never knew
Light other than of dawning skies,
What new life now lights up anew
The little eyes?

Who knows but on their sleep may rise
Such light as never heaven let through
To lighten earth from Paradise?

No storm, we know, may change the blue
Soft heaven that haply death descries;
No tears, like these, in ours, bedew
The little eyes.[1]

The meter is iambic tetrameter with the exception of the refrain which is iambic dimeter. Like the previous three roundels, it begins with a reminder of the brief life of the baby, who saw of life only the dawning skies. The happiness of the baby in heaven is expressed through the image of light. First, in verse three and refrain, the speaker reflects on the new life which now lights up his eyes. Then stanza two adds to this with the description of the light surrounding the child as greater than any experienced on this earth. Stanza three reiterates the hopeful tone with the image of the blue soft heaven undisturbed by storms. The last verse and refrain contrast the happiness of the child with the sorrow of the mourners, so that the roundel ends with the more hopeful tone again mingled with sadness.

In the fifth roundel there is a different meter used and the indentations are different:

1. Ibid., p. 39.

V.

Was life so strange, so sad the sky,
So strait the wide world's range,
He would not stay to wonder why
Was life so strange?

Was earth's fair house a joyless grange
Beside that house on high
Whence Time that bore him failed to estrange?

That here at once his soul put by
All gifts of time and change,
And left us heavier hearts to sigh
'Was life so strange?' [1]

In this roundel, verses one, three, four, six, seven, and nine are iambic tetrameter; verses two, five, and eight are iambic trimeter and are indented with the refrain; the refrain is again iambic dimeter. The punctuation concluding each stanza is a question mark. The first stanza questions, in a tone of wonder, whether the reason for the baby leaving this earth could be the strangeness, sadness, or difficulties of life here. In the second stanza a metaphor is used comparing the earth to a joyless grange which contrasts with heaven, that house on high. In the concluding stanza wonder is expressed whether the contrast of life on earth to that in heaven is the reason the child left us. The tone is a

---

1. Ibid., p. 40.

questioning and sorrowing one, with the sorrowful tone intensified by the expression in the third stanza of the sense of loss, left us heavier hearts to sigh.

In the sixth roundel the speaker attempts to solve the problem of why such a young child should die:

VI.

Angel by name love called him, seeing so fair
The sweet small frame;
Meet to be called, if ever man's child were,
Angel by name.

Rose-bright and warm from heaven's own heart he came,
And might not bear
The cloud that covers earth's wan face with shame.

His little light of life was all too rare
And soft a flame:
Heaven yearned for him till angels hailed him there
Angel by name.[1]

This roundel differs in meter from the preceding ones: verses one, three, four, six, seven and nine are iambic pentameter; verses two, five, eight, and the refrain are iambic dimeter and are indented. The first stanza recalls the loveliness of the child, which makes him deserving of an angel's name. Stanza two adds that he was too lovely to survive such an imperfect world. Stanza three extends this idea with a

1. Ibid., p. 41.

metaphor in which the flame of the child's life is said to be too gentle and too exceptional for this world, so that finally, heaven longing for him called him back. The tone is one of sad acceptance of the fact that such a sweet and lovely child is more fittingly a part of heaven than of earth. The refrain takes on different meanings in accordance with the verse preceding it. Verse one refers to the fact that those who loved the child gave him an angel's name; the first refrain in association with verse three states that an angel's name is suitable to this child, if to any child of man; the final refrain concludes the thought initiated in verse nine, that because heaven longed for the child the angels called him to be an Angel by name.

The seventh roundel expresses intense grief:

VII.

The song that smiled upon his birthday here
Weeps on the grave that holds him undefiled
Whose loss makes bitterer than a soundless tear
The song that smiled.

His name crowned once the mightiest ever styled
Sovereign of arts, and angel: fate and fear
Knew then their master, and were reconciled.

But we saw born beneath some tenderer sphere
Michael, an angel and a little child,
Whose loss bows down to weep upon his bier
The song that smiled. [1]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 42.

In stanza one, the joy at the child's birth is contrasted with the weeping at his grave, his loss making bitter the recollection of that earlier joy. The metaphor comparing this bitterness to a soundless tear intensifies the grief. The second stanza unites the baby, by his name, with the greatest of angels to whom both fate and fear were subject; the Archangel Michael is referred to with such diction as crowned, sovereign, mightiest, master. Stanza three returns in thought to the child. In contrast with the majestic diction used to refer to the great Archangel are the gentleness and simplicity of the reflections on this other Michael an angel and a little child, born beneath some tenderer sphere. This contrast intensifies the pathos associated with the child. Verse nine and refrain conclude the poem with an expression of intense grief, as those who rejoiced at the child's birth now weep at his death. The grief is intensified by the repetition of much of the same diction used in stanza one; Weeps on the grave in verse one becomes weep upon his bier in verse nine; Whose loss makes bitterer in verse three becomes Whose loss bows down in verse nine. This is the first roundel in the sequence in which the words grave and bier are used. These words contribute a harshness not present in the previous roundels in which the grief has been muted by reference to taking wing for heaven or being

led back to God. Here the references to the grave that holds him and his bier intensify the tone of grief. The meter is iambic pentameter except for the refrain which is iambic dimeter. The longer verse line, the extensive use of assonance, particularly of o sounds, the preponderance of long vowels, and the extensive alliteration contribute to the slow, heavy movement in keeping with the tone of intense grief.

As a sequence, these seven roundels express the progression of emotion on the death of a little child. The first four roundels are united by the similarity of the meter and by the parallel refrain: in the first roundel the refrain is, A little soul; in the second, The little feet; in the third, The little hands; in the fourth, The little eyes. The frequent repetition of little in the four roundels emphasizes the brevity of the child's life, deepening the pathos and the melancholy tone. Also, the brevity of the child's life is referred to in the first stanza of each of these first four roundels. The tone of quiet sorrow and tenderness of the first two roundels becomes mingled with a more hopeful note in the third and fourth with a consideration of the child's life in heaven. The fifth roundel adds a questioning tone to the sorrowful one as the speaker ponders the reasons for the child leaving life so soon.

The sixth roundel stresses the angelic qualities of the child which make him more fittingly a member of heaven's angelic host than a citizen of this earth. Here the tone is one of sorrowing acceptance. The seventh roundel concludes the sequence with a tone of intense grief. Harsh reality is introduced with the first reference to bier and grave. The longer verse line of this roundel, iambic pentameter, together with the assonance and the many long vowels contribute to a heavy elegiac movement. As the tone varies, the sequence is united by the overall theme, the emotions elicited by reflection on the death of a beloved child. Throughout the sequence, the simplicity of diction and sentence structure, which is in keeping with the subject, the little child, also has a unifying effect.

However, each of the roundels in the sequence may also be considered as a poem in itself conforming to the definition of the roundel. The stanzaic form and the rhyme scheme of each roundel is as follows: nine verses and two refrains in three stanzas rhyming a,b,a B/b,a,b/a, b,a B. As in the single roundels, the refrain is somewhat altered in meaning each time it is used. Alliteration and assonance are used extensively. Because of the simplicity of expression there are fewer figures of speech used here than in the majority of roundels evaluated. Metaphors used include the

comparison of our thoughts to bells tolling in the first roundel, the child's feet to a June rose in the second roundel, sorrows to storms in the fourth, earth to a joyless grange in the fifth, the child's life to a flame in the sixth. Similes include earth's goods, worthless all as sands in the third roundel, recollected joy at the child's birth bitterer than a soundless tear in the seventh roundel. The thought and emotion expressed in each roundel is complete.

3. A Survey of Other Roundel Sequences

Other roundel sequences dealing with babies are "One of Twain", "Étude Réaliste", and "Babyhood". The theme developed in "One of Twain"[1] is that of the death of a young child, one of twins. The child referred to is again Michael Rossetti, lamented in "A Baby's Death". The tone is one of sorrowing reflection. The meter is the same in both roundels; iambic pentameter in all verses except the refrain which is iambic dimeter. The a rhyme in both roundels is a feminine rhyme.

---

1. Ibid., pp. 43-44.

Étude Réaliste"[1] and "Babyhood"[2] express in a joyous tone the pleasure derived from babies. "Étude Réaliste", in three roundels, reflects upon the joy which a baby brings with him. The three roundels of this sequence have the same meter: verses one, three, four, six, seven and nine are iambic tetrameter, verses two, five, and eight iambic trimeter; the refrain iambic dimeter. As was the case with "First Footsteps", discussed in chapter four, the shorter verses are indented the same distance as the refrain. The refrain in each of the three roundels is much the same with the only variation in diction being the final word: in the first roundel the refrain is A baby's feet, in the second, A baby's hands, in the third A baby's eyes. The images include sea-shells, sea-flowers, flower bells, rosebuds. The simplicity of diction is in keeping with the subject. The tone is light, affectionate, joyful.

"Babyhood" in four roundels develops the theme of the joy and beauty associated with a baby. In each roundel the meter is different. In the first, the meter is iambic trimeter with a refrain of one foot as the poet reflects on the

---

1. Ibid., pp. 48-50.
2. Ibid., pp. 51-54.

happiness brought by a baby. The second, with iambic tetrameter and a one foot refrain, expresses the thought that a baby reflects the goodness and happiness of heaven. The third uses the same variation as discussed in "Étude Réaliste"; that is, the shorter indented verses two, five and eight are iambic trimeter; verses one, three, four, six, seven and nine are iambic trimeter; the refrain is iambic dimeter. This roundel reflects on a baby's beauty, unmatched by anything in the world. The fourth compares the baby to a rose, in a poem of short two foot lines with a one syllable refrain. The meter and rhythm are sufficiently different and the thought in each roundel sufficiently complete that each could be considered as an individual poem; however, there is a unifying effect created by the similarity of the affectionate tone in each.

The child is the subject of two sequences, each composed of three roundels; "A Ninth Birthday" and "Not a Child". The child referred to is Bertie Mason, a nephew of Theodore Watts-Dunton, who lived at The Pines with his mother, and with Watts-Dunton and Swinburne. Swinburne was devoted to young Bertie. The first, "A Ninth Birthday"[1] may be considered an occasional piece. It celebrates Bertie's ninth birthday. Imagery of external nature is used to describe

1. Ibid., pp. 56-58.

the passing of nine years since the child's birth. The tempo is slow as the poet lovingly sings the praises of the child. The three roundels are united by similarity of tone, theme, and meter. Also, the same refrain, Three times thrice, is used in each roundel. As a result, each roundel begins with the same words and the b rhyme in each roundel is the same. This contributes to a more unified effect. In the second roundel, commas are used to conclude stanzas one and two, rather than the usual full stop.

In "Not a Child" the tone is light in the first roundel as the speaker reflects upon the nine year old's remark: 'Not a child: I call myself a boy;'. The second roundel is more pensive as he reflects on the many adults who would like to be children again. The third roundel has a happy, affectionate tone as he concludes that, whether called Child or boy, the child is a source of love and joy. The refrain is Not a Child in the first two roundels, changing to Child or boy in the third.

With the exception of "A Dialogue", the four roundel sequences about death express thoughts and emotions at the death of two individuals, George Powell and Richard Wagner. The four sequences are printed one after the other in A Century of Roundels in the order discussed here. "A Dead

Friend",[1] a sequence of seven roundels, expresses the poet's thoughts on the death of his friend, George Powell. Swinburne referred to his grief at the death of George Powell in a letter to Theodore Watts-Dunton:

> Leigh House, November 8, 1882
>
> My dear Watts
>
> I am really very much grieved as well as startled by the news of poor George Powell's death. I can hardly realize the idea that I shall never see him again with whom I have spent so many days and weeks together and exchanged so many signs of friendship in past years. I had no notion that his health was seriously shaken, much less that his life was endangered. The poor fellow was one of the most obliging and kind-hearted of men, and wonderfully bright spirited under severe trial and trouble. I shall always have a very tender and regretful remembrance of him.[2]

Lang adds the following footnote: "'Dead Friend', 'Past Days', and 'Autumn and Winter' (Bonchurch 5, 13-20) in C R [A Century of Roundels] memorialize their friendship".[3] "Past Days",[4] a sequence of three roundels, also reflects upon the death of Powell and reminisces about shared pleasures.

---

1. Ibid., pp. 14-20.

2. C.Y. Lang, ed. Algernon C. Swinburne Letters, Vol. 4, p. 311.

3. Ibid., p. 311.

4. Swinburne, A Century of Roundels, pp. 21-23.

"Autumn and Winter" [1] in four roundels reflects in a melancholy, pensive tone upon the death of George Powell and Richard Wagner. Powell had died three months before Wagner; both were connected in Swinburne's thoughts because Powell had been an early advocate of Wagner's music and had always maintained this admiration. A letter of Swinburne to his sister, Isabel, refers to his association of George Powell with Wagner in this sequence:

> ... In reading 'Autumn and Winter' you will remember that my poor dear friend George Powell, the most unselfish, generous, gentle and kind and affectionate of men, died last year just about three months before Wagner - the man who was to him what Victor Hugo is to me. As soon as I heard of the latter's death, the fancy crossed me that poor George had gone before to announce his coming - one of the fancies that cross one's mind even when the heart is really and deeply moved - at least it is so with me. [2]

In a three roundel sequence, "The Death of Richard Wagner", [3] the first roundel mourns Wagner's death, the second reflects upon his music, the third in an unusually long, twenty-syllable line, using anapestic meter except for one iambic foot ending each verse, evokes the powerful sweep of Wagner's music.

---

1. Ibid., pp. 24-27.
2. Lang, ed. Algernon C. Swinburne Letters, Vol. 5, p. 16.
3. Swinburne, A Century of Roundels, pp. 28-30.

The last four sequences mentioned reminisce about the past as well as mourning the dead. Recollections of the past form the theme of several other sequences. "In Harbour"[1], a sequence of two roundels reflects upon past life in a quiet, tranquil tone using imagery from the sea - of waters and wind, ports and tide. The meter is mixed iambic and anapestic with the a rhyme feminine in both roundels. In the first roundel the verse length is five feet, with the refrain two feet; in the second, the verse length is four feet with the refrain one foot. "Recollections"[2] is a three roundel sequence which recalls the past in a reflective, melancholy tone. The meter is primarily iambic with some anapestic feet and with the substitution of a trochaic foot beginning each verse. Again, much of the imagery is taken from external nature - clouds, wind, stars, moorland, mists, mountain passes. The same meter is used and the same refrain, Years upon years. Thus the b rhyme, with which the refrain rhymes, remains the same in the three roundels.

"Time and Life"[3] is a two roundel sequence in which

---

1. Ibid., pp. 1-2.
2. Ibid., pp. 5-7.
3. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

life speaks in the first roundel in a melancholy tone of the sorrows which come with time, and time replies in the second roundel, in a more hopeful tone, that time heals all sorrow and brings rest.

The objective correlative pattern of "On an Old Roundel" with the subtitle "Translated by D. G. Rossetti from the French of Villon"[1] is composed of a rondeau about death written by Villon, the translation of that rondeau by Rossetti and reflections upon the death of these two poets. In this sequence Swinburne recalls, in a pensive and reflective tone, Villon's appeal to Death which is still remembered and the response to it made by another (Rossetti), now also dead.

The rondeau by Villon, which Swinburne refers to in his sequence, is quoted by Cohen in Lyric Forms from France,[2] and Cohen refers to the fact that it has been "exquisitely translated into English by Rossetti".[3] Rossetti's translation of this rondeau appears in Dobson's "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse". Dobson, referring to Rossetti's "translation of the 'Lay, au plustot Rondeau' in Villon's Grand Testament", calls it " ... a very

---

1. Ibid., pp. 78-79.
2. Cohen, Lyric Forms from France, p. 56.
3. Ibid., p. 56.

beautiful example of this latter [rondeau] form ..."[1] Swinburne himself later wrote a translation of the same rondeau which he entitled "Roundel: From the French of Villon". This was published in A Channel Passage and Other Poems in 1904.[2] The three rondeaux- of Villon, Rossetti, and Swinburne - appear in the Appendix.[3]

"Eros"[4] celebrates the god of love in three roundels. The same refrain, Eros, is used in each roundel. This is the third sequence in A Century of Roundels in which the same refrain and also the same b rhyme are used throughout the sequence. The other two sequences, in which the same refrain is used throughout the sequence, are "A Ninth Birthday" and "Recollections", which have been discussed above. In "Eros" the a rhyme also is the same throughout the sequence.

"In Guernsey"[5] is a sequence of eight roundels which celebrates the beauty of land and sea at Guernsey. The first celebrates the beauty of the bay which will always remain in

---

1. Dobson, op. cit., p. 341.

2. A.C. Swinburne, "A Channel Passage and Other Poems", Collected Works, Vol. 6, p. 395.

3. Appendix, pp. 145-146.

4. Swinburne, A Century of Roundels, pp. 73-75.

5. Ibid., pp. 92-99.

the memory. The second rejoices at the sea which is personified in verse one as my mother sea, my fortress. The third roundel, exulting in wind and sea, reflects that we are as waves borne along by the sea of life. Roundels four, five and six describe the caverns in Guernsey; Swinburne compares the pathway to the caverns and the caverns themselves to Dante's journey to hell. These poems are referred to by Swinburne in a letter to Christina Rossetti enclosing a copy of A Century of Roundels, which is dedicated to her:

> The Pines, Putney Hill, S.W.,
> June 7, 1883
>
> Dear Miss Rossetti
>
> Here is the little book to which you have been so kind. As in duty bound, I send you the first copy I receive of it - or rather the two first copies, as two have been sent together, and I hope your Mother will do me the favour to accept one of them for the sake of the dedication.
>
> If the references to Dante and Farinata à propos of caverns in Guernsey seem strange or far-fetched to you, I wish you - as a poetess, and his countrywoman - would go and see that wonderful sight for yourself, which I have so faintly tried to indicate. It is amazing to me that so few English folk will trouble themselves to make so short a run to see within their own territory landscapes and prospects to which I really know no parallel - not even in the Highlands, the Apennines, or the Pyrenees - for splendour and variety of sublimity and beauty. Nowhere else, that I ever saw or heard of, is there such a sea for background to such shores - or such land for background to such seas - as in Sark and Guernsey. Watts said of the latter, when we were roaming over it last year - 'I did not think there was such an island as this in the world.' It has literally every kind of loveliness and grandeur

> packed into it - you step as it were out of the Hebrides into Tuscany in a few miles' walk - or you pass from the valleys of the Spey or the ravine of the Findhorn straight into Valdarno or Valdelsa. And if you dont believe me on trust, all I can say is, do go and see, and give these almost unknown beauties a word of song - as I have tried to do.
>
> Believe me, with best regards to your Mother,
>
> Ever most sincerely yours,
> A. C. Swinburne [1]

4. Summary and Conclusion

Swinburne has demonstrated the use of the roundel sequence to express various themes, the most common being recollections of the past, reflections upon death and the death of loved ones, and upon babies and children. The tone in which the theme is expressed is suited to the theme. For example, the tone in "A Dialogue" varies from the pleading tone of the first roundel to the imperious tone of the second to the hopeful, resolute tone of the third with a pervading serious, reflective tone over all. A sad, quiet tone in the first four roundels of "A Baby's Death" becomes more questioning in the fifth roundel, more accepting in the sixth, and finally more intensely sorrowful in the last roundel. The tone of "Étude Réaliste", because expressing the joy a baby

---

1. Lang, ed. Algernon C. Swinburne Letters, Vol. 5, p. 22.

brings with him, is light and joyous. The deaths of George Powell and Richard Wagner are reflected in a melancholy, pensive tone in "Autumn and Winter". The tone varies in "In Guernsey" with the scene being depicted and the emotion elicited by it; for example, there is a quiet, tranquil tone in the depiction of the bay in the first roundel; an exultant tone in the joyous description of the sea and the waves in the third roundel; a sombre tone in the depiction of the dark grandeur of the caverns in the sixth roundel.

Meter and rhythm vary with theme and tone. The slow, heavy movement of "A Dialogue" is in keeping with the theme. The selection of diction, the assonance and alliteration, the many long vowels contribute to the slow tempo. The meter is iambic pentameter with occasional substitution of a trochaic or anapestic foot. In "A Baby's Death" iambic tetrameter is used in the first four roundels; the simplicity of diction, little use of punctuation, evenness of rhythm contribute to the quiet tone. In the fifth roundel the use of a question mark at the end of each stanza contributes to the questioning tone.

There is great variation in the meter and verse lengths used by Swinburne in the roundel sequences. The most commonly used verse lengths are four and five feet. The shortest verse length is the dimeter line used in the

fourth roundel of "Babyhood". The longest is the heptameter line, consisting of six anapestic feet and one final iambic foot, used in "The Death of Richard Wagner". The refrain varies from one to two feet. The one syllable refrain is common. For example, each of the seven roundels of "A Dead Friend" has a monosyllabic refrain. The longest refrain is that of two anapestic feet as in the fourth roundel of "The Death of Richard Wagner". The most frequently used meter is iambic, although mixed iambic and anapestic is employed often, and anapestic less frequently. Invariably there is some substitution, of trochaic and anapestic feet, if the line is primarily iambic, or of trochaic and iambic if the line is anapestic. Feminine rhyme occurs very frequently, occurring in all of the roundels of four sequences, and in some roundels of six sequences. It occurs always in the a rhyme but never, as far as can be ascertained, in the b rhyme.

As in the single roundels, assonance, consonance, and alliteration are used extensively and contribute effectively to the euphony and tempo. Attention was drawn to the use of these devices in "A Dialogue."

A variety of objective correlative patterns are used. The recollection of an old friend and the places associated with him in memory provide the objective correlative pattern

for "Past Days". A tiny baby and imagery of sea-shells and sea-flowers are combined to form the objective correlative pattern of "Étude Réaliste"; poets and their poetry are the objective correlative for "On an Old Roundel". The imagery most frequently used is that taken from external nature. For example, "A Baby's Death" uses rose, sod, flowers, dawning skies, storm, cloud; "A Ninth Birthday" uses imagery of winter, such as frost, fog, streams, mud, winds, snow, to denote the passing of time.

Figures of speech used most frequently are similes and metaphors. Personification and metonymy also are used. Examples of figures of speech were pointed out in "A Dialogue" and "A Baby's Death".

As in the single roundels, the refrain is used in the individual roundels of each sequence to keynote the theme of that roundel. And, as in the single roundels, the refrain is meaningful in its context, continuing the concept initiated in the preceding verse.

The same variations from the typical roundel form which were found in the single roundels are found in the sequences. The first, the use of some shorter, indented verses, was noted in the fifth and sixth roundels of "Babyhood", and in all of the roundels of "Étude Réaliste". The second variation, the lack of a full stop at the end of

each stanza, was noted in "A Ninth Birthday".

The extent to which a sequence is unified varies. As discussed, there are many unifying factors within "A Dialogue" - the logical progression of thought, the similarity of the archaic diction, of meter and tempo. "A Baby's Death" has less unity than "A Dialogue"; however, there is an overall theme, a progression of emotion, and a simplicity of diction and sentence structure throughout the sequence which give a unity of style. In this sequence, the first four roundels are more closely bound by a similarity of meter, tempo, and tone, and the repetitive effect of the similar refrains. "In Guernsey" has less unity. It is united by the common subject, the island of Guernsey, but different roundels treat of different aspects of the island in very different tones, as has been discussed earlier in this conclusion. The meter is frequently similar throughout a sequence as, for example, in "Past Days", "Autumn and Winter", "A Dead Friend". The repetition of the same refrain, and with this the same b rhyme, throughout the entire sequence occurs in "Recollections", "A Ninth Birthday", and "Eros"; this has a binding effect. In "Eros" the same two rhymes and the same refrain are repeated throughout the sequence. In the majority of sequences there is less unity than in "A Dialogue" but more than "In Guernsey".

Thus, it can be concluded that the roundels used in sequences are similar to the single roundels inasmuch as each adheres to the nine line and two refrain form, to the stanza structure and rhyme scheme of the roundel as defined. The same literary devices and figures of speech are employed. A variety of themes and tones are expressed and a wide variety of meters used in the sequences. The extent of unity within sequences varies. Although similarity of meter contributes to the unity in some instances, most sequences are united by theme, tone, and tempo.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to define the roundel, to determine its origin, and, by an examination of roundels written by Swinburne, to evaluate his roundel as a poetic form.

The roundel was derived from the rondeau form which had its origin in France as a song accompanying a dance. The first literary rondels are found in thirteenth century France. From this form the rondeau evolved consisting of thirteen lines with two rhymes and two unrhymed refrains. Swinburne's roundel consists of nine lines with two rhymes and two rhymed refrains. He published one hundred and one of these roundels in A Century of Roundels in 1883. To arrive at a definition of the roundel, a representative poem was examined. The poem is "The Roundel" which has as its theme the nature of the roundel. This examination demonstrated the following characteristics of the roundel. The nine lines and two refrains are divided into three stanzas with the rhyme scheme a,b,a,B / b,a,b / a,b,a,B. B indicates the refrain which rhymes with the b rhyme and is taken from the first part of the first line. The lines are of equal length and similar meter. In "The Roundel" Swinburne states that any of a variety of themes serious or light, happy or

sad may be expressed, that the structure of the roundel is circular, and that a musical quality is essential to the poem. The refrain keynotes the theme, in both instances completing a thought initiated in the preceding verse. A variety of imagery is used to form the objective correlative pattern. Figures of speech, similes and a metaphor, contribute to the expression of the theme. Assonance and alliteration contribute to the musical quality.

Swinburne had been given, from both sides of his family, an early interest in French language and literature. His mother, partly educated on the continent, taught him French and Italian in childhood. The Swinburnes historically had been supporters of the Stuarts and for some period lived at the exiled court at St. Germain. Swinburne greatly admired his grandfather, Sir John Edward Swinburne, whose youth had been spent in France and whose library contained much eighteenth century French literature. At both Eton and Oxford Swinburne won awards for French. Among Swinburne's early poems are two examples of the rondeau with some variation from the exact rondeau form; these were published in his first volume of 1866 but believed composed in 1862 and 1863. At this time he was also expressing admiration for the contemporary French poets Baudelaire and

Victor Hugo, as well as for the fourteenth century Villon. The later volume of 1878, Poems and Ballads: Second Series, includes other experiments with French forms such as the ballade, sestina, double sestina. Impetus was given to Swinburne's interest in French forms by the enthusiasm of Edmund Gosse and Austin Dobson whose articles in 1877 and 1878 contributed to the interest of English poets in these forms. Finally, in 1883 Swinburne published his roundels. Although derived from the rondeau, the nine line, two refrain form was a new one not precisely identical with any rondeau pattern previously used.

Swinburne does not seem to have stated a precise reason for originating and using this form at this time. Critics, since Gosse first suggested the idea, have concluded that he was seeking to curb his excessive fluency by use of a rigidly fixed form. An awareness of his background and interests leads us to conclude that, although this may be one factor, there are others: Swinburne's interest in French forms and in experimenting with them for twenty years preceding, combined with his recognized technical ingenuity, and the upsurge of interest in French forms by such other important poets and critics as Dobson and Gosse, all contributed to his origination of and use of the roundel form at this

time.

Critical reaction to the first roundels was somewhat mixed, with some critics expressing admiration for Swinburne's ability to adapt a seemingly light form to serious themes, others finding the form inadequate for dealing with serious themes, but most agreed on the high quality of craftsmanship demonstrated. Later critics have paid scant attention to the roundels; in general, in their full length works on Swinburne, devoting but a few sentences to A Century of Roundels.

In the examination of single roundels it was found that all adhere strictly to the rhyme scheme and stanza form of the roundel as defined in chapter one. The roundel form has been used by Swinburne to express a wide variety of themes in a wide variety of tones. Themes have included reflections upon the past, and upon a dead love, reaction to a painting, the inexorability of fate, and life as a sea voyage. The tones used have included light, joyous, melancholy, sombre, exultant, reflective and nostalgic.

A variety of meters has been used: iambic or anapestic or mixed anapestic and iambic; frequently a trochaic foot is substituted as the initial foot in a verse. Always there is some substitution rather than precise conformity to one

meter throughout the poem. The same verse length is maintained throughout a roundel and has varied from three to six feet. Feminine rhyme occurs frequently in a verses; that is verses one, three, five, seven, and nine. Occasionally there has been a variation from this, in the use of alternate shorter verses. A second variation, noted infrequently, is the use of a comma or dash, rather than the usual full stop of a period or question mark at the end of each stanza. Assonance, consonance, and alliteration have been used extensively, contributing to the musical quality of the poem, to an emphasis on key ideas, and to rhythmical variation.

A wide variety of objective correlatives have been used. These have included the sea, a baby, an Italian city, a painting. In the forming of the objective correlative pattern, much of the imagery is taken from external nature but other imagery is effectively combined with this. Similes and metaphors are commonly used.

The refrain always keynotes the theme. Read in conjunction with the verse preceding it, it contributes to the theme in a slightly different way each time it is used and contributes to the circular structure of the roundel. Also, by repetition it contributes significantly to an intensifying of the tone and of the emotion expressed in the roundel.

Frequently Swinburne has used the roundels in sequences. In the roundel sequence, each roundel adheres to the rhyme scheme and stanza form of the roundel as defined in chapter one. Each roundel in a sequence may be considered as a single poem, complete in itself and using a variety of imagery, meters, literary devices, figures of speech, tones to express various themes. Similarly, the refrain keynotes the theme and contributes to the circular structure.

The most common themes expressed in the roundel sequences have been death and reflections upon friends now dead, the past, babies and children. A great many different tones have been used in the sequences; in some instances the same tone pervades the entire sequence; in others, the tone varies from one roundel to the next. The tones have ranged from light and joyous to exultant, sombre, reflective, melancholy and nostalgic.

An even greater variety of meter has been observed in the sequences, with the verse length varying from two to seven feet. As with the single roundels, feminine rhyme is used frequently, always in the verses with the a rhyme; that is, verses one, three, five, seven, and nine. As with the single roundel, there has been occasionally a variation from the use of the same verse length throughout a roundel, and

alternate shorter verses used. The second variation noted in single roundels is also found in the roundel in sequence, the use of a comma rather than the full stop of a period at the end of each stanza.

A wide range of objective correlatives has been used in the sequences. Among these are a tiny baby, poets and their poetry, recollections of old friends. Most often imagery of external nature contributes to the objective correlative pattern.

The extent of the unity within a sequence varies. There may be a logical progression of thought from one roundel to the next contributing to the unity; there may be, although this is infrequent, the same refrain used throughout a sequence; there may be similarity of meter and tempo throughout a sequence. In general, sequences are united by theme, tone, and tempo. The individual roundel in a sequence, though complete in itself, becomes more meaningful when considered in its context as a part of the sequence.

From this evaluation of the roundel form as originated and used by Swinburne, the following conclusions may be made. The roundel may be used as a single poem or as a part of a sequence. A wide range of themes may be expressed, tones and tempos achieved within this form. The fact that there is no restriction on the meter which may be used gives

flexibility to an otherwise restricted form. Alliteration, assonance, and consonance may be used effectively, contributing particularly to the varying of tempo and to the achievement of euphony. A wide variety of objective correlative patterns may be employed. Figures of speech, particularly similes and metaphors, can contribute significantly to the expression of the theme. The refrain is most important: in the circular structure of the roundel it keynotes the theme; it contributes to theme and tone in a somewhat different way each time used, altered in its meaning by the preceding verse, with which it is linked.

The roundel, a form seemingly light and seemingly rigid, has been demonstrated by Swinburne to be very effective in the expression of a wide variety of themes in a wide range of tones.

APPENDIX

Rondeau of François Villon, "Lay, ou plustot Rondeau", occurring in Grand Testament:

Mort, j'appelle de ta rigueur,
Qui m'as ma maistresse ravic,
Et n'es pas encore assouvie,
Se tu ne me tiens en langueur.
Onc puis n'euz force ne vigueur;
Mais que te nuysoit-elle en vie,
Mort?

Deux estions, et n'avions qu'ung cueur;
S'il est mort, force est que devie,
Voire, ou que je vive sans vie,
Comme les images, par cueur,
Mort?.[1]

Translation by Dante Gabriel Rossetti of Villon's rondeau:

"Death, of thee do I make my moan,
Who had'st my lady away from me,
Nor wilt assuage thine enmity
Till with her life thou hast mine own;
For since that hour my strength has flown.
Lo! what wrong was her life to thee,
Death?

"Two we were, and the heart was one;
Which now being dead, dead I must be,
Or seem alive as lifelessly
As in the choir the painted stone,
Death!" [2]

---

1. Cohen, op. cit., p. 56.

2. Dobson, op. cit., p. 341.

APPENDIX

Swinburne's translation of the same rondeau of Villon:

ROUNDEL

From the French of Villon

Death, I would plead against thy wrong,
  Who hast reft me of my love, my wife,
  And art not satiate yet with strife,
But needs wilt hold me lingering long.
No strength since then has kept me strong:
  But what could hurt thee in her life,
    Death?

Twain we were, and our hearts one song,
  One heart: if that be dead, thy knife
  Hath cut me off alive from life,
Dead as the carver's figured throng,
    Death! [1]

1. Swinburne, Collected Works, Vol. 6, p. 395.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, W. Davenport, ed. Latter Day Lyrics, London, Chatto and Windus, 1878, XI-357 p.
A collection of lyric poetry which includes a section devoted to French forms. Also important for the inclusion of an "Appendix" consisting of an article by Austin Dobson entitled "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse".

Brooks, Cleanth and Warren, Robert Penn, Understanding Poetry, Third Edition, Toronto, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960, XIV-584 p.
A textbook of practical criticism of poetry. Contains useful discussion, with examples, of metrics, tone, theme, imagery in poetry.

Brown, E.K., "Swinburne: A Centenary Estimate", Victorian Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism. Edited by A. Wright, New York, Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 295-311.
An assessment of Swinburne's poetry made one hundred years after his birth. States that Swinburne's later poetry has been underestimated.

Cassidy, John, Algernon C. Swinburne, New York, Twayne University, 1964, 186 p.
A discussion of the influence of Pre Raphaelism, Positivism, and French aestheticism on Swinburne. Draws attention to signs of sexual abnormality, such as love of flogging, in Swinburne.

Charteris, Evan, The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse, London, Wm. Heinemann, 1931, 525 p.
Contains references to Gosse's friendship with Swinburne and some letters of Gosse to Swinburne. Useful in assessing the friendship of the two men.

"A Century of Roundels", The Athenaeum, June 16, 1883, pp. 755-756, (unsigned article).
A review of Swinburne's A Century of Roundels which concludes that the roundel is inadequate for dealing with serious themes.

"A Century of Roundels", Contemporary Literature, June, 1883, pp. 398-399, (unsigned article).
A review of A Century of Roundels which is warm in its praise of Swinburne's roundels.

Chew, Samuel C., Swinburne, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1929, 335 p.
A thoughtful study of Swinburne's life and works. Discusses his criticism and drama as well as poetry.

Cohen, Helen Louise, Lyric Forms from France, New York, Harcourt, 1933, VII-523 p.
Includes a discussion of the various forms introduced from France into England in the late nineteenth century. A section is devoted to examples of the various forms. Important for its references to Swinburne, as well as Gosse, Dobson, and others, to the re-introduction of French forms into English poetry.

Courtney, W.L., "Mr. Swinburne's Poetry", The Fortnightly Review, XLIII, May, 1885, pp. 597-610.
Assesses Swinburne's later works as still musical, but more restrained and not impressive.

Dobson, Austin, "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse", Latter Day Lyrics. Edited by W. Davenport Adams, London, Chatto and Windus, 1878, pp. 328-351.
A useful article. An examination of the French forms which were being re-introduced into England at this time. Includes a discussion of the rondeau.

Eliot, T.S., "Swinburne as Poet", The Sacred Wood, London, Faber and Faber, 1920, pp. 131-136.
Defends Swinburne's early poetry against charges of immorality. Comments upon Swinburne's diffuseness of language and also the vitality of his language.

Evans, Ifor, English Poetry in the Later Nineteenth Century, London, Methuen, 1933, XIII-497 p.
In his assessment of Swinburne, Evans comments very briefly on the roundels, singling out those about babies for criticism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gosse, Edmund, "Algernon Charles Swinburne", Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement, Vol. II. Edited by Sidney Lee, London, Oxford University Press, 1912, pp. 456-465.
A brief, factual outline of the life and works of Swinburne.

------, "A Plea for Certain Exotic Forms of Verse", Cornhill Magazine, July, 1877, pp. 53-71.
An article encouraging the use of the ballade, rondeau, and other French forms by English poets. Stimulated interest in these forms in England.

------, The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne, London, Wm. Heinemann, 1917, XI-362 p.
The first important biography of Swinburne. Contains some interpretation of Swinburne's personality and also criticism, mostly of Swinburne's early works.

Grierson, H.J.C., Swinburne, London, Longman, Green, and Co., 1953, 31 p.
A short summary of Swinburne's life and works.

Houghton, W.E. and Stange, G.R., ed., "Algernon C. Swinburne", Victorian Poetry and Poetics, Boston, Riverside Press, 1959, pp. 625-628.
A brief evaluation of Swinburne as an introduction to his works in this anthology. Refers to Swinburne's interest in French literature.

Hyder, Clyde, Kenneth, Swinburne's Literary Career and Fame, Durham, Duke University Press, 1933, X-388 p.
Contains many quotations from critics of Swinburne's works. Excellent notes and a very extensive bibliography of Swinburne criticism.

Kastner, L.E., A History of French Versification, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1903, XX-312 p.
Useful in its discussion of the origin and development of the rondeau in France.

Ker, W.P., "Contemporary Record-Poetry", The Contemporary Review, Vol. XLIV, Sept. 1883, pp. 466-467.
A review of A Century of Roundels. Comments on the range of ideas in the roundels. Concludes that the ideas are sometimes too weighty for the light meters.

Lafourcade, Georges, La Jeunesse de Swinburne, Tome I: La Vie, Tome II: L'Ouevre, London, Oxford University Press, 1928, 271 p., 618 p.

A study of the first thirty years of Swinburne's life. Traces the development of Swinburne's political and philosophical ideas. Discusses the various influences on Swinburne at different periods.

------, Swinburne, New York, Russell and Russell, 1932, XIV-314 p.

A useful biography. Less detailed than La Jeunesse de Swinburne but covers the entire life of Swinburne.

Lang, Cecil Y., ed., New Writings by Swinburne, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1964, XV-253 p.

Contains previously unpublished works of Swinburne, including some roundels. Also contains lengthy editorial notes which provide important background helpful in an appreciation of these works.

Lyall, Sir Alfred C., "Characteristics of Mr. Swinburne's Poetry", The Edinburgh Review, CCIV, October, 1906, pp. 468-487.

Although critical of Swinburne's morbidity, judges him the most important lyrical poet of the second half of the nineteenth century.

Marcotte, Paul J., "An Introduction to the Triolet", "Inscape", Vol. 5, No. 2, Autumn, 1966, pp. 18-31.

Discusses the origin of the triolet, its introduction into England, its versification. Useful because of the relationship between the triolet, rondeau, and roundel.

Nicolson, Harold, Swinburne, London, Macmillan, 1926, 203 p.

An assessment of Swinburne which claims that Swinburne's emotional receptivity began to harden in his twenty-first year. Maintains that Swinburne had two dominating and conflicting impulses, towards revolt and towards submission.

Noble, James Ashcroft, "A Century of Roundels", The Academy, No. 581, June 23, 1883. pp.429-430.

A review of A Century of Roundels. Impressed by Swinburne's use of the roundel for the expression of serious and profound themes.

Saintsbury, George, History of English Prosody, Vol. 3, London, Macmillan, 1923.
A useful history which contains a very good discussion of Swinburne's metrics, X-562 p.

Swinburne, Algernon Charles, A Century of Roundels, London, Chatto and Windus, 1883, XI-100 p.

------, "From Charles Baudelaire", Victorian Poetry and Poetics. Edited by W.E. Houghton and G.R. Stange, Boston, Riverside Press, 1959, pp. 657-658.
Excerpt from Swinburne's article written originally for The Spectator following his reading of Beaudelaire's Fleurs du Mal in 1862.

------, Complete Works, Bonchurch Edition, 20 Vols. Edited by Edmund Gosse and Thomas Wise, London, Wm. Heinemann, 1925-27.
The most complete collection of Swinburne's works including poems published posthumously, a bibliography, and Gosse's biography of Swinburne.

------, Algernon C. Swinburne Letters, 6 Vols. Edited by Cecil Y. Lang, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1962.
The most complete compilation to date of the letters of Swinburne from 1854 to his death. Also contains several letters of Lady Jane Swinburne, mother of Algernon C. Swinburne, to Theodore Watts-Dunton about Swinburne. Useful in evaluating Swinburne's personality and interests.

------, Swinburne's Poems, 6 Vols., London, Chatto and Windus, 1904.
The collection of Swinburne's poetry published under his own supervision.

"Mr. Swinburne's Century of Roundels", The Spectator, July 28, 1883, p. 970, (unsigned article).
A review of A Century of Roundels. Maintains that the form of the roundel is suited to a narrow range of themes.

"Mr. Swinburne's New Volume", The Times, London, June 6, 1883, pp. 4-5, (unsigned article).
A review of A Century of Roundels. Admires Swinburne's mastery of verse.

Thrall, William Flint and Hibbard, Addison, A Handbook to Literature, revised and enlarged by C. Hugh Holman, New York, The Odyssey Press, 1960, VIII-594 p.
A useful handbook. Contains definitions of terms in current use in English literary history and criticism.

Welby, T. Earle, A Study of Swinburne, London, Faber and Gwyer, 1926, 274 p.
A study of the life and works of Swinburne which emphasizes the importance placed on liberty by Swinburne. Speaks highly of two volumes in particular, Songs Before Sunrise and Poems and Ballads: Second Series.

ABSTRACT

In 1883, Algernon Charles Swinburne published A Century of Roundels, a volume composed entirely of poems made in the roundel form.

The purpose of this work is to establish a definition of the roundel, to determine the factors which led to its origin, and to evaluate the use made of this form by Algernon Charles Swinburne.

Chapter one reviews, briefly, the development of the rondeau from which the roundel is derived. Swinburne's roundel, entitled "The Roundel", which has as its theme the nature of the roundel, is examined. From this examination a tentative definition of the roundel is reached.

Chapter two explores the factors in Swinburne's background which contributed to his early interest in French language and literature and his use of French forms, including the rondeau. It is concluded that the roundel was originated by Swinburne. Reasons are suggested for his use of the roundel form at this particular time, 1883.

Chapter three notes the various publications in which Swinburne's roundels can be found, and the critical reaction to A Century of Roundels. The opinions of the literary reviewers upon first publication of the volume and views of

ABSTRACT

twentieth century critics are included.

Chapter four examines seven roundels, establishing some of the themes, tones, tempos, meters, objective correlatives, literary devices, variation from the form which are found in Swinburne's roundels. The use and importance of the refrain are established.

Chapter five examines a three roundel sequence and a seven roundel sequence, and surveys the other sequences found in A Century of Roundels. The variety of themes, tones, tempos, meters, objective correlatives, literary devices, variations from the form are explored. It is established that there is no essential difference between the single roundel and the individual roundel used in a sequence. The extent of unity within a sequence is variable. Various factors - progression of thought from one roundel to another, use of the same meter and/or same refrain throughout the sequence, similarity of tone, tempo, diction - may or may not be used to unify the roundels within a sequence.

It is concluded that Swinburne, having originated the roundel, has been able to use this form to effectively express a wide variety of themes in a wide range of tones and tempos, using various objective correlatives, meters, literary devices, figures of speech - but always conforming to the roundel as defined in chapter one through examination of "The Roundel".