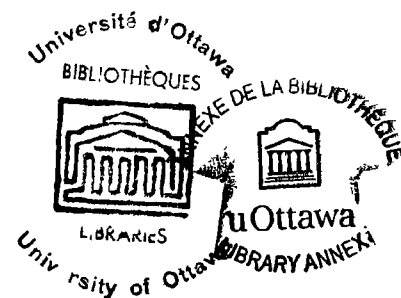


POETRY OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE  
IN THE AGE OF TRANSITION: 1880-1909

by

F. Lorraine McMullen

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Arts  
of the University of Ottawa in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy



Ottawa, Canada, 1969

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was prepared under the guidance of Professor Frank M. Tierney, Ph.D., of the Department of English of the University of Ottawa.

The writer is indebted to Dr. Tierney for his time, courtesy, scholarship, and direction.

CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Lorraine McMullen was born in Ottawa on July 27, 1926. She received a Nursing Diploma from Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, P.Q. and Registered Nurse Certificate in 1947. Miss McMullen received a Bachelor of Science degree (Public Health Nursing) from the University of Ottawa in 1948, a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Ottawa in 1963, and a Master of Arts degree in English Literature from the University of Ottawa in 1967.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine some of the poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne written between 1880 and his death in 1909, and to assess his contribution to the poetry of the "age of transition."

As Swinburne's biographers have noted, Swinburne lived during this period, 1880 to 1909, the life of a recluse, a quiet, retired life in Putney with his friend Theodore Watts-Dunton.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Swinburne continued to write poetry and criticism. The major volumes of his poetry during this period are the following: Studies in Song (1880), Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems (1882), A Century of Roundels (1883), A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems (1894), The Tale of Balen (1896), A Channel Passage and

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<sup>1</sup>Significant critical biographers who confirm this fact include the following: Samuel C. Chew, Swinburne, Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1929; John Drinkwater, Swinburne: An Estimate, London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1913; Edmund Gosse, The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne, London, Wm. Heinemann Ltd., 1917; Humphrey Hare, Swinburne, A Biographical Approach, London, H. F. and G. Witherby, London, 1949; Georges Lafourcade, Swinburne, New York, Russell and Russell, 1935; Harold Nicolson, Swinburne, London, Macmillan and Co., 1926; William R. Rutland, Swinburne, A Nineteenth Century Hellenic, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1931; T. Earle Wilby, A Study of Swinburne, London, Faber and Gwyer, 1926.

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Other Poems (1904). A further volume, Posthumous Poems (1917), was published by Edmund Gosse and Thomas Wise.<sup>1</sup>

The major source of the poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne used in the writing of this thesis is The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, Bonchurch Edition, twenty volumes, edited by Sir Edmund Gosse, C. B. and Thomas James Wise, London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1925-1927, reprinted New York, Russell and Russell, 1968. Two additional sources are New Writings by Swinburne, edited by C. Y. Lang, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1964, and Posthumous Poems, edited by Edmund Gosse, C. B. and Thomas J. Wise, London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1917.

The poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne which is under examination in this thesis is that written between 1880 and 1909, a period which this thesis terms a "transition period" in English literature. This was a period in which a wide variety of poetry was being written, and a period which is being increasingly recognized as of significant influence on contemporary poetry. Many recent critics support the concept of the period 1880 to 1920 as a "transition

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<sup>1</sup>Titles and dates of these volumes have been taken from The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, Bonchurch Edition, edited by Sir Edmund Gosse, C. B. and Thomas J. Wise, 20 Vols., London, William Heinemann, 1925-1927, reprinted New York, Russell and Russell, 1968, Vol. XX, Bibliography. In following footnotes this edition of Swinburne's works will be referred to as Works.

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period,"<sup>1</sup> neither characteristically Victorian nor characteristically contemporary. The literary periodical, English Literature in Transition: 1880-1920, originated in 1957.

This periodical was first titled English Fiction in Transition and renamed English Literature in Transition in 1963, at which time it became, as the editor, Helmut E. Gerber, stated, a "period journal rather than a genre journal."<sup>2</sup>

Chapter One examines some of the statements of recent critics concerning the "transition period" and arrives at the conclusion that a wide variety of poetry was written during this period, of which the more important types are aesthetic, decadent, symbolist, political-patriotic, Georgian, Imagist, and "Sitwellian surrealist." Of these, the latter three came into prominence in the last decade of the "transition period," 1910 to 1920, the decade after the death of Swinburne; the preceding four: aesthetic, decadent, symbolist,

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<sup>1</sup>Among these critics are the following: Richard Ellmann, "The Two Faces of Edward," Edwardians and Late Victorians, New York, Columbia University Press, 1960; Helmut E. Gerber, "The Nineties, Beginning, End or Transition?", Edwardians and Late Victorians, New York, Columbia University Press, 1960; Graham Hough, "George Moore and the Nineties," Edwardians and Late Victorians, New York, Columbia University Press, 1960; John M. Munro, ed., English Poetry in Transition, New York, Western Publishing Co., 1968; Henry F. Salerno, ed., English Drama in Transition, New York, Western Publishing Co., 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Helmut E. Gerber, "Forum: Decadence and Aestheticism," English Literature in Transition, Vol. VI, No. 1, p. 16.

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political-patriotic, were current during Swinburne's lifetime. It is, therefore, under the four headings--aesthetic, decadent, symbolist, political-patriotic--that the poetry of Swinburne will be examined in the following chapters.

In comparison with the critical reaction to such earlier works of Swinburne as Atalanta in Calydon (1865), Poems and Ballads, First Series (1866), and Songs before Sunrise (1871), there has been little attention devoted by critics to Swinburne's later poetry, that is, his poetry after 1880.<sup>1</sup> Several reasons are suggested for this. The "shocking" quality of some poems in Poems and Ballads (1866) attracted contemporary attention to Swinburne's poetry. Later critics directed attention to these same works because of the same aesthetic and decadent qualities; no startlingly new element is found in Swinburne's poetry after 1880; hence it does not draw similar attention to itself. A second reason for lack of greater critical interest in this later poetry is possibly an association of Swinburne's poetry with his life. His early life was in some ways spectacular. Some

<sup>1</sup>Many critics have written of Swinburne's life and works, but all of them have directed most attention to the period before 1880. Here are some of the major critics who have placed emphasis on Swinburne's earlier works: Chew, Swinburne; Drinkwater, Swinburne: An Estimate; Gosse, The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne; Hare, Swinburne, A Biographical Approach; Georges Lafourcade, La Jeunesse de Swinburne, 2 volumes, London, Oxford University Press, 1925; Nicolson, Swinburne; Rutland, Swinburne, A Nineteenth Century Hellene; Welby, A Study of Swinburne.

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current critics<sup>1</sup> express concern with such facets of his life as his interest in flagellation; his relationship with Adah Isaacs Menken, the actress, who had been four times married before meeting Swinburne; Swinburne's attraction to the works of the Marquis de Sade; and his possible homosexuality.

There is nothing of such unusual interest apparent in Swinburne's later life. Retiring to Putney in 1879, he lived quietly there with Theodore Watts-Dunton until his death in 1909. Rarely going out except for regular daily walks and holidays with his family, he also seldom received visitors. Increasing deafness contributed to Swinburne's lack of communication with earlier friends. Thus he virtually disappeared from society. Those who closely associate life with works would expect nothing too substantial to come from Putney.

Several critics have noted that this lack of attention to Swinburne's later work is unwarranted:

But in the last half of his life, as in the first, he wrote a very large amount of lyrical poetry; and this has been under-estimated by the world. . . . But much of the political and philosophical poetry of the later years is in no degree inferior, either in intellect or in music, to what he had written in his first volumes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>These include the following: John Cassidy, Algernon C. Swinburne, New York, Twayne University Press, 1964; Jean Fuller, Swinburne, London, Chatto and Windus, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>E. K. Brown, "Swinburne: A Centenary Estimate," Victorian Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. A. Wright, New York, Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 307-308.

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It is a common superstition that after the first full impulse of his youth Swinburne's powers steadily waned, and that his poetry deteriorated.<sup>1</sup>

In order to discuss the poetry of Swinburne as a contribution to the "age of transition," Chapter Two examines the characteristics of Aestheticism, Decadence, and Symbolism in the nineteenth century, and Swinburne's relationship to these literary trends. The development and interrelationship of the three movements are explored as means of deducing the characteristics of each.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five examine and evaluate some poems of Swinburne published during the period under consideration. These chapters comprise the major part of this thesis. There is no attempt to consider all of the poems in the many volumes of poetry published by Swinburne at this time, but merely to present some of the poems which demonstrate his achievement at this period in his career, and at the same time to point out the variety in Swinburne's poetry which establishes him as a poet of the "transition period." The order used in the examination of poems will be a chronological one. Chapter Three deals with poetry of Swinburne between 1880 and 1884, Chapter Four with poetry of Swinburne between 1885 and 1889, and Chapter Five with poetry between 1890 and 1909. This chronological order reveals the

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<sup>1</sup>Drinkwater, Swinburne: An Estimate, p. 157.

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characteristics of Swinburne's poetry at that particular time: style, metrical patterns, diction, subject matter, and theme. Also, it shows the contrasting types of poetry written at the same time, evidence of Swinburne's flexibility, and of the richness and variety of his poetry.

It must be noted that of the poems published by Swinburne during the period, forty-three have been selected as representative of the various kinds of poetry Swinburne was writing during the "age of transition." No attempt has been made to analyse these poems in depth, but rather to reveal those characteristics in the poems which show them representative of the "age of transition." Because of the excessive space which would be occupied, the poems discussed are not printed in the body of the thesis but in the Appendix; poems over two hundred lines in length do not appear.

A two-fold contribution to the study of English literature in the "transition period" will be made by this thesis: first, it will examine and evaluate some of the poetry of Swinburne in the period 1880 to 1909, a period in his poetry which has received little attention from critics thus far; secondly, it will evaluate his contribution to the "transition period," a period in which many streams of literature are found, and thus assess his entitlement to be called, in this later period of his writing, a "transition poet."

## CHAPTER I

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE AND THE  
"TRANSITION PERIOD"

In this chapter a brief outline of the life of Algernon Charles Swinburne will be given. The purpose of this outline is to direct attention to those facets of Swinburne's life considered to be of importance to his poetry from 1880 to 1909. This will be followed by a section examining the literary period 1880 to 1920 as a "transition period" which encompasses a variety of literary trends more suitably grouped together than attached to either the Victorian or the modern age. This section will demonstrate that there is increasing support among recent critics for the designation of the years 1880 to 1920 as a "transition period." In subsequent chapters Swinburne will be demonstrated to have contributed to many of these trends.

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## Section 1

Algernon Charles Swinburne in the  
"Transition Period"

Algernon Charles Swinburne was born in London, England, April 5, 1837, the elder son of Captain Charles Henry Swinburne and Lady Jane Henrietta Swinburne, fourth daughter of the Earl of Ashburnham. He was educated at Eton and at Oxford, which he left in 1860 without taking a degree. An important event at Oxford was Swinburne's meeting with William Morris and Dante Gabriel Rossetti in 1857. In London he renewed his acquaintance with the Pre-Raphaelite poets and painters: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, and Edward Burne-Jones, and, in fact, shared a house with Rossetti, George Meredith, and others for a short period in 1863 and 1864.

Although Swinburne published several poems in the Spectator in 1862, his first important work was the poetic drama, Atalanta in Calydon (1865),<sup>1</sup> founded on the Greek legend of Meleager who was destroyed by his mother, Althaea. The drama was highly praised and is considered by one critic

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<sup>1</sup>Algernon Charles Swinburne, Atalanta in Calydon, Moxon and Co., London, 1865.

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"the most valuable as well as the most communicable of all Swinburne's work."<sup>1</sup> With the advent of Atalanta in Calydon Swinburne became a celebrity. With Poems and Ballads<sup>2</sup> in 1866 he provoked a sensation. Led by John Morley's attack in the Saturday Review, August 4, 1866, critics condemned and denounced the poems for their hedonism, sensuousness, sadism, and lasciviousness.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this outcry, Bertram Payne, general manager of Moxon and Company, withdrew the volume from circulation. Swinburne thereupon transferred his works to John C. Hotten and published his own defence of his poems, Notes on Poems and Reviews, in which he supported the amorality of art.<sup>4</sup> Two important

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<sup>1</sup>Nicolson, Swinburne, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup>Algernon Charles Swinburne, Poems and Ballads, Moxon and Co., London, 1866.

<sup>3</sup>John Morley, "Mr. Swinburne's New Poems," Saturday Review, August 4, 1866, reprinted in Victorian Poetry and Poetics, edited by Walter E. Houghton and C. Robert Stange, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959, pp. 831-835. These poems of Swinburne and the critical reaction to them will be discussed further in Chapter Two, Section One, pp. 30-31, 45-46, Section Two, pp. 63-64.

<sup>4</sup>Algernon Charles Swinburne, Notes on Poems and Reviews, John C. Hotten, London, 1866. Swinburne's Notes on Poems and Reviews is discussed below, Chapter Two, Section One, pp. 45-46.

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influences on these poems were the French poets Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of these French writers is not surprising in the light of Swinburne's background. Swinburne had an interest in French literature and in the French language very early in life. In his childhood he was taught French and Italian by his mother. At Eton he won the Prince Consort's prize in French; later at Oxford he won the Taylorian scholarship for French and Italian.<sup>2</sup> Swinburne's grandfather, Sir John Edward Swinburne, who was born in Bordeaux and educated in France, had a library of eighteenth century French literature at the family seat at Capheaton; this was available to Algernon Swinburne on his frequent holidays there.<sup>3</sup> Of the important French writer and leader of the "art for art's sake" movement, Théophile Gautier, Swinburne, in a letter to E. C. Stedman of February 23, 1874, stated that he had been "from boyhood almost his [Gautier's]

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<sup>1</sup>Albert J. Farmer, Le Mouvement esthétique et "decadent" en Angleterre (1873-1900), Paris, Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1931, pp. 23-25.

<sup>2</sup>T. Earle Welby, A Study of Swinburne, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Georges Lafourcade, Swinburne, p. 7.

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ardent admirer."<sup>1</sup> Swinburne's early regard for Baudelaire is demonstrated in his article, "Charles Baudelaire," which appeared in the Spectator in 1862 and shows that he is one of the first in England aware of Baudelaire, certainly the first critic in England to evaluate Fleurs du Mal.<sup>2</sup>

Other important influences on Swinburne were Walter Savage Landor and Victor Hugo from whom Swinburne learned a love of freedom,<sup>3</sup> and the Italian patriot, Joseph Mazzini, who visited England to achieve support for a free and united republican Italy. Songs before Sunrise (1871), inspired by the events in Italy, was dedicated to Mazzini.<sup>4</sup> These poems express Swinburne's love of liberty and hatred of despotism. This volume also contains the clearest expression of Swinburne's evolutionary naturalistic philosophy, the poem "Hertha" of which Swinburne asserts, "Of all I have done,

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<sup>1</sup>Algernon C. Swinburne, Algernon C. Swinburne Letters, edited by Cecil Y. Lang, 6 volumes, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1962, Vol. II, p. 282. In following footnotes this edition of Swinburne's letters will be referred to as Letters.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter Two, Section One, for a further discussion of Swinburne's essay on Charles Baudelaire.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel C. Chew, Swinburne, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Algernon C. Swinburne, "Dedication: To Joseph Mazzini," Songs before Sunrise, London, F. S. Ellis, 1871, p. v.

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I rate 'Hertha' highest as a single piece, finding in it the most of lyric force and music combined with the most of condensed and clarified thought."<sup>1</sup> Both the devotion to "art for art's sake" expressed in Poems and Ballads (1866) and the love of liberty expressed in Songs before Sunrise (1871) remained with Swinburne and influenced his work in the period of Swinburne's life with which this thesis is concerned, 1880 to 1909.

By 1879 Swinburne's health had failed considerably, due primarily, it would seem now, to an extremely highstrung temperament unable to sustain the irregular habits of life and, in particular, the increasingly frequent periods of excessive drinking. Frequently his father would take him to the family home to recuperate from the debilitating effects of these habits, and he would in a few weeks return to London only to relapse into the same way of life. Finally, in 1879, Theodore Watts, at the request of Swinburne's mother (his father was now deceased) brought Swinburne, extremely ill, to Putney. Watts, a solicitor who was also very interested in literature, first knew Swinburne as a business associate in 1873, and soon became a personal friend.<sup>2</sup> With

<sup>1</sup>Swinburne, cited in Nicolson, Swinburne, pp. 138-139.

<sup>2</sup>Nicolson, Swinburne, p. 146. Watts added the additional surname Dunton in 1896.

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the encouragement of Lady Jane Swinburne, Watts and Swinburne in 1879 established a permanent home at Putney where Watts saw that Swinburne established a peaceful and regular way of life.

Thus, throughout the rest of his life, Swinburne lived in a much quieter way. He seems to have seen little of many former friends. Apparently Watts-Dunton decided which friends it was advisable to admit. From his letters, we know that Swinburne kept in close touch with William Michael Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones, both friends from his youthful Pre-Raphaelite days, and with Edmund Gosse. Gosse shared Swinburne's interest in French literature and the revival of French fixed forms.<sup>1</sup> Gosse became Swinburne's first biographer and the compiler, with Thomas J. Wise, of the complete works of Swinburne, first published in the Bonchurch Edition in 1925-1927.

Increasing deafness also limited Swinburne's communication with the world outside Putney. However, he continued to be a prolific writer, dividing his time between poetry, drama and critical works. His poetry during this period includes Songs of the Springtides (1880), Studies in

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<sup>1</sup>The revival of use of the French fixed forms as part of the Aesthetic movement in England is discussed below, Chapter Two, Section One, pp. 48-50.

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Song (1880), Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems (1882), A Century of Roundels (1883), A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems (1884), Poems and Ballads, Third Series (1889), Astrophel and Other Poems (1894), The Tale of Balen (1896), A Channel Passage and Other Poems (1904). His critical works include Miscellanies (1886), a series of essays on English writers; A Study of Victor Hugo (1886); A Study of Ben Jonson (1889); Studies in Prose and Poetry (1894), essays on a wide variety of writers; The Age of Shakespeare (1908), essays on King Lear, Othello, and Richard II; Shakespeare (1909).

During this period Swinburne also published several dramas including Mary Stuart, A Tragedy (1881); Marino Faliero, A Tragedy (1885); Lochrine, A Tragedy (1887); The Sisters, A Tragedy (1892); Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards, A Tragedy (1899); The Duke of Gandia, A Tragedy (1908).<sup>1</sup>

Many of Swinburne's poems and essays were published in periodical journals before being collected in the volumes noted above. The poems were published most frequently in The Athenaeum and The Fortnightly Review as well as in The Gentleman's Magazine, The Spectator, The Academy, The Musical Review, The Pall Mall Gazette, The Nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup>Titles and dates of publications of these volumes are from Works, Bibliography, Vol. XX.

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Century, and others.<sup>1</sup> This thesis will demonstrate that during the period 1880 to 1909, in which Swinburne lived quietly at Putney, he produced poetry of high quality, very much in the mainstream of that period, a "transition period."

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<sup>1</sup>Dates and names of periodicals in which poems were published are from Works, Bibliography, Vol. XX.

## "TRANSITION PERIOD"

## Section 2

## The "Transition Period"

Traditionally English Literature between 1837 and 1969 has been divided into the Victorian Period 1837 to 1900 and the Contemporary Period 1900 to the present. However, it is increasingly recognized that poetic trends do not necessarily begin and end with centuries, that the year 1900 does not necessarily end one period and begin another. The period from 1880 to 1920 is becoming accepted as a "transition period," encompassing a variety of literary trends more suitably grouped together than attached completely to the Victorian or to the modern period. Further, it is being recognized that in this period reside the main sources of modern literature. It is noteworthy that there is now a journal entitled English Literature in Transition 1880-1920 which began publication in 1957 and is published three to six times yearly. Further, three anthologies devoted to works in this period were published in 1968: English Poetry in Transition 1880-1920, edited by John M. Munro; The English Short Story in Transition 1880-1920, edited by Helmut E. Gerber; English Drama in Transition 1880-1920, edited by Henry F. Salerno.

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The 1890's have been called fin-de-siècle and primary attention paid to its decadent qualities.<sup>1</sup> However, in his English Institute Essay entitled "The Nineties, Beginning, End, or Transition?" Helmut E. Gerber supports the concept that the nineties is a part of a wider period, 1880 to 1920, which is most suitably termed "transition." Gerber sees the nineties as neither an end nor a beginning nor an independent period, not "significantly a genesis of anything, and . . . not . . . significantly the end of anything . . . not an independent, more or less self-sufficient period, . . ." <sup>2</sup> Asserting that critics have now begun to affirm "that the various movements discoverable in the nineties did not die with the nineties," <sup>3</sup> Gerber acknowledges the nineties as "a colourful, fervent, sometimes clamorous, often comic and just as often tragic decade" nevertheless, as a decade "in the heart of a cultural period which can best be denoted with the words 'interim,' 'experimentation,' 'turning point,' or 'transition.'" <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Decadent qualities are discussed in Chapter Two, Section Two, pp. 53-64.

<sup>2</sup>Gerber, "The Nineties, Beginning, End, or Transition?" p. 54.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

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Hough questions the concept of the Victorian Age, from 1837 to 1901, as a literary division, objecting that "the life of the spirit does not coincide with the vicissitudes of the temporal power, and as a division of literary history, this slice of time [1837 to 1901, the period of Queen Victoria's reign] makes very little sense."<sup>1</sup> Hough proposes, in support of the concept of a "transition period," that there is a period from about 1880 to 1914 which, while distinct from what is usually considered as Victorianism, and also distinct from the modern period, is "a period in which all the foundations of modern literature were being laid."<sup>2</sup>

Claude Bissell, in "The Butlerian Inheritance of G.B. Shaw," makes a similar objection to the idea of the Victorian age, 1837 to 1901, which he states is not sufficiently united in basic ideas and attitudes to be considered as one period. Bissell considers that there are greater differences between the world of the 1840's and that of the 1880's than there are between the world of the 1880's and the present world. Thus, he, too, concludes that "We need a new name for the era that begins in the seventies and eighties and

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<sup>1</sup>Hough, "George Moore and the Nineties," p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

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stretches certainly to the end of the first World War, possibly even later."<sup>1</sup>

It has become apparent that many kinds of poetry were being written towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. It was an age of experimentation. Included in the poetry being written at this time were late Victorian poetry with romantic and naturalist characteristics; aesthetic, decadent, and symbolist poetry; poetry of public statement; and poetry reflecting a renewed interest in old fixed forms. That there is a great variety of poetry to be found during this period is supported by Gerber, who says, "Decadence, aestheticism, naturalism, impressionism, symbolism, neo-romanticism, late Victorianism, modernism, and a host of other isms--these are some of the movements, whenever they began, that commentators recognize in the nineties."<sup>2</sup>

Munro, in the Introduction to the anthology, English Poetry in Transition, divides the varieties of poetry being written in the late nineteenth century into two general categories which he calls Decadent and Counter-Decadent.

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<sup>1</sup>Claude Bissell, "The Butlerian Inheritance of G. B. Shaw," Dalhousie Review, XLI, Summer 1961, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup>Gerber, "The Nineties, Beginning, End, or Transition?" p. 57.

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The Decadent<sup>1</sup> includes all those who "followed Tennyson's advice in 'The Lotus Eaters' and reclined 'on the hills like gods together, careless of mankind.'"<sup>2</sup> The Decadents were such poets as Ernest Dowson, Arthur Symons, and Oscar Wilde. The Counter-Decadents who "proclaimed the virtues of the active life, responded to the patriotic demands of Queen and country, and accepted with enthusiasm the technological advances of the modern age,"<sup>3</sup> include such poets as W. E. Henley, Rudyard Kipling, and Henry Newbolt. However, as Munro points out, these groups are not mutually exclusive; many poets belong to both. It is the intention of this thesis to demonstrate that Swinburne is a poet who belongs to both groups. These two groups had in common the concern to find new modes of expression. Also, both experimented with the old French fixed forms. Although Munro does not refer to it, there is another group including such poets as Frances Thompson and Alice Meynell which forms the Catholic Literary Revival.

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<sup>1</sup>The term "Decadent" is used here by Munro as the name for a general category. Decadent as used throughout this thesis is defined in Chapter Two, Section Two.

<sup>2</sup>Munro, English Poetry in Transition, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

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In the early twentieth century, Munro sees four main groups: the Georgians, the Chesterton school, the Imagists, and the Sitwellian non-representational poets. According to Munro all four of the groups "had their roots firmly embedded in the nineteenth century tradition."<sup>1</sup> He explains that the Georgians are later and weaker Wordsworthians; the Chestertonians reflect the nineteenth century interest in the Middle Ages and in the ballad; the Imagists are inheritors of the Parnassian tradition as well as influenced by Chinese and Japanese poetry; the Sitwellian poets are influenced by French Symbolism and possibly, Munro suggests, by Victorian nonsense verse. Thus it can be seen that Munro strongly supports the concept that modern poetry has its roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Munro says also in support of this contention that "the widely held notion that the direction of English poetry shifted radically shortly after the end of the first World War is simply not tenable."<sup>2</sup> In support of this thesis Munro states that "the kind of poetry Eliot advocated in 'The Metaphysical Poets' and put into effect in 'The

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<sup>1</sup>Munro, English Poetry in Transition, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

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Wasteland' was not altogether new."<sup>1</sup> Munro says that "Eliot's summary of those poetic qualities which he found in the Metaphysicals and looked for in the poetry of his own time is remarkably close to the description of the poetry of Stephen Mallarmé contained in Arthur Symons' The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899)."<sup>2</sup>

Although in the early twentieth century, 1900 to 1920, Munro sees four main groups, it is noted that three of these--Georgians, Imagists, and Sitwellians--really developed in the last decade of this period, between 1910 and 1920. The first anthology of Georgian Poetry<sup>3</sup> was published in 1912. Although such writers as Housman and Masfield who were published in this volume had begun writing earlier, the vast majority of Georgians came to the forefront only after 1912. Rupert Brooke, a leader of the group when it started, published his first poems in 1911. The Imagists, writing largely in reaction to the Georgians, became important with

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<sup>1</sup>Munro, English Poetry in Transition, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 21. That Eliot found in the Metaphysical poets the same poetic qualities which are found in the late nineteenth century French Symbolists is stated also by Frank Kermode in his essay "Dissociation of Sensibility," The Romantic Image, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961, pp. 138-161.

<sup>3</sup>Georgian Poetry 1911-1912, edited by Edward Marsh, London, The Poetry Bookshop, 1912.

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Pound's anthology Des Imagistes (1914).<sup>1</sup> The Sitwells' work became prominent in their publication Wheels<sup>2</sup> 1916 to 1921; they, too, were reacting to Georgian poetry. Thus of the four main groups of early twentieth century poetry, the only one of widespread popularity in the early years of the twentieth century, before Swinburne's death in 1909, was the Chestertonian propagandist school.

It will be shown that Swinburne contributed to this "propagandist" school. Also, it will be shown that Swinburne contributed to the two major categories of late nineteenth century poetry described by Munro as Decadent and Counter-Decadent. Decadent in the general sense in which Munro uses it, includes all poetry deriving from the "art for art's sake" movement, which is considered in this thesis under the three headings aesthetic, decadent, and symbolist. Counter-decadent includes didactic poetry such as poetry of public statement, patriotic and political poetry, thus often, as in the Chestertonian school, propagandist.

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<sup>1</sup>Des Imagistes. An Anthology, edited by Ezra Pound, London, The Poetry Bookshop, 1914.

<sup>2</sup>Wheels, edited by Edith Sitwell, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1916-1921. Wheels was an annual collection of poems. Six numbers were published from 1916 to 1921. Besides the three Sitwells, Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell, other notable contributors include Aldous Huxley and Wilfred Owen.

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It is evident from the authorities cited above that the literary period from 1880 to approximately 1920 is being increasingly recognized as a period of major importance, distinct from both the Victorian age and the modern age, and deserving consideration as a period in itself. Of the various names suggested for this time, the one most commonly suggested and used by the above critics and which seems most descriptive of the period is "transition." Thus the literary period from 1880 to 1920 is called, in this thesis, the "transition period," or "age of transition."

## CHAPTER II

AESTHETICISM, DECADENCE, SYMBOLISM AND  
SWINBURNE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THESE LITERARY TRENDS

Three main literary trends active in the age of transition are Aestheticism, Decadence, and Symbolism. The purposes of this chapter are twofold: first, to define Aestheticism, Decadence, and Symbolism, and show their major characteristics; secondly, to demonstrate Swinburne's relationship to these literary trends. Chapters Three, Four, and Five will show that Swinburne's poetry during the age of transition reflects his continued attachment to Aestheticism, Decadence, and Symbolism.

Chapter Two is divided into three sections. The first deals with the Aesthetic movement, its development, its characteristics, and Swinburne's relationship to the Aesthetic movement. The second section deals with Decadence, its development, its characteristics, and Swinburne's relationship to Decadence. The third section deals with the Symbolist movement, its development, its characteristics, and Swinburne's relationship to Symbolism. It will be seen that these three literary movements are closely related; they are influenced by many of the same writers, such as Swinburne, himself, and Walter Pater of England, Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire of France.

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Section 1

The Aesthetic Movement  
 and Swinburne's Relationship to It

Aestheticism in England stems from two main sources. The English source was the Pre-Raphaelites who had inherited the romantic spirit; the French source was the French proponents of "art for art's sake," Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement began in 1848 with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood composed of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais. These three artists returned to the painters before Raphael as sources of inspiration. Their group soon included James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens, William Michael Rossetti, and later Ford Maddox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones, Coventry Patmore, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Simeon Solomon, and Christina Rossetti.<sup>1</sup> Poetry as well as painting was then included as a means of expression. In both art forms the Pre-Raphaelites sought realism with sharp particularization of visual detail.

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<sup>1</sup>James D. Merrit, "Introduction," The Pre-Raphaelite Poem, New York, E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1966, p. 17.

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From the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly from Rossetti, the Aesthetes derived many of their characteristics. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) was the major figure in the movement. He had an intense admiration for Keats (though based on an incomplete view of Keats) which led him to concentrate on the beautiful. This cult of beauty can also be traced to his love of medieval Italian poetry.<sup>1</sup> The love of beauty and devotion to Keats and Italian poetry led to the use of rich, sensuous description. The Pre-Raphaelites also were poets of escape. Rossetti withdrew from theological, political, social, and economic disputes. As Buckley says, "To the outside world he seemed completely lost in the rarified atmosphere of his shuttered studio."<sup>2</sup> Bowra confirms this, adding that the Pre-Raphaelites escaped into "happy day-dreams and exalted fancy" and, unlike the Romantic poets, built their imaginary worlds "on the whole less from an immediate experience of life than from art and literature," with the result that their work is "narrower than the best work of the Romantics."<sup>3</sup> The Pre-Raphaelites,

<sup>1</sup>C. M. Bowra, "The House of Life," The Romantic Imagination, London, Oxford University Press, 1950, pp. 200-201.

<sup>2</sup>Jerome Buckley, The Victorian Temper, New York, Random House Inc., 1951, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup>Bowra, The Romantic Imagination, p. 199.

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interested in both poetry and painting, were also interested in closely relating the two; for example, Rossetti wrote in The Germ poems titled "Sonnets for Pictures" in which he described and commented upon the paintings of other artists.<sup>1</sup> The careful craftsmanship of the Pre-Raphaelites was exemplified by Rossetti who was a slow worker, continually changing his work, using dictionaries of rhymes and synonyms, all of which has led to the criticism that his work was "elaborate and self-conscious."<sup>2</sup> This careful craftsmanship was one of the Pre-Raphaelite characteristics inherited by the Aesthetes.

Other characteristics of the Pre-Raphaelites became, in the eighteen eighties, elements of Aestheticism. The Pre-Raphaelite dedication to their art, concern with beauty, rejection of the problems of the world for a poetry of escape, and interest in merging the arts--all became elements of the Aesthetic movement. Merritt asserts: "Though Aestheticism often seems to be Pre-Raphaelism gone slightly mad the two movements are inextricably bound together, and it is certainly extremely unlikely that Aestheticism would have developed at all if the P.R.B. had not been founded in 1848."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Merritt, The Pre-Raphaelite Poem, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Bowra, The Romantic Imagination, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup>Merritt, The Pre-Raphaelite Poem, p. 30.

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W. B. Yeats confirms the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites on the Aesthetes, referring to the period of his own early aesthetic poetry and his association with The Rhymers Club, "I was in all things Pre-Raphaelite."<sup>1</sup>

It is generally accepted that Swinburne was one of the earliest proponents of "art for art's sake,"<sup>2</sup> demonstrating his support for this movement both in his first volume of poetry, Poems and Ballads (1866) and in his early essays. An important influence on Swinburne in this regard was the Pre-Raphaelites whom he first met while he was an undergraduate at Oxford, when, in 1857, Rossetti, Morris, and other Pre-Raphaelites came to Oxford to paint murals at the new Oxford Union Society Debating Hall. Swinburne was much impressed by them, and the influence of Morris, particularly, is evident in Swinburne's early

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<sup>1</sup>William Butler Yeats, Autobiographies, London, Macmillan and Company, 1955, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>Among those who refer to this fact are the following: Morley, "Mr. Swinburne's New Poems," Saturday Review, August 4, 1866; Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties; Chew, Swinburne; Lafourcade, La Jeunesse de Swinburne; Welby, A Study of Swinburne, Beckson, ed., Aesthetes and Decadents; Louise Rosenblatt, L'Idée de L'Art pour L'Art dans la Littérature Anglaise pendant la Période Victorienne, Paris, Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1931.

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ballads.<sup>1</sup> Swinburne left Oxford in November 1860. He went to London where he renewed acquaintance with Rossetti and Morris, living for a period in 1863 and 1864 with Rossetti and other Pre-Raphaelites.

Swinburne proved to be of considerable assistance to Rossetti. After opening the grave of his wife, Lizzie Siddal, in 1869, to recover the poems he had buried with her, Rossetti sent the proofs of these poems to Swinburne for criticism. In his correspondence with Rossetti between October, 1869 and March 1870,<sup>2</sup> Swinburne gave Rossetti much helpful criticism and made a number of suggestions which Rossetti accepted. For example, in a letter dated December 10, 1869, Swinburne suggested changing the word "double-bedded" to "double-pillowed" in Rossetti's poem, "Jenny."<sup>3</sup> This alteration was made by Rossetti.<sup>4</sup> The extent to which Rossetti depended upon Swinburne may be seen in the remark

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<sup>1</sup>The influence of Morris on Swinburne's early poetry is attested to by the following critics: Chew, Swinburne; Nicolson, Swinburne; Welby, A Study of Swinburne; Albert J. Farmer, Le Mouvement esthétique et "decadent" en Angleterre (1873-1900).

<sup>2</sup>This correspondence has been published in Letters, Vol. II, pp. 42-108, passim.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Vol. II, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Poems and Translations, London, Oxford University Press, 1913, p. 72, l. 375.

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he made in a letter to Swinburne at this time, "It is a shame boring you about such mere trifles amid the mass of magnificent work which you do without worrying your friends with the details, but the fact is I never can feel clear on uncertain points until I get your opinion."<sup>1</sup>

Swinburne vigorously supported Rossetti in the famous controversy with Robert Buchanan, author of the critical attack against Rossetti and Swinburne, "The Fleshly School of Poetry," published in The Contemporary Review, October, 1871. Swinburne's major contribution to this controversy was a reply to Buchanan's article titled Under the Microscope, first published in pamphlet form in 1872.<sup>2</sup> Both Swinburne and Rossetti had been attacked by Buchanan as "the fleshly gentlemen [who] have bound themselves by solemn league and covenant to extol fleshliness as the distinct and supreme end of poetic and pictorial art; . . ."<sup>3</sup> In this instance Rossetti and Swinburne were united against those who sought to limit the poet's range by setting themselves up as

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<sup>1</sup>British Museum: MSS. Ashley 4995, f. 5, cited in Jean Overton Fuller, Swinburne, London, Chatto and Windus, 1968, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup>Works, Vol. XVI, pp. 377-444.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Buchanan, "The Fleshly School of Poetry," reprinted in Victorian Poetry and Poetics, ed. Houghton and Stange, p. 840.

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guardians of English morals. After the death of Dante Gabriel Rossetti in 1882, Swinburne retained a close relationship with his family, as may be noted by his numerous letters to William Michael Rossetti,<sup>1</sup> and his dedication of A Century of Roundels (1883) to Christina Rossetti.<sup>2</sup>

Walter Pater (1839-1894) was an important influence on the Aesthetic movement. His Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873), particularly the "Conclusion" of that work, led him to be considered "the foremost Aesthete of his day."<sup>3</sup> In the "Conclusion" Pater saw experience itself as the one certain thing in life, advocating that one seek to experience always new and different impressions and sensations. He saw the transitory nature of life as reason for seeking a constant series of pleasurable sensations so as not to lose the fleeting moments one had, and said, "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this

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<sup>1</sup>Many letters of Swinburne to William Michael Rossetti are published in Letters. Lang, editor, states in his Introduction to Letters, Vol. I, p. xxxix: "William Michael Rossetti, with whom Swinburne corresponded for nearly half a century, trails only Chatto [Swinburne's publisher] and Watts-Dunton in the total number of letters received and collected in these volumes."

<sup>2</sup>Works, Vol. V, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Beckson, Aesthetes and Decadents, p. xxviii.

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ecstasy, is success in life."<sup>1</sup> The most pleasurable of these sensations, Pater concluded, was the experiencing of art: "For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake."<sup>2</sup> These concepts of Pater were seen in the eighties and nineties as support for the "art for art's sake" movement. Yeats says in his Autobiography that The Rhymer's Club "looked consciously to Pater for philosophy" and that the members "wished to express life at its intense moments and at these moments alone."<sup>3</sup> Recent critics confirm Pater's influence on the Aesthetic movement. Buckley asserts that "Pater's first and most influential book, Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873), seemed clearly to foreshadow the ideals of Wildean aestheticism," and concludes that in this book ". . . was sufficient sanction for the first premises of the Aesthetic Movement."<sup>4</sup>

Swinburne was an important influence on Pater.

Praz says of Pater's "La Giocanda" that "The family likeness

<sup>1</sup>Walter Pater, "Conclusion," Studies in the History of the Renaissance, 1873, reprinted as The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, New York, The Modern Library, 1950, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>3</sup>Yeats, Autobiographies, p. 302.

<sup>4</sup>Buckley, The Victorian Temper, p. 178.

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between this portrait and the Fatal Woman of Gautier, Flaubert, and Swinburne strikes one immediately."<sup>1</sup> Charlesworth goes further in asserting Swinburne's direct influence on Pater, referring to letters Rossetti and Swinburne had exchanged on the similarity of Pater's style to Swinburne's. Swinburne's letter to Rossetti dated November 28, 1869, contains the following remark: "I liked Pater's style on Leonardo very much. I confess I did fancy there was a little spice of my style, as you say, but much good stuff of his own, and much interest."<sup>2</sup> Charlesworth concludes, "Indeed, there are similarities of material as well as style between Swinburne's 'Notes and Designs of the Old Masters of Florence' and Pater's 'Leonardo da Vinci.'"<sup>3</sup> Rosenblatt

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<sup>1</sup>Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony, London, Oxford University Press, second edition, 1954, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup>Letters, Vol. II, p. 58. Lang, editor, adds the following explanatory footnote:

"'Notes on Leonardo da Vinci,' Fortnightly Review (Nov. 1869): reprinted in Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873). The personal life (if he had any) of Walter Pater (1839-1895) is so obscure, and Swinburne's infrequent allusions to him are so cautious, that their acquaintance can scarcely be discussed. Two things seem certain: the acquaintance was slight, and Pater, as an aesthetic critic, owed more than his prose style to Swinburne and more of his style than is allowed here."

<sup>3</sup>Barbara Charlesworth, Dark Passages, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965, p. 33.

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traces the influence of Swinburne on Pater to their frequent meetings around 1868 when Swinburne often visited Pater at Oxford, and concludes that, "C'est à l'imitation de Swinburne aussi sans doute que Pater employa la formule 'l'art pour l'art.'"<sup>1</sup> Rosenblatt, like Charlesworth, notes the resemblance between Swinburne and Pater in both style and critical method, in particular the similarity of the ideas in Pater's "Leonardo da Vinci" to those in Swinburne's William Blake. Rosenblatt believes that it is through Swinburne that Pater became interested in French literature.<sup>2</sup>

In the French "art for art's sake" movement Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) is seen as "the one who more than any other figure of the nineteenth century had publicized the idea of 'art for art's sake'--l'art pour l'art."<sup>3</sup> Gautier insisted upon the autonomy of art, stating in the introduction to his second volume of poems, Albertus (1832), "In general, when a thing becomes useful, it ceases to be beautiful."<sup>4</sup> In the well-known preface to his novel

<sup>1</sup>Rosenblatt, L'Idée de L'Art pour L'Art, p. 195. Translation: It is in imitation of Swinburne, also, doubtless that Pater used the formula "art for art's sake."

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 195-196.

<sup>3</sup>Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents, p. xix.

<sup>4</sup>Théophile Gautier, Albertus, cited in Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents, p. xix.

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Mademoiselle de Maupin (1835) he again made the same assertion, in opposition to "the idea of l'art utile held by political radicals and bourgeois writers."<sup>1</sup> In this Preface he stated: "Nothing is really beautiful unless it is useless, everything useful is ugly, for it expresses a need and the needs of men are ignoble and disgusting, like his poor weak nature. The most useful place in a house is the lavatory."<sup>2</sup>

Gautier's poem, "L'Art," published in Emaux et camées (1858) is, in both form and content, his artistic manifesto:

## L'ART

Oui, l'oeuvre sort plus belle  
D'une forme au travail  
Rebelle,  
Vers, marbre, onyx, émail.

Point de contraintes fausses!  
Mais que pour marcher droit  
Tu chausses,  
Muse, un cothurne étroit.

Fi du rythme commode,  
Comme un soulier trop grand,  
Du mode  
Que tout pied quitte et prend!

<sup>1</sup>Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents, p. xix.

<sup>2</sup>Gautier, Mademoiselle de Maupin, cited by Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents, p. xix.

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Statuaire, repousse  
 L'argile que pétrit  
     Le pouce  
 Quand flotte ailleurs l'esprit;

Lutte avec la carrare,  
 Avec le paros dur  
     Et rare,  
 Gardiens du contour pur;

Emprunte à Syracuse  
 Son bronze où fermement  
     S'accuse  
 Le trait fier et charmant;

D'une main délicate  
 Poursuis dans un filon  
     D'agate  
 Le profil d'Apollon.

Peintre, fuis l'aquarelle,  
 Et fixe la couleur  
     Trop frêle  
 Au four de l'émailleur.

Fais les sirènes bleues,  
 Tordant de cent façons  
     Leurs queues,  
 Les monstres des blasons;

Dans son nimbe trilobe  
 La Vierge et son Jésus,  
     Le globe  
 Avec la croix dessus.

Tout passe. -- L'art robuste  
 Seul à l'éternité,  
     Le buste  
 Survit à la cité.

Et la médaille austère  
 Que trouve un laboureur  
     Sous terre  
 Révèle un empereur.

Les dieux eux-mêmes meurent,  
 Mais les vers souverains

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Demeurent  
 Plus forts que les airains.  
  
 Sculpte, lime, ciselle;  
 Que ton rêve flottant  
 Se scelle  
 Dans le bloc résistant!<sup>1</sup>

In this poem, Gautier compares the poet to the sculptor and painter. Like them, he must carve hard, clear lines. Craftsmanship requires that the poet carve out his poem with difficulty, scorning the too facile rhyme, as the sculptor struggles with marble for a pure outline, scorning the softer, easier clay. The work of art alone survives eternally, outlasting political and social conditions and even religion. The poem, written in precise, austere quatrains, exemplifies Gautier's theory of art. Besides comparing poetry with the plastic arts and seeking to obtain the effects of sculpture in poetry, Gautier was interested in suggesting the effects produced by the other arts. For example, in the same volume as "L'Art" is Gautier's poem "Symphonie en blanc majeur" which is intended to suggest a musical composition.

J. K. Robinson refers to Gautier's insistence, in both his preface to Mademoiselle de Maupin and his poem

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<sup>1</sup>Théophile Gautier, Emaux et camées, Paris, Librairie Droz, 1945, pp. 130-132.

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"L'Art," upon perfect workmanship, and his exasperation with a public which ignored his affirmation that form is all important. Robinson quotes a further essay of Gautier emphasizing the same points:

. . . la forme . . . est toute. Jamais on n'a pensé qu'un carrière de pierre fût artiste de génie; l'important est la façon que l'on donne à cette pierre, car autrement, où serait la différence d'un bloc et d'une statue! . . . Le monde est la carrière, l'idée le bloc, et le poète le sculpteur.<sup>1</sup>

Once more Gautier is insisting that form is all. Again he equates the poet with the sculptor; with both poet and sculptor what is important is the way in which the artist fashions his material.

Austin Dobson's poem "Ars Victrix" is an adaptation of Gautier's "L'Art." Written in 1876 with the epigraph "Imitated from Théophile Gautier," it provides an interesting example of the clear link between Gautier and the English Aesthetes. Here is Dobson's poem:

## ARS VICTRIX

YES: when the ways oppose--  
 When the hard means rebel,  
 Fairer the work out-grows,--  
 More potent far the spell.

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<sup>1</sup>Gautier, Victor Hugo. This was written in 1835, cited in J. K. Robinson, "A Neglected Phase of the Aesthetic Movement: English Parnassianism," PMLA, Vol. 68, 1953, p. 739.

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O POET, then, forbear  
 The loosely-sandalled verse,  
 Choose rather thou to wear  
 The buskin--strait and terse;

Leave to the tiro's hand  
 The limp and shapeless style,  
 See that thy form demand  
 The labour of the file.

SCULPTOR, do thou discard  
 The yielding clay,--consign  
 To Paros marble hard  
 The beauty of thy line;--

Model thy Satyr's face  
 For bronze of Syracuse;  
 In the veined agate trace  
 The profile of thy Muse.

PAINTER, that still must mix  
 But transient tints anew,  
 Thou in the furnace fix  
 The firm enamel's hue;

Let the smooth tile receive  
 Thy dove-drawn Erycine;  
 Thy Sirens blue at eve  
 Coiled in a wash of wine.

All passes. ART alone  
 Enduring stays to us;  
 The Bust outlasts the throne,--  
 The Coin, Tiberius;

Even the gods must go;  
 Only the lofty Rhyme  
 Not countless years o'erthrow,--  
 Not long array of time.

Paint, chisel, then, or write;  
 But, that the work surpass,  
 With the hard fashion fight,--  
 With the resisting mass.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Austin Dobson, The Complete Poetical Works of Austin Dobson, ed. Alban Dobson, London, Oxford University Press, 1923, pp. 141-142.

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Dobson's poem is written, as Gautier's, in quatrains rhyming a, b, a, b, but he has reduced Gautier's fourteen quatrains to ten. "Ars Victrix" expresses the same concept of art as "L'Art." In his poem which can be seen to be almost a direct paraphrase of Gautier's, Dobson urges the poet to "scorn the limp and shapeless style" for a form which demands "the labour of the file." Like Gautier, Dobson says that art alone endures.

Gautier's influence in England, as well as in France, was of great significance. He repeatedly asserted the doctrine of "art for art's sake," insisting that art must not be useful or contain moral, social, or political purpose; he insisted upon perfect workmanship to the extent of maintaining that "the form is all"; and he stressed the analogy of poetry with sculpture and also, to a lesser extent, with music.

Swinburne was an early admirer of Gautier and also of another early French advocate of "art for art's sake," Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). This fact is supported by Robinson in his article "A Neglected Phase of the Aesthetic Movement: English Parnassianism" in which he traces the interest of English poets and critics in the French Parnassians and Aesthetes, and concludes that "Swinburne stood

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practically alone in the early sixties as an admirer of French letters and a devotee of French aesthetics."<sup>1</sup> As a result, Robinson concludes, Swinburne had some influence on the later (1878) enthusiasm for French fixed forms, having "softened the enemy for the next invasion."<sup>2</sup>

Swinburne's admiration for Gautier is expressed in his "Memorial Verses on the Death of Théophile Gautier" and "Sonnet."<sup>3</sup> These poems, written by Swinburne at the time of Gautier's death, were printed in the memorial text, Le Tombeau de Théophile Gautier, (1873) and later in Poems and Ballads, Second Series, (1878).<sup>4</sup> Swinburne also wrote two poems in French and one in Latin in honour of Gautier which also were printed in Le Tombeau de Théophile Gautier and later in Poems and Ballads, Second Series (1878).<sup>5</sup>

The review of Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal by Swinburne in the Spectator in 1861 drew the attention of

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<sup>1</sup>Robinson, "A Neglected Phase of the Aesthetic Movement: English Parnassianism," p. 742.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 742.

<sup>3</sup>Works, Vol. III, pp. 52-60.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Bibliography, Vol. XX, p. 159.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 164. These poems are "Théophile Gautier," "Ode: Le Tombeau de Gautier," and "In Obitum Theophili Poetae."

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England to this French poet, and demonstrated Swinburne's early support of Baudelaire's aestheticism. In this essay Swinburne says:

The critical students there, as well as here, judging by the books they praise and the advice they proffer, seem to have pretty well forgotten that a poet's business is presumably to write good verses, and by no means to redeem the age and remould society.<sup>1</sup>

Swinburne is here supporting Baudelaire against those critics who insist upon didacticism as the primary purpose of poetry. Swinburne also adds that, whereas Baudelaire is not deliberately didactic, "There is not one poem of the Fleurs du Mal which has not a distinct and vivid background of morality to it. Only, this moral side of the book is not thrust forward in the foolish and repulsive manner of a half-taught artist."<sup>2</sup> It would seem here that Swinburne is taking a balanced view, recognizing that a poem, which is first and foremost a work of art, will necessarily communicate to the receptive reader whatever thought or emotion is contained within it, and in this way may convey some moral aspect; but, most importantly, this moral aspect "is not put forward," that is, it is not permitted to become all important.

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. XIII, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 423.

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Swinburne continues to assert his support of "art for art's sake" in Notes on Poems and Reviews, published in pamphlet form in 1866, in defence against the violent critics of his Poems and Ballads, (1866):

The question at issue is wider than any between a single writer and his critics, or it might well be allowed to drop. It is this: whether or not the first and last requisite of art is to give no offence; whether or not all that cannot be lisped in the nursery or fingered in the schoolroom is therefore to be cast out of the library; whether or not the domestic circle is to be for all men and writers the outer limit and extreme horizon of their world of work.<sup>1</sup>

Here Swinburne defends the poet's right to choose any subject without being hindered by the excessive restrictions of critics who object to any literature unsuitable for children. He adds further, "And if literature indeed is not to deal with the full life of man and the whole nature of things, let it be cast aside with the rods and rattles of childhood."<sup>2</sup>

The concluding paragraph of Notes on Poems and Reviews is a forceful presentation of Swinburne's support of "art for art's sake" as he looks forward to the day when, in England, art will not be judged by standards of morality,

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. XVI, p. 369.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

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but rather "The press will be as impotent as the pulpit to dictate the laws and remove the landmarks of art," and it will be recognized that didacticism is not the primary purpose of art, "Those will be laughed at who demand from one thing the qualities of another--who seek for sermons in sonnets and morality in music." When this time comes Swinburne sees that an article such as he is writing to defend his poems will no longer be necessary: "No one will then need to assert, in defense of work done for the work's sake, the simple laws of his art which no one will then be permitted to impugn."<sup>1</sup> In this final statement Swinburne has clearly stated the core of the "art for art's sake" doctrine, "work done for the work's sake" adhering to one law only, "the simple law of his [the poet's] art."

Rosenblatt notes the remarkable similarity between Swinburne's Notes on Poems and Reviews and Gautier's Preface to Mademoiselle de Maupin, as demonstrating Swinburne's awareness of Gautier's Preface and his agreement with its tenets:

La brochure de Swinburne, Notes on Poems and Reviews, ressemble nettement à la préface de Mademoiselle de Maupin. Tous les deux sont des attaques contre la critique contemporaine, et

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. XVI, p. 373.

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surtout contre la pruderie et l'hypocrisie de la critique moralisante.<sup>1</sup>

In his lengthy study, William Blake, first published in 1868, Swinburne again asserts, "Art for art's sake first of all, and afterwards we may suppose all the rest shall be added to her."<sup>2</sup> Swinburne adds, "But from the man who falls to artistic work with a moral purpose shall be taken away even that which he has,"<sup>3</sup> and refers to Baudelaire in support of this doctrine, referring to him as "A living critic of incomparably delicate insight and subtly good sense . . . [who] calls this 'the heresy of instruction.'"<sup>4</sup>

In William Blake, not only does Swinburne refer to Baudelaire in support of his assertion of "art for art's

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<sup>1</sup>Rosenblatt, L'Idée de L'Art pour L'Art, p. 148. Translation: Swinburne's pamphlet, Notes on Poems and Reviews, clearly resembles the preface of Mademoiselle de Maupin. Both are attacks against contemporary criticism, and particularly against the prudery and hypocrisy of moralizing criticism. Farmer, Le Mouvement esthétique et "decadent" en Angleterre, p. 25, agrees that Swinburne here borrowed directly from Gautier's preface to Mademoiselle de Maupin: "Swinburne . . . emprunts directs à la préface de l'autonomie de l'art." Translation: Swinburne borrowed directly from the celebrated preface of Mademoiselle de Maupin in which Gautier summarized the theory of the autonomy of art.

<sup>2</sup>Works, Vol. XVI, pp. 137-138.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

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sake" but, according to Rosenblatt, in this work Swinburne follows very closely Baudelaire's essay on Edgar Poe:

L'influence de Baudelaire est évidente surtout dans l'exposé de l'art pour l'art dans William Blake. Les ressemblances non seulement de pensée mais encore de formules montrent combien Swinburne a suivi Baudelaire, particulièrement dans ses Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in this study of William Blake, Swinburne again demonstrates the influence of Baudelaire on the "art for art's sake" doctrine which he is promulgating.

Théodore de Banville (1823-1891) was an important apostle of Gautier who influenced, by both his poetry and his criticism, English and French Aesthetes.<sup>2</sup> Banville's Petit Traité de poésie française (1872) restated Gautier's theories, particularly that form rather than subject matter was of primary importance, that the "sharply defined image

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<sup>1</sup>Rosenblatt, L'Idée de L'Art pour L'Art, p. 155. Translation: The influence of Baudelaire is evident, especially in the statement of art for art's sake in William Blake. The resemblances not only of thought but more of form demonstrate how much Swinburne has followed Baudelaire, particularly in his Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe.

<sup>2</sup>Among critics who assert the importance of Banville's influence on English poets of the seventies and eighties are the following: Helen L. Cohen, Lyric Forms From France, New York, Harcourt, 1933, who cites letters from Austin Dobson, Edmund Gosse, and Andrew Lang; Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents of the Nineties; Robinson, "A Neglected Phase of English Aestheticism"; Buckley, The Victorian Temper.

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should be the poet's major concern . . . and that poetry was 'at the same time music, statuary, painting and eloquence.'<sup>1</sup> Further, Banville urged poets to return to the old fixed forms of verse to achieve their aims, and he stimulated considerable interest in these forms.<sup>2</sup> Robinson lists Payne, Dobson, Gosse, Stevenson, Henley, and Lang as English poets who "paid him [Banville] the tribute of imitation."<sup>3</sup> Cohen asserts in Lyric Forms From France, "It was in particular Théodore de Banville (1820-1891) who, in his conscious desire to introduce unusual and intricate rhyme scheme into French poetry once more, turned back to the native fixed forms."<sup>4</sup> Later, Cohen says that "Both in France and in England Banville was beyond doubt the one man responsible for the renewed vogue of old refrain poetry."<sup>5</sup> In support of this

<sup>1</sup>Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents, p. xx.

<sup>2</sup>The critics cited in footnote number two, page 48, affirm Banville's influence in arousing the interest of English poets in the ballade, the rondeau, triolet, villanelle, and chant royal, and in particular the influence of Petit Traité de poésie française.

<sup>3</sup>Robinson, "A Neglected Phase of English Aestheticism," p. 742.

<sup>4</sup>Cohen, Lyric Forms From France, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 79-86. Cohen discusses at some length this influence of Théodore de Banville on the early users of these forms in England, verified by letters to her from Edmund Gosse, Austin Dobson, and Andrew Lang.

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contention she cites Edmund Gosse and Austin Dobson, early users of the fixed forms, who wrote to her that Banville was the primary impetus in their use of these forms. Swinburne demonstrated a very early awareness of Banville by a brief reference to him in his essay, "Charles Baudelaire," (1861) in which he commented on "the graceful, slight, and somewhat thin-spun classical work of M. Théodore de Banville."<sup>1</sup> He is more enthusiastic about Banville later, writing in 1891 "The Ballad of Melicertes," a precise ballade in memory of Banville. This poem was written at the request of and first published in a French decadent magazine, La Conque.<sup>2</sup>

The elements of English Aestheticism of the eighties and nineties evolved from the two sources which have been discussed, the Pre-Raphaelites in England, Gautier and his followers in France. The term "art for art's sake," as a translation of the French l'art pour l'art of Gautier, involved primarily the devotion to art for its own sake, eliminating all concern with moral, social, or political concerns. Art, to the Aesthetes, was amoral and

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. XIII, p. 424.

<sup>2</sup>Letters, Vol. VI, pp. 7-8, letter from Swinburne to Pierre Louÿs, editor of La Conque.

## SWINBURNE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THESE LITERARY TRENDS

non-didactic. In many instances this elimination of worldly concern led to a division between the poet and society and in some cases to a poetry of escape. The devotion to art included a concern for craftsmanship which derived both from the Pre-Raphaelites and from Gautier's insistence upon the primary importance of form and the necessity of hard, clear lines. Stemming from this principle was the resurgence of interest in the French fixed forms; this interest was due primarily to Gautier's disciple, Banville. The cult of beauty of the Pre-Raphaelites and the insistence of Gautier that the useful cannot be beautiful contributed to an aesthetic concern with beauty as a part of their basic principle of "art for art's sake." Gautier's analogy of poetry with sculpture, painting, and music and the Pre-Raphaelite merging of the characteristics of painting and poetry led to the aesthetic interest in combining the arts.

In all aspects of this evolution and development of the Aesthetic movement Swinburne was involved. He was a close associate of the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He was an early admirer of Gautier, the leader of the French "art for art's sake" movement, and he was vocal in support of both Gautier and Gautier's disciple, Baudelaire. Swinburne's first volume of poems, Poems and Ballads (1866) and his early prose writings, such as his

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essay on Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal (1861) and his defence of his own poems, Notes on Poems and Reviews (1866), gave an early impetus to the Aesthetic movement. That Swinburne had an influence on Pater means that indirectly, through Pater, as well as directly through his own poetry, critical essays, and public support of Gautier and Baudelaire, Swinburne was an extremely important influence on the evolution and development of the Aesthetic movement in England.

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Section 2

Decadence

and Swinburne's Relationship to It

Out of the Aesthetic movement evolved Decadence. Both Baudelaire and Gautier, proponents of "art for art's sake," were largely influential in the further extension and moderation of this concept into Decadence.<sup>1</sup> Baudelaire is credited with being one of the first to use the term "decadent" in a laudatory manner in his essay on Edgar Allen Poe.<sup>2</sup> Gautier, in his "Notice" which he wrote as a Preface to the 1868 edition of Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal, was among the first to attempt to define Decadence.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Among the critics who discuss the major influence of France, and particularly of Gautier and Baudelaire, on the Decadent movement in England are the following: Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties; Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents; E. A. Carter, The Idea of Decadence in French Literature, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1958; Praz, The Romantic Agony; Rosenblatt, L'Idée de l'art pour l'art; Farmer, Le mouvement esthétique et "decadent" en Angleterre.

<sup>2</sup>Reference is made to this fact by Carter, The Idea of Decadence in French Literature and by Houghton and Stange, editors, Victorian Poetry and Poetics.

<sup>3</sup>Carter, The Idea of Decadence in French Literature, p. viii, states that he chose this preface as his starting point in studying Decadence in French literature; also that, "'The Notice' is a final statement of ideas which had occupied Gautier for over thirty years; to write it, he scarcely needed to read Baudelaire at all; he had only to consult some of his own poems, novels, and critical articles."

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One of the main characteristics of Decadence is the desire to improve upon nature. Baudelaire, in his essay, "Eloge du maquillage," says that "woman should therefore borrow from all the arts the means of rising above nature in order to better subjugate all hearts and impress all minds."<sup>1</sup> Baudelaire's thesis, on which he bases this statement, is that everything that is natural in man is bad; man strives to overcome this; whatever is good in man, therefore, is artificial, whether it is beautifying the face with paint or practicing virtue.<sup>2</sup> A further result of this concept is the interest of Baudelaire and the later Decadents in drugs and alcohol as means of improving upon and altering man's natural state. Baudelaire wrote two essays on drugs, "Du vin et du haschisch" (1851) and "Les Paradis artificiels" (1860).

A further characteristic of Decadence is the desire to shock. This idea also stemmed from France with the term épater les bourgeois of Gautier. Gautier exemplified this concept to which he gave expression in his novel Mademoiselle de Maupin. In this novel, the hero, the Chevalier d'Albert,

<sup>1</sup>Baudelaire, cited in Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's, p. xxiv.

<sup>2</sup>This particular essay and Baudelaire's concept on which it is based are discussed by Carter, The Idea of Decadence in French Literature; Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's; Praz, The Romantic Agony.

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suffers from ennui and dissatisfaction. He has a mistress but searches for further emotional and erotic satisfactions. He longs to be a woman in order to taste new experiences. Mademoiselle de Maupin is dissatisfied with her state as a woman and disguises herself as a man. She achieves some satisfaction in causing a young woman to fall in love with her in her disguised state. Later she falls in love with d'Albert, who reciprocates her feeling, though horrified at finding himself in love with a young man. At the conclusion of the novel Mademoiselle de Maupin has affairs with both the Chevalier d'Albert and the young woman, Rosette, who had fallen in love with her in her disguise as a young man. Besides its success in shocking the middle class, the novel also demonstrates the decadent attraction to sexual perversion and depravity which is a result of the desire to transcend the natural. The hero suffers from the ennui and dissatisfaction which are to be characteristic of decadent heroes, both in books and in real life. Like Gautier himself, d'Albert prefers art to nature.

Among Swinburne's poems written in honour of Gautier at the time of his death is the poem entitled "Sonnet." Introduced with the epigraph "(With a copy of Mademoiselle de Maupin)," the poem is a hymn of praise to Gautier's novel, Mademoiselle de Maupin:

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## SONNET

This is the golden book of spirit and sense,  
 The holy writ of beauty; he that wrought  
 Made it with dreams and faultless words and  
                   thought  
 That seeks and finds and loses in the dense  
 Dim air of life that beauty's excellence  
     Wherewith love makes one hour of life distraught  
     And all hours after follow and find not aught.  
 Here is that height of all love's eminence  
 Where man may breathe but for a breathing-space  
     And feel his soul burn as an altar-fire  
     To the unknown God of unachieved desire,  
 And from the middle mystery of the place  
     Watch lights that break, hear sounds as of  
                   a quire,  
 But see not twice unveiled the veiled God's face.<sup>1</sup>

In this poem Swinburne is referring to a novel dealing with sexual perversion and depravity as a "golden book of spirit and sense," and "The holy writ of beauty." He is demonstrating his admiration not only for Gautier but for a major decadent work. The influence of the Preface to Mademoiselle de Maupin on Swinburne's Notes on Poems and Ballads, in which he supports his own decadent poems against those who "seek for sermons in sonnets and morality in music,"<sup>2</sup> has been examined in the previous section.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. III, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 373.

<sup>3</sup>See above, Chapter Two, Section One, pp. 45-47.

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The cult of the artificial, of which the sexually perverse, the use of drugs and alcohol, and the use of cosmetics are a part, is accepted as a chief characteristic of the Decadent movement. Carter asserts:

Artificiality, in fact, is the chief characteristic of decadence as the nineteenth century understood the word . . . They [writers] accept civilization as corrupt, but take perverse pleasure in that very corruption, preferring the civilized to the primitive and the artificial to the natural.<sup>1</sup>

Baudelaire is considered as the primary influence in associating modernism, artifice, and Decadence.<sup>2</sup> Beckson states that, "As a Decadent he [Baudelaire] envisioned the decay of civilization and the horrifying seductive evils of men."<sup>3</sup> Gautier is seen by the same critics as "like many Decadents, absorbed by paganism and exoticism."<sup>4</sup> The craze for monstrous plants and hothouse flowers of many Decadents is seen as partly due to Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal<sup>5</sup> as well as to the cult of the artificial. The first section of this

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<sup>1</sup>Carter, The Idea of Decadence in French Literature, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>This fact is asserted by Carter, Ibid., p. 10 and p. 14, and Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's, p. xxxvi.

<sup>3</sup>Beckson, Ibid., p. xxxvi.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. xxxvi.

<sup>5</sup>Carter, The Idea of Decadence in French Literature, p. 15.

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chapter has referred to the importance of Swinburne in drawing the attention of England to Fleurs du Mal in 1861 and the influence of Baudelaire on Swinburne's exposition of the "art for art's sake" doctrine in William Blake.<sup>1</sup>

Joris Karl Huysman's novel A Rebours (1884) contains, as Beckson says, "All the themes and images which had absorbed the Decadents from Gautier on."<sup>2</sup> Symons refers to it as "the breviary of the decadence."<sup>3</sup> The hero of the novel, des Esseintes, is interested in the abnormal and the artificial, in exotic gems and diseased flowers, as well as in sexual perversity. Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray is modelled upon him. Both of these heroes are described as "authentic decadent types."<sup>4</sup> Suffering from boredom and ennui, they seek new sensations which are à rebours: against the grain. Of importance to the English Decadent movement is the fact

<sup>1</sup>See above, Chapter Two, Section One, pp. 43-44, 47-48.

<sup>2</sup>Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents, p. xxvii; Carter, The Idea of Decadence in French Literature, pp. 19-20 agrees. Praz, The Romantic Agony, p. 208, states "Not only his own novels, but all the prose works of the Decadence, from Lorrain to Gourmont, Wilde, and D'Annunzio, are contained in embryo in A Rebours." Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties, p. 26, states "A Rebours may be said to contain the apotheosis of the fin de siècle spirit."

<sup>3</sup>Symons, cited in Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup>Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties, p. 61.

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that Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray is so clearly modelled on A Rebours that it provides a close link between French and English Decadence. Praz concludes of The Picture of Dorian Gray, "The work itself, then, though written in English, belongs really to the French school and must be considered as a curious exotic reflection of it."<sup>1</sup>

Arthur Symons (1865-1945), one of the earliest English poets and critics to discuss Decadence, says in his essay on George Meredith written in 1897, "What decadence in literature really means is that learned corruption of language by which style ceases to be organic, and becomes, in the pursuit of some new expressiveness or beauty, deliberately abnormal."<sup>2</sup> Later, in The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899), Symons again associates Decadence with style, stating "As a matter of fact, the term is in its place only when applied to style; . . . No doubt perversity of form and perversity of matter are often found together, and, among the lesser men especially, experiment was carried far, not only in the direction of style."<sup>3</sup> In the second statement

<sup>1</sup>Praz, The Romantic Agony, p. 340.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur Symons, "George Meredith," cited in Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's, p. xxxix.

<sup>3</sup>Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, New York, E. P. Dutton and Co., 1958, first published in 1899, p. 4.

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quoted, Symons says less dogmatically that Decadence is associated with style alone, and somewhat halfheartedly admits that "perversity of form and perversity of matter are often found together." Certainly perversity of matter is very evident in the works referred to in this section.

Pater is one of the most important of the English influences upon Decadence in England. The "Conclusion" of his Studies in the History of the Renaissance, influential in the Aesthetic movement, was used as a support for Decadence, also. It is to such statements in the "Conclusion" as "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end,"<sup>1</sup> and "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life,"<sup>2</sup> that the Decadents referred in their search for unusual, intense sensations.<sup>3</sup> Richard Le Gallienne refers to Pater's influence on the

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<sup>1</sup>Pater, Studies in the History of the Renaissance, p. 197. See also the discussion of Pater in Chapter Two, Section One, pp. 33-34. That Swinburne influenced Pater is also discussed in the same section, pp. 35-36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>3</sup>Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties, p. 58, says: "The accident by which Pater became a decadent influence in English literature was due to a misapprehension of the precise meaning of the famous "Conclusion" to the final edition of the volume originally issued in 1873." Praz, The Romantic Agony, p. 341, agrees that Pater was "the forerunner of the Decadent Movement in England, particularly in his Conclusion to Studies in the History of the Renaissance."

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young men of the nineties who "were exhorting each another 'to burn always with this hard gem-like flame.'"<sup>1</sup>

In discussing the Decadent movement in England, Beckson states that Swinburne "deserves more than anyone before him the distinction of being called 'the first Decadent in England.'"<sup>2</sup> The reason for this is Swinburne's first volume of poetry, Poems and Ballads (1866) which shocked, in true decadent manner, the British public and British critics. An anonymous literary critic, later identified as John Morley, attacked Swinburne as "either the vindictive and scornful apostle of a crushing ironshod despair, or else he is the libidinous laureate of a pack of satyrs."<sup>3</sup> Praz asserts that "Swinburne's influence introduced into England the French literary tendencies to which he paid homage."<sup>4</sup> Praz devotes considerable attention to Swinburne's influence in England, France, and Italy in developing the type of the Fatal Woman: the depraved woman, both adored and hated, who is sad and cruel, erotic and

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Le Gallienne, The Romantic Nineties, New York, Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1926, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>Beckson, The Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's, p. xxii.

<sup>3</sup>Morley, "Mr. Swinburne's New Poems," p. 835.

<sup>4</sup>Praz, The Romantic Agony, p. 340.

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sadistic. Praz refers particularly to "Laus Veneris," "Anactoria," "Faustine," and "Dolores," poems published in Poems and Ballads (1866), as exemplifying the Fatal Woman.<sup>1</sup>

From the cult of the artificial and the desire to shock, the main elements of Decadence evolve. From both of these stems the obsession with perversity and drugs. From the cult of the artificial stems the interest in the unnatural, such as monstrous plants and exotic flowers, and in dead and dying things. From these interests are derived the obsession with death, the seeing of beauty in corruption and in death, the union of the beautiful and the sad.

The cult of the artificial leads also to the preference of art to nature. Even the careful craftsmanship characteristic of the Aesthetic movement becomes more self consciously a seeking for the precise word or brilliant expression. Carter notes that "To let oneself go on the wings of inspiration was natural; to prepare one's effects, call upon will-power and reason to develop them, was voluntary, artificial, decadent."<sup>2</sup> The use of bizarre images and striking paradoxes may be seen as stemming from the desire to

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<sup>1</sup>Praz, The Romantic Agony, pp. 189-286, passim.

<sup>2</sup>Carter, The Idea of Decadence in French Literature, p. 128.

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surprise or shock. There is frequently, in decadent poetry, a tone of despair, stemming from the insatiable search for newer and more intense sensations. Buckley refers to the "note of world-fatigue [which] dominated altogether the tenuous music of Decadence," adding that "the Decadents suffered--or affected to suffer--the ineffable weariness of strayed revelers lost in a palace of fading illusion."<sup>1</sup> An example of this ennui or tedium vitae is seen in the following lines of the English Decadent, Ernest Dowson:

I was not sorrowful, I could not weep,  
And all my memories were put to sleep.

I watched the river grow more white and strange,  
All day till evening I watched it change.

All day till evening I watched the rain  
Beat wearily upon the window pane.

I was not sorrowful but only tired  
Of everything that ever I desired.<sup>2</sup>

That Swinburne was a major force in the evolution and development of the Decadent movement in England is evident. In his Poems and Ballads (1866), such poems as "Faustine," "Dolores," and "Laus Veneris," which shocked the public by their sensuality, eroticism, and sadism, earned him the title

<sup>1</sup>Buckley, The Victorian Temper, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>Ernest Dowson, The Poetical Works of Ernest Dowson, edited and with an introduction by Desmond Flower, London, Cassell and Company, 1934, p. 56.

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of "the first Decadent in England." His praise of Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal and Gautier's Mademoiselle de Maupin drew attention to these leaders of Decadence in France. Swinburne influenced Pater who, in turn, was a major influence on decadent poets of the nineties. Swinburne insisted, in his critical essays, on the right of the poet to choose any subject, "to deal with the full life of man and the whole nature of things" adhering to one law only, "the simple law of his art."<sup>1</sup> Thus in both poetry and criticism Swinburne gave a major impetus to Decadence in England.

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. XXVI, p. 373.

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## Section 3

The Symbolist Movement  
and Swinburne's Relation to It

The purpose of this section is to trace the development of Symbolism, its characteristics, and Swinburne's relationship to Symbolism. Symbolism is recognized as an important literary movement in France. It evolved from Aestheticism and is related to Decadence; many of the major poets involved in the development of Symbolism, such as Baudelaire and Verlaine, were Aesthetes and Decadents, with the name Symbolism not officially ascribed to the movement in France until the period 1885 to 1895. In England, although the term Symbolist movement is not used, the French movement exerted a considerable influence on late nineteenth and early twentieth century poets.

Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal (1857) is generally accepted as the starting point for symbolist poetry in France.<sup>1</sup> In poems of this volume are found elements which

<sup>1</sup>Among critics who concur with this assessment that Baudelaire is the "father" of the Symbolist movement are the following: Anna Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, New York, Random House, 1967; Edward Engleberg, editor, The Symbolist Poem, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1966; William York Tindall, Forces in Modern British Literature, New York, Random House, 1956; Richard Ellmann, introduction to Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1947; C. M. Bowra, The Heritage of Symbolism, London, Macmillan, 1943.

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later are accepted as characteristic of symbolist poetry. Of these poems, Baudelaire's sonnet, "Correspondances," is frequently cited as an example of a symbolist poem. "Correspondances" is considered by Engleberg as one of the three important literary manifestoes of Symbolism.<sup>1</sup> (The other two manifestoes Engleberg cites are Paul Verlaine's "Art of Poetry" (1884) and Jena Moreas' Manifesto (1886)).<sup>2</sup> "Correspondances" is here quoted:

## CORRESPONDANCES

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
Laisseront parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent  
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité  
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarte  
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,  
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,  
--Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

<sup>1</sup>Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, p. 38. Beckson, Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's, asserts that "Correspondances" "had an enormous influence on the symbolist movement," p. xxv. Bowra, The Heritage of Symbolism, quotes "Correspondances" as demonstrating that "Baudelaire saw nature as symbolical of another reality," p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Verlaine's "Art of Poetry," is discussed below, in this section, pp. 72-75. Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, p. 38, says that "Moreas' Manifesto is mainly an attempt to familiarize a wider reading public with the work of the Symbolistes, who, even in the eighties, had not yet gained recognition outside a small coterie."

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Ayant l'expansion des chose infinies,  
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,  
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.<sup>1</sup>

In this poem, nature is seen as a temple, the columns become confused voices, man wanders in a forest of symbols. The poet interprets the symbols which he finds in nature. Bowra sees this poem as demonstrating that "For Baudelaire the visible and sensible world was full of symbols which fill man's heart with joy and sorrow, and convey him through scent, colour, and sound to raptures of the spirit."<sup>2</sup> In this poem Baudelaire makes use of synaesthesia, a mingling of sense perceptions, the evocation of one sense by use of another, as in line eight, where perfume, colours, and sounds

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, 19 volumes, Paris, Louis-Conrad Librairie-Éditeur, 1923, Vol. XI, p. 17.

The following prose translation by Frances Scarfe is reprinted in Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, Appendix, p. 347:

Correlatives

Nature is a temple, in which living pillars sometimes utter a babel of words; man traverses it through forests of symbols, that watch him with knowing eyes.

Like prolonged echoes which merge far away in an opaque, deep oneness, as vast as darkness, as vast as light, perfume, sounds, and colours answer to each other.

There are perfumes fresh and cool as the bodies of children, mellow as oboes, green as fields; and others that are perverse, rich, and triumphant.

That have the infinite expansion of infinite things--such as amber, musk, benjamin, and incense, which chant the ecstasies of the mind and senses.

<sup>2</sup>Bowra, The Heritage of Symbolism, p. 6.

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answer to one another. Through use of the symbols found in the visible, sensual world and through synaesthesia, Baudelaire sought to express what would otherwise be inexpressible. Engleberg, stressing the influence of this poem asserts, "Much poetry guided by this sonnet caught its magical, incantatory tone, its use of the senses, its otherworldly atmosphere, its scent."<sup>1</sup>

Another poem of Baudelaire which demonstrates symbolist elements is "Harmonie du soir." This poem is here quoted:

## HARMONIE DU SOIR

Voici venir les temps où vibrant sur sa tige  
Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;  
Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir;  
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige!

Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;  
Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige;  
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige!  
Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir.

Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige,  
Un cœur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir!  
Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir;  
Le soleil s'est moyé dans son sang qui se fige.

Un cœur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir,  
Du passé lumineux recueille tout vestige!

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<sup>1</sup>Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, p. 39.

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Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige . . .  
Ton souvenir en moi luit comme un ostensor! <sup>1</sup>

The particular use of images in this poem to evoke and suggest is discussed by Balakian who terms this

the process of indirect discourse in full play . . . the intervention of communication between the poet and the reader through an image or series of images that have subjective as well as objective value. While their objective existence is unilateral, their subjective meaning is multi-dimensional, and therefore suggestive rather than designated: the censer, the altar, the monstrance, the violin, the blood. <sup>2</sup>

This use of images in a suggestive and evocative way is to become one of the main characteristics of symbolist poetry.

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<sup>1</sup>Baudelaire, Oeuvres complètes, Vol. XI, p. 77. The following is an approximate translation:

Behold the hour (of the day) where swaying on its stem  
(The perfume of) each flower rises to heaven  
(evaporates) like (incense from) a censer;  
Sounds and perfumes hover in the evening air,  
A sad refrain (melody, waltz) and drowsy lethargy.

(The perfume of) each flower rises to heaven like  
(incense from) a censer,  
The violin trembles like a sorrowing heart;  
A sad refrain and a drowsy lethargy  
The sky is sad and beautiful as a flower-strewn altar.

The violin trembles like a sorrowing heart  
A loving (tender) heart which shuns vast dark emptiness  
The sky is sad and beautiful as a flower-strewn altar.  
The sun has drowned in its own thickening blood.

A loving (tender) heart which shuns vast dark emptiness  
From the radiant past can regain every trace (memory)  
The sun has drowned in its own thickening blood  
The memory of you glows in my heart like a monstrance.

<sup>2</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 38.

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The poet does not make a direct statement of his emotions but selects these particular objects through which to express them. Thus in line six, "Le violon frémit comme un coeur qu'on afflige" (The violin trembles like a sorrowing heart), the trembling violin becomes the exterior revelation of the heart. In line twelve, "Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige," (The sun has drowned in its own thickening blood), the sun is a projection of the poet's heart sinking into the abyss of its own sorrow, with all the connotations associated with "blood," of suffering and of death, transferred to the speaker's inner state. The speaker's emotions are, in this poem, expressed through the images which suggest and evoke his mood. There is a duality between the mood of the poet and the appearance of nature which he uses to express this mood.

Besides this particular use of symbols, "Harmonie du Soir" possesses a further quality which is to become a characteristic element of symbolist poetry: a similarity to music in structure and in sound. The theme is not developed in logical progression but is restated, varied, and developed as is a theme in music. In each stanza, two lines from the previous stanza are repeated; in each case, line two becomes in the following stanza line one, and line four becomes in

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the following stanza line three. Thus, with the repetition of a line, the same concept is repeated but in a different context, with the result that its significance is altered and amplified with the repetition, as a theme in music is repeated, developed, and varied. For example, when the second line of stanza two is repeated as the first line of stanza three, it is amplified by the line which follows it: "Le violon frémit comme un coeur qu'on afflige, / Un coeur tendre qui hait le néant vaste et noir." Thus the evocations initially suggested by the one line are retained but amplified now by a new concept associated with it by the added line. In this poem the lines are so interwoven that, for example, stanza two is made up of two lines from stanza one and two lines which will occur again in stanza three.

The poem also contains musical sound qualities. There is much alliteration, and there is a closely knit rhyme pattern with only two rhyme endings which are used in the following order: a, b, b, a; b, a, a, b; a, b, b, a; b, a, a, b. The consistent repetition of lines, which has been discussed, also adds to the sound and rhythmical repetition. The result is a musical incantatory sound which is to become another major element of symbolist poetry. There is a melancholy, sad tone which also becomes characteristic of

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symbolist poetry. Balakian, discussing this poem in its use of symbols, its musical structure and sound, its melancholy tone, concludes of "Harmonie du Soir" that "in technique and perspective it proves to be, in fact, one of the genuine models of symbolist poetry."<sup>1</sup>

We have seen the following characteristics in this poem of Baudelaire which will be primary elements of symbolist poetry: the use of symbols in a suggestive and evocative way so that emotions are expressed through particular objects; a similarity of the poem to music in structure and in use of the sound qualities of words; a melancholy tone. The earlier poem discussed, "Correspondances," demonstrated the use of synaesthesia as a means of mingling the senses to express what would otherwise be inexpressible, and conveyed Baudelaire's idea that symbols of the visible, sensual world may be used to express the spiritual which is beyond it.

Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), also, is accepted as having made a significant contribution to the Symbolist movement.<sup>2</sup> His "Art Poétique" (Art of Poetry) is considered to

<sup>1</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Among critics who stress the important contribution of Verlaine to Symbolism are the following: Balakian, The Symbolist Movement; Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem; Bowra, The Heritage of Symbolism; Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature; W. Y. Tindall, Forces in Modern British Literature.

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be one of the important manifestoes of the Symbolist movement. Here is the poem, translated by Arthur Symons:

## ART OF POETRY

Music first and foremost of all!  
Choose your measure of odd not even.  
Let it melt in the air of heaven,  
Pose not, poise not, but rise and fall.

Choose your words, but think not whether  
Each to other of old belong:  
What so dear as the dim grey song  
Where clear and vague are joined together?

'Tis veils of beauty for beautiful eyes,  
'Tis the trembling light of the naked noon,  
'Tis a medley of blue and gold, the moon  
And stars in the cool of autumn skies.

Let every shape of its shade be born;  
Colour, away! come to me, shade!  
Only of shade can the marriage be made  
Of dream with dream and of flute with horn.

Shun the Point, lest death with it come,  
Unholy laughter and cruel wit  
(For the eyes of the angels weep at it)  
And all the garbage of scullery-scum.

Take Eloquence, and wring the neck of him!  
You had better, by force, from time to time,  
Put a little sense in the head of Rhyme:  
If you watch him not, you will be at the  
beck of him.

O, who shall tell us the wrongs of Rhyme?  
What witless savage or what deaf boy  
Has made for us this twopenny toy  
Whose bells ring hollow and out of time?

Music always and music still!  
Let your verse be the wandering thing  
That flutters in flight from a soul on the wing  
Towards other skies at a new whim's will.

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Let your verse be the luck of the lure  
 Afloat on the winds that at morning hint  
 Of the odours of thyme and the savour of mint . . .  
 And all the rest is literature.<sup>1</sup>

In this poem Verlaine asserts his own poetic creed which he practised in his own poetry and which had a significant effect upon symbolist poets who followed him.<sup>2</sup> In "Art Poétique" Verlaine insists upon music as the most essential quality of poetry: "Music first and foremost of all!" and "Music always and music still!" In order to achieve music, Verlaine recommends the use of irregular verse patterns: "Choose your measure of odd not even," "Let your verse be the wandering thing / That flutters in flight from a soul on the wing." He also suggests here the use of grey rather than colour, to achieve nuance; the use of grey is characteristic of much of the poetry of Verlaine and other Symbolists. Imprecise diction in order to be indirect and evocative is also part of his credo, as he says, "What so dear as the dim grey song / When clear and vague are joined together?" "Only of shade can the marriage be made / Of dream with dream and

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Symons, An Anthology of Nineties Verse, London, Elkin Mathews, 1928, cited in Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>The importance of "Art Poétique" is stressed by the following critics: Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature; Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem; Balakian, The Symbolist Movement.

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of flute with horn." Against direct statement, he advises, "Shun the Point, lest death with it come." Verlaine is also against rhetoric, saying, "Take Eloquence, and wring the neck of him!" Verlaine's insistence upon the musical quality of poetry, through "Art Poétique" and also through the example of his own poetry, was influential in liberating French poetry from rigid metrical rules. Of Verlaine's poetry, Engleberg states, ". . . through uneven rhythms, cadences, indefiniteness, precise nuances, the poet liberates himself from rules that had dominated French poetry for centuries."<sup>1</sup>

Verlaine's "Claire de Lune" is an example of his own symbolist poetry:

## CLAIR DE LUNE

Votre âme est un paysage choisi  
 Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques,  
 Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi  
 Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur  
 L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,  
 Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur  
 Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune.

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,  
 Que fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres

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<sup>1</sup>Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, pp. 39-40. The same assertion is made much earlier by Symons who stated in 1899 in The Symbolist Movement in Literature, p. 48, "That 'setting free' of verse . . . is one of the achievements of Verlaine."

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Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau,  
Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres.<sup>1</sup>

In this poem, the speaker says that the soul of his beloved is a landscape in which are heard delightful sounds of singing, lute playing, and dancing, which express the happiness of love and life. There is a mixture of joy and sadness, as this music is heard in "sad moonlight" and the waters of the fountain "sob in ecstasy." Verlaine's ability to evoke mood through landscape, as seen in this poem, is one of his main characteristics and one which the symbolist poets imitated. He uses simple words. Balakian describes his technique as follows:

. . . he sets moods, as a musician sets a key:  
skies, clouds, the moon, the wind, the snow,  
the crows, rain, the plain . . . were to be

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Verlaine, Oeuvres complètes, 2 Vols., Paris, Le Club de Meilleur Livre, 1959, p. 173. Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 63, gives the following translation:

## Moonlight

Your soul is an exquisite landscape  
That bergamasks have charmed. Enchanting bands  
Playing the lute and dancing to escape  
The sadness left untouched by mummer's hands.

Chanting the while upon the minor mode  
Of happy love and of life's long delight  
Shyly they tread upon the happy road  
And their sweet music sighs in the moonlight.

In sad moonlight, serene in its beauty,  
Birds cease their song and dream under its spell;  
And graceful waters sob in ecstasy  
Singing from marbles in which they dwell.

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coupled with the most non-specific adjectives possible--grey, pale, uncertain, white, placid, deep, fleeting, soft--and with verbs suggestive of melancholy rather than of passion . . .<sup>1</sup>

The melancholy tone which is characteristic of Verlaine and which is noted also in Baudelaire's "Harmonie du Soir" becomes a characteristic element of symbolist poetry. Engleberg says that Symbolists create, in their poems, symbolic landscapes in which are found "despair, a sense of loss and fear, a hunger for beauty and release, and a horrible awareness of sullen, leaden reality . . ."<sup>2</sup>

That Verlaine was an important influence upon the Symbolist movement has been stated. He insisted upon the avoidance of rhetoric and direct statement, upon music achieved through freer verse forms and the use of evocative diction. In his own poetry he successfully used landscape to evoke mood, and he popularized the use of the musical instrument in poetry as a symbol which further united music and poetry. Most of Verlaine's poetry has a tone of melancholy, or the bittersweet mixture of joy and sorrow, characteristic of much symbolist poetry.

The Symbolist movement in France in a technical sense denotes the ten year period from 1885 to 1895 during which,

<sup>1</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, pp. 63-64.

<sup>2</sup>Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, pp. 32-33.

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as Balakian notes, ". . . it became a widely espoused literary movement and as a cénacle produced manifestoes, sponsored literary periodicals . . . and attracted to Paris poets and literary personalities from all parts of the Western world."<sup>1</sup> Among these literary personalities were George Moore and Arthur Symons. Moore's Impressions and Opinions (1891) include the first articles written in English on Rimbaud, Laforgue, and Verlaine. Symon's The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899) is the first book in English devoted to French Symbolism. Both of these English writers, who made frequent visits to France and were acquainted with the symbolist poets, assert that Stephen Mallarmé was the acknowledged leader of the Symbolist movement during the period.<sup>2</sup> Mallarmé was born in 1842, and thus was of the age group of Swinburne, Banville, and Verlaine, whereas poets who attended the famous Tuesday afternoon gatherings of his cénacle between 1882 and 1894 were of a younger generation who looked up to him as teacher, leader, and sage. His own two great poems had been written earlier: "L'Après-midi d'une Faune" (1876) and "Hérodiade" (1867).

<sup>1</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, pp. 64-66; George Moore, Memoirs of My Dead Life, London, Wm. Heinemann, 1923, cited in Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 88.

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With Mallarmé the "art for art's sake elements of Symbolism were continued. He supported the concept that the poet need not concern himself with society, but had the right to withdraw from social action. Most of the Symbolists acquiesced in this attitude and continued, as had Gautier and Baudelaire earlier, to create a gulf between themselves and society. Also, like Gautier, Baudelaire, and Verlaine, Mallarmé was a demanding craftsman.

The melancholy tone and "decadent spirit" also continued in Mallarmé's poetry. He disliked the word "decadent," saying, "What an abominable title is Décadence; it is high time to get rid of everything that resembles it!"<sup>1</sup> However, he expressed in his poetry that ennui which results from an awareness of the temporal nature of the world, the futility of thought that will be swallowed up in death, and the tendency to withdraw from life to inactivity and to a dream world. An early poem, "Brise marine," expresses this boredom and dissatisfaction. Here is a translation of "Brise marine" by Arthur Symons:

## SEA-WIND

The flesh is sad, alas! and all the books are read.  
Flight, only flight! I feel that birds are wild to tread

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Mallarmé, Notes et Variants, cited in Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 81.

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The floor of unknown foam, and to attain the skies!  
 Nought, neither ancient gardens mirrored in the eyes,  
 Shall hold this heart that bathes in waters its delight  
 O nights! nor yet my waking lamp, whose lonely light  
 Shadows the vacant paper, whiteness profits best,  
 Nor the young wife who rocks her baby on her breast.  
 I will depart, O steamer, swaying rope and spar,  
 Lift anchor for exotic lands that lie afar!  
 A weariness, outworn by cruel hopes, still clings  
 To the last farewell handkerchief's last beckonings!  
 And are not these, the masts inviting storms, not these  
 That an awakening wind bends over wrecking seas,  
 Lost, not a sail, a sail, a flowering isle, ere long?  
 But, O my heart, hear thou, hear thou the sailors' song!<sup>1</sup>

Of this poem, Balakian singles out the first line for its expression of ennui:

In one alexandrine he ran the gamut of that boredom that neither the pleasures of the flesh nor those of the intellect can decrease. This weariness of the super-refined man and the impossibility of relief is one of the themes that Mallarmé was to use over and over again without ever being quite as subjective as the 'je' in that line.<sup>2</sup>

The poem expresses the speaker's boredom and dissatisfaction with pleasures of this life, whether sensual or intellectual, and his yearning to escape to "exotic lands that lie afar!"

Symons quotes Mallarmé's principle that "to name is to destroy, to suggest is to create."<sup>3</sup> As a result of this

<sup>1</sup>Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, pp. 67-68.

<sup>2</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 75. Balakian refers, of course, to the original French poem of which the first line is, "La chair est triste, hélas! et j'ai lu tous les livres." Poésies Complètes, Editions Pierre Cailler, Genève, 1948, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, p. 71.

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principle, Mallarmé insisted that symbols be used to evoke, that the poet suggest rather than name. He used the word "Orphic," explaining that "what is suggested is Orphic, i.e. oracular, for like the oracle it can contain multiple meanings."<sup>1</sup> In both "L'Après-midi d'un Faune" and "Hérodiade" Mallarmé used mythological figures, Pan and Herodias, as symbols of ennui. Pan seeks escape in his inner images, memories and dreams. Hérodiade withdraws into introspection, avoiding by her withdrawal the risk of being hurt by life.

Mallarmé followed Baudelaire in seeking a form of poetry closer to music, seeking a way of using the structure of theme and variations of music to replace logical progression; seeking, also, as with music, to provoke the imagination directly, eliminating the need for logical comprehension. He most successfully achieves the parallel with music in "L'Après-midi d'un Faun" which Balakian describes as follows:

. . . narration and description of events are replaced by principal and secondary attitudes serving as channels of varying degrees of identification of the subject's desires with the object of his desire. Image is superimposed on image, transposed from one level to another,

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<sup>1</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 85.

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as from one key to another; there is a rising and an ebbing, and silences, like musical rests.<sup>1</sup>

Mallarmé was an important influence on Symbolism at the time when the Symbolist movement was being accepted in France as an important literary movement and when literary artists from other countries were frequenting Paris to learn of the movement. George Moore and Arthur Symons have been mentioned as among those drawn to Paris, to the Symbolists, and to Mallarmé's Tuesday afternoons. Thus Mallarmé's evocative use of symbols and images, his affiliation of poetry with music, and his expression of ennui contributed to a furthering of interest in these characteristic elements of symbolist poetry.

Swinburne was acquainted with Mallarmé during the early years of Mallarmé's career, 1875 to 1876. Mallarmé is reported to have visited Swinburne in 1875.<sup>2</sup> Letters of Swinburne during the period July, 1875 to June, 1876, give evidence of their acquaintance. In a letter dated July 7, 1875 Swinburne wrote to Mallarmé to thank him for a copy of his translation of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven," Le Corbeau, illustrated by Edouard Manet, the painter.<sup>3</sup> A further letter

<sup>1</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Ellmann, Introduction to Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, p. vii.

<sup>3</sup>Letters, Vol. III, pp. 41-42.

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dated January 13, 1876 expressed delight and appreciation to Mallarmé for inviting Swinburne to contribute to a new periodical La République des lettres, and recalled the close ties of the Swinburne family with France: "J'ai toujours senti que les liens de race et de reconnaissance qui rattachent à la France les rejetons d'une famille autrefois proscrite par nos guerres civiles, qui a deux fois et pendant des générations entières trouvé en elle une nouvelle mère-patrie."<sup>1</sup>

Swinburne made one condition with regard to his contribution to La République des lettres, that Mallarmé correct any anglicisms in his poem:

Maintenant j'ai à vous demander une faveur; c'est de me faire savoir s'il n'y a pas par hasard dans mes vers français quelque anglicisme, quelque phrase louche ou dure, quelque chose enfin qu'un poète né en France ne se serait point permis ou bien qu'il aurait tout de suite effacé de son texte.<sup>2</sup>

That Swinburne and Mallarmé took this stricture seriously may be noted by the letter of Swinburne to Mallarmé dated February 5, 1876, in which Swinburne discussed possible alternatives to several lines of his poems "Nocturne," which he was contributing to La République des lettres. He mentioned particularly his appreciation of Mallarmé's

<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. III, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

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suggestion for line two, "Pour y cueillir rien qu'un souffle d'amour." Mallarmé had suggested replacing "recueillir" by "y cueillir," and the suggestion was accepted.<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to Mallarmé dated June 1, 1876, Swinburne thanked Mallarmé for a copy of "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" (Paris, 1876) sent to Swinburne with the inscription "Au Maître que j'admire de loin et veux connaître, Stéphane Mallarmé."<sup>2</sup> Of this poem and its text Swinburne says: "Merci mille fois de votre merveilleux petit joyau de poésie si dignement et si délicatement enchâssé comme un diamant dans un écrin de perles."<sup>3</sup>

Of interest also is Swinburne's praise of Mallarmé in a letter to Sara Sigourney Rice dated November 9, 1875, as "one of the most remarkable younger poets . . . in France."<sup>4</sup>

From this correspondence of Swinburne, it is possible to conclude that Swinburne knew and admired Mallarmé's work, admiring him sufficiently to ask for and accept his advice on altering a poem he had written in French. Mallarmé

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. III, pp. 132-133.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 193. Footnote of the editor.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

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apparently admired Swinburne sufficiently to send him copies of his newly published works and to inscribe the copy of one of his poems "Au maître que j'admire de loin et veux connaître." This friendship and exchange of poems, and Swinburne's awareness that Mallarmé was "one of the most remarkable younger poets . . . in France," occurred in 1875 and 1876, thirteen years before the first critical essay on Mallarmé published in England.<sup>1</sup> This was Gosse's article on Mallarmé which appeared in Questions at Issue (1893).<sup>2</sup>

That the symbolist poets influenced English poets is an accepted fact. Such great poets as Eliot and Yeats admit the influence of the French poets on their work, and refer to the part played by Symons in drawing attention to the French Symbolists. Symons interested Yeats in the French Symbolist movement in the 90's and dedicated The Symbolist Movement in Literature to him. At the same time, Moore and Gosse were also writing articles about Verlaine, Rimbaud and Mallarmé; in the nineties in England there was great interest in this

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<sup>1</sup>Ellman, Introduction to Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup>Edmund Gosse, Questions at Issue, Wm. Heinemann, London, 1893.

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movement. Despite the fact that there has never been the use of the term "Symbolist" in the sense of a Symbolist movement in England, we can assume that such interest in these French poets would lead to some influence of this movement and its members on English literature of the time. Engleberg states that "If it is true that English poetry produced no great nineteenth century symbolist poets it could at least boast an ambitious significant (if loosely associated) 'movement' whose collective contribution to the development of modern poetry is increasingly being acknowledged."<sup>1</sup> In his anthology, Engleberg includes, under the heading "Symbolists and Decadents," poems of the following: Emily Dickinson, Thomas Hardy, Gerald Manley Hopkins, George Moore's translations of Mallarmé and imitations of Baudelaire, "Michael Field," William Sharp, W. E. Henley, Ernest Dowson, Aubrey Beardsley, Edmund Gosse, Oscar Wilde, John Gray, Lawrence Binyon, James Flecker, T. Sturge Moore, John Millington Synge.<sup>2</sup> Thus Engleberg finds that symbolist qualities are present in some of the works of a large number of poets writing in the 1890's, including many of those poets called aesthetic and

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<sup>1</sup>Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

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decadent in England who were looking to France for inspiration.

Hough notes that in France the "art for art's sake" movement passes over into Symbolism; whereas in English literature, "Whether there is anything in English letters that can be called a symbolist movement I am not sure; but the word seems inevitable and is not without its uses."<sup>1</sup> Thus, it seems accepted that symbolist characteristics were a part of English literature at least by the 1890's.

In the poetry of Swinburne, because he was very much interested in and influenced by the poets of France, we can expect to find some of the elements which are characteristic of the leaders of the Symbolist movement. This is not to say that Swinburne was particularly influenced by the French symbolist *cénacle* of 1885 to 1895, as were Moore and Symons, who attended and participated in the Tuesday afternoons of Mallarmé; after 1880 Swinburne no longer participated actively in current literary gatherings, nor in current literary movements. However, Swinburne had been influenced by the same poets as the symbolist *cénacle*, in

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<sup>1</sup>Hough, "George Moore and the Nineties," *Edwardians and After*, ed. Ellmann, New York, Columbia University Press, 1960, p. 7.

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particular by Baudelaire and Gautier, and he knew Mallarmé's poetry.

Several French critical writers have noted similarities between Swinburne and the French Symbolists. Temple discusses the interest of the French generation of 1870-1890 in Swinburne. She refers to Emile Blémont, Gabriel Sarrazin, and Gabriel Mourey who praised Swinburne, and notes that the qualities which these critics attribute to Swinburne explain why he was highly regarded by the French symbolist poets:

Sarrazin cites Swinburne's ample periods, his melodic virtuosity, the extraordinary plastic element of his form. . . . Mourey is even more instructive than Sarrazin on the elements of Swinburne's poetic manner which gave him a claim to the attention of the Symbolists. Like that of the other Pre-Raphaelites, Swinburne's poetry combines salient detail with general obscurity in such a way as to produce the atmosphere of a dream of Burne-Jones and Rossetti paintings.<sup>1</sup>

Temple suggests that this description may be equally applied to Mallarmé, that "The magic of suggestion is in the poetry of both, and it is for this characteristic that Sarrazin calls Swinburne a visionary."<sup>2</sup> Temple adds that "In his intoxication with words, too, Swinburne has some community with the Symbolists," and concludes, "In these two ways,

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<sup>1</sup>Ruth Z. Temple, The Critic's Alchemy, New Haven, College and University Press, 1953, pp. 113-114.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

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then, Swinburne may have seemed to the French Symbolists one who participated in their enterprise."<sup>1</sup> It is Temple's contention that in Swinburne the French Symbolists saw qualities equally characteristic of Mallarmé, the most admired Symbolist of the 1885-1895 symbolist cénacle, and that these were the characteristics most admired by their group.

Bowra observes that Swinburne resembles the Symbolists in his use of the musical effects of the sound of words:

In his love of poetry he [Swinburne] knew that what pleased him most, what seemed essential and indispensable, lay in certain musical effects of sound which give those mysterious, magical hints that are poetry's central function. Swinburne was not a Symbolist, but he resembled the Symbolists in his concentration on this special aspect of his art.<sup>2</sup>

In her excellent study of the Symbolist movement Balakian comes to the conclusion that "among the heterogeneous miscellany of elements associated with symbolism there are three prevailing constants: ambiguity of indirect communication; affiliation with music; and the 'decadent spirit.'"<sup>3</sup> We have seen examples of these three elements of

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<sup>1</sup>Temple, The Critic's Alchemy, pp. 114-115.

<sup>2</sup>Sir Maurice Bowra, "Atalanta in Calydon," The Romantic Imagination, London, Oxford University Press, 1950, p. 244.

<sup>3</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 101.

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Symbolism in the poems cited of Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Mallarmé. The "ambiguity of indirect communication" is achieved through the use of images and landscapes symbolically so that through them the poet indirectly expresses feelings and evokes mood. Certain symbols became very popular and are found time after time in symbolist poems, such as birds, swans, seagulls, flowers, fountains, glaciers, barren trees, mirrors, palaces, hothouses. Musical instruments are popular symbols. Baudelaire used the image of the violin in "Harmonie du Soir." Verlaine, with his great interest in associating poetry with music, popularized the lyre, violin, guitar, flute and other musical instruments as symbols. Mythological figures, which Mallarmé used in his two greatest poems, were used symbolically because of their timeless, unreal, and imaginary quality. Sometimes the use of symbols to suggest and evoke in a multidimensional way resulted in poetry which is obscure or enigmatic.

Rosenblatt says: "Les Symbolistes désirent aussi la perfection de la forme, mais une forme suggestive, plutôt que descriptive, une forme qui ne représente pas la réalité extérieure, mais que évoque la vraie réalité derrière elle."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rosenblatt, L'Art pour L'Art, pp. 288-289. Translation: The Symbolists desire also the perfection of form, but a form suggestive rather than descriptive, a form that does not represent exterior reality, but which evokes the true reality behind it.

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The Symbolists sought, through symbols, to evoke the very essence of things, searching as Symons says for "every symbol by which the soul of things can be made visible."<sup>1</sup> Synaesthesia, noted in Baudelaire's "Correspondances," continues to be a characteristic of symbolist poetry, a way of mingling the senses in an attempt to convey that which is beyond the senses.

The stress on the affiliation of poetry with music resulted in two main techniques used by the Symbolists. The concern with the musical sound of words and recurrence of similar sounds is used consciously to evoke mood and sometimes becomes hypnotic and incantatory. The simulation of musical structure, noted in Baudelaire's "Harmonie du Soir" and Mallarmé's "L'Après-Midi d'un faune," is used in some symbolist poems in place of logical progression.

It is in the "decadent spirit" of symbolist poetry that the close relationship between Decadence and Symbolism is most apparent. The close relationship can be seen by the fact that Symons first used the term "decadent" to describe the movement, in his essay, "The Decadent Movement in Literature,"<sup>2</sup> published in 1893. In 1899, however, he

<sup>1</sup>Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Symons, "The Decadent Movement in Literature," first published in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 1893, reprinted in Beckson, Aesthetes and Decadents, pp. 135-151.

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asserted that the decadent is

a straying aside from the main road to literature. . . . The interlude, half a mock-interlude, of Decadence, diverted the attendance of the critics while something more serious was in preparation. That something more serious has crystallised, for the time, under the form of Symbolism, in which art returns to the one true pathway, leading through beautiful things to the eternal beauty.<sup>1</sup>

Engleberg mentions, also, the "special emphasis on the 'decadent mood of French Symbolism'" seen in the English poets who translated the French symbolists and who were, themselves, "part of the English Decadence of the eighties and nineties."<sup>2</sup> However, the "decadent spirit" associated with the Symbolist movement is not so exaggerated as it is to become in Decadence where it is associated with the cult of the artificial and the desire to shock. The "decadent spirit" as it is seen in symbolist poetry is well described by Balakian as "the state of mind of the poet who is haunted by the cruelty of Father Time and the imminence of death. It is an engrossment with self and with the mysteries of an inner fixation on the incomprehensible limits of life and death; it is the delicacies of the over-sensitive."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Symons, The Symbolist Movement, p. 4.

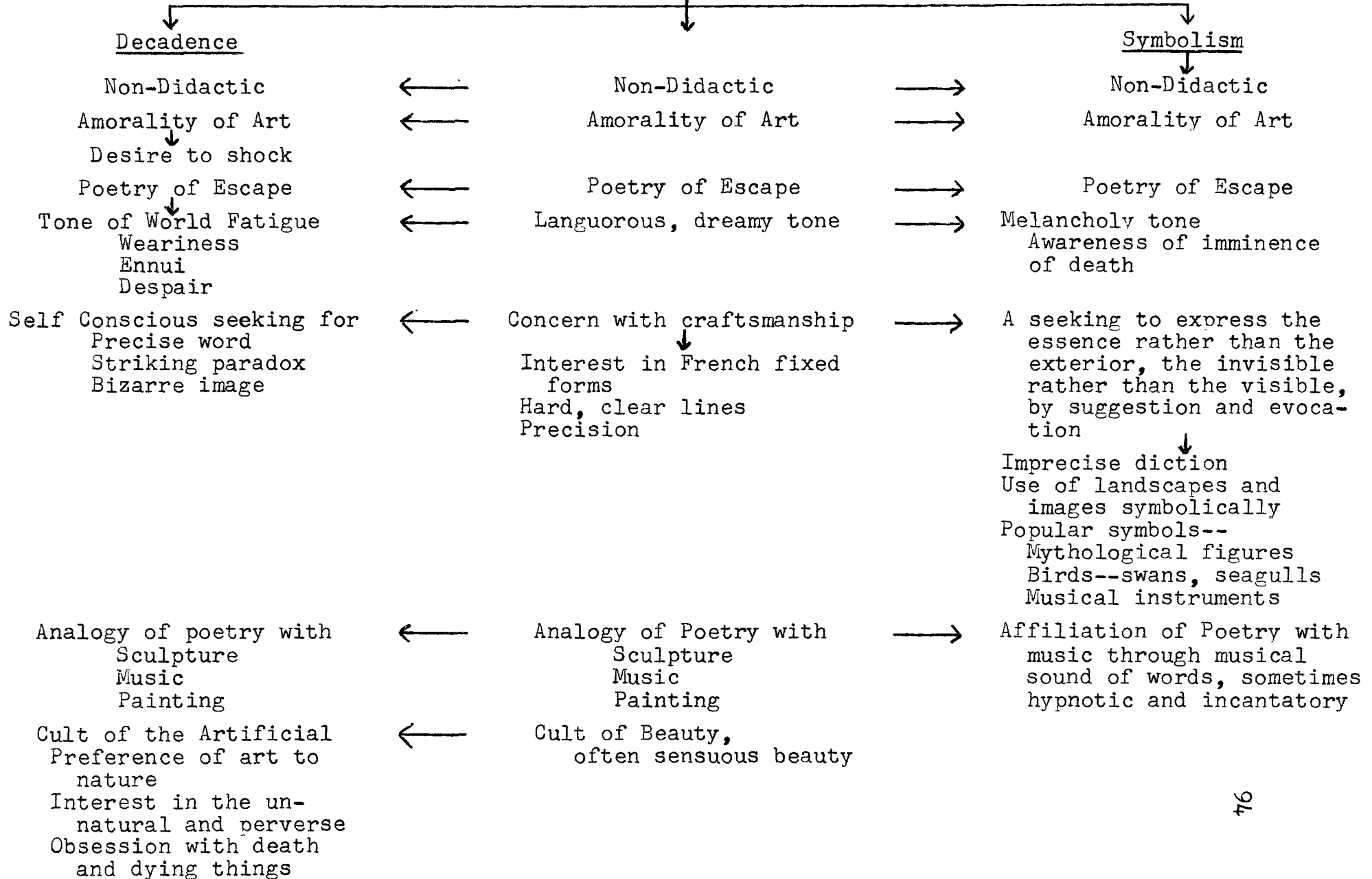
<sup>2</sup>Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, pp. 69-70.

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Aestheticism, Decadence, and Symbolism are three of the major literary trends of the period of transition with which Swinburne's poetry is associated. Aestheticism, Decadence, and Symbolism are interrelated and overlapping. The following chart will summarize their similarities and differences.

Aestheticism



## CHAPTER III

## AN EXAMINATION OF POETRY OF SWINBURNE

1880 to 1884

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate some of the poetry of Swinburne written during the early part of the age of transition, 1880 to 1884. The poems selected will be discussed from the point of view of their contribution to Aestheticism, Decadence, Symbolism, and public poetry, major literary trends of the age of transition. They will also show variety in the poetry written by Swinburne at this time and continuation of such earlier interests as support for the liberty of man, opposition to the despotism of organized religion, and advocacy of a naturalist philosophy.

During the period 1880 to 1884 Swinburne published four major volumes of poetry. Poems will be taken from each volume beginning with Studies in Song (1880). Two parodies written in 1880 and 1881, but not published until Posthumous Poems (1917), will also be examined. These will be followed by poems from Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems (1882), A Century of Roundels (1883), and A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems (1884).

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## Section 1

Poems published in Studies in Song (1880)

Of the volume Studies in Song (1880), two poems are discussed. The first is "Off Shore."<sup>1</sup> This poem expresses the swimmer's delight in sea and sun, and concludes with a paean of praise to the sun as God. The tone is light and joyous, sometimes exalted. In this poem Swinburne demonstrates the aesthetic concern with sensuous beauty and the continuation from the romantic poets of a delight in nature. He makes use of images frequently used by symbolist poets, particularly the image of music.

The first two stanzas establish the theme and tone. Summer brings a joyous enchantment to the sea. Stanzas three to nine describe the beauty of the sea weeds which, as the swimmer looks down upon them, seem "forests of crimson and russet and olive and gold" (iii.15). Such delight in richness of colour is characteristic of the Pre-Raphaelites whose devotion to beauty included a merging of the arts of painting and poetry. The waters seem like banks from which these flowers, the seaweeds, rank after rank, lift their heads. Stanzas ten to eighteen describe the effect of the sunlight

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. IV, pp. 288-296.

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on the water. The tone which has been joyous now becomes exalted in praise of the sun; as, for example, in stanza twelve:

Light, perfect and visible  
 Godhead of God,  
 God indivisible,  
 Lifts but his rod,  
 And the shadows are scattered in sunder, and  
 darkness is light at his nod.  
 (xii.56-60)

Music and light are associated, as in stanza fifteen, ". . . the sound of the strings of the music of morning," and in stanza sixteen, ". . . dawn as the sound of his breath."<sup>1</sup> Synaesthesia, used here in the interrelation of light and sound, is characteristic of much symbolist poetry since Baudelaire's poem, "Correspondances," in 1857. Images from music, such as ". . . the sound of strings of the music of morning," were used frequently by symbolist poets, particularly following Verlaine's manifesto "Art Poétique" which urged, "Music first and foremost of all." However, "Art Poétique" was published in 1884, the poem under discussion in 1880.

Stanzas twenty-three to thirty-one describe the white foam on the sea in a series of images which express both

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<sup>1</sup>This association of music and light is developed more fully by Swinburne in "Music: An Ode," a poem written twelve years later. For discussion of "Music: An Ode," see Chapter Five, Section One, pp. 233-237.

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appearance and movement of the water. The foam is compared to white birds, to sheep guided by the wind, as herdsman, to swans, butterflies, and finally petals fluttering from a tree. Birds, swans, flowers, which are used here, are among the most popular symbols of the symbolist poets. Stanzas thirty-three to the end of the poem express praise, adoration, and glorification of the sun as God. The speaker pleads that the sun continue to shine upon him as he swims outward. He exalts the sun as "The saviour and healer and singer, the living and visible God" (xl.200), and concludes: "But thou art the God, and thy kingdom is heaven, and thy shrine is the sea" (xli.205).

The poem comprises forty-one five-line stanzas rhyming a, b, a, b, b. The meter is anapestic with some iambic substitution. The line length is unusual: in each stanza the first four lines are dimeter and the fifth line is hexameter. The short lines and prevailing anapestic meter contribute to a rapid movement in keeping with the light and joyous tone. The use of the one final much longer line to end each stanza slows the movement, so that the overall effect is wavelike, imitating the motion of the sea. The careful craftsmanship demanded to effectively use this difficult and original stanza form throughout a lengthy poem

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is characteristic of the aesthetic and symbolist concern for perfection of form.

Diction used in the description of the sun as God is consistently elevated and religious, as in the invocation to the sun as Father and God, with attached epithets; for example, "God, father of song" (xxxiii.162), "God, loved of me long" (xxxiii.64), "Fair father of all" (xxxvii.181), "O God most beautiful" (xxxviii.188).

The tone, joyous and light in expressing the swimmer's delight in sea and sun, becomes more exalted in his realization of the grandeur and power of this God, the sun. The sun's power in dividing the dark clouds is compared to the rending of the veil of the temple and covering of noon with darkness at the death of Christ, as described in the New Testament. Yet in speaking of the sun the poet is concerned primarily with the beauty, joy, and music which he brings into the world; thus the joyous tone, initiated at the beginning, is maintained throughout the poem.

The attitude to nature expressed in this poem, in which Swinburne accepts a God of nature, the sun, as his God, is in keeping with Swinburne's naturalist philosophy. This philosophy, based on an evolutionary concept of nature, was shared by Swinburne with other late Victorian poets, George

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Meredith, for example. "Hertha," published in 1871, is the poem best known as a statement of Swinburne's naturalist philosophy. The unusual stanza form and rhyme scheme of "Off Shore" are the same as those used earlier in "Hertha."

"By the North Sea"<sup>1</sup> is another lengthy poem published in Studies in Song which describes nature and the experimenter's reaction to nature. "By the North Sea" is divided into seven sections with varying numbers of stanzas, varying point of view, and varying tone in each section.

The theme of the first section of the poem is the remorseless power of the sea. The desolate and barren shore, where wind and waves beat relentlessly, evokes the speaker's reflections about the power of the sea before which man seems helpless. The melancholy tone and concentration on the desolate in nature are decadent elements in section one of the poem.

The first three stanzas describe the scene, an endless wasteland without flowers, without herds, where even the birds are songless. The last two lines of stanza three introduce the two rulers of this scene, death and the sea. These two rejoice in each other: through the years death

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. IV, pp. 323-347.

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gives victims to the sea which continually hungers for more; thousands die, cast upon the banks of sand, as "wild weeds cast on a heap" (viii.66). They sleep in graves along the shore where there is no danger from wind and sea; rather, the sound of the water lulls them and the wind brings them peace, until the time when even these graves will be worn away by the sea.

The rhythm is suited to the bleak and desolate tone. For example, the long, slow movement of line four is suitable to the description of the unending desolate vista; the enjambement extends the slow movement even more: "Waste endless and boundless and flowerless / But of marsh-blossoms fruitless as free" (i.4-5).

The imagery and diction are suggestive of desolation, destruction, and death. In the first three stanzas the emphasis is on the absence of anything related to life: "Wan waste where the winds lack breath" (i.3), "flowerless, earth lies exhausted" (i.7), "The pastures are herdless and sheepless" (iii.17), "songless the birds" (iii.4). The first description of the sea, itself, is squalid and unpleasant: "And her waters are haggard and yellow / And crass with the scurf of the beach" (iv.27-28).

The only vitality described is that of the sea and

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death and the relationship between them in which each rejoices in the other. The raging hunger of the sea for more and more victims is compared to that of a wolf in winter. The vast multitude of her victims, the dead lying in graves along the shore, are described repeatedly by use of nature imagery, "thick as the blades of the grasses" (viii.63), "As wild weeds cast on an heap:" (ix.66), "As the waves of the numberless waters" (xiii.97).

The tone is melancholy in the first four stanzas. A decadent note is added with the introduction of the relationship between death and the sea and the animated description of the gleeful cooperation of these two in the destruction of man. Stanzas eight to fifteen are more tranquil in tone with the description of the peaceful slumber of the dead, safe from wind and sea, whose sound now lulls them to a deeper sleep.

Section two expresses the cruelty of the sea. This section of the poem is decadent in the harsh, melancholy tone, the desolation of the scene portrayed, the concentration on the cruelty of the sea, and the use of decadent images.

The first stanza describes the cruelty of the waters, their kisses fearful, their waves consuming ships as fire

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consumes fuel. Stanza two adds that the effect of the sunlight shining on the water is to give the impression of delight and laughter; yet the sea is engaged in unending warfare with the land at the sea's edge.

The imagery is well chosen to convey the impression of the sea's cruelty. Sun and sea are personified. The description of the cruel heart and fearful kisses of the waters creates an image of passion in the decadent mode. This is reminiscent of images in Poems and Ballads (1866). For example, references to the sea in "The Triumph of Time" contain similar sensuous and decadent images as in the following lines:

Sea that art clothed with the sun and the rain,  
Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,  
Thy large embraces are keen like pain.<sup>1</sup>  
(266-268)

The image in the second stanza is a sensuous one, ". . . her [the sea's] lips breathe back to the breeze / The kiss that the wind's lips waft her" (ii.9-10). The enduring warfare of sea and wasteland is described in images of battle, the fens and the waves are "borders . . . matched in their might" (iii.14), the waves form close ranks, the "lists are set from old" (iv.23).

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. I, p. 177.

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The section is composed of four six-line stanzas rhyming a, b, a, b, a, b. The meter is trimeter, with primarily anapestic feet and some iambic substitution. There is a steady rhythm in keeping with the remorseless, unending battle of the sea with the bordering land. As in section one, the scene is a desolate one, particularly the land bordering the sea, which is described as "wastes," "Bleak fens," "fens . . . naked and cold." The sensuous and decadent imagery, concentration on the sea's cruelty, and harsh melancholy tone contribute to make this a primarily decadent section.

The theme of section three is the desolate, vast, unchanging stretches of shore which lead the experiencer to feel that he is in Hades, a place of rest where both joys and sorrows of life cease. In its concern with the escape from this world, which is expressed in a languorous tone, rather than in the melancholy tone of the earlier sections, this section of the poem is aesthetic.

The first seven stanzas are concerned with the seeming endlessness of this lonely, desolate setting. As he wanders here alone, the speaker gradually begins to feel a sense of peace and wonder. The description here consists in particular details which are in keeping with the mood. Far

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away grey steeples are seen against the grey sky, symbols of those who believe in an after-life, the only ones who do not fear the passing of time. The sensation comes to the speaker that this shore on which he stands is, indeed, Hades. Although he has not been aware of crossing the border which separates life from death and weariness from rest, he realizes that here the joys and woes of life have ceased. Here the speaker recalls the visit of Odysseus to his mother, Anticleia, in Hades, narrated in The Odyssey, Book Eleven. The poet stresses the great love shared by Anticleia, who died of heartache for Odysseus, and her son who tried vainly to clasp his mother when he met her in Hades. The poem ends as the vision disappears, the shore now forlorn, lacking even the presence of ghosts. Rhythm combines with repetition and effective use of punctuation to echo the endless, changeless, desolate setting: "Miles, and miles, and miles of desolation! / Leagues on leagues on leagues without a change!" (i.1-2).

The section is descriptive, with more details of the scenery than in earlier sections: marsh-mosses and rush-flowers, sand saturated with water, the sun shining through the clouds. The emphasis, however, is on the repetitive nature of the scenery and the absence of any sign of life.

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The setting seems so remote from life as to bring to the speaker a feeling of peace and wonder, a feeling that the border between life and death has been passed, that here one can find rest.

In its emphasis on the escape from the world's joys and woes and weariness to rest, and in its languorous tone, section three is aesthetic. The concrete, sensory detail of the description combined with the dream-like quality of the experience are characteristics found in the poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites. It is this combination of "salient detail with general obscurity in such a way as to produce the atmosphere of a dream" which Temple suggests is characteristic of Swinburne and also of Mallarmé, and is one of the reasons "Swinburne may have seemed to the French Symbolists one who participated in their enterprise."<sup>1</sup>

In section four the poet first contrasts the protected land, which is further from sea and wind, with that which is exposed to the force of wind and sea and crumbling before it. Inland are houses, green lawns, bright fields, pine woods. Here a sense of life is conveyed by the sights and sounds of a nature which is living; for example: "They

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<sup>1</sup>Temple, The Critic's Alchemy, p. 115. See Chapter Two, Section Three, pp. 88-89.

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blossom and warble and murmur" (iii.21). In contrast the headlands are in the process of erosion by the sea and wind. Stanza twelve introduces the association of humanity with wind and sea. The speaker is one of those who delight in the wind as does the sea; these are "sons of the sea" (xiii.104). They, too, like the wind, are constantly seeking a love which is beyond them.

The imagery describing the headlands crumbling before the force of the wind and sea is bleak. The cliffs are described as ashes crumbling into dust. The grasp of the sea is like iron, in contrast to which the strength of the cliffs is like reeds. To the sea, the wind is "her lord and her lover" (x.79), and the wind's greatest delight is in his mistress, the sea:

For a season his wings are about her,  
His breath on her lips for a space;  
Such rapture he wins not without her  
In the width of his worldwide race  
(xi.81-84)

Such sensuous imagery describing wind and sea resembles that of section two, but without the element of cruelty and suffering which gives that section a more decadent tone.

Section five compares the sea with man, and also develops the contrast between the sea near the shore and the sea far from land. Stanza one expresses the idea that man

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and the sea are similar in that both seek and rejoice, gain and lose and regain. The remaining three stanzas compare the sea at the shore and far away from shore. At the edge of land the sea, laden with spoil from the land, is yellow, turbid, grimy, marked by the sign of her greed and corruption. But far out to sea, the water is clear, "pure as the wind and the sun" (iv.24).

The primary image is that of the sea, personified, shown first as having the same emotions, joys and sorrows, as man. She is then shown as having really two faces. Close to shore we see upon her evidence of her greed, of her spoiling and devouring the earth; away from land, there is no sign of this dishonour; she appears forever pure as sun and wind. There is an effective play on the word "soil" in lines fourteen and twenty-two: "The sign of her deed is her soil" (iii.14), and "the soil of her sin comes never" (iv.24). Here "soil" means both the soil itself which is washed into the sea and also the soiling of the sea's honour by her spoiling and devouring the earth. The aesthetes, in their concern with precision of diction as part of their dedication to precise craftsmanship, were interested in multiple meanings of words and the multilevel meanings which could be achieved through such a play on words as is seen here.

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In section six the land is seen as under the domination of Time; it is ruled by death, change, and darkness; the earth, along with the tombs and the bones it holds, is gradually crumbling into the sea. The tone is grave, reflecting upon the awesome desolation which occurs through Time. This is the most decadent section of the poem in its concentration on desolation and death and with the shocking elements which add to the sense of horror.

The first seven stanzas describe the change and desolation brought about by Time, proof of Time's awesome power. In the second and third stanzas, which form an invocation to Time as God, there is a parody of the Apostle's Creed:

Change of change, darkness of darkness, hidden,  
 Very death of very death, begun  
 When none knows,--the knowledge is forbidden--  
 Self-begotten, self-proceeding, one,  
 Born, not made--abhorred, unchained, unhidden,  
 Night stands here defiant of the sun.  
 (ii.7-12)

Change of change, and death of death begotten,  
 Darkness born of darkness, one and three,  
 Ghostly godhead of a world forgotten,  
 (iii.13-15)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A comparison of these lines of stanzas two and three with the following words of the Creed will demonstrate the parody: "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God; Begotten, not made; Being of one substance with the Father; Through whom all things were made": The Book of Common Prayer, Cambridge University Press, 1962, p. 71.

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This parody has a shocking effect which contributes to the sense of horror which is building up.

Stanzas eight to ten refer to that God "more merciful than time" (viii.48) who has been praised in churches here. But the fury of this God, less powerful than Time, is gone, and there remain only "Dust, and grass, and barren silent stones" (x.56). God is seen here as powerless against the ravages of Time. These pejorative references to Christianity evince the aesthetic and decadent concept of the amorality of art, which not only is non-didactic but may be, as here, contrary to current religious mores.

Stanzas eleven to fifteen describe the destruction of tombs and the disinterment of bones, all finally crumbling into the sea. The emphasis is on the desecration. Here the dead lay sleeping, awaiting the last judgment; now they are cast out of consecrated ground, devoured by the sea. Both earth and man are thus humbled: "Earth, and man, and all their gods wax humble / Here, where Time brings pasture to the sea." (xv.89-90).

The stanzas are composed of six verses rhyming a, b, a, b, a, b. The meter is iambic pentameter. The rhythm is adapted to tone and meaning. For example, in stanza eleven the long vowels, alliterated "l", assonance

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of "o," and feminine rhyme give expression to the soft, low sound of the wind: "Low and loud and long, a voice for ever, / Sounds the wind's clear story like a song" (xl.61-62). In stanza thirteen the abrupt rhythm achieved primarily through punctuation, and the harsh "c" and "r" sounds, the extensive alliteration of "s" and "sh" which contributes a hissing sound--all add to the forcefulness of expression:

Naked, shamed, cast out of consecration,  
Corpse and coffin, yea the very graves,  
Scoffed at, scattered, shaken from their station,  
Spurned and scourged of wind and sea like slaves.  
(xiii.73-76)

The overall effect is an increasing sense of horror. The land is not only desolate but ruled by death and change and darkness, over all of which presides Time. The blasphemous parody of the Creed is shocking and increases the sense of horror. The concentration on the disruption and destruction of graves and the washing away of the bones of the dead also adds to this feeling. The descriptive diction used is also sometimes shocking in its concentration on the macabre, as "Here, where earth with dead men's bones is rotten" (iii.17), "Here, where earth is dense with dead men's bones" (x.66), "Tombs, with bare white piteous bones protruded, / Shroudless" (xiv.79-80). These factors all contribute to

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an objective correlative<sup>1</sup> which is predominantly decadent.

There is a change of tone in section seven which praises and delights in sun and sea. The tone of delight and joy is more marked by contrast with the previous tone of horror. This section is aesthetic in its delight in the beauties of nature.

Stanza one introduces the concept of the grandeur of the sun which has as robe the sky and as sandal the sea. Stanza two describes the glories of the sea and land which are prepared to receive their father and God, the sun. Stanzas three, four, and five contrast the God of the land, Time, "haggard and changeful and hoary" (iii.18), with this glorious father of free souls, the Sun. Stanza six expresses the delight of all nature in the sun. In stanza seven, the poet includes himself among the rejoicing voices, singing his song to the sea.

This section is composed of eight-line stanzas rhyming a, b, a, b, c, d, c, d. The meter is anapestic

<sup>1</sup>The term "objective correlative" is used in this thesis as defined by T. S. Eliot in his essay "Hamlet," Selected Prose, edited by John Hayward, Harmondsworth, Peregrine Books, 1963, p. 102, "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."

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trimeter with the final line dimeter; this meter contributes a rapid rhythm in keeping with the joyous, exalted tone. The imagery and diction also contribute greatly to this tone. There is richness of colour in stanza two in the description of the headland whose "green floor glitters with fire" (ii.10) and the waves as a "pavement of amber" (ii.13). This richness of colour, as stated previously, reflects the aesthetic inheritance from Keats and the Pre-Raphaelites. The praise of the sun is expressed in the language of prayer: "O father of all of us ever, / All glory be only to thee" (iii.21-22). This diction contributes to the picture of the sun as God. There is a forceful contrast of the Sun with Time, darkness, and death: ". . . the Gods of the night [Time, death, and darkness] lie rotten" (v.33) and "Thou, Lord, [the sun] art God of the day" (v.36). All nature now delights in the sun, "The bloom of the bountiful heather / Laughs broadly" (iv.29-30), "The flowers . . . / Are drunk with the mad wind's mirth:" (vi.45-46), and, "The delight of thy coming unclouded / Makes music of earth" (vi.47-48). This section concludes "By the North Sea" on a happy, exalted note.

The tone of the poem varies considerably as the speaker reflects upon the scene before him of sea and shore.

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The first section expresses a sense of desolation in the evidence of the destructive power of the sea along the shore. Section two continues in much the same way reflecting upon the cruelty of the sea which devours ships and land. In section three, the poet contemplates the vast, desolate reaches of sand, as a land seemingly without life which reminds him of Hades, thus giving him the strange sensation of one escaped from the worries and weariness of life.

Section four introduces a lighter tone in expressing the delight of the wind in its power, as it combines with the sea to crumble cliffs like ashes. Section five contrasts the sea along the shore, dirty and yellow, showing the effect of its greed, with the sea far away from land, pure and unsullied. Section six reflects gravely and with an increasing sense of horror upon the death of everything on land which is under the sway of Time. This is the most shocking section in its concentration upon death and the macabre effects of the eroding away of graves by the sea. The final section is exalted and joyous as the poet unites himself with all of nature rejoicing in sun and sea.

The poem is a complex interweaving of a variety of conflicting emotions aroused by this particular aspect of nature. It is unified by the subject, the shore of the North

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Sea. Delight in the beauty of nature, a sense of awe at its power, and an awareness of the unity of man and nature are characteristics of the romantic poets which are seen here. The melancholy tone and emphasis on death of section one, the sensuous and decadent imagery, concentration on the cruelty of the sea, and melancholy tone of section two, the shocking quality and emphasis on death of section six, make these sections primarily decadent. Section three is predominantly aesthetic with its languorous tone and attraction to escape from the weariness and troubles of life. Sections five and seven are aesthetic in their expression of the beauty and joy to be found in wind and sea.

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## Section 2

## Two Parodies Written in 1880 and 1881

Swinburne's best known humorous works are the parodies of seven poets of his time: Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Robert, Lord Lytton, Coventry Patmore, and himself. Although published in Heptalogia (1880), many of these had been written earlier. Two other parodies which are not so well known will be discussed here, "Disgust" and "Poeta Loquitor." These show Swinburne's contribution to a type of humour which came into frequent use in the age of transition with such writers as Oscar Wilde and Max Beerbohm.

Written in 1880, "Poeta Loquitor"<sup>1</sup> parodies Swinburne's "By the North Sea" which has been discussed in

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. V., pp. 295-297. The following footnote of the editor is printed at the end of the poem: "This parody of a chorus in By the North Sea was written in 1880, and was originally intended to occupy a position in Heptalogia, published in that year. It was, however, ultimately discarded in favour of Nephelidia." Stanza five and parts of stanzas six, seven, and eight had appeared earlier under the title "The Ghost of It," Posthumous Poems, ed. Edmund Gosse, C.B., and Thomas James Wise, London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1917, pp. 193-194. See Appendix A, p. 291.

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the preceding section of this chapter. In the content of the poem, Swinburne ridicules both himself and his poetry. For example, in stanza one, he admits, "The emptiest thoughts that can be thought / Are mine on the sea"; in stanza five he says that his poems describe the rapturous sensation of the wind striking and stinging him, but that, in actual fact, he prefers to be well out of harm's way when a storm is about; in stanza six he admits imitating other poets who are much better than he; in the final stanza Swinburne concludes that his "would-be maleficent verses / Are nothing but wind."

Swinburne parodies his own style. He uses the same stanza form and meter as in sections one, four, and seven of "By the North Sea." Each stanza is composed of eight lines; the rhyme scheme is a, b, a, b, c, d, c, d. The meter is anapestic trimeter with some iambic substitution; the final line of each stanza is dimeter with one iambic followed by one anapestic foot. As in the sections of "By the North Sea" which are being parodied, the "a" rhyme in each stanza is a feminine rhyme. The diction is similar: for example, "ravishing rapture," "Storm strikes me and strokes me and stings." There is excessive alliteration, ridiculing Swinburne's characteristic use of much alliteration; for

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example, "In a maze of monotonous murmur," "A perennial procession of phrases," "tempest makes tremble the tree," and "Frank, Fulminant, fragrant and free."

The imagery and diction contribute to the humour of the parody. The powerful wind during the storm "Makes soap of the sea." There is colloquial diction such as "I'm scarcely the bird," "out of harm's way," and "what a low lot am I," which contributes to the lightness of tone. The poet's comparison of himself to a bird in the colloquial expression, "But I'm scarcely the bird you might capture / Out of doors in the thick of such things," is double effective when we recall Swinburne's serious comparison of himself to a bird in poems such as "To a Sea-Mew." In the final line of each stanza Swinburne parodies the stanza endings of "By the North Sea." For example, in section four of "By the North Sea" the following lines end the stanzas: "Of wind on the sea" (ii), "The grasp of the sea" (iii), "Immense as the sea" (vii), "The lord of the sea" (ix), "And springs of the sea" (xi), "For sons of the sea" (xiii), and "Elect of the sea" (xv). In "Poeta Loquitor" there are the following stanza endings: "That steer through Time's sea" (iii), "Makes soap of the sea" (v), and "Of wind on the sea" (vii).

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In style Swinburne has cleverly and successfully parodied his characteristic diction, use of alliteration and of anapestic meter; in content he has belittled himself and his work. The tone is light and humorous. Swinburne demonstrates his sense of humour, and particularly his ability to laugh at himself. He has successfully incorporated much colloquial diction into the parody which contributes greatly to the humour. Also, he has contributed to a form of humour which was frequently used in the age of transition, parody.

"Disgust,"<sup>1</sup> subtitled "A Dramatic Monologue," is a parody of Tennyson's "Despair." Tennyson's "Despair" had been published in The Nineteenth Century, November, 1881. Swinburne's "Disgust" was first published in the Fortnightly Review, December, 1881, but was not included in Swinburne's collected works until Posthumous Poems (1917).<sup>2</sup> Lang refers to "Disgust" as "Swinburne's diabolically clever parody."<sup>3</sup> It is another example of Swinburne's contribution to a form of humour which was in favour in the age of transition.

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 387-391. See Appendix A, pp. 292-295, for this poem.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Vol. XX, p. 471.

<sup>3</sup>Letters, Vol. VI, p. 243.

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In this poem Swinburne parodies both the story contained in Tennyson's "Despair"<sup>1</sup> and the form of that poem. Tennyson began his poem with an explanatory introduction as follows: "A man and his wife having lost faith in God, and being utterly miserable in this, resolve to end themselves by drowning. The woman is drowned, but the man rescued by a minister of the faith he had abandoned."<sup>2</sup> Swinburne begins with an almost identical explanatory introduction which outlines a reverse situation: a woman and her husband have been converted to Calvinism, "being utterly miserable in consequence [they] resolve to end themselves by poison." The result is the opposite of Tennyson's, for the man dies and the woman is saved.

In the poem "Despair" a man speaks to the minister who has saved him from drowning, recalling the event and explaining why he and his wife had decided upon suicide. They had lost their faith in Christ. Then, considering themselves as souless brutes, they longed for death as an end to the horror and anguish of life and walked into the waves together. The man feels no gratitude to the one who has

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Despair," The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, London, Macmillan and Co., 1893, pp. 544-546.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 544.

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parted him from his wife who drowned. He recalls their sorrows--one son is dead, the other a fugitive criminal, the only daughter had been stillborn. Now that this man no longer believes in an after-life, to continue suffering seems useless. The minister has advised him to call on "Infinite love," which he rejects as "Infinite cruelty rather than made everlasting hell."<sup>1</sup> He still longs to be with his dead wife. Finally, concluding that in any case he will be hanged at the cross-roads he says to the minister, "fool, if you will, does it matter to me?"<sup>2</sup>

In Swinburne's "Disgust," the woman has survived and explains to those who have revived her, and are unable to revive her husband, the troubles which brought them to their decision to commit suicide. They had been brought up as Agnostics. Then came a series of troubles--a cousin was discovered to be a forger, her husband's puppy died of the mange, her parrot choked to death. Was this, she wondered, the result of not attending church weekly? In view of their troubles and the state of the world ("worms breed worms," "reviewers are barely civil," "people get spiteful letters,")

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<sup>1</sup>Tennyson, "Despair," The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, p. 547, xvii.2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 547, xxi.4.

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they decided on suicide. They bought two packages of poison. The speaker maintains that she intended to die with her husband, but first, deciding to see how he liked the poison, she took only a sip. Her husband died. It's terrible, she reflects, but might have been worse: he might have been the survivor and she dead.

We have, of course, in Swinburne's poem the clear implication that this woman is quite happy with the turn of events and, in fact, planned it that way. As she states in the first section: "If I hadn't taken precautions--a warning to all that wive-- / He might not have been dead, and I might not have been alive." (i.3-4). Here Swinburne points out the ridiculous rather than tragic nature of the situation out of which Tennyson has made his poem, a planned double suicide in which one partner survives.

In form, the poems are similar. Tennyson has divided his dramatic monologue into twenty-two short sections, varying in length from two to fourteen lines. He has used iambic hexameter couplets. Swinburne's poem has twelve sections of two to ten lines and the same meter and rhyme scheme as Tennyson's.

Swinburne ridicules many of the expressions Tennyson uses. For example, in Tennyson's poem, the despairing man

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speaks of his realization that God exists only in man's mind and that man himself is only a worm:

He [God] is only a cloud and a smoke who was once a  
 pillar of fire,  
 The guess of a worm in the dust and the shadow of  
 its desire--  
 Of a worm as it writhes in a world of the weak trodden  
 down by the strong,  
 Of a dying worm in a world, all massacre, murder, and  
 wrong.<sup>1</sup>

Swinburne's woman describes the world, "Where worms breed worms to be eaten of worms that have eaten their betters--" (iv.15). Tennyson's hero sighs and frequently repeats, "Ah, God"; for example, in section nine: "'Ah God,' tho' I felt as I spoke I was taking the name in vain-- / 'Ah God,' and we turned to each other . . .,"<sup>2</sup> "'Ah God,' should we find Him, perhaps, perhaps, if we died, if we died."<sup>3</sup> Swinburne equals this: "So we went, O God, out of chapel--and gazed, ah God, at the sea" (vii.27). He ridicules the use of repetition by Tennyson, as seen, for example, in section nine, line ten of "Despair," ". . . perhaps, perhaps, if we died, if we died." Swinburne parodies this with such lines as, "Well, then came trouble on trouble on trouble--I must say,

<sup>1</sup>Tennyson, "Despair," The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, p. 546, v.3-6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 546, ix.6-7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 546, ix.10.

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a peck--" (iii.9). Tennyson gives a long, involved description of the stars as they appeared to the couple as they walked into the sea together:

And the suns of the limitless Universe sparkled and  
 shone in the sky,  
 Flashing with fires as of God, but we knew that their  
 light was a lie--  
 Bright as with deathless hope--but, however they  
 sparkled and shone,  
 The dark little worlds running round them were worlds  
 of woe like our own--  
 No soul in the heaven above, no soul on the earth below,  
 A fiery scroll written over with lamentation and woe.<sup>1</sup>

Swinburne ridicules this in the description the woman gives as she and her husband leave the chapel where they had been listening to a sermon "with a brimstone smell" and gaze at the sky:

Like the parings of nails Aeonian--clippings and  
 snippings of stars--  
 Shavings of suns that revolve and evolve and involve  
 and at times  
 Give a sweet astronomical twang to remarkably  
 hobbling rhymes.

(vii.36-38)

The last line probably refers to Tennyson's rather "hobbling" rhyme of "shone" and "own" in the preceding quotation describing the sky.

Tennyson uses a rough, wrenched rhythm reminiscent of

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<sup>1</sup>Tennyson, "Despair," The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, p. 545, iii.1-5.

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the Spasmodic School.<sup>1</sup> He is seeking to express the tortured emotional speech of a disturbed and despairing man. The abrupt rhythm is achieved in large measure by the use of many dashes and interrogation marks, as in his poem, "Maud." Swinburne parodies this as can be seen, for example, in a comparison of the following lines of the two poems. Tennyson's hero says: "What did I feel that night? You are curious. How should I tell? / Does it matter so much what I felt? You rescued me--yet--was it well."<sup>2</sup> Swinburne begins his poem: "Pills? talk to me of your pills? Well, that I must say, is cool. / Can't bring my old man round? he was always a stubborn old fool" (i.1-2).

Swinburne ridicules with great effect Tennyson's excessive use of dashes. In section eleven of "Disgust" there are eleven dashes in six lines:

I meant of course to go with him--as far as I  
pleased--but first

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<sup>1</sup>The Spasmodic School of the 1840's and 1850's is described by Thrall and Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature, p. 467, as follows: "The spirit of the verse . . . reflected discontent and unrest, while its style was marked by jerkiness and forced or strained emphasis." Jerome Hamilton Buckley, in an essay, "The Spasmodic School," The Victorian Temper, pp. 41-65, discusses works of this school and generally condemns it.

<sup>2</sup>Tennyson, "Despair," The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, p. 545, ii.1-2.

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To see how my old man liked it--I thought perhaps  
 he might burst.  
 I didn't wish it--but still it's a blessed release  
 for a wife--  
 And he saw that I thought so--and grinned in  
 derision--and threatened my life  
 If I made wry faces--and so I took just a sip--  
 and he--  
 Well--you know how it ended--he didn't get over me.  
 (xi.57-62)

In a letter to John Morley dated November 24, 1881, Swinburne refers to the deliberate use which he made of these dashes:

The same hour that I revised the proof I returned it to the printer with corrections. I trust in the God of Tennyson it has not miscarried. The characteristic and necessary dashes indicating the breaks and pauses of passion or anguish were shamefully often omitted, to the injury at once of panting meter and of gasping sense.<sup>1</sup>

The tone of Swinburne's poem, of course, also mocks Tennyson's. Tennyson was extremely serious and was actually expressing "breaks and pauses of passion" by use of dashes. Swinburne's heroine is mocking the husband whom she tricked into suicide and watched die. Her language is casual and colloquial in keeping with this tone. She refers to her husband throughout the poem as "my old man," and is obviously quite casual as she concludes: "Terrible, isn't it? Still on reflection, it might have been worse. / He might have been the unhappy survivor, and followed my hearse" (xii.64-65).

<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. IV, pp. 243-244.

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In both content and form Swinburne effectively parodies Tennyson's poem, "Despair."

Other humorous poems of Swinburne are satires. They are not always as good humoured as the parodies, as will be seen with some poems discussed below. "Rondeaux Parisiens"<sup>1</sup> is a series of roundels mocking the hypocrisy of France's "pretended" shock at hearing of immoral incidents occurring in England. "A Last Look,"<sup>2</sup> a sonnet, satirizes Carlyle, a man Swinburne disliked. Most of his other satires are political. "A Ballade of Truthful Charles"<sup>3</sup> derides the dishonesty of Charles Parnell, leader of the Irish movement for Home Rule. "Vos Deos Laudamus"<sup>4</sup> heaps ridicule on the attitude to the House of Lords of those who consider these Lords as greater than England's greatest poets. The occasion for the poem was the raising of Tennyson to the peerage, which many journalists extolled as a great honour.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter Four, Section One, pp. 180-184, for a discussion of "Rondeaux Parisiens."

<sup>2</sup>See this chapter, Section Three, pp. 134-136, for an examination of "A Last Look."

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter Four, Section Three, pp. 204-206, for an examination of "The Ballade of Truthful Charles."

<sup>4</sup>See this chapter, Section Five, pp. 168-172, for an examination of "Vos Deos Laudamus."

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Other political and occasional poems are derisive and mocking. However, the extensive use of invective and insult detract from the humorous quality and create a heavier, more serious tone. Much of Swinburne's poetry of public patriotic statement directs itself negatively to the faults and weaknesses of political or national enemies, often in a rather heavyhanded way.

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## Section 3

Tristram of Lyonesse and  
Other Poems (1882)

From the volume Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems (1882), the following poems will be examined: "After Sunset," "A Last Look," "Quia Nominor Leo," and "On the Russian Persecution of the Jews." These poems evidence Swinburne's use of the sonnet form to express a variety of themes. The sonnet is one of the fixed forms which Banville advocated in his Petit Traité de Poésie Française and which was popular in England at this time. Swinburne made extensive use of this form in the period 1880 to 1909.

"After Sunset"<sup>1</sup> is a sequence of three sonnets which reflect the speaker's contemplation of death and his hope for after-life, thoughts evoked by the setting of the sun. Below the title of the poem is the epigraph, "Si quis piorum Manibus locus."<sup>2</sup>

The theme of sonnet one is the search for hope in the midst of grief at the death of loved ones. The tone is

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. V, pp. 105-106. See Appendix A, pp. 296-297, for this sonnet sequence.

<sup>2</sup>This epigraph may be translated "If there is a place for the shades."

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calm and meditative. The method of expression is predominantly symbolist. External nature is used to evoke the speaker's mood: a symbolic landscape, the sky at sunset, expresses his inner feelings. Engleberg says that the symbolist poets "repeatedly create symbolic landscapes, seascapes, cityscapes, and dreamscapes in which despair, a sense of loss and fear, a hunger for beauty and release, and a horrible awareness of sudden, leaden reality pervade their work."<sup>1</sup> As with much symbolist poetry, the diction here is imprecise, intended to suggest rather than to describe or state.

The octet of the sonnet describes nightfall, in which are seen signs of death and also signs of life. The western sky, described as the "sun's grave" brings thoughts of death; the strong wind blowing from the west and the appearance of the stars in the sky bring thoughts of life. The sestet sees a correlation between this natural scene and man's situation. The wind, a symbol of life, comes from the very border of death itself, from the west where day has died. So may not some slight hope of new life arise from the grave over which we mourn.

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<sup>1</sup>Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, p. 33.

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In symbolist manner, the diction used to describe nature is imprecise, chosen to evoke mood rather than to present a detailed or even clear picture. For example, "sun's grave" describes the sunset and introduces the thought of death; "soft keen stardawn" and "brightening breath" suggest life and hope. Synaesthesia, an element in many symbolist poems, is present in the description of the wind as "sweet" and the coming of the stars as "soft" and "keen."

The poem expresses universal emotions, sorrow at the death of friends and hope that there may be some after-life. The movement is slow, with a preponderance of long vowels, particularly long "o" sounds. The tone is calm and meditative, and also, despite a note of hope, melancholy in its contemplation of death.

Sonnet two expands upon the association of sunset with death and of the wind from the west as a sign of life. In symbolist fashion this poem communicates completely through image and symbol, without direct statement and without intrusion of the poet. The theme is presented through landscape and through metaphors and similes by which this is described. The poem builds upon the contemplation of death of the previous sonnet.

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In the octet, the sunset is seen as the death of day, the clear breeze springing up as a sign of life. The imagery is both descriptive and evocative: ". . . the cloud-enshrouded corpse of day / Is lowered along a red funereal way / Down to the dark . . ." is a harsh and realistic picture of day as a corpse in its shroud, the redness of the evening sky as a funeral path ending in the darkness into which this corpse is lowered. The unusual presentation of such harshly realistic, unpleasant details of death--the corpse, the shroud, the lowering of the body into the grave--is reminiscent of the preoccupation with death characteristic of many decadent poems.

In the sestet, the description of the wind blowing from beyond the setting sun toward the east, introduces a more hopeful tone. Two similes are used: the wind is said to be "Bright as a child's breathing on a rose" and "Smooth to the sense as plume of any dove." These are imprecise, suggestive images of which the various elements--"child's breathing," "Bright," "rose," "dove,"--evoke impressions of life, hope, peace and love. They effectively contribute to the concluding hopeful note, "Silence and night seem likest life and love." Synaesthesia, in the description of the wind as "Bright" and as "Smooth to the sense" contributes

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to the suggestion of hope and tranquillity in these images.

In this sonnet a precise, harshly realistic image has been used to convey the harsh reality of the unpleasant aspects of death; imprecise, suggestive images have been used to convey the hopeful tone associated with the unknown and yet hoped for after-life. The poet has expressed his melancholy at the thought of death and his hope for an after-life through the intermediary symbolism of the evening landscape.

Sonnet three, building on the possibility of life after death introduced in the preceding two sonnets, is the most hopeful in tone. This poem is more direct in statement than the two previous sonnets. The direct discourse used here is the antithesis of the symbolist method of indirect discourse of the preceding poem.

Death is called the "set of sun," which recalls the central image of the two previous sonnets; however, this is the only reference to external nature which occurs. In thought, the poem is divided into two septets. The first seven lines are a question; the last seven, an answer. The question is: if life survive after death, should not that most precious in man be most certain to revive? The reply is: this being so, then what revives will be a soul

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recognizable, though transfigured, to those who love this man, thus proving that the end of mortal life is not the end of all life for man. Sonnet three concludes the sequence on a hopeful note, in expectation that there is an after-life in which we will meet and recognize those we love.

This sonnet sequence demonstrates variety in the method of expression of Swinburne at this time. He has used primarily the symbolist method of indirect communication in the first two sonnets, and the direct rhetorical method in the last. There are decadent overtones in the second sonnet, in the harsh imagery of death. The melancholy tone of the first two sonnets in the contemplation of death is characteristic of Aesthetes and Symbolists writing in England and France at this time.

"A Last Look"<sup>1</sup> is one of several sonnets published in Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems in 1882 concerning Thomas Carlyle who had died in 1881. Others were a single sonnet "On the Deaths of Thomas Carlyle and George Eliot"<sup>2</sup> and two sonnets "After Looking into Carlyle's Reminiscences."<sup>3</sup> "A Last Look" is a Petrarchan sonnet expressing

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. V, p. 114. See Appendix A, p. 298, for this poem.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

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the hope that Carlyle may find the peace in heaven which he never found on earth. The octave describes Carlyle's characteristics. Swinburne first ridicules Carlyle, quoting from the words of Olivia to Malvolio in Twelfth Night: "Sick of self-love, Malvolio."<sup>1</sup> The comparison to Malvolio continues with a reference to Malvolio's cross garters worn to please Olivia; here the garters refer to Carlyle, a dour Scot, embracing German transcendentalism, "With German garters crossed athwart thy frank / Stout Scottish legs." Carlyle is also compared to an owl preferring night to day, because of his dark pessimism. His ideas are summarized as a hatred of the world, of spring, and of freedom, and his attitude as snarling and scowling. Having ridiculed and criticized Carlyle's personality, attitude, and beliefs in the octet, Swinburne then alters tone in the sestet as he speaks of the present, now that Carlyle is dead, expressing a hope that he "pass in peace"; and that, having

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<sup>1</sup>William Shakespeare, "Twelfth Night," The Works of Shakespeare, New York, Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 645:

O! you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distempered appetite. To be generous, guiltless, and of free disposition, is to take those things for bird-bolts that you deem cannon-bullets. There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail, nor no railing in a known, discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove.

(I.v.87-93)

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had no peace on earth, he rest "Where highstrung hope and strenuous envy cease."

The comparison to Malvolio is a witty and apt one. The mere mention of the name brings to mind the coldness, self-love, Puritanism, ill-humour, and revengefulness associated with Malvolio. The violence of Carlyle's language is echoed in the diction chosen to describe his ideas: for Carlyle, "springtime stank," "the world smelt rank," "Liberty seemed foul." While the sestet is calmer in tone and bids Carlyle rest in peace, the reader is still reminded of his unpleasant characteristics by references to the past, to "ill thoughts nursed and ill words given," "high-strung hate and strenuous envy," and by the addressing of Carlyle as "Son of storm and darkness."

By beginning the poem with ridicule but concluding with a wish that in death Carlyle find peace, the poet succeeds in severely criticizing a man now dead, yet without leaving a strong feeling of personal bitterness or hatred.

Swinburne had been known from his youth for his hatred of all political and ideological despotism. Best known of his poems in support of the freedom of man was the volume Songs before Sunrise (1871), dedicated to Mazzini and

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the cause of Italian freedom. Even earlier he had opposed the tyranny he saw in Christianity and particularly in Roman Catholicism with such poems as "Hymn to Proserpine" subtitled After the Proclamation in Rome of the Christian Faith. This poem, published in Poems and Ballads (1866) contains the well known line, "Thou hast conquered O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath." (1.35)<sup>1</sup> The majority of Swinburne's political poems of the 1880's are not merely public patriotic utterances, but continue to be assertions of the poet's love of freedom. The volume Tristram of Lyonesse (1882) contains examples of such poems.

One of the angriest of these is the two sonnet sequence, "Quia Nominor Leo,"<sup>2</sup> January, 1882, which angrily rejects the claims of Pope Leo XIII to Rome. Addressing the Pope as "lion" and "ravenous beast," Swinburne recalls the years when all Europe was under papal domination, possessed by "right of rack and rod." It is the tyranny and repression of man which the poet associates with papal power and here bitterly denounces.

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. I, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Vol. V, p. 122. See Appendix A, pp. 299-300, for this poem. The title of this poem may be translated, "Since I am named lion."

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Also printed in Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems (1882) is the sonnet "On the Russian Persecution of the Jews."<sup>1</sup> This is a political poem written in objection, as the title indicates, to the persecution of the Jews which was taking place in Russia. The point is made that this persecution is being perpetrated by Christians.

The octave criticizes the persecutors as the worst of the followers of Christ. Christ is addressed as "Son of man." The tone is angry as these followers of Christ are denounced as "lying tongues" and "slaughterous hands of slaves with feet red-shod / In carnage deep as ever Christian trod." The prayer, sacrifice and incense offered by these are a profanation. The octave concludes with the assertion that these are the "Most murderous" and "Most treacherous" of all who call Christ God. The attack is two-edged; while directed at the Russian persecutors it also contains an attack on all Christians, of which these are merely the worst; this is particularly conveyed by the use of the words "ever" and "even": "In carnage deep as ever Christian trod," "Most murderous even of all who call thee God," and "Most treacherous even that ever called thee Lord."

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. V, p. 120. See Appendix A, p. 301, for this poem.

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In the sestet the address to Christ is continued. The tone alters with the recollection of Christ as loved by children long ago, hated by the priests and rulers who now are among the chief of his supporters. The question is asked whether Christ's greatest suffering was not the foreknowledge, as he died, that his followers would behave in such a way. The tone is a sorrowing and sympathetic one; the sestet is built upon the dichotomy between Christ and his followers. The final question ends the sonnet on a powerful note.

The poem is a simply constructed, direct address to Christ. Synecdoche is used in the reference to "lying hands" and "slaughterous hands." The entire poem is one sentence, divided by a semicolon at the end of the octave and ending on a questioning note. As a condemnation it is successful. The anger and bitterness are almost entirely in the first eight lines. By the sympathetic address of the first line of the sestet to Christ as "Face loved of little children long ago," the poet places himself in sympathy with Christ. The Biblical reference compares the Russian Christians to the swine into which the devils entered when Christ cast them out of the men who had been possessed; the swine then ran

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headlong into the sea.<sup>1</sup> This comparison suggests that these Christian persecutors are possessed by devils. By concluding with the realization that Christ's greatest suffering must have been His awareness of the evils which His followers would perpetrate in His name, the poet maintains the association of himself in sympathy with Christ but against these "works of Christian men." Thus the sonnet is not merely an angry denunciation as would appear at the beginning but is given a broader, more universal significance: the realization that despite the example given by Christ He has such followers.

Four examples of Swinburne's use of the sonnet form in Tristram of Lyonesse (1882) have been discussed. The range of expression which he achieves within this one form evidences his wide-ranging interests and skill. Writing in an age of transition Swinburne has, in this one volume, within this one form, written both didactic and non-didactic poems, using a satiric tone to criticize an individual in "A Last Look," a melancholy tone and both symbolist and direct rhetorical techniques to contemplate death in the three sonnet sequence "After Sunset," and invective to

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<sup>1</sup>The passages referring to this incident are found in Matthew, chapter VIII, verses 28 to 32 and Mark, chapter V, verses 1 to 13.

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condemn despotism in "On the Russian Persecution of the Jews" and "Quia Nominor Leo."

In writing poetry which was patriotic, political, and public, Swinburne was carrying on a tradition of the poet as teacher, leader, and public figure. This concept was prominent in romantic and early Victorian literature, for example in the early Tennyson's "The Poet," and was actually an extension of the earlier romantic concept, as seen in Shelley, for one, of the poet as teacher, possessor of truth and supporter of freedom. Patriotic and political poetry came increasingly to the fore during the age of transition. During the eighteen eighties and nineties Kipling was one of the foremost public poets in England. At this time, William Watson and Henry Newbolt also were becoming popular public poets. By the early twentieth century political and patriotic poetry was to become the most widely read and the political poets the most popular in England.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The popularity of public and patriotic poetry in England in the early twentieth century is discussed below, Chapter Five, Section Two, pp. 275-277.

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## Section 4

Poems Published in

A Century of Roundels (1883)

In 1883 Swinburne published A Century of Roundels, a volume composed entirely of roundels. These poems are one of the evidences of Swinburne's interest in the old French forms being revived in England at this time.<sup>1</sup> The roundel consists of nine lines and a refrain, taken from the first part of the first line, and repeated after the fourth and after the ninth lines. The rhyme scheme is a, b, a, B; b, a, b; a, b, a, B, with "B" representing the refrain which rhymes with the "b" rhyme. This is a form which Swinburne derived from the rondeau and used for the first time in A Century of Roundels (1883).<sup>2</sup>

In this thesis, three of Swinburne's roundels will be considered. Of these, the first is "Aperotos

<sup>1</sup>The interest of the 1870's and 1880's in the revival of fixed French forms such as the rondeau, ballade and villanelle has been discussed in Chapter Two, Section One, pp. 48-51.

<sup>2</sup>In the writer's unpublished M.A. thesis, The Importance of Algernon Charles Swinburne to the Origin of the Roundel and His Use of This Form, the roundel is defined, several roundels are analysed, and the variety of themes and tones expressed through this form by Swinburne are explored.

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Eros."<sup>1</sup> The title is a Greek expression from Aeschylus;<sup>2</sup> it means loveless love or unloving love. The poem is decadent: its tone is harsh, disturbing, and hopeless. It gives a terrifying picture of love as something cruel, irresistible, and associated with extreme suffering; therefore, as the title states, unloving love.

The first and second stanzas form one sentence. In the first line, two similes initiate the description, "Strong as death and cruel as the grave," and the remainder of the stanza continues it, but without naming that which is depicted as clothed in the blackness of the storm, known to death, and outbraved by none. The effect is grim, threatening, and terrifying.

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. V, p. 69. See Appendix A, p. 301, for this poem.

<sup>2</sup>Aeschylus, The Choephoroi, trans. E. D. A. Morshead, The Complete Greek Drama, 2 volumes, edited by Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr., New York, Random House, 1938, Vol. I, p. 250.

The context in which this quotation is found is the following chorus, antistrophe I:

But who can tell aright the fiercer thing,  
 The aweless soul, within man's breast inhabiting?  
 Who tell, how, passion-fraught and love-distraught,  
 The woman's eager, craving thought  
 Doth wed mankind to woe and ruin fell?  
 Yea, how the loveless love that doth possess  
 The woman, even as the lioness,  
 Doth rend and wrest apart, with eager strife,  
 The link of wedded life?

(1.595-603)

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A feeling of shock results from the disclosure in the second stanza that that which is so grim and terrifying is love. Stanza two stresses the suffering aspect of love in a series of strong images: "brow-bound with anguish for a wreath" implies held down or bound, as well as suffering; "Fierce with pain" denotes intensity of suffering, but here also has the connotation of passion which is reinforced by "Burns" in the following line. "Fierce" also has the added implication that love becomes fierce because of its suffering. "Tyrant-hearted slave" paradoxically describes love as both a tyrant himself, compelling service of others, an idea reinforced by the following line "Burns above a world that groans beneath" and as a slave, a concept also implied in "brow-bound." There is complexity of thought in the few intense and highly charged words used in stanza two to associate love and suffering.

In stanza three, two questions are addressed to love. Again, there is paradoxical phrasing: "Hath not pity power," "hath power no pity." The forceful and brief response, "Nought," rejects all tenderness and all hope. "Blind he walks as wind or wave" describes love as not only unseeing but indiscriminating, walking where he will, and also irresistible, as are those forces of nature, wind and wave.

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This concept is reinforced by the final refrain, "Strong as death."

The diction contributes to the harsh, disturbing, hopeless tone; for example, words such as "strong," "cruel," "grave," "fierce," "anguish," and "groans," are used. The many "c"'s and "r"'s contribute a harshness to the sound. The roughness of rhythm also contributes to the harsh and disturbing tone. The rough rhythm is due primarily to the frequent pauses within as well as at the ends of the lines. This is most apparent in line eight which contains two interrogation marks which require complete pauses, as well as the pause marked by a comma at the end of the line: "Love? hath power no pity? Nought he saith."

The poem consists of a series of montage-like images, particularly in the first two stanzas, which have a cumulative effect, intensifying the feeling conveyed. There are few connectives. Also, in the first two stanzas there is grammatical indirectness in the listing of descriptive adjectival phrases first, then the introduction of the subject, love, at the beginning of stanza two, followed by further descriptive phrases, then the verb. These are characteristics Engleberg noted in his discussion of Symbolism: "Thus montage-like imagery, a scarce use of verbs and connectives,

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syntactical contortions and grammatical indirectness--all become virtues."<sup>1</sup> The decadent spirit is very apparent in this poem; in the shocking quality: the forceful and unexpected diction used to describe love, associating it with death, suffering, and cruelty; and the hopeless, harsh, and disturbing tone. The aesthetic concern with craftsmanship can be seen in the precision of form, and use of a fixed form.

"Ventimiglia"<sup>2</sup> is one of three roundels written under the general title "Three Faces" to celebrate the beauty of three women Swinburne had seen and admired. Georges Lafourcade notes that the experiences celebrated by Swinburne in these poems had occurred in 1861, on Swinburne's first visit to Italy.<sup>3</sup> The theme of "Ventimiglia" is the beauty of the woman before whose appearance the beauty of the Mediterranean setting fades. The aesthetic qualities of this poem are primarily Parnassian. It is highly polished, with hard

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<sup>1</sup>Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Works, Vol. V, p. 53. See Appendix A, p. 302, for this poem. "Ventimiglia" is discussed briefly in the writer's unpublished M.A. thesis, The Importance of Algernon Charles Swinburne to the Origin of the Roundel and His Use of This Form, pp. 85-88.

<sup>3</sup>Georges Lafourcade, La Jeunesse de Swinburne, Tome 1, London, Oxford University Press, 1928, p. 187.

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clear lines; there are no wasteful words; nothing inessential is included.

In the first stanza the intense and brilliant heat of the scene is described, then immediately juxtaposed with the appearance of the girl. The second stanza emphasizes the vast, motionless glare of the sea. Stanza three returns to the girl whose intense vitality seems to absorb the brilliance of the sunlight, her splendour causing that of the sky and sea to wane and fade.

Sound is used effectively in the first stanza to contrast the scene with the girl. Harsh sounds of "k" and "r" and short syllables of line one, "The sky and sea glared hard and bright and blank," contribute to the effect of hardness and brilliance. Soft "s" sounds, alliteration of "s" and assonance of the "ee" sounds combined with the long vowels in line two, "Down the one steep street, with slow steps firm and free," demonstrate the sharp contrast between the hard, glaring setting described in line one and the slow moving, graceful girl described in line two. The endlessness of the expanse of the sea is emphasized by heavy alliteration and repetition in line five, "Through bay on bay shone blind from bank to bank," and also by the enjambement extending the movement through this line to the middle of line six without a pause.

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The diction contributes to the impact of the poem. Sky and sea are without vitality: "bleak," "dead," "void of wrath or glee," and "blind." The effect of sea and sky on the beholder is inverted and ascribed to the scene itself: "shone blind," "weary Mediterranean." The image of the "One dead flat sapphire," which so well evokes the colour and calm of the water and at the same time its effect on the beholder, is an instance of the Parnassian use of images of gems. The roundel form is used here to express one short, intense moment. The speaker himself is hardly present, only in the brief "shed . . . on me." Other than this, the picture painted evokes a tone of admiration amounting to wonder, without intrusion of the poet to describe the feelings. As the symbolist poets, Swinburne has presented the figure of the girl with suggestive rather than precise diction; she is "tall," "moves with slow steps firm and free," her eyes are "proud," "deep," and "living"; this produces a vague picture, which evokes a mood rather than painting a precise picture.

It is of some interest to compare this roundel with a sonnet by Baudelaire, "A une Passante," which Swinburne himself had singled out for particular admiration in his essay on Baudelaire written in 1861. Baudelaire's poem "A une Passante" follows:

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La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.  
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,  
Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse  
Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet;

Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.  
Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,  
Dans son oeil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan,  
La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.

Un éclair . . . puis la nuit!--Fugitive beauté  
Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,  
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?

Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici! trop tard! jamais peut-être!  
Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,<sup>1</sup>  
O toi que j'eusse aimé, a ô toi qui le savais.<sup>1</sup>

The following is a translation of "A une Passante" by C. F. MacIntyre:

## TO A PASSER-BY

('A une Passante', 1861)

Amid the deafening traffic of the town,  
Tall, slender, in deep mourning, with majesty,  
A woman passed, raising with dignity  
In her poised hand, the flounces of her gown;

Graceful, noble, with a statue's form,  
And I drank, trembling as a madman thrills,  
From her eyes, ashen sky where brooded storm,  
The softness that fascinates, the pleasure that kills.

A flash . . . then night!--O lovely fugitive,  
I am suddenly reborn from your swift glance;  
Shall I never see you till eternity?

Somewhere, far off! too late! never, perchance,  
Neither knows where the other goes or lives;  
We might have loved, and you knew this might be!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. II, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>Cited in Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, p. 137.

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Of this poem, Swinburne made the following remarks in his essay "Charles Baudelaire: Les Fleurs du Mal":

Another of this poet's noblest sonnets is that A une passante, comparable with a similar one of Keats, 'Time's sea hath been five years at its low ebb,' but superior for directness of point and forcible reality. Here for once the beauty of a poem is rather passionate than sensuous. Compare the delicate emblematic manner in which Keats winds up his sonnet with this sharp perfect finale:--

Fugitive beauté--  
Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,  
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?  
Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici, trop tard! jamais peut-être!  
Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,<sup>1</sup>  
O toi que j'eusse aimé, O toi qui le savais!

There are some remarkable similarities between Swinburne's roundel and the sonnet of Baudelaire which he had admired more than twenty years earlier. Both Swinburne and Baudelaire express the effect on the beholder of the momentary glimpse of a woman. Both pay particular attention to her way of walking and to her eyes which seem to absorb the scene and shed it upon the beholder; this can be seen by comparing these two excerpts: Swinburne says, ". . . her eyes that drank / The breathless light and shed again on me,"; Baudelaire says, "And I drank, trembling as a madman thrills, / From her eyes, ashen sky where brooded storm." The woman in Swinburne's poem seems to drink in the brilliant

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. XIII, p. 421.

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Mediterranean light and, looking in her eyes, the speaker feels that this is shed upon him. The woman in Baudelaire's poem holds in her eyes the signs of impending storm which the experiencer, looking in her eyes, drinks in. Baudelaire gives more detail of appearance. It is significant that Baudelaire devotes the entire sestet of his sonnet to the effect this woman had on him, an effect already introduced in lines six to eight. Swinburne, as pointed out above, conveys the effect through the image itself which he created, using the contrast of the Mediterranean with the woman to evoke the mood.

Thus, it would seem that the "directness of point and forcible reality" which Swinburne admires in the poem of Baudelaire are, in fact, more evident in his own poem. Also, "Ventimiglia" points to the twentieth century Imagist poems, particularly with regard to two of the major objectives of the Imagists, "to present an IMAGE (that is to be concrete, firm, definite in their pictures--harsh in outline); to strive always for concentration, which they were convinced was the very essence of poetry"; and "to suggest rather than to offer complete statements."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W. F. Thrall and A. Hibbard, A Handbook to English Literature, revised and enlarged by C. H. Holman, New York, The Odyssey Press, 1960, p. 236. These major objectives of the Imagists cited by Thrall and Hibbard are derived from Amy Lowell's Tendencies in Modern American Poetry (1917).

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The third poem to be discussed from the volume A Century of Roundels (1883) is "The Lute and the Lyre."<sup>1</sup> The theme of this poem is intense, unsatisfied yearning which is given expression, but in no way lessened, by music. The poem is primarily decadent in tone and theme--in the tone of yearning and theme of intense, unsatisfied desire.

In the first stanza the intense yearning is given voice first, though somewhat reluctantly, in poetry, then, more successfully, in music. The second stanza describes how effectively music gives expression to passion and yearning. The third stanza, as the music slowly comes to an end, reveals that the soul's feeling has in no way been lessened by the music, but rather the "deep desire" persists.

The refrain keynotes the theme of unsatisfied passion. The alliteration of "d" and the long vowels of "deep" and "-ire" in the refrain "deep desire" create a slow movement in keeping with the tone of yearning. The tremendous impact of this emotion is forcefully introduced in the first line with the sharp and direct "pierces heart and spirit to the root." Throughout the poem the imagery and diction are very sensuous, in keeping with the intensity of

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. V, p. 25. See Appendix A, p. 303, for this poem.

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passion which is being expressed. The primary image is music of the lute and the lyre; both are instruments associated with expressions of love. Musical instruments are among the commonly used images of symbolist and decadent poets, particularly after Verlaine. Oscar Wilde, for example, uses the image of the lute in his poem, "Hélas" in 1896: "To drift with every passion till my soul / Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play."<sup>1</sup> There are several images of fire used to express the intensity of emotion: "soaring fire," "burns," "soul feels burn," "a flame unslaked." There are also images of flowers: "roses," "blossom," "flower-soft"--all particularly sensuous in association. Along with the refrain "Deep desire," the words "yearns" and "yearning" are repeated, also "rapture," and "palpitation." The final mood is one of unhappy, unsatisfied longing.

This poem is primarily decadent in tone and theme; in its tone of unsatisfied, seemingly unsatisfiable, yearning which reaches despair in the final lines, and in the theme itself of unsatisfied longing. The desire is certainly a sensual one, as is clearly expressed by the imagery which is, throughout the poem, very sensual; and is intense and

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, The Poems of Oscar Wilde, Boston, John W. Luce and Company, 1909, p. 21.

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passionate as evinced by the frequent images of fire and flame and the repeated "Deep desire." Unhappy yearning and a sense of frustration are major elements of the decadent poetry of the 1890's.

As stated above, the use of the roundel links Swinburne with Parnassianism and Gautier's stress on form. The need to "forge hard, clear lines" contributed to the revival of fixed forms, such as the rondeau from which Swinburne evolved his roundel. In this particular roundel Swinburne has eliminated all irrelevant material leaving only the emotional expression, as advocated by Gautier: "Only an art purified of irrelevant intrusions of morality and social-political ideas could resist time. . . . Art required the chisel and the file."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gautier, cited in Beckson, Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's, p. xix.

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## Section 5

Poems Published in A Midsummer Holiday  
and Other Poems (1884)

A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems (1884) contains poetry expressing a variety of themes in a variety of forms. Several poems of this volume with aesthetic and decadent characteristics will be discussed, followed by several public and patriotic poems.

"A Ballad of Sark"<sup>1</sup> is a ballade consisting of three ten-line stanzas and a five-line envoy. The theme, which is brought out by the contrast between the joyous colour and beauty of the island and the grim tragedy recalled here, is the sorrow and tragedy which nature is capable of causing man. The tone is one of increasing melancholy and desolation.

The first stanza describes the sensuous beauty of the setting. From the water's edge, where the great granite rocks rise like a gateway, the moors and valleys stretch purple, green, and gold, compared in their richness to an ark full of spices. The diction of this stanza is both sensuous and joyous; for example, "Sweep and swell the billowy breasts

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 1-2. See Appendix A, pp. 304-305, for this poem.

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of moor and moss," "rapturous island," "Full of spicery." The verbs contribute to this sensuous and joyous tone: "Basks," "glows," "exults," "Fill with joy." This concern with the colourful, sensuous beauty of the landscape is an aesthetic characteristic seen in the poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites, forerunners of the Aesthetic movement, and indeed in early romantic poets such as Keats, to whom the Pre-Raphaelites had turned for inspiration. The lark and dove, usually associated with joy and love, are included in the picture, contributing to the joyous atmosphere. The last two lines of the stanza, which include the one-line refrain, introduce the first reference to grief, which it seems almost impossible to associate with such a setting: "None would dream that grief even here may disembark / On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea."

Stanza two furthers the description, emphasizing the brilliance of the sun which shines on the rocks as on a great metal shield. The reference to darkness and sorrow in contrast to the sunlight is introduced earlier in this stanza than in the preceding one, in the third line, whereas this reference occurred only in the ninth line in the first stanza. The same words are used to introduce this reference to past sorrow, "None would dream . . . ." These words lead

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to a recollection of the time in the past when this now brilliant setting was "dark as tombs." The final two lines, which include the refrain, forcefully present the tragedy which has occurred: "While the soul lies shattered, like a stranded bark / On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea." The simile comparing the soul to a stranded bark shattered against the shore recalls the metaphor at the conclusion of stanza one: ". . . grief even here may disembark."

The third stanza develops more fully the awful picture of the stormy seas which brought death and misery to these shores. Here a more decadent element is introduced into the poem. There is no mention whatever of the rich beauty of the present scene. An expanded metaphor contributes to the desolate and melancholy tone, describing the sound of the waves as a wailing and moaning, the only bridal song for the bride and groom who drowned on these shores, and for whose wedding the priest was death and the clerk was doom. A double comparison adds to the horror of the picture: the wedding choir is the sound of the roaring waves and this sound is like that of wolves hungrily barking for their prey. The diction adds to the sombre mood: "mourning notes," "woe and moan," "graveyard," "mould," "death," "doom," "drear."

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The tone now is extremely melancholy. The grim picture of death and sorrow, and of man's helplessness when confronted with the forces of nature, add a decadent note to the poem. Images presented to express the tragic death of bride and groom on an angry sea are excessively morbid; they are conducive to an intensely melancholy tone which includes a quality of despair seen in the helplessness of man confronted with the forces of nature.

The envoy concluding the poem addresses the "Prince of storm and tempest," that force in nature which can so lightly cause the end of joy and hope and love. The refrain, which ends each stanza and the envoy, contributes to the melancholy tone; each time repeated it has a cumulative effect on the mounting melancholy and desolation and each time contributes in a slightly different way to the theme: the sorrow and tragedy which nature can bring to man. The alliteration of "w" in "wrathful woful" and the repeated ending "-ful" emphasize these two words with all their connotations of anger and destruction, sorrow and tragedy. The long vowels of almost every syllable in this one-line refrain, "On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea," also contribute to the melancholy tone.

The startling contrast of the joyous and sensuous beauty of the present scene with the scene of horror from the

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past, introduced gradually in the first and second stanzas but then fully developed in the third stanza, intensifies the grim and sombre tone.

The ballade is one of the most popular of the French fixed forms revived by the aesthetic poets in England in the 1870's and 1880's. Swinburne uses the ballade form with precise craftsmanship in this poem.<sup>1</sup> Each of the three

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<sup>1</sup>The definition of the traditional ballade is given by Théodore de Banville, Petit Traité de Poésie Française, Paris, Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1909, pp. 188-194. This work was first published in 1872. Both Austin Dobson, "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse," Latter-Day Lyrics, ed. W. Davenport Adams, 1878, pp. 344-347, and Edmund Gosse, "A Plea for Certain Exotic Forms of Verse," Cornhill Magazine, July, 1877, pp. 65-69, repeat this definition. Helen Cohen, Lyric Forms From France, pp. 8-47, defines and discusses the ballade in a general way.

In his definition of the ballade, Banville includes among its pertinent features the following: the ballade is composed of three eight-line or three ten-line stanzas written with identical rhyme scheme and a half stanza called an Envoy which rhymes with the last half of the three preceding stanzas; the rhyme scheme of the ballade with ten-line stanzas (as "The Ballad of Sark") is a,b,a,b,b,c,c,d,c,d, and, therefore, of the Envoy c,c,d,c,d; in the Envoy a Prince, Princess, Queen or Lord is addressed. Traditionally this may be an address to a symbolical Prince or Princess, as the Prince of Love or Princess of Beauty. The refrain each time repeated must appear effortless and natural, and it must bring light to a new aspect of the central idea or emotion.

All of these requirements have been adhered to by Swinburne in "A Ballad of Sark."

Another characteristic of the ten-line ballade stanza of Banville is that there is a caesura following the fourth syllable of each line. Swinburne does not fulfil this requirement in "A Ballad of Sark." No reference is made to the caesura by Dobson, "A Note on Some Foreign Forms of Verse" or Gosse, "A Plea for certain Exotic Forms of Verse."

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ten-line stanzas has the identical rhyme scheme: a, b, a, b, b, c, c, d, c, d; the envoy rhymes with the last five lines of the stanza: c, c, d, c, d. This envoy is addressed to a prince, "Prince of storm and tempest." The refrain, "On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea," keynotes the theme, each time it is repeated contributing in a slightly different way to the theme and intensifying the melancholy tone.

Swinburne's use of this fixed form shows his continued interest in these forms and in this aspect of the Aesthetic movement, an interest which dates back at least to 1862 and 1863 when his first rondeaux were written. His first ballades appeared in 1866.

This is an aesthetic poem, with its precise craftsmanship and use of a French fixed form, and with its emphasis on rich, sensuous beauty. Decadent overtones are found in the increasingly melancholy tone, the grim picture of death and sorrow, the implication of despair in man's helplessness against nature. The poem is nondidactic and amoral. "A Ballad of Sark" reveals a continuity in Swinburne from Poems and Ballads, 1866 to 1884. It is a manifestation of the current preoccupation with aesthetic and decadent concerns in France and the growing tendency to produce this type of poetry in England at this time. Differing in degree but not in kind from the poetry Swinburne was writing in 1866, which

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was aesthetic and decadent, this poem is not shocking as some of the poems of 1866 were, however.

"A Midsummer Holiday" is composed of nine ballades, occasioned by a holiday in the country. Each poem combines description and reflection, describing an aspect of nature and the speaker's reaction to it; each contains three stanzas and an envoy. Of these ballades, the third, "On a Country Road,"<sup>1</sup> is discussed here.

The theme of "On a Country Road," is remembrance of Chaucer, occasioned by the appearance of the early summer countryside through which the speaker is passing. The tone is calm and happy. Chaucer is a poet particularly admired by Swinburne who saw him as one of the three great poets of the Middle Ages, the other two being Dante and François Villon.<sup>2</sup>

Chaucer was of particular interest to the Pre-Raphaelites who recognized him as a great craftsman and as a storyteller without ulterior motive. William Morris

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. V, pp. 304-305. See Appendix A, p. 306, for this poem.

<sup>2</sup>"Short Notes on English Poets," Works, Vol. XIV, p. 99. In this essay, first published in The Fortnightly Review, December, 1880, Swinburne refers to Dante, Chaucer, and Villon as "the three great typical poets of the three great representative nations of Europe during the dark and lurid lapse of the Middle Ages."

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expresses his admiration for Chaucer in The Earthly Paradise, a series of tales set in a framework as are Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. In "An Apology" introducing The Earthly Paradise, Morris asserts his own non-didacticism and sets himself in the aesthetic camp as a teller of tales, intended not to solve problems or teach lessons but to build up a dream world into which one can escape from the troubles of life. Morris speaks of the non-didactic nature of his work in the following lines:

Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,  
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,  
Or make quick coming death a little thing,  
Or bring again the pleasure of past years  
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,  
Or hope again for aught that I can say,  
The idle singer of an empty day.<sup>1</sup>

Further he says that his poems will create a dream world:

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,  
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?  
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme  
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,  
Telling a tale not too importunate  
To those who in the sleepy region stay,  
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.<sup>2</sup>

Morris also says that he will "strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss / Midmost the beating of the steely sea, / Where

<sup>1</sup>William Morris, "An Apology," The Earthly Paradise, Victorian Poetry, ed. E. K. Brown and J. O. Bailey, New York, The Ronald Press Company, 1942, p. 602, ll. 1-7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 602, ll. 22-28.

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tossed about all hearts of men must be."<sup>1</sup> "L'Envoi" is addressed to Chaucer as "Master":

O Master, O thou great of heart and tongue  
 Thou well mayst ask me why I wander here,  
 In raiment rent of stories oft besung!  
 But of thy gentleness draw thou anear,  
 And then the heart of one who held thee dear  
 Mayst thou behold! So near as that I lay  
 Unto the singer of an empty day.<sup>2</sup>

Morris says of Chaucer:

Yet he and his shall know whereof we cry,  
 Shall call it not ill done to strive to lay,  
 The ghosts that crowd about life's empty day.<sup>3</sup>

Like Morris, Swinburne expresses the view of Chaucer as non-didactic, referring to Chaucer in the ballade, "On a Country Road" as "the soul sublime / That sang for song's love more than lust of fame." Thus this poem demonstrates Swinburne's link with the Pre-Raphaelite poets in their love of the medieval, and especially of Chaucer, and with Morris in the assertion of the non-didactic nature of poetry, also a major assertion of the Aesthetic movement.

Stanza one of this ballade recalls that it was on such a day as this that Chaucer rode through these lanes.

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<sup>1</sup>Morris, "Apology," The Earthly Paradise, p. 602, ll. 38-40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 619, ll. 50-56.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 620, ll. 103-105.

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The first two lines of the poem suitably initiate a mood of reminiscence by repetition of the phrasing often used in recalling an event of the past, ". . . on such a day, So soft a day as this . . . ." Stanza two adds that each May brings its remembrance of Chaucer. Despite the changes in the world, though others of the past are forgotten, men continue to remember and praise Chaucer. Stanza three expresses the thought that at each turn in the road it seems as if Chaucer might appear and speak, as he spoke so long ago to men of all kinds. This stanza recalls that Chaucer sang because he loved to sing rather than to achieve fame. The envoy concludes that, though the years continue to pass and other loved names fade, Chaucer continues to be praised and honoured.

The calm, happy, reflective tone is maintained throughout the poem. The regularity of the iambic pentameter and the preponderance of long vowels which slow the movement contribute to this tone. The imagery, primarily that of spring, also contributes to this: the winding land with lime trees flowering overhead, the sun and shade and warmth. Chaucer seems to blend into this setting; his "glad grave eyes" are described as looking upon the "glad wild way," his smile, like the sun, ". . . warmed the world with benison."

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This merging of the season with Chaucer which begins in stanza one continues in stanza two as the poet recalls, "Each year that England clothes herself with May / She takes thy likeness on her." The imagery of nature and spring is used in further comparisons. The forgetfulness with which the past is surrounded is described as "mists" which climb around "last year's memories," and the multitude of years which pass are compared to "bees about the flowering thyme." The diction throughout the poem is warm and happy. Even the recollection of Chaucer's death is expressed with words of cheerful connotation: in "thy funeral chime / Rang," the words "chime" and "rang" are much happier in connotation than such usual words used to express sorrow as "knell" and "toll."

The refrain is used effectively to keynote the theme. In repeating "Our father, Chaucer, here we praise thy name" the speaker praises Chaucer, honours him as father of all English poets interested in song for its own sake, and states that it is here, in the place and season he loved, that Chaucer is remembered and praised. The repeated "Our Father" has associations with prayer which underline the honour and respect colouring the recollection of Chaucer. The ballade is a form which Chaucer himself had used and which was being

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revived in England at this time. It is thus suitable that Swinburne use this form to honour Chaucer.

"A Solitude"<sup>1</sup> is a Petrarchan sonnet. It possesses decadent characteristics in the harshness of the images of the inevitable devastation caused by time and the sea, and in the hopeless and desolate tone. The octave describes the stretch of sea and sand, emphasizing the vastness and loneliness of the scene. The description of the endless reaches of sea and sand and grey sky is desolate and colourless. A tactile image is used in the description of the sand as "ivory smooth" and the water as "soft as rain or snow." "Ivory" is reminiscent of the Parnassian use of images of stones and gems to express the affinity of sculpture and poetry: the hard, clear lines of statuary finding a parallel in the hard, clear lines of a poetry devoid of ornament or embellishment, devoid also of didacticism. The tone of the octave is one of loneliness and languor. The slow movement created by the long vowels, for example, in "Sea beyond sea, sand after sweep of sand," contributes to the sense of the vastness and loneliness of the scene and also to the languorous tone. Diction used also contributes to this tone, as "Stretch their lone length," "Grey gleam," and "weary."

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, p. 37. See Appendix A, p. 307, for this poem.

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The sestet forms a rhetorical question. The opening "Is there an end" echoes the seeming endlessness of the stretches of sea and sand described in the first part of the octave. The sestet describes the effect of the waves, through time destroying the cliffs which can be seen crumbling and sliding beneath the water. There is an impression of loss and ruin conveyed by the word "waste" describing the eating away of the cliffs by the sea. Even the flowers upon the cliff edge in this scene of waste and devastation are described as "bleak" and "blown." The language is harsh: "crumbling cliffs," "defeatured and defaced," "ruinous heights." This harshness is more evident because of the contrast with the diction of the first eight lines, in which such words are used as "bland," "smooth," and "soft." The tone of the sestet is one of hopelessness and desolation, as the effects of the waves are seen as inevitable and inexorable. The impression of immensity in the vast reaches of sea and sand described in the octave and the heavy slow movement of those lines can be seen now to contribute to the inevitable and inexorable effects of the waves described in the last six lines.

Besides the decadence of tone and imagery which have been pointed out in this poem, there are Parnassian aesthetic

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elements: the use of the fixed form of the sonnet, the image of ivory, and the hard, clear lines which express theme and tone without ornamentation and without didacticism.

In the volume A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems (1884) are several didactic political poems which will be discussed.

"Vos Deos Laudamus"<sup>1</sup> is a three sonnet sequence expressing Swinburne's indignant reaction to the journalists who had welcomed Tennyson's acceptance of the peerage. The sonnet sequence is subtitled "The Conservative Journalist's Anthem" and is introduced by two epigraphs, quotations from these journalists: "'As a matter of fact, no man living, or who ever lived--not CAESAR or PERICLES, not SHAKESPEARE or MICHAEL ANGELO--could confer honour more than he took on entering the House of Lords.'--Saturday Review, December 15, 1883," and "'Clumsy and shallow snobbery--can do no hurt.'--Ibid."<sup>2</sup> The title is intended to be satirical; it is derived from the well known hymn of praise to God, "Te Deum Laudamus,"<sup>3</sup> which Swinburne pluralizes and uses as his address

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 27-28. See Appendix A, pp. 308-309, for this poem.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Translation: We praise Thee, O God.

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to the members of the House of Lords, "Vos Deos Laudamus."<sup>1</sup>

Sonnet One is a Petrarchan sonnet which expresses, satirically, the poet's anger that the members of the House of Lords should be considered greater than England's greatest poets. The octave states that the glory of the House of Lords puts to shame the honour granted to poets. The sestet insists that only "the serf, the cur, the sycophant" will not bow to those higher than Milton or Shakespeare, and insists that England's great poets such as Chaucer, Keats, Shelley, and Burns bow to their superiors, that is, to the Lords. The logical sense is, of course, echoing the attitude of the journalists to the Lords.

The power of the sonnet lies in the intensity of irony. The original address to the Lords in the first three lines is a parody of the Psalms. The terminology is that of the Psalms, in particular there is a remarkable similarity between these three lines and the opening verses of Psalm 92:

O Lords our Gods, beneficent, sublime,  
 In the evening, and before the morning flames,  
 We praise, we bless, we magnify your names.  
 (11.1-3)

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and  
 to sing praises unto Thy name O most High:

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<sup>1</sup>Translation: We praise Thee, O Gods.

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To tell of the loving-kindness in the morning,  
 and of thy faithfulness in the night-season.  
 (Psalm 92:1-2)

The diction is exalted. The style is also elevated, with the use of inversions, such as, "The slave is he that serves not; his the crime / And shame, who hails not . . . ." The consistently serious, exalted address to these men as Gods is intended to mock them and effectively does so. It is apparent that the statement, "The serf, the cur, the sycophant is he / Who feels no cringing motion twitch his knee," means exactly the opposite; and that the final lines, "These [Chaucer, Keats, Shelley, Burns] have no part with you, O Lords our Gods," also have a meaning opposite to their apparent meaning: the poets have no part, not because these Lords are higher but because they are much lower than the poets. The shocking effect on the reader of the use of the terminology of prayer, and particularly the parody of the Psalms, contributes to the effectiveness of the satire.

Sonnet two criticizes the House of Lords because the Lords' appointments are due primarily to wealth and flattery. The poem makes it very specific that these are truly "Gods," for they sit "Serene above the thunder," and entrance to their ranks is described as "The portals of your

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heaven." Again the main technique of criticism is irony. In the octave the Lords are addressed as sitting serene above all strife and confusion, but this is not the reason they are superior to the commoners whose intellect and manliness make them fit leaders. The true reason is more far reaching: as the sestet states, it is because a peerage is never won by gold, flattery, or other ignoble means, but only by "high service given, high duty done." The exalted language contributes to the derisive, ironic, mock serious tone.

Sonnet three expresses the idea that, although in these present times other nations praise the untitled for their great deeds, we (the British) still praise the Lords. This sonnet also is very ironic in tone. Irony is seen in the address, "O Lords our Gods," and in the reference to the "abject souls" who bow to those "Whose honour dwells but in the deeds they do," whereas the "nobler servants" of the Lords give a "More manful salutation." There is a veiled threat in the conclusion, with the reminder that while other lands are now disturbed by men struggling for equality, here the Lords are still honoured; the emphasis is on "yet" which is repeated, and implies that this grossly unfair situation will not last: "But yours are yet the corn and wine and oil, / And yours our worship yet, O Lords our Gods." As in

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the preceding two sonnets, there are exalted diction, Biblical imagery (corn and wine and oil), reference to worship, and the repeated invocation, "O Lords our Gods."

Irony is intensified by the cumulative effect of the three sonnets. They are united by similarity of theme, criticism of the Lords; similarity of address at beginning and ending, "O Lords our Gods"; similarity of diction, which is exalted and Biblical; and a consistently mocking, ironical tone.

Several other poems criticizing the House of Lords appear in the same volume. "Clear the Way!"<sup>1</sup> was first published in the Pall Mall Gazette, August 19, 1884 and later in A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems (1884). This poem is a public statement urging the abolition of the House of Lords. That Swinburne considered this another of his cries for the freedom of man, for a democracy unhampered by this hereditary house, is apparent from a remark he made in a letter written at this time to Theodore Watts. This letter refers to the French version of this poem, entitled "Faites Place!" which had been read to Victor Hugo by Swinburne's French translator, Tola Dorian, and had been received with much approval

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 42-43. See Appendix A, p. 310, for this poem.

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by Hugo. Swinburne says: "Mme. Dorian has read 'Clear the Way!' in French to Victor Hugo, and it is much approved of."<sup>1</sup> Hugo had always been admired by Swinburne as an ardent supporter of the freedom of man.

The poem is addressed to the House of Lords, urging them to realize that their time is over and they must now give up their inherited right to rule. The tone is derisive and insulting. The first stanza begins strongly, calling the Lords "lords and lackeys" and exclaiming that they must now "clear the way!" The following stanzas recall that their power had been achieved dishonestly through lust, falsehood, the influence of courtiers and of harlots, promises, and gold; as these sources of influence have died away, so now will their power and privileges also die away. The power of the Lords has been inherited and has been maintained through treason, fear, sloth, and custom. Finally, Swinburne compares the force of public opinion to a tide, warning that the disapproval which is felt now by the Lords is only a spray, but the wind which is strengthening and the waves which will follow will sweep all of them away.

The poem is written in triplets with some internal rhyme. The lines are generally seven feet long. Much

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. V, p. 82.

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alliteration and a regular, sweeping rhythm contribute to a forceful tone. This forcefulness is intensified by the use of repetition; for example, the repetition of "clear the way" in lines one, three, twelve, and fifteen, of "By the grace of . . ." in lines one, ten, eleven, and thirteen; and by parallel structure, as in lines four and five: "Lust and falsehood, craft and traffic, precedent and gold, / Tongue of courtier, kiss of harlot, promise bought and sold." The long sweeping movement of the lines is in keeping with the theme, particularly of the seventh stanza which pictures the Lords being swept away by the tide of opinion.

This is a forceful, energetic poem in which Swinburne uses the triplets and the long, sweeping lines effectively to express a political theme.

"A Word for the Country"<sup>1</sup> is a longer poem which continues the criticism of the House of Lords and urges all Englishmen to assert their right to freedom. The tone is light and derisive. Swinburne derides the kind of freedom which the common man has:

You are free to consume in stagnation:  
 You are equal in right to obey:  
 You are brothers in bonds, . . .  
 (i.1-3)

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 44-49. See Appendix A, pp. 311-314, for this poem.

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He derides the Lords as unworthy to reign, having achieved power through the rather questionable behaviour of their ancestors: "Who are Graces by grace of such Mothers / As brightened the bed of King Charles" (vi.43-44). The poem ends on a more serious note, suggesting that the true master, who should be obeyed as leader, is the man who earns respect by being worthier and wiser than others (xviii). The final stanza urges that all English men be brothers and be free, "lordless, and fearless of lords" (xx.145). England no longer wishes "gold or steel" (xx.156), that is, wealth or force, to rule.

The stanzas and meter are unusual. The rhyme scheme is a, b, a, b, c, d, e, d. The rhythm is rapid since the meter is primarily anapestic and the lines are short, the eight lines of each stanza are trimeter, with the exception of lines five and seven which are dimeter. There is much use of feminine rhyme. There is internal rhyme in lines five and seven of each stanza. The rapid rhythm of the short anapestic meter and the use of much rhyme contribute to a lightness of tone.

This poem is intensely patriotic, combining love of England with criticism of hereditary power which interferes with the freedom of all Englishmen. The underlying message is serious, despite the light, derisive tone.

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In the poem "A Word from the Psalmist,"<sup>1</sup> the title is followed by the epigraph, "Psalm XCIV, 8." The psalm is not quoted within the epigraph but forms the opening two lines of the poem: "Take heed ye unwise among the people: / O ye fools, when will ye understand?" This opening warning occurs somewhat as a refrain, repeated several times with some alteration; for example, "Take heed: for the time of tide is risen" (ii.13), "Take heed, ye unwise indeed, who listen" (v.37). The final stanza concludes with the same two lines from Psalm 94 which began the poem. The epigraph thus keynotes the theme. The poem expresses a warning to the people not to heed their lords, but to break the bonds of servitude and attain justice and freedom. The poem concludes with the assertion that this, indeed, will come.

The tone is serious and lofty. The initial Biblical quotation contributes to this tone. The diction is Biblical, in keeping with the quotation with which the poem begins and ends; for example, "Ye are old but ye have not understanding" (iii.26), "Ye hearken" (iii.29), "Let not dreams misguide"

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 54-58. See Appendix A, pp. 315-318, for this poem.

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(iv.41). Inverted word order contributes to the lofty tone; for example, "not endless is its length" (ii.20).

The theme of "A Word from the Psalmist" is similar to that of "Clear the Way!" and "A Word for the Country." In each of these three poems the House of Lords is attacked as contrary to the concept of a truly democratic form of government. The variety of tone and form with which Swinburne expresses this theme is a further demonstration of his skilful craftsmanship and flexibility. In "Clear the Way!" the tone is forceful, assured, and insulting; the form is seven foot triplets. In "A Word for the Country" the form is eight-line stanzas of very short, dimeter and trimeter, lines; the tone is light and derisive. In "A Word from the Psalmist" the tone is serious and lofty as the words of warning in Psalm 94 are applied to the Lords; Biblical diction contributes to this tone.

Poems of Swinburne examined in this chapter give evidence of his participation, during the early years of the period of transition, in aesthetic, decadent, and symbolist trends and also in the poetry of public statement. His use of satire and parody place Swinburne in a main current of interest of this period. In poems of this time is seen, also, evidence of his continued interest in a naturalist

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philosophy and in man's right to freedom, concepts expressed in his earlier poetry.

## CHAPTER IV

## AN EXAMINATION OF POETRY OF SWINBURNE

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The purpose of Chapter Four is to examine some of the poems of Swinburne of the period from 1885 to 1889. Poems selected for examination in this chapter will demonstrate Swinburne's contribution to major literary trends of this time. They will also demonstrate variety in poetry which Swinburne wrote at this time and the continuation of such earlier interest as his support for the freedom of man.

In the chapter are included "Rondeaux Parisiens" written in 1885, although not published until 1962; poems from Poems and Ballads, Third Series; and political poems written between 1885 and 1889, which appeared in periodicals and journals, but were not republished by Swinburne until A Channel Passage and Other Poems (1904). There was only one major volume of poetry during this period, Poems and Ballads, Third Series (1889).

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## Section 1

## "Rondeaux Parisiens"

"Rondeaux Parisiens" consists of ten roundels dated August, 1885 and referring to a particular incident which occurred in July, 1885 and the reaction in France to this incident. Because of the topicality of the subject these are occasional poems, the significance of which is understood only in conjunction with the incident to which they allude. These roundels are of particular interest as demonstrating for the first time Swinburne's use of the roundel form for satire. "Rondeaux Parisiens"<sup>1</sup> appear in Lang's New Writings by Swinburne. Lang says that these poems were not previously published, but had been privately printed by Gosse and Wise in 1917. Included in Lang's "Editor's Commentary and Notes,"<sup>2</sup> is an outline of the situation which led to the writing of "Rondeaux Parisiens," which is as follows.

A sensationalistic journalist, William Thomas Stead, had become editor of the Pall Mall Gazette in 1883. In 1885 a bill designed to combat juvenile prostitution by raising the age of consent from thirteen to sixteen was introduced

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<sup>1</sup>Cecil Y. Lang, ed., New Writings by Swinburne, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1964, pp. 22-26.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 190-195.

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into parliament, and Stead was approached by Benjamin Scott, Chamberlain of the city of London, for assistance in getting the bill passed. Stead devised a course of action, first contacting the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and Cardinal Manning for approval. His intention was to prove that a man could procure a girl of only thirteen for immoral purposes. He succeeded.<sup>1</sup> Through General Booth of the Salvation Army and his son, Bramwell Booth, Stead contacted a former brothel keeper, Rebecca Jarrett, now a Salvationist, who went to a Mrs. Armstrong, mother of Eliza who had just turned thirteen, and obtained the girl for Stead, on payment of three pounds with a further payment to be made later.

Stead published this incident in a series of four articles, "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," in the Pall Mall Gazette, July 6 to July 10, 1885. The articles caused great excitement, and the Bill which Stead was supporting was passed. There was a further result. Stead and his accomplices were indicted for abduction. Because he had obtained the consent of the girl's mother but not her father, Stead was found guilty and sentenced to three months. His trial

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<sup>1</sup>Lang quotes Frederic Whyte's biography, The Life of W. T. Stead, 2 volumes, London, 1925, in support of the details of Stead's plan.

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caused more excitement. Many objected to the methods Stead had used. It was felt that he may have exaggerated and doctored the facts, in order to make his story sensational.

Stead's articles were widely reported on the continent. "Rondeaux Parisiens" express Swinburne's reaction to the French journalists' reporting of this story of English vice. Swinburne inserted an epigram beneath the title of the poem, "Hypocrisy is the homage that France pays to England."<sup>1</sup> "Rondeaux Parisiens" consists of ten poems written in the roundel form, the form which Swinburne had used in A Century of Roundels in 1883. They are all ironic in tone, expressing indignation that France should hypocritically pretend shock at the revelation of vice in England; France, according to Swinburne, being much more corrupt and vice-ridden than England.

The first roundel<sup>2</sup> states that France is ashamed to hear of the vices which are found in London, vices never dreamed of in Paris. France is personified as a delicate and chaste maiden. The refrain, "Chaste France is ashamed," keynotes the theme. The poet is using irony: France is not chaste, the infamies at which she now expresses horror are

<sup>1</sup>Lang, New Writings by Swinburne, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix A, p. 319, for this roundel.

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more than dreamt and named in Paris, her "virginal innocent air" does not become France.

The tone of the first stanza is calm and mocking. The poet uses repetition for emphasis, "As never, O never in Paris were dreamt of or named." The tone becomes increasingly ironic in stanza two with the description of France covering her maidenly face and averting her horrified eyes from such corruption. Exaggeration is evident in the description of this maiden's face which she, herself, states is "purer and fairer than any most pure and most fair." The tone is more indignant in the third stanza. Exclamation marks are used to give more emphasis to the indignation. The final use of the refrain, "Chaste France is ashamed!" contributes to the cumulative effect of increasing irony and indignation at France's reaction.

The remaining nine poems<sup>1</sup> develop the same theme. The poet's ironic tone is evidenced by the various refrains used; for example, the refrain in the second poem is, "Pure Paris is shocked," in the third "Not in Paris--ah no!" The diction becomes increasingly vituperative. As it does, the humour is lessened. For example, in poem seven France is described as "foul" and the hope expressed that "From the

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<sup>1</sup>Lang, ed., New Writings by Swinburne, pp. 22-26.

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dunghill she sat on, and smiled at the clank of her chain, / Fair France shall arise." Shocking diction, frequent use of exclamations, and repetition contribute to the poet's expression of his indignation, which becomes more angry, scornful, and vituperative with each poem. It is not surprising that "Rondeaux Parisiens" were not published at the time of writing. Lang notes that "Swinburne seems to have offered the poems to James Knowles for publication in the Nineteenth Century (Letters, V, 128) who, in a note dated September 4, 1885 (A Swinburne Library, p. 234) seems to have declined them."<sup>1</sup> Thus "Rondeaux Parisiens" remained unpublished until 1962.

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<sup>1</sup>Lang, ed., New Writings by Swinburne, p. 191.

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## Section 2

Poems Published in Poems and Ballads,  
Third Series (1889)

In 1889 Swinburne published Poems and Ballads, Third Series. This volume contains poems varying widely in theme and form.

In "To a Seamew"<sup>1</sup> the seamew's joy, freedom, and delight in nature are contrasted with man's lot, tied down by time, by cares, by disappointed hopes. The tone alternates between joy and elation in expressing the seamew's happy state and melancholy at the awareness of the disparity between man and bird, with an increasing longing of man for the freedom of the seamew.

This is an aesthetic poem. It has the aesthetic qualities of devotion to the beauty of the bird's song and flight, longing for escape, and careful craftsmanship in the use of a fixed stanza form. It also possesses the romantic elements of delight in nature, primarily in the seamew but also in sea and wind, and love of freedom. Emphasis on the musical quality of words and use of imprecise rather than exact, detailed imagery, to evoke mood rather than to present

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. III, pp. 195-198. See Appendix A, pp. 320-322, for this poem.

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a picture, are qualities of symbolist poetry, as the seamew is a popular image of symbolist poets.

The objective correlative is the seamew which is addressed throughout the poem, and which symbolizes joy and freedom. In the first stanza the speaker addresses the seamew as "my brother" and recalls the time when he had the same sense of freedom as the bird. In the second stanza he introduces the contrast between the sense of vitality and elation inherent in the seamew's flight and song and man's "faint heart . . . [which] sickens / With hopes and fears that blight" (ll.13-14). The next six stanzas describe the joy of the bird undeterred by storm or darkness, wave or wind, but rather delighting in these and saluting them with "clarion-call of joy" (l.42). Stanza ten is directed to the unhappy contrast of man with the seamew. Even the man who is nearest the bird in his passion for freedom now sings but does not fly, and lives the grey life of those who must live in time. In stanza eleven, even the lark and the nightingale are seen as unable to equal the joy and love of the seamew. The speaker returns again to the contrast of the bird with man, who can only dream and sing and watch the seamew's flight. Man's dreams and hopes fail, but the seamew, unfettered by any fears or cares, unaffected by time, is able to enjoy the waves and wind. In the final stanza the sense

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of longing is intensified. The speaker longs to change his life for that of the seamew, exchanging his own song for the bird's wings.

The poem is composed of fifteen eight-line stanzas rhyming A, B, c, c, a, b, A, B, with the seventh and eighth lines a repetition of the first two lines, thus forming a kind of refrain. The lines are iambic trimeter with feminine rhymes used throughout the poem in all five "a" and "c" lines. This makes for grace and lightness. The shortness of the lines gives a rapid movement. The short rhyming couplet formed by the third and fourth lines contributes a lilting sound. Extensive use of alliteration, regularity of meter, the rhyming couplet, and the refrain--all contribute to the light, graceful movement and musical quality in keeping with the mood of joy and the delight in the bird's song and flight. This emphasis on the musical quality of words is part of the association of music with poetry stressed by Verlaine and later Symbolist poets. Here Swinburne successfully uses the sound qualities of words to contribute to theme and tone.

The diction and imagery point sharply to the contrast between the seamew and man. The bird is associated with the sense of elation and freedom conveyed by such words as "thrills and quickens" (1.9), "elation" (1.10), "exultation"

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(1.11), "gladlier" (1.30), "delight" (1.34), "rapture" (1.81). Contrastingly, man is described with such phrases as "faint heart sickens" (1.13), "time's grey fashion" (1.77), "creep" (1.90), and "falter" (1.97).

This is a lyric poem expressing the intensity of emotion aroused in the speaker by the seamew. He associates himself with the seamew by the personal "my brother" with which he addresses him; he rejoices in the song and flight of the bird, and expresses a longing to be like him. The primarily joyous, elated tone is mixed with melancholy at the disparity between man and the bird he longs to be like. As an aesthetic poem, "To a Seamew" demonstrates the continuation of the romantic elements of delight in nature, primarily in the seamew but also in wind and sea, and love of freedom.

Two poems celebrating public events and published in the volume Poems and Ballads, Third Series (1889) are "The Commonweal" and "The Armada." "The Commonweal"<sup>1</sup> was written to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1887. It has been called by Chew "the finest of his [Swinburne's] patriotic poems."<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. III, pp. 160-170.

<sup>2</sup>Chew, Swinburne, p. 295.

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poem rejoices in the freedom of England which has survived wars and various disturbances throughout the world. The past fifty years is recalled, the period since Victoria was crowned; the hope and promise of that time have survived darkness and storms which have shaken other thrones and lands. The sea is England's, so much so that the sea is her mantle and the sea-clouds her crown (xviii.4-5).

The primary symbol is light, the sunlight which illuminates England while other countries are still in darkness, a light which "leads forth souls from prison," "breaks the seals of tombs" (xxiv.4-5), and dissolves the forces of darkness, whether these are the forces of subjection of mind or of body. The time of year, which is spring, is woven into the theme: earth seems as glorious as the sea, the woods rejoice, the whole world's heart yearns for spring as those of her subjects are yearning toward the queen. Victoria's children all turn to salute her with love and to acclaim this jubilee. Extremely patriotic in theme, the poem maintains a joyous, exultant tone by directing itself to the positive attributes of England and her queen. It avoids digressions to insult her enemies, in the way characteristic of other patriotic poems previously discussed. England's political and intellectual freedom are stressed, with light as the primary image of that freedom. The poem has fifty stanzas,

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paralleling the fifty years being celebrated. The movement is rhythmical, each stanza of five lines rhyming a, b, b, a, b; the meter is primarily iambic with the line length four-four-four-four-three. The evenness of rhythm and the rhyme pattern contribute a musical songlike quality, in keeping with the joyous tone of the poem.

"The Armada"<sup>1</sup> was written in celebration of the tricentenary of England's great victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588. The poem narrates the battle, interspersing narration with rhetorical exclamations about the glory of England; England is associated with wind and sun and sea. Spain is seen as depending upon the "Lord God of the priests of Rome" (iv.6), as Philip of Spain and Pope Sixtus are joined in the plan to defeat England. Their victory would include the destruction of England:

And the streets and the pastures of England,  
                   the woods that burgeon and yearn,  
 Shall be whitened with ashes of women and  
                   children and men that burn.  
(iv.19-20)

The description of the battle itself in section six of the poem is quite vivid. The English are seen as hunters, the wind as her hounds, the Spanish the quarry which is swept northward and west, some perishing as far north as

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. III, pp. 171-194.

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Iceland, many swept onto the coast of Ireland. Catholic Ireland was considered a friend of Spain so that the poet finds much to criticize in the Irish massacre of those driven to her shores: "Short shrift to her foes gives England, but shorter doth Ireland to friends" (vi.3), "Hacked, harried, and mangled of axes and skenes, three thousand naked and dead / Bear witness to Catholic Ireland, what sons of what sires are bred" (vi.3). In section seven, the poet derides the trust in God of Philip and Pope Sixtus and speaks of their God in some of his most vituperative language:

God the Devil, thy reign of revel is here for ever  
eclipsed and fled:  
God the Liar, everlasting fire lays hold at last  
on thee, hand and head:  
God the Accursed, the consuming thirst that burns  
thee never shall here be fed.  
(vii.3)

The poem concludes in a paean of praise for England, as "queen of the waves," "Mother fair as the morning," "mother beloved," "maiden immortal," and "a land where truth and freedom live."

As an occasional poem, designed to celebrate a glorious day in the history of England, "The Armada" more than fulfills the requirement. The poet's skill is demonstrated in the variety of verse and stanza forms: the stanzas are of varying length and the lines vary from trimeter to octameter. The narrative of the battle is exciting

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and is the most effective part of the poem. The hatred for Roman Catholicism, the Pope, and the God worshipped by him is not new to Swinburne; this was evident in Poems and Ballads (1866). However, this poem is overburdened with repeated invective which, along with excessive rhetoric, detracts from the exciting description and celebration of the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

"A Baby's Epitaph" was first published in the Fortnightly Review in 1888 and later reprinted in Poems and Ballads, Third Series, 1889. A brief reference was made to this poem by Swinburne in a letter to Edward Burne-Jones, January 1, 1888,<sup>1</sup> but he does not state whether the poem refers to a particular baby's death. It could possibly be written with the death of Michael, baby son of William Michael Rossetti, in mind. Michael Rossetti's death had been lamented earlier in the sequence of seven roundels, "A Baby's Death" which appeared in A Century of Roundels (1883).

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. V, p. 223. Swinburne states in this letter ". . . I want you [Edward Burne-Jones] and Georgie to like two tiny poems of mine in the Fortnightly--I haven't a copy by me--if you should see them. I have (did I tell you?) discovered the one serious rhyme in the language to go with that blessed word 'babe'." [The word to which Swinburne here refers is "astrolabe."]

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"A Baby's Epitaph"<sup>1</sup> is a simple and moving little elegy mourning the death of a baby and consoling those left with the thought that the baby is now in heaven, thus should not be wept over. The tone is gentle, elegiac, consoling. It is an occasional poem which demonstrates Swinburne's ability to write with simplicity and brevity, and in a calm, even tone.

The poem is expressed from the point of view of the baby who is addressing those who weep for him. Born in April and dying in the winter, he lived less than a year. Yet he should not be mourned as he has been called home from this "brawling world" by angels. The diction is very simple and the statement direct. The poem is brief, consisting of three triplets. The long heptameter line contributes to the grave, elegiac tone. The movement is slow and even, with a regularity of meter, iambic with the initial foot of each line consisting of a single syllable. There is internal rhyme which occurs regularly in each line, in the second and fourth feet, which gives a rocking, rhythmic effect recalling somewhat a baby's lullaby; this also adds to the slowness of movement in keeping with the elegiac tone.

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. III, p. 233. See Appendix A, p. 323, for this poem.

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This appears to be a personal poem. However, in theme and tone its expression is a universal one: sorrow at the death of a child, mixed with awareness of the troubled world he has left for a happier one. This poem is deceptively simple in appearance, yet the form is a difficult one with the unusually long line, internal rhyme, and triplets. Although this is not one of the French fixed forms in which there was current interest, it has a rigidly restricted structure which demonstrates the same aesthetic concern for hard, clear lines and requires the same skilful craftsmanship as the French fixed forms.

"Neap-Tide"<sup>1</sup> also was published in Poems and Ballads, Third Series (1889). This is a dreamy, evocative poem describing the dreary appearance of sea and shore at low tide. The tone is languorous, sometimes melancholy, in the evocation of a dreamlike world in which both land and sea seem dim and far away. This poem is aesthetic-decadent. It is aesthetic in its concern with evoking the atmosphere of an unreal world between land and sea, in the weary, languorous tone, and in the skilful craftsmanship of the unusual stanza form and effective use of sound qualities to contribute to the tone. The intensity of melancholy, in particular

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. III, pp. 221-223. See Appendix A, 324-325. For this poem.

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the metaphor of the sea as a "corpse with night for bier" (iv.18), and the images of sickness, pallor, and death are decadent.

The point of view from which the setting is described is given in the first stanza: the speaker is on the stretch of shore normally washed by the sea but which is now bare. From here, both the sea and the land beyond the low banks seem far away. The sense of remoteness from reality increases with the description in stanza two of fields, churches, towns which seem to be receding as in a dream. The sea stretches grey and still, "A corpse with the night for bier" (iv.18). This particularly decadent image introduces the first association of the scene with death. The sight of a sail or a sound from shore would break the spell which now reigns over this still, silent dream world. The lonely stretches of sand, formerly washed by the sea, contrast with the remembered sights and sounds when the waters rippled over the sand. Now there is neither light nor sound: the sky is grey, the sun fading, the fog thickening as the day dies. The last two stanzas suggest that this scene bears a resemblance to death. As a time of shadows and greyness are present here for a brief time only, to be replaced by sun and life once more, so perhaps death, too, is for us only a shadow to be replaced by the light of another life.

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Each stanza is composed of five lines rhyming a, b, b, a, b. The meter is anapestic and iambic. The first and fourth lines, the "a" lines, are tetrameter; the second, third, and fifth, the "b" lines, are trimeter. There is considerable use of alliteration, assonance, and consonance, which combines with rhyme and repetition to create an incantatory, hypnotic effect, contributing to the dreaminess of tone. For example, in stanza three, there are repetition and parallel structure in the first line, "The world draws back and the world's light wanes"; extensive alliteration of "d" and also primarily long vowel sounds in the second line, "As a dream dies down and is dead"; parallel structure again in the third line, "And the clouds and the gleams overhead"; repetition and assonance of "an" sound which is almost rhyme in the fourth line, "Change, and change; and the sea remains." The final line contains the repetition of "dream" from line two and alliteration of "d." All of these sound techniques contribute to an incantatory tone intensifying the dreamlike mood.

Imagery is carefully chosen to contribute to theme and tone. There is a contrast between the diction and imagery used to describe the setting when the waves were washing over it and as it is now, deserted. In describing the former scene the emphasis is on vitality: movement,

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sounds, and joy. This is particularly apparent in the verbs: "flashed," "tumbled," "laughed," "struck," "ring," "sprang," "sing." The present scene is described negatively: "Now no light" (1.41), "now / Not a note" (11.41-42), and with images of sickness and death: "A sun more sad than the moon" (1.45), "More sad than a moon that clouds beleaguer" (1.46), "sick sun" (1.48), "Grows faint" (1.49), "withers away" (1.50), "Full fain would the day be dead" (1.52), "the sunset dies for dread" (1.55). The overall effect is the evocation of an intensely dreary, melancholy scene made all the more so by the startling contrast with the earlier scene.

The last two stanzas add a generalization based upon the contrasting scenes which have been described. The present sombre, melancholy scene is known to be a fleeting one, soon to be replaced by a return to the earlier joyous, vivacious scene, filled with sound and movement. The question is asked, can we not, then, learn from this that death is temporary, to be followed by renewed life? However, what remains with the reader much more than this generalization in the two concluding stanzas is the effective evocation of mood; the dreamy, languorous, sometimes melancholy tone which conveys the effect of this strange, almost unreal setting on the experiencer.

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## Section 3

## Political and Patriotic Poems

Between 1885 and 1889

Some political poems written at this time were not included in the volume, Poems and Ballads, Third Series (1889). In 1886 and 1887 Swinburne strongly opposed Home Rule for Ireland. He allied himself with the Unionists who were determined to maintain the union of England, Ireland, and Scotland. In support of the Unionist stand Swinburne wrote several poems which were published in various newspapers and journals. For example, "The Commonweal: A Song for Unionists"<sup>1</sup> appeared in The Times, July 1, 1886, and "The Question"<sup>2</sup> appeared in Daily Telegraph, April 29, 1887. The political poems of Swinburne at this time were severely critical of the Irish Nationalists, of Gladstone who was introducing the Home Rule Bill, and of Charles Parnell, leader of the Irish Nationalists. Gladstone was defeated when the Liberal Unionists joined with the Conservatives to vote against his Home Rule Bill.

In two letters to The Times in 1887, Swinburne explained his position against Home Rule, answered his

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 263-266.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 267-270.

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critics, and invoked the support of Karl Blind, a friend of Mazzini, to prove that in supporting the Unionists and opposing Gladstone he was behaving in a way consistent with his support of Mazzini which had proved a primary theme of Songs before Sunrise in 1871.

In his first letter to the Editor of The Times, dated May 3, 1887, Swinburne states that he has been denounced as "an apostate, a convert, or a renegade from principles which I formerly maintained."<sup>1</sup> Swinburne asserts that Mazzini would not have supported or condoned the crimes of the Disunionists and refers to Karl Blind, who had first introduced him to Mazzini, and is quite in sympathy now with Swinburne's stand on Union. A further letter dated May 7, 1877 quotes an extract from a letter Blind had written to Swinburne: "As to Mazzini, I can bear witness from a long friendship, down to his death, that he, the champion of the Unionist principle in nationality matters, was utterly opposed to the dissolution of the Legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland."<sup>2</sup> The following poems will indicate that Swinburne expressed the same sentiments in his poems as he did in

<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. V, p. 188. The complete text of this letter appears in Appendix B of this thesis, pp. 357-359.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Vol. V, p. 191. The complete text of this letter appears in Appendix B of this thesis, pp. 360-361.

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his letters concerning the Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

"The Commonweal: A Song for Unionists"<sup>1</sup> is dated June 30, 1886 and was published in The Times, July 1, 1886. It consists of fifteen four-line stanzas invoking those whose fathers had defended the British union against the world to show their spirit now. The poet berates Gladstone and Parnell, "See the man of words [Gladstone] embrace the man of blood [Parnell]!" (ii.4). Those who oppose the Union are considered murderers, thieves, and traitors; for example: "Thieves and murderers, hand yet red with blood and tongues yet black with lies." (vii.25). The final two lines conclude the poem with the same plea with which it began: "Yet an hour is here for answer; now, if here be yet a nation, / Answer, England, man by man from sea to sea!" (xv.59-60). This poem is angry in tone, bitter and insulting in its denunciation of those who seek disunion, intended to excite and rouse to action those British who oppose disunion. It is repetitious and rhetorical.

In writing to Blind Swinburne revealed the sincerity of the sentiments he expressed in this poem by the following statement: "There is no man living whose

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix A, pp. 326-328, for this poem.

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approbation of my stroke<sup>1</sup> at the worst enemy<sup>2</sup> of his country now alive could be more precious to me than yours."<sup>3</sup>

"The Question" written in 1887 and published in The Daily Telegraph, April 29, 1887, subscribes to much the same sentiments. Written in twenty five-line stanzas the poem asserts that England will live in shame if she accepts falsehood, treason, and murder, without seeking to punish the perpetrators of these crimes. As in "The Commonweal: A Song for Unionists" the tone is angry. The enemies of union are again insulted and their punishment urged.

"Apostasy,"<sup>4</sup> a four sonnet sequence written about the same political problems, expresses its theme in a calmer tone and in a more coherent and restrained manner, and gives more meaningful expression to the poet's thoughts and feelings.

Apostasy means the total desertion of one's faith; the abandonment of what one has voluntarily professed. In this sonnet sequence the theme is apostasy, but it is more

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<sup>1</sup>Footnote of Lang, ed., notes that this remark refers to "The Commonweal: A Song for Unionists."

<sup>2</sup>Footnote of Lang, ed., notes that this remark refers to Gladstone.

<sup>3</sup>Letters, Vol. V, p. 150.

<sup>4</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 221-223. See Appendix A, pp. 329-330, for this sonnet sequence.

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than that, it is the distortion of apostasy into its opposite: those who maintain their stand for truth are now considered to be apostates. The epigraph is significant for the clarification it gives to the theme: "Et Judas m'a dit: Traître!--VICTOR HUGO." It is also significant that Swinburne selected as epigraph a quotation from Victor Hugo, the man he revered from his youth as a supporter of freedom and equality for all men.

Sonnet one expresses the idea that truth now changes with time. Those who turn from their previous tenets to hold the opposite view are now considered truthful. In this contradictory world, "To veer is not to veer," the man called "renegade" is he who does not change his position. The same theme is expressed in sonnet two: he who stands firmly for what he has always supported "Stands proven apostate in the apostate's eye."

Sonnet three, expressing the same theme, adds a new note by using a series of examples from history, mythology, and literature. Beginning with the statement, "Fraud shrinks from faith," the speaker gives a series of examples which show that it is the guilty who projects his own guilt upon the virtuous: the raven at sight of swans reproaches blackness; the snake at sight of birds fears poison; Thersites, who was killed by Achilles for mocking him, calls Achilles a

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coward; a shoal in which ships are wrecked blames the safe haven; Bacon considers Essex a traitor; Oates considers Russell a traitor; the name of the puritan Milton sickens the dissolute Waller. In such a world, the poem concludes, wisdom itself "dotes if it turns not tail and licks the dust." This poem, with the cumulative effect of these examples from nature and from man, expresses more intensely than the two earlier sonnets the conviction that principles of conduct have been reversed: apostates now call those who hold fast to the truth apostates.

The fourth sonnet concludes the sequence on a more affirmative note. England has previously crushed "rebel reptiles" with her heel.<sup>1</sup> Her fame shall continue beyond these troubled years, as her loyal and free sons remember, not Leicester and Gladstone, but Sidney and Gordon. This poem is hortatory in tone, a public political statement.

Of the sonnet sequence, the third sonnet expresses the theme with most intensity and most compression. Throughout the sequence, the emotion and exhortation are more controlled than in the two previously discussed poems, "The Commonweal: A Song for Unionists" and "The Question." The tone is calmer. The sonnet form itself would seem to be a

<sup>1</sup>This Biblical allusion originally referred to the crushing of the serpent, Satan, by Mary, by giving birth to the Redeemer of mankind.

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controlling and restricting force. The very fact that the poet has used the sonnet form means that he then does not have space for the excessive invective against his opponents of which he is capable.

These three political poems "The Commonweal: A Song for Unionists," "The Question," and "Apostasy," were not included in Swinburne's volumes of collected poems until 1904 when they were published in A Channel Passage and Other Poems, a volume which contains many poems of political statement.

"The Ballade of Truthful Charles"<sup>1</sup> was first published in the St. Jame's Gazette, July 18, 1889; it then appeared in a private printing of twenty copies of The Ballade of Truthful Charles and Other Poems in 1910, and was reprinted in 1917 in Posthumous Poems, edited by Gosse and Wise; however, it has been omitted from The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, Bonchurch Edition; thus it is not easily accessible. This poem is an interesting demonstration of Swinburne's use of the fixed form of the ballade for a humorous satire devoted to one of Swinburne's favourite political themes, the attempt to obtain Home Rule for Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup>Posthumous Poems, pp. 151-152. See Appendix A, p. 331, for this poem.

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"Truthful Charles" of the title is Charles Parnell, the leader of the Irish attempt to obtain self government. In this poem, Swinburne has made use of an apparently true incident in which Parnell had admitted that a statement he made to parliament had been intended to mislead. The theme is the dishonesty of Parnell. This is underlined by the refrain which forms the final line of each stanza and of the envoy, the quotation ascribed to Parnell, "I meant to cheat you when I said it." Both Parnell and his cause, Home Rule for Ireland, are ridiculed.

In the first stanza Parnell is called "Charles Stuart," a slightly altered form of his correct names, Charles Stewart; the alteration serves to associate him with Charles Stuart, the Pretender, and the support given by Ireland to the Stuart cause. Parnell is called "crownless king" in allusion to his strong leadership position in Ireland; this term also serves to further his association with the Stuart Pretender. Parnell is considered a smooth and dangerous talker; since he is such an adroit speaker we are surprised to hear him saying, "I meant to cheat you when I said it." The second stanza continues to deride the oratorical abilities of Parnell. He influenced even those "souls more pure than flowers in spring," by his "grave,"

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"calm," "bland" voice which rang out so truly, "I meant to cheat you when I said it." In the third stanza Parnell and his followers are described as splashed with the mud they, themselves, have thrown. The envoy concludes with the question addressed to Parnell, "Prince of pure patriots" and "blameless king," is it really to your credit that you admit, "I meant to cheat you when I said it."

There are several amusing plays on words such as calling Charles Stewart Parnell "Charles Stuart," holy Ireland "holy Liarland," and Gladstone "Gladsniff." Swinburne's use of alliteration effectively exaggerates the oratorical skill of Parnell. For example, in lines four and five, "Can give his tongue such scope and swing / So smooth of speech, so sure of tongue," the alliteration of "s" and the long vowels of "so," "smooth," "sure" add to the exaggeration. The overall effect is a very ironical tone. The incongruity of describing Parnell's followers as "more pure than flowers in spring" in this particular context adds to the humour. The quickness of rhythm which results from the preponderance of short vowels and the short tetrameter lines contributes to the lightness of tone. The refrain, a direct quotation of the man being derided, is used effectively to climax each stanza and, finally, the entire poem.

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Humour, particularly satire and parody, became prominent as a mode of expression in the age of transition. Max Beerbohm (1872-1956) and George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), two major humorists of the twentieth century, began their careers in the age of transition. Beerbohm, a brilliant parodist, wrote "A Defence of Cosmetics," satirizing the Decadents' cult of artificiality, while he was still an undergraduate. This was published in the first number of The Yellow Book in April, 1894. Shaw displayed his wit and humour as a drama critic in the 1890's and in his comedies from 1892 to 1939, using his wit to ridicule political, social, and religious structures of which he disapproved.

Many of the Decadents ridiculed the society which they rejected. Oscar Wilde's (1854-1900) epigrammatic wit sparkled in his conversations, his criticism, and his comedies of manners of the 1890's. Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1892) wrote a parody of the Venus and Tannhauser legend which had been used by Wagner in his opera, by Swinburne in his poem, "Laus Veneris," and by Morris in his poem, "The Hill of Venus." Beardsley's version of the legend, although incomplete, first appeared in The Savoy in 1896 under the title "Under the Hill." It has been described as "a brilliant

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parody of the legend."<sup>1</sup> In 1896, a collection of satires and parodies entitled Battle of the Bays, edited by Owen Seamen, was published by Bodley Head, the leading publishing company of well known Aesthetes and Decadents of that time.

Opponents of Decadence also used satire as a means of expressing their opposition. Punch magazine persistently parodied the two journals, The Yellow Book and The Savoy. Richard LeGallienne (1866-1947) ridiculed the Decadents in his poem, "The Decadent to His Soul." Robert Smyth Hichens (1864-1950) satirized the Decadents in his novel The Green Carnation published in 1894. Containing thinly disguised portraits of Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, this novel consists primarily of conversations in which many satiric paraphrases of Pater and Wilde are evident.

The prevalence of satire and parody at this time clearly demonstrates that Swinburne was very much a part of the age of transition in writing his parodies and satires.

Poems examined in this chapter show Swinburne's continued participation in aesthetic and decadent literary trends, his use of techniques of symbolist poetry, and his involvement in current political issues, as well as his continued use of satire as a mode of criticism.

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<sup>1</sup>Beckson, Aesthetes and Decadents, p. 9.

## CHAPTER V

## AN EXAMINATION OF POETRY OF SWINBURNE

1890 to 1909

The purpose of Chapter Five is to evaluate some of the poems of Swinburne between 1890 and his death in 1909. Poems selected for examination in this chapter will demonstrate Swinburne's continued contribution to major literary trends and will also show the variety of poetry written by him at this time and the continuation of interests demonstrated in earlier poetry.

During this period Swinburne published two major volumes, Astrophel and Other Poems (1894) and A Channel Passage and Other Poems (1904). Because Astrophel and Other Poems is his first major volume in ten years, a larger number of poems is examined from this than from earlier publications. Swinburne's last collection of poems before his death, A Channel Passage and Other Poems (1904), contains many poems written earlier. Three of these poems, "The Commonweal: A Song for Unionists," "The Question," and "Apostasy," were discussed in Chapter Four.<sup>1</sup> Many of the poems of this final volume are either political or are occasional poems honouring remembered friends.

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter Four, Section Three, pp. 198-204.

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## Section 1

Poems Published in Astrophel  
and Other Poems (1894)

Poems published in the volume Astrophel and Other Poems (1894) continue to demonstrate Swinburne's versatility and wide range of themes and interests.

Swinburne wrote a sequence of seven sonnets in memory of Robert Browning. These were first published in The Fortnightly Review, 1890, and reprinted in Astrophel and Other Poems (1894). Of this sonnet sequence, the fifth will be considered.<sup>1</sup> The theme of this poem is the illumination of all ages and all aspects of life by Browning. The tone is admiring and serious. The imagery used is suggestive and imprecise in the symbolist tradition, rather than precise and concrete.

The thought may be divided into three sections. The first five lines introduce the main idea: Browning sought to illuminate with his thought many various ages and aspects of life. In the next seven lines are listed some of these aspects of life. These are described first, in a general

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, p. 147. See Appendix A, p. 332, for this poem. Only one sonnet of the sequence is here discussed as sufficient to demonstrate theme, tone, and techniques used within this sonnet sequence.

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way, as light and darkness; then as less general but still broad areas: "faith," "fear," "dream," "rapture"; then more metaphorically; for example, "virtue girt and armed and helmed with light." The final two lines conclude that all the facets of life which have been expanded and developed in the previous seven lines have been penetratingly understood, interpreted and enlightened by him.

The meter is iambic pentameter with occasional substitution of an anapestic foot. The evenness of meter gives emphasis to the repetitive "no" in "no faith, no fear, no dream, no rapture, nought." The regularity of meter, the use of balanced phrases, as "nought / That blooms in wisdom, nought that burns in crime," the slow rhythm created by the long vowels, particularly the many "o" sounds, as in "No love more lovely than the snows"--all contribute to the elevation of tone suitable to a memorial poem. Browning's themes are forcefully expressed by the repeated negatives, thirteen negatives within seven lines, and the conclusion that none of the matters listed has escaped his perceptive and penetrating exploration.

The thought of the poem is communicated through symbolism and imagery. The sonnet is built on the metaphor introduced in the first five lines, in which Browning is seen as bearing a thoughtful spirit which, like a lamp, illumines

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the dusk of all ages and conditions with its sublime fire. A cumulative effect is then achieved by the listing of the wide variety of things with which he was concerned. As implied in "light and darkness," both good and evil comes within his scope. That which "blooms in wisdom" and "burns in crime" suggests the same kind of balance; "blooms" implies that which prospers and thrives, "burns" its opposite, that which is destructive. A series of images is used to continue the comprehensive catalogue of Browning's interests; for example, virtue "girt and armed and helmed with light" and evil is seen as a "serpent sleeping in some dead soul's tomb." The cumulative effect of this series of images is to reinforce the emphasis on the vast scope of Browning's topics. Such imagery as "love more lovely than the snows are white" and "virtue girt and armed and helmed with light" are suggestive and evocative as in symbolist poetry, rather than precise and detailed. The conclusion, referring to his "sense invasive as the dawn of doom," expresses the fact that Browning's perception, penetration, and interpretation of a theme are as complete, as final, and as inevitable as the coming of doom.

It is noteworthy that Swinburne gave a similar assessment of Browning fifteen years earlier. In an essay

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on George Chapman<sup>1</sup> in 1875, Swinburne referred to Browning's "decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and intensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim . . . ." <sup>2</sup> In the same article, Swinburne uses the image of light to describe Browning's central quality as "a faculty of spiritual illumination rapid and intense and subtle as lightning, which brings to bear upon its central object by way of direct and vivid illustration every symbol and every detail on which its light is flashed in passing."<sup>3</sup>

The idea and the image conveyed in these passages are similar to the theme of the sonnet discussed, expressed through the image of Browning's "lamplike spirit of thought" which "illume[s] with instance of its fire sublime / The dusk of many a cloudlike age and clime."

First published in The New Review, January 1890, then in Astrophel and Other Poems (1894), "A Swimmer's Dream"<sup>4</sup> is

<sup>1</sup>Algernon Charles Swinburne, George Chapman: A Critical Essay, London, Chatto and Windus, 1875, reprinted in Works, Vol. XII, pp. 136-251.

<sup>2</sup>Works, Vol. XII, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Vol. XII, pp. 154-155. Robert Peters, The Crowns of Apollo, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1965, p. 118, refers to this description of Browning by Swinburne in his essay on Chapman, adding, "Usually, for Swinburne, light symbolizes imaginative power."

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 100-104. See Appendix A, pp. 333-336, for this poem.

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printed with the date November 4, 1889, beneath the title, and the epigraph, "Somnio mollior unda."<sup>1</sup> The poem consists of five sections. Of these, sections one, two, and five have similar stanza form and meter, whereas sections three and four differ in both. The poem evokes the emotions and sensations of the swimmer who feels as if, in the sea, he has entered another world.

The evocation of emotion and sensation in this poem rather than direct statement is in the symbolist tradition as, also, is the effective use of the musical qualities of poetry, through assonance, alliteration, rhythm and rhyme, as a primary means of evocation. Also in the symbolist tradition is the use of imprecise diction for its suggestive qualities. The non-didacticism and concern with beauty are symbolist aesthetic characteristics, as, also, is the other-worldly atmosphere, the attraction to a dream world which seems unchanging and timeless.

In the first section, the sensations and emotions of the swimmer toward the sea are expressed in a dreamy, languorous tone. Through the description of the waves of the sea at dawn, the swimmer evokes his own mood, dreamy and

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<sup>1</sup>This epigraph may be translated, "Softer than sleep is the water," or, "Gentler than a dream is the wave."

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languorous, and his sensations as he is borne along on the waves. The tone is characteristic of much aesthetic poetry and also of symbolist and decadent poetry.

This section of the poem is composed of three stanzas of eight lines, with the rhyme scheme a, b, a, b, c, c, c, b. Each line is iambic tetrameter with the first foot of each line catalectic and with one anapestic substitution within each line. There is a regular rhythm. Also, there is much alliteration and assonance; for example, in line one, "Dawn is dim on the dark soft water," "d" alliterates in "Dawn," "dim," and "dark"; assonance occurs of "a" in "Dawn," "dark," "water"; of "i" in "is" and "dim"; of "o" in "on" and "soft." The alliteration and assonance, as well as the many long vowels, slow the movement of the line in keeping with the languorous tone. Also, there are many feminine rhymes: in the first two stanzas, the "a" and "c" rhyme endings are feminine; thus five of eight lines of these stanzas have feminine rhymes; these also slow the movement. The extensive use of alliteration and assonance contributes to the musical quality. The evenness of the slow rhythm contributes to a regular, wavelike movement which echoes the movement of the waves of the sea. This is particularly evident in lines five, six, and seven where the repetition of the "c" rhyme

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adds to this regular movement creating an incantatory effect. All of these effects of rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and assonance contribute to a sound effect in keeping with the sensations being evoked by the movement of the waves. The emphasis on the sound qualities of poetry, that is, on the musical element, as a primary means of poetic expression has been a main element in symbolist poetry since Baudelaire and received great impetus, as has been noted, from Verlaine's urgings in his "Art Poétique" (1884) as well as from his own example of the skilful use of the musical element in poetry.<sup>1</sup>

The diction in section one is simple. It is reminiscent of Verlaine's technique as Balakian describes it: "With the simplest words in the French language . . . he sets moods, as a musician sets a key: skies, clouds, the moon, the wind, the snow, the crows, rain, the plain--these nouns, so often used by Verlaine. . . . were to be coupled with the most non-specific adjectives possible--grey, pale, uncertain, white, placid, deep, fleeting, soft. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Here Swinburne uses nouns such as "dawn," "water," "waves," "spring," "sleep," "sea," "shadows," and adjectives just as non-specific as Verlaine's: "dim," "soft," "dark," "sweet,"

<sup>1</sup>See above, Chapter Two, Section Three, pp. 70-77.

<sup>2</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 63.

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"deep." The result, as with Verlaine, is not a clear, precise picture but a vague, evocative one through which, combined with the musical, rhythmic, incantatory quality of the sound, the swimmer's languorous, dreamy mood is evoked. In this poem one might say, as was said of Verlaine, "he sets moods as a musician sets a key."

The diction describing the water contributes to the evocation of the swimmer's sensations; for example, "dark soft water," "soft and passionate, dark and sweet," "Softer than sleep's are the sea's caresses." This last quotation is almost a direct translation of the epigraph to the poem, "Somno mollior unda"--softer than sleep is the water. The allusion to Venus, beautiful daughter of the sea and symbol of love, contributes to the impression of beauty and of the sensuous.

As has been shown this first section contains major elements of symbolist poetry: emphasis on the musical quality of poetry through extensive use of alliteration and assonance, and regular, incantatory rhythm; languorous tone; use of vague rather than precise diction, for its suggestive and evocative qualities. The dreamy, languorous tone and musical quality may also be considered aesthetic, as are the avoidance of didacticism and the concern with sensuous beauty; since symbolism evolved from aestheticism, as has

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been discussed,<sup>1</sup> symbolist poetry retains characteristics of aesthetic poetry.

In section two the poet continues to evoke the swimmer's sensations and emotions in the same dreamy, languorous tone. There is increasing attention given to the timelessness, grandeur, and power associated with the sea, and to its hypnotic effect on the swimmer.

Stanza one describes the overcast, sunless sky which conveys a certain timeless quality in that "Dawn and even and noon are one / Veiled with vapour and void of sun." To the impression of timelessness is added the impression of grandeur and power: "Nought in sight or in fancied hearing / Now less mighty than time or fate."

The remoteness from reality continues in stanza two with the description of the greyness of sky and sea. There is a dreamlike quality inherent in this timeless and vast greyness of sky and sea. The movement of the waves, rhythmic and hypnotic, seems to lure the swimmer into this timeless, dreamlike world. The sound qualities of the stanza contribute to the evocation of this effect on the swimmer: a slow movement is created by the long vowels, feminine endings, extensive alliteration and assonance; for example, in line

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter Two, Section Three, pp. 93-94.

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one of this stanza, "The grey sky gleams and the grey seas glimmer," the repetition of "the grey," alliteration of "g" in "grey" and "glimmer" and of "s" in "sky" and "seas," assonance of the "ea" sound in "gleams" and "seas." The lulling, hypnotic effect of the movement of the waves is echoed in the rhythm and sound of "Swings the rollers to westward" and the repetition of the "lu" sound in ". . . lustrous shadow that lures the swimmer, / Lures and lulls him . . ."

The impression of immensity and of cosmic significance continues in stanza three with "world of the skies" and "world of the waters" and a comparison of the light and sound of the waves to lightning and thunder in the last two lines of the poem. The emotions of the swimmer are expressed in imprecise but evocative diction which merges the appearance of sky and sea with the feelings they evoke, as in lines one and two of this stanza: "Light, and sleep, and delight, and wonder, / Change, and rest, and a charm of cloud."

Diction used throughout section two is again, in the symbolist tradition, imprecise and evocative, not making a direct statement of emotions but suggesting and evoking them. There is, again, the resemblance to Verlaine in the use of non-specific diction; for example, "sweet," "pale," "dimmer." The dim, grey, shadowy scene also is reminiscent of Verlaine

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who "had also discovered that the half-light is richer in its suggestive power and for stimulating the imagination than the bright sunlight."<sup>1</sup> "Dark wind" is an example of synaesthesia, a characteristic frequently noted in symbolist poetry. The dreamlike quality of the swimmer's experience continues to reflect the aesthetic and symbolist attraction to escape into a dream world. Through imprecise diction and full use of the resources of sound and rhythm the poet evokes the very essence of the swimmer's experience.

In section three the unrestricted freedom and timeless beauty of the sea are contrasted with the circumscribed and temporal nature of the land. The tone is joyous as the speaker associates himself with the sea, "here [where] the days are fair as dreams."

In the first stanza the waves are described as "shoreless"; and, rejoicing in their freedom, their "glee / Scorns the shore." The shore is associated with restrictions which are not found here. The pale light of the "moonlight-coloured sunshine" contributes to the mystery and beauty of the sea, "Strange as sleep and pale as death and fair as life."

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<sup>1</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 63.

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In stanza two the movement of the waves westward is contrasted to the movement of autumn days towards winter. The difference is in the unchanging appearance of the waves in contrast to the aging effects of time on the land. The usual effects of time, seen on earth in woods and streams, are expressed with harsh and unpleasant words: "chilled," "bowed," "warped," "wrinkled." These contrast sharply with the water where "the days are fair as dreams."

In this section, the concept of the mysterious and dreamlike aspect of the sea is continued. However, there is a greater sense of vitality in much of the diction, with such verbs as "strife," "glee," "Scorns," "shifts." Also, the rhythm is more rapid, primarily because of the use of shorter vowels. The joyous tone is more lively, therefore, in contrast to the languorous tone of the preceding sections of the poem. The expression of joy in the escape from the effects of time and from the restrictions of the world into a dreamlike, timeless world is a primary concern of the Aesthetic movement.

There is a shift in subject matter in section four, as the speaker turns to observe the effects of November on land and sea. The joyous, vivacious tone continues. This section reveals Swinburne's use of diction characteristic of

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symbolist, aesthetic, and decadent poetry current at this time in France and England.

In stanza one, November is contrasted favourably with August and September. November is described in the rich colours attractive to many Aesthetes as inheritors of the romantic love of beauty, such as "russet-robed" and "golden-girt"; in contrast to this, August is "chill" and September "pale." November smiles and "Bids all she looks on smile," despite her awareness that the other months, August and September, merely "Endured a woful while." The aesthetic symbolist concern with the transience and mutability of our world is basic to the theme of section four. In stanza two November is compared to June; prouder than June, November pretends to be unafraid of death although her foliage is fading and falling. She seems to feel that her beauty, fading as the moon wanes, will return as surely as the moon waxes. Stanza three extends this thought, for the fields, struck by "grey December's breath" will, indeed, requicken with "April's breath." The descriptive diction here is decadent: "fields lie stricken / By grey December's breath," "growths that sicken - And die for fear of death." Also decadent is the association of love with suffering suggested by "thrills for love, spring-stricken / And pierced with April's breath."

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Stanza four returns to thoughts of the sea where the effects of time which have been seen on land will not occur. Thus, the speaker once more rejoices at the unchanging, timeless aspect of the sea. The sharp wind of November merely adds to the "glowing sense of glee" of the sea for, whether the winds be those of summer or winter, "South-wester or north-easter," they bring joy and freedom to the sea. There is once more an impression of decadence in the diction describing the action of the wind on the sea, linking "stings and spurs" with "feed and feast her / With glowing sense of glee."

Contributing to a tone of joy and vitality are the rapid rhythm of the meter and the rhyme scheme of A, B, a, b, a, b, A, B which creates a light, singsong effect; the repetition of the same word to end lines one and seven, two and eight contributes to this very rhythmic effect.

In section four, the speaker has turned to the land only to emphasize the evident mutability of the beauty apparent in the November scene in contrast to the timelessness of the sea. He continues the joyous tone by recalling that, though the beauty of the land fades, it will be renewed in spring. Nevertheless, it is to the unchanging, free, and joyous sea that he returns.

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Section five returns to the dreamy, languorous tone and the unreal yet sensuous quality of the swimmer's experience. This section uses the symbolist techniques of evocation of experience and mood through imprecise, suggestive diction and stress on the contribution of the rhythmical and sound qualities. There is, also, as in the first two sections, a longing to escape to this world forever, combined now with an awareness of the brevity of the present experience.

Stanza one emphasizes the dreamlike quality of the experience. The incantatory effect of the repetition, "A dream, a dream, is it all--," the insistent repetition of the question, "A day-born dream . . . --no more?" the diction, "marvel moulded with sleep," "cloudlike," "slumber," "sleep" --all combine to convey this dreamlike quality. Stanza two evokes the sensuous quality of the experience also, using such images as "cold grey pillow" and "soft swell." The swimmer's desire to make the experience timeless concludes the stanza: "And wish the wheel of the world to stand." Stanza three continues to express the desire to capture the fleeting moment forever and yet the awareness that it must pass: ". . . too soon will a dark day sever / The sea-bird's wing from the sea-wave's foam." A melancholy note is introduced in the awareness that this experience must end. This

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awareness of the transitory nature of this life is a characteristic element of symbolist and aesthetic poetry. Stanza four again recalls the dreamlike quality of the experience, but seeks consolation in the permanent quality of the remembrance of this moment. The speaker turns once more to the land as a symbol of the transitory, "Not all the joy and not all the glory / Must fade as leaves when the woods wax hoary." In contrast to the beauty of the land, both the remembrance of this moment and the sea, itself, remain.

The form of section five is almost the same as that of section one. There are four stanzas; the rhyme scheme of stanza one is a, b, a, b, c, c, c, b, of the following three stanzas a, b, a, b, c, c, a, b. As with section one, the regularity of meter and the slow movement resulting from the preponderance of long vowels and feminine rhymes, contribute to the dreamy, languorous tone and evocation of the swimmer's sensations.

The entire poem depends very much on the symbolist method. It is through imprecise, suggestive diction and use of the resources of sound and rhythm that the emotions and sensations of the swimmer are evoked. There is no didacticism in the poem, but only a concern with the dreamlike experience through which the speaker escapes temporarily into a timeless, unchanging world.

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Under the title of the poem, "A Swimmer's Dream," is printed the date November 4, 1889. Letters of Swinburne written at this time demonstrate that the poem is based on a genuine experience of the poet and his significant reaction to it. A letter to his sister, Alice Swinburne, dated October 30, 1889, contains the following:

I hope you--even in London--are enjoying this divine return of summer in which we are basking here. To-day when I was in the sea it was like swimming into heaven--the glorious sunlight on and in the splendid broad rolling waves made one feel for the minute as if one was in another and better world--and it was so warm and soft and mild (with this lovely west wind which the sea here always wants to make it perfect) that one would have taken it for midsummer. And then this afternoon the wind grew stronger and made it so magnificent to walk by and look at as it came hurling in and making cascades in the sunlight over the breakwaters, that I think I was very good not to go in again.<sup>1</sup>

Here Swinburne speaks of the same feeling when swimming which he expresses in his poem, "as if one was in another and better world."

A further letter to Isabel Swinburne, dated November 11, 1889, expresses once more Swinburne's delight in swimming and in the beauty of the sea:

And yesterday, after our long walk that took up all the morning, of course I had to get my plunge at 4 P.M. or thereabouts, just before the sun took its plunge behind a great three-block rampart

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. V, p. 274.

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of cloud. I saw I could only be just in time--and I ran like a boy, tore off my clothes, and hurled myself into the water. And it was but for a few minutes--but I was in Heaven! The whole sea was literally golden as well as green--it was liquid and living sunlight in which one lived and moved and had one's being. And to feel that in deep water is to feel--as long as one is swimming out, if only a minute or two--as if one was in another world of life, and one far more glorious than even Dante ever dreamed of in his Paradise.<sup>1</sup>

Further affirmation that "A Swimmer's Dream" is, in fact, a result of Swinburne's own experience of reality may be found in a letter addressed to Edwin Harrison and dated February 5, 1890:

. . . As for swimming, if you look at the "New Review" of January, you will get a faint idea--but as good as I can give--of what it is like--in November--not exactly the month in which a man over fifty might be expected to enjoy it. But it is no affectation, for the poem was really begun in my head a little way off shore, out of pure delight in the sense of the sea.<sup>2</sup>

The poem "A Swimmer's Dream" was published in The New Review, January, 1890,<sup>3</sup> thus confirming that this is the poem to which Swinburne referred as, "really begun in my head, a little way off shore, out of pure delight in the sense of the sea."

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. V, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Vol. V, p. 282.

<sup>3</sup>Works, Bibliography, Vol. XX, p. 501.

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These letters are significant, also, in pointing out an erroneous assumption by Chew that poems written at this late date in Swinburne's life must refer to memories of earlier days. In a brief reference to this poem, Chew remarks, ". . . 'A Swimmer's Dream' in which he associates the memories of far-past swimming days with like delights which yet remain."<sup>1</sup> The swimming days are not, as these letters of Swinburne clearly demonstrate, "far-past."

"The Ballad of Melicertes"<sup>2</sup> was written in memory of Théodore de Banville. Banville was known to Swinburne as early as 1861 when, in his essay on Baudelaire published in the Spectator, Swinburne made reference to the poetry of Banville.<sup>3</sup> Banville's Petit Traité de Poésie Française encouraged the return of poets to such old fixed forms of verse as the ballade, the rondeau, and the triolet.<sup>4</sup> It was particularly fitting that Swinburne, very much interested in and influenced by French poetry, be asked by a French magazine to write a poem honouring Théodore de Banville, following

<sup>1</sup>Chew, Swinburne, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 155-156. See Appendix A, p. 337, for this poem.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter Two, Section One, p. 50 of this thesis.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter Two, Section One, pp. 48-51 of this thesis.

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Banville's death in March, 1891. "The Ballad of Melicertes" was first published in a French periodical, La Conque, in June, 1891, the first year of the magazine's publication. Swinburne's poem was written at the request of the editor, Pierre Louÿs. In a letter to Louÿs, Swinburne referred to the poem he was writing for the magazine: "J'aurais voulu vous envoyer une ballade anglaise (que j'ai nommé 'The Ballad of Melicertes'<sup>1</sup>) sur l'illustre poete que nous pleurons--le Simonide<sup>2</sup> de la France qui a dérobé au Banville de la Grèce son surnom divin de Mélicerte."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Melicertes was a figure in Greek mythology. He was the child of Ino, sister of Semele. Zeus gave his and Semele's son, Dionysus, into her care. The jealous Hera drove Ino mad and she leaped into the sea with her own child, Melicertes. Melicertes was deified as the sea god, Palaemon. Paul Harvey, compiler and editor, The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 265, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Simonides of Ceos (556-468 B.C.) was a great lyric poet of Greece. Harvey, The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature, p. 396. In his ballade Swinburne refers to Banville as Simonides of Ceos.

<sup>3</sup>Letters, Vol. VI, p. 7. In a footnote to this letter Lang notes that Pierre Louÿs ". . . in 1891 founded La Conque, a periodical wholly in the mode of the nineties, yellow cover and all." This indicates Swinburne's association with the decadent poets of France in the nineties, who had requested his poem for their new periodical. The English decadent poet John Gray (1866-1934) dedicated his poem "On a Picture" to Pierre Louÿs. Oscar Wilde sent his French version of Salomé to Louÿs for correction. Thus Louÿs is a French poet, writer, and editor who had close associations with the English Decadents of the 1890's, as well as the French Decadents.

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This ballade rejoices in the permanence of poetry and honours the poet who continues to live in his works, and therefore "casts off death." The tone is hopeful and joyous.

In the first stanza, death bids heaven take back as shining stars the souls of those whose light brought something of divinity to this world. Their fame shines on, deathless. The poet, Banville, was Simonides of Ceos returned, but he has gone once more; his fame is a continuation of his life here. The second stanza adds a recollection of much which this poet's lyrics contained: joy, sorrow, laughter, delight in the sea, a mother's love. As a sea-shell retains the music of the sea so the lyrics of the poet retain his soul.<sup>1</sup> The poet recalls in the third stanza that he and Banville had together mourned Gautier.<sup>2</sup> Now he stands alone at Banville's tomb. But there is no gloom here, rather light and the incense of love. The envoy addresses Banville as "Prince of song more sweet than honey." He is both

<sup>1</sup>Swinburne noted in his letter to Pierre Louÿs this use of the metaphor of the sea-shell in the poem to be published in La Conque: "Voici ma ballade de Melicerte. . . . j'espère que la métaphore de la conque vous semblera juste--et convenable." Letters, Vol. VI, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Swinburne was one of the two poets of England invited to contribute to a memorial volume for Gautier, generally recognized as a foremost influence on the aesthetic and decadent movements, and had contributed, among other poems, his sonnet on Gautier's Mademoiselle de Maupin, "This is the golden book of spirit and sense."

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mourned and hailed, not only by France but by strangers, all united now as brothers in honouring him.

Light is the main image. In stanza one the poet's soul is seen as a star, having brought light to earth, now returned to heaven. The fact that the poet, through his work, still lives is conveyed by such words as "burn and bloom," "fames that shine," "Star by star," "sun by sun," "quicken, kindles." This same emphasis on light as a symbol of continued life is continued in stanza three; the poet mourns at the tomb, yet here there is no gloom, but "Only light more bright than gold of the inmost mine." The negative is used repetitively to insist upon the absence of death and its concomitants: "no breath of death," "no shadow of gloom," "Not the darkling stream," "Not the hour that smites and severs," "Not the night subduing light." Synaesthesia, a technique characteristic of aesthetic and symbolist poetry, is used to describe the sensations evoked by Banville's poetry; for example, "Sorrow soft as sleep and laughter bright as wine / Flushed and filled with fragrant fire his lyric line," and "song more sweet than honey."

Classical allusions contribute to the effectiveness of the poem. The association of Banville with Simonides of Ceos suggests Banville's classical interests as well as his greatness as a lyric poet. "Stygian ford," referring to the

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river Styx of the Greek mythological underworld, is one of a series of images associated with death in the third stanza. Melicertes, another Greek mythological figure, was deified; the refrain implies that Banville, inasmuch as he is immortalized through his poetry, is also deified: "Life so sweet as this . . . dies and casts off death."

Throughout the poem, the tone is joyous and hopeful, as the poem rejects the darkness of night and death, while asserting that the brilliant light and sensuous beauty of Banville's poetry continue his life here.

It is appropriate that Swinburne chose the ballade, one of the old fixed forms advocated and defined by Banville, as the form for this poem. The ballade form as defined by Banville<sup>1</sup> is closely adhered to. The three stanzas of ten lines have the identical rhyme scheme: a, b, a, b, b, c, c, d, c, d. The five-line envoy rhymes with the last five lines of each stanza: c, c, d, c, d. In the envoy, Banville is addressed as, "Prince of song more sweet than honey." The refrain, "Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death," forms the final line of each stanza and of the envoy. It carries the motif of the ballade: the poet, by the beauty

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter Three, Section Five, pp. 159-160, discussion of "The Ballade of Sark," for reference to Banville's definition of the ballade.

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of his poetry, continues to live. Each time that the refrain is repeated it contributes in a somewhat different way to the theme which is the permanence of poetry and, therefore, of the poet. As in "The Ballad of Sark" Swinburne does not consistently use the caesura after the fourth syllable in each line.

"Music: An Ode"<sup>1</sup> was written for the opening of a new building of the Royal College of Music. A small number of copies were printed in 1892. The poem was set to music for Soprano Solo, Chorus, and Orchestra by Charles Wood in 1893, and was then reprinted, with the music, in pamphlet form. It was also published in Astrophel and Other Poems (1894).<sup>2</sup> The fact that Swinburne was asked to write a poem for such a public occasion demonstrates that he was still, in 1892, very much a publicly recognized figure.

The theme of the poem is music as the source of life in the world and in the spirit of man. The tone is exalted and joyous. Major elements of symbolist poetry are evident: musical structure and emphasis on musical sound patterns,

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 244-245. See Appendix A, p. 338, for this poem.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Vol. XX, Bibliography, pp. 251-252. See Appendix C of this thesis, pp. 367-369, for this writer's enquiry regarding the musical score, and reply from The British Museum, London, England.

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use of suggestive rather than explicit diction and imagery, and careful craftsmanship in the strict adherence to the form of the Horatian ode. The ode is a particularly suitable poetic form to use here. Originally a Greek form used in dramatic poetry, the ode was choric and was accompanied by music, just as Swinburne intended with this poem. Also, an ode is dignified and sincere in language, imaginative and intellectual in tone; it is generally a poem of a public nature, solemn in diction, and of a stately gravity. Thus it was a suitable form for the occasion and for the nature of the poem Swinburne was writing, as he intended to give honour to music on a public occasion. The type of ode used is Horatian:<sup>1</sup> one stanza type is used throughout. There are three stanzas of five lines. The rhyme scheme is similar in each: a, a, b, b, a; c, c, d, d, c; f, f, g, g, f.

The poem opens with a question: was it light or music that brought life to the world and to the souls of men? Surely it was music. The same theme is reiterated in the second stanza. Music is associated with light and is called "Sister of sunrise"; her smile on man, as dawn, was the herald of life to man, freeing him from bondage to nature and time by bringing life to his soul. The third stanza amplifies

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<sup>1</sup>Thrall and Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature, pp. 327-328.

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the same theme: man, hearing the sounds of dawn and noon and night, is awakened to the beauty around him; his soul comes alive.

The theme, the life giving effect of music, has a universal significance. Throughout the poem, music and light are equated. This correlation is introduced in the first line: "Was it light that spake from the darkness, or music that shone from the word," that is, did light speak or music shine. The final line of the poem asserts the same idea: ". . . the light and the darkness of earth were as chords in tune."

Assonance and alliteration contribute to the melody. For example, in line four, "Bound fast round with the fetters of flesh, and blinded with light that dies," assonance is present in the "ou" sound of "Bound" and "round," in the "e" sound of "fetters," "flesh," in the "i" sound of "blinded," "light," "dies." In the same line the "f" alliterates in "fast," "fetters," "flesh," the "b" in "Bound," and "blinded." The balanced structure of many lines, such as line four, quoted above, gives a repetitive, rhythmic quality which contributes to an incantatory tone. The extensive alliteration and assonance also contribute to this tone.

The language has Biblical overtones, in keeping with the exalted theme and tone. Such expressions as "Was it

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light that spake, "Morning spake, and he heard," and the inversion of "Kept for him not silence" have echoes of Biblical diction. In stanza two, which emphasizes the sense of release man achieved through music, "thrall," "slave," "serf," and "bondman" are used to describe man's state before music released his spirit and made him free.

This ode has the structure of music. Rather than logical progression of thought or feeling, there is repetition of the same theme in a different way in each of the three stanzas, in the same way that the theme in a musical composition is developed. This structure, along with the musical quality of sound achieved through rhythm, alliteration and assonance, results in a poem in which the qualities of music play a prominent part. Affiliation with music is particularly suitable to the theme of the poem, music as the source of life; to the occasion for which the poem was written, the opening of a building of the Royal College of Music; and to the fact that this poem was intended to be set to music. Affiliation with music, stressed by Verlaine in "Art Poétique," in which he said, "Music before everything," has been noted also in Baudelaire's "Harmonie du Soir."<sup>1</sup>

Synaesthesia, one of the main techniques of symbolist poets, is a primary technique in this poem in which light

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter Two, Section Three, pp. 70-77.

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and music are interrelated by the description in line one of light speaking and music shining, in line two of the "sound of the sun," in line fifteen of "light and darkness . . . as chords." In keeping with the symbolist method, the diction and imagery are suggestive rather than explicit; the vitalizing effect of music upon the spirit of man is expressed through references to "light," "sunrise," "bird," and "moon" without any explicit pictures being painted or any specific sounds described.

A political topic of much interest to Swinburne came once again to the fore when, in 1893, a second Home Rule bill was introduced into Parliament. It passed the House of Commons but was rejected by the House of Lords. Swinburne again supported the Unionists opposing Home Rule for Ireland. At the request of Ernest Dowden he wrote a song, "The Union."<sup>1</sup> The poem was published in The Nineteenth Century, May, 1893 and reprinted in Astrophel and Other Poems (1894).

Correspondence of Swinburne with Dowden indicates that "The Union" was written for propaganda purposes. In a letter to Dowden dated April 18, 1893, Swinburne said: "I have tried to make the song as simple, straightforward,

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 133-134. See Appendix A, p. 339, for this poem.

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and easily singable as I could; and you will see that I have been mindful of your desire that it should be 'a song for Irish Unionists--not exclusively Ulster men'."<sup>1</sup> In the same letter, Swinburne offered to alter lines if so desired. In a second letter dated April 21, 1893, to Dowden, he referred to a change suggested by Dowden to eliminate a line which could be considered offensive to Roman Catholic supporters of the Unionist stand in Ireland. Swinburne agreed completely with the objection made and replaced the line, "Dark as role or creed of priest" with "Dense as round a death-struck beast,"<sup>2</sup> saying:

Let me say that nothing could give me more pain than to know that I had given cause of offence to any Roman Catholic loyalist. Indeed I cannot adequately express my admiration for the noble independence and conscientious dignity of the position they have taken up in face of the attitude assumed by such priests and bishops of their Church as those of whom--and of whom alone--I was thinking when I wrote the words to which objection has naturally and rightly been taken.<sup>3</sup>

That Swinburne has been placed among the popular political rhetorical poets of England can be seen by the following statement of Dowden in a letter to Gosse: "I wrote

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. VI, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>This alteration is noted by Lang, editor, Letters, Vol. VI, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

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to Swinburne, Kipling, and Alfred Austin for songs for unionists in Ireland. Swinburne at once sent the song, but required that the music should be by Sullivan, who could not be brought to give it."<sup>1</sup>

The first stanza asserts that God bid this union to exist. The description of the union as "Three in one, but one in three" in line one is an unusual application to the British union of the terminology commonly used to describe the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The second stanza refers to those who oppose the union as "ravens," "hounds," and "wolves"; this is reminiscent of Anglo-Saxon descriptions of ravens, wolves and eagles which hovered ominously over battlefields. The third stanza asserts that Ireland's own sons alone can wrong her, suggesting, of course, the Irish who seek Home Rule. The final stanza asserts that all who wish the best for Ireland must guard the Commonwealth from disaster.

The rhyme scheme is a, a, a, b, c, c, c, b. The lines are trimeter and tetrameter. The repetitive rhyme, the short lines, and the feminine rhyme in the "c" lines contribute to the sense of movement and rhythm of a song. The

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. VI, p. 58, footnote 1. An effort has been made to trace whether or not there ever was a musical score for this poem by Sullivan. The Music Room of The British Museum was unable to trace one. Letters to this effect appear in Appendix C of this thesis, pp. 367-369.

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simple diction and repetitious nature of the poem's statement, along with this songlike rhythm, make it suitable as a rallying song, which Swinburne's letters indicate as its purpose.

"The Palace of Pan"<sup>1</sup> is a descriptive nature poem published in 1894. It presents the glories of nature in September and their effect upon the perceiver. In expressing the mysterious effect of nature, Swinburne makes use of techniques characteristic of the Symbolists: an incantatory tone achieved through rhythm and sound, and evocative diction.

The first stanza establishes a mood of exultation. September, "all glorious with gold," more beautiful than summer or spring, is compared to a radiantly attired king. In a sustained metaphor initiated in the second stanza, the pine forest is described as a temple, in which the tall pines are the columns, the top branches meeting to form a roof. The silence, fragrance, and shadows evoke a sense of silent worship and an atmosphere of peace. The sun is described as resembling a bird caught in the toils of the branches, the sunlight shining through the branches to the ground as shreds of its golden plumage, like flakes of gold. This setting is

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 117-119. See Appendix A, pp. 340-341, for this poem.

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a secluded, natural temple built over centuries by mysterious, unknown hands. Contributing to its grandeur is the immensity indicated by the description of the transepts extending for miles. The description of the setting as a temple contributes to a mood of silent, hushed worship.

The effect on the experiencer forms the central concern of the last five stanzas. Though nothing can be seen of the god, Pan, his presence can be felt by the mind, awakened by the atmosphere here of worship and wonder to feelings of "rapture" and "passionate awe," to awareness of a great, earthly god whose footsteps echo in volcanic chasms. The spirit of man is captivated by the spell of this great god, until man and god seem to be united, as the final stanza expresses:

The spirit made one with the spirit whose breath  
 Makes noon in the woodland sublime  
 Abides as entranced in a presence that saith  
 Things loftier than life and serener than death,  
 Triumphant and silent as time.

In form, the poem consists of thirteen five-line stanzas. Each stanza has the rhyme scheme a, b, a, a, b, with the "a" lines tetrameter and the "b" lines trimeter. The meter is primarily anapestic with, generally, an iambic foot beginning the "a" lines--first, third and fourth lines of each stanza. The regularity of rhythm combines with the use of much alliteration and assonance to give a musical

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quality to the sound, an incantatory rhythm in keeping with the mood being created of a spell, as man's spirit is enraptured and entranced by the felt presence of the god of nature. This use of a magical, incantatory tone is a characteristic of much symbolist poetry from the time of Baudelaire. The diction is precise in the description of nature but becomes vague and imprecise in evoking the mood of the experiencer, with use of such imprecise words as "rapture," "passionate awe," "spell," "serene," "entranced." Evocative rather than precise diction is also a quality of symbolist poetry as it attempts to express the essence of the experiencer rather than exterior appearances only. As with much symbolist poetry, Swinburne is here seeking to catch the mysterious, otherworldly atmosphere through evocative diction and the incantatory tone created by rhythm, sound, and repetition.

This poem also possesses romantic characteristics: detailed nature description, emphasis on imagination rather than intellect, and subjectivity. The experiencing of a felt presence in nature is Wordsworthian, the final stanza expressing an experience somewhat similar to Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey":

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

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Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,  
 And rolls through all things.<sup>1</sup>

(11.93-102)

Associated with the experience of a felt presence in nature in "The Palace of Pan" is the experiencer's reference to this presence in nature as that of Pan, an earthly god, described as "godhead terrene and Titanic." The experience is in accord with Swinburne's naturalistic philosophy as expressed in much earlier poetry, particularly in the volume Songs Before Sunrise (1871), and most specifically expressed in "Hertha." "Hertha" celebrates the earth as the force inherent in nature which is the source of all forms of life, including man. In this poem Hertha, Germanic goddess of the earth, speaks:

I am that which began;  
 Out of me the years roll;  
 Out of me God and man;  
 I am equal and whole;  
 God changes, and man, and the form of them  
 bodily; I am the soul.<sup>2</sup>

Hertha makes clear the relationship between man and external nature; all, including man, are her children and, therefore,

<sup>1</sup>William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey." The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, London, Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup>Works, Vol. II, p. 137, ll. 1-4.

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brothers. Hertha addresses man, "Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou?"<sup>1</sup> Beach states in discussing Swinburne's attitude to nature in Songs Before Sunrise (1871), "He [Swinburne] apparently takes for granted the derivation of man by process of evolution from the substance of the material earth."<sup>2</sup> Although in "The Palace of Pan" Swinburne is not explaining his naturalistic philosophy as he did in "Hertha," the basic philosophy reflected, particularly in the last stanza, is the same. Pan, rather than Hertha, is the earth god, a god of vast consequence "whose breath / Makes noon in the woodland sublime," "a presence that saith / Things loftier than life and serener than death." In "The Palace of Pan" the experiencing of the sublimity of nature, its beauty and its vastness, evokes in the experiencer emotions of wonder, awe, and serenity, leading to his awareness that the spirit of man, his own spirit, is one with the spirit which inhabits and gives vitality to these woods.

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. II, p. 139, l. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Warren Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century Poetry, New York, Russell and Russell, 1936, republished 1966, p. 455.

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The theme of "A Dirge"<sup>1</sup> is sorrow at the death of a friend. The title sets the melancholy tone. This song mourns Philip Bourke Marston, a poet who had been a close personal friend of Swinburne for many years.

The sincerity of the emotion expressed can be appreciated by reading the following excerpts from a letter which Swinburne wrote to his mother, expressing the significant reaction he experienced to the death of his friend. In this letter Swinburne speaks of his "beloved friend Philip Marston" who has "passed from a life of such suffering and sorrow as very few can have known to a happy one."<sup>2</sup> Swinburne speaks particularly in this letter about the great gifts with which Marston was born, "a beautiful gift of poetry, and a most affectionate nature, and the most beautiful face I ever saw in a man,"<sup>3</sup> and the great sorrows Marston had to suffer: blinded in infancy, losing through death the beautiful young woman engaged to marry him and then the sister who had devoted herself to him. Swinburne's poem refers to Marston as a poet and as a man required to carry many burdens in his life.

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, p. 161. See Appendix A, p. 342, for this poem.

<sup>2</sup>Letters, Vol. V, pp. 181-182. The entire text of this letter appears in Appendix B of this thesis, pp. 355-356.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

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"A Dirge" contains aesthetic and symbolist elements. The tone is primarily melancholy and is compellingly introduced by the first line, "A bell tolls in my heart." The entire first stanza develops this symbol of the mournful, tolling bell which is no longer heard by the ear but echoes in the heart. The use of the bell to evoke the speaker's mournful mood is in keeping with the symbolist use of a concrete object to evoke interior mood. This line, "A bell tolls in my heart," is reminiscent of Paul Verlaine's "Tears fall within my heart, / As rain upon the town" in an unnamed poem from Romances sans Paroles, 1874.<sup>1</sup>

Though the lines of the stanza are short, generally only three feet, the abundance of long vowels creates a slow movement in keeping with the mournful tone and the image of the tolling bell. This tolling movement is augmented by the rhyme scheme of the stanza. With only two rhymes in the six line stanza: a, b, b, a, a, b, the recurrence of the same rhyme has a chiming effect, echoing the sound of the tolling bell.

The cause of sorrow is introduced in the second stanza with reference in the first line to the "dear dead

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Verlaine, Romances sans Paroles, 1874, translated by Ernest Dowson, 1891, reprinted in Engleberg, The Symbolist Poem, p. 154.

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singer." The speaker reflects that for the mourned poet grief is now over, but he, as mourner, still sorrows. His mixed feelings are reflected in his ambiguous use of "burden," implying both "burden" as the cares and troubles of life and "burden" as a refrain or song. Thus, in saying "The burden is now not thine / That grief bade sound . . .," the speaker expresses regret that the mourned poet is no longer singing his songs; he is also implying consolation that the "burden," or cares and sorrows of life, are "now not thine." The symbol of night is used to express life with its sorrows, whereas for the poet who has died "morrow / Has risen"; death has brought a more hopeful time, ending his cares and sorrows. The tone is mixed; the speaker is melancholy at his own loss, yet at the same time aware that death has brought an end of grief for the one he mourns.

Stanza three continues the concept that for the mourned one the time of sorrow is now over. Again the ambiguous "burden" is used, reflecting in its double meaning the mixed feelings of the speaker; however, a more hopeful aspect of the speaker's feelings is expressed in "The winter is over and past / Whose end thou wast fain to see." Here "winter" symbolizes as did "night" in the preceding stanza, life with its suffering. Surely then, the speaker says, as he ends the stanza with a question, cannot my sorrow bring

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some measure of comfort, bringing as it does the realization that your sorrow is now ended? These lines, "Shall sorrow not comfort me / That is thine no longer--at last?" form the first direct statement in the poem; thus far the speaker's feelings had been expressed through symbols: bell, night, morrow, and winter. The slow movement, derived primarily from the preponderance of long vowels, continues throughout the second and third stanzas, contributing to the doleful, melancholy tone which still outweighs the consoling note also present in these two stanzas.

The final stanza concludes with the hope that death will bring some comfort to the dead poet in the same way that those left to mourn derive some comfort from dreams. Here the day-night symbols introduced in stanza two are continued. There is compression of meaning in the final lines to which the ambiguous use of "night" and "day" contribute. In the fourth and fifth lines of the stanza, "That night of the day might borrow / Such comfort as dreams lend sorrow," "night" is death borrowing from "day" that is, life, the consolation that the living mourners achieve through dreams. The final, "Death gives thee at last good day" returns to the concept of death as bringing "good day" a welcome greeting, a release from the sufferings or "night" which were this man's life.

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The repetitive rhyme scheme of each stanza echoes the sound of the tolling bell throughout the poem, so that this image and the mournful tone introduced with it in the first line remain with the reader. The sound qualities and symbols--bell, day, night, winter--effectively combine in expression of theme and evocation of mood.

This poem expresses deep personal feeling at the death of a friend. Nevertheless, it expresses a universal human emotion, a response to death felt by all men at some time, a mourning sense of loss which outweighs, emotionally, the logical awareness that, for the one who has suffered, death brings release. The melancholy tone and the awareness that in life one escapes some of the sorrows of the world through dreams are characteristic of Aesthetes, Decadents, and Symbolists. The bell has been mentioned by Balakian as one of a number of musical instruments used by the Symbolists "to communicate the range of delicate emotional innuendoes on the part of the symbolist poet."<sup>1</sup> In this poem, night and winter also are used to reflect the time of sorrow and grief. The ambiguous use of "burden" contributes to the complexity of emotion which is being expressed. Symbolists

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<sup>1</sup>Balakian, The Symbolist Movement, p. 108.

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seek, through symbols, to suggest the mysterious or the inexpressible. In this poem, the poet successfully evokes the mixed emotions of the mourner, as he strives for consolation in reflecting upon the mysterious realm of death. In this poem Swinburne has used a rigidly fixed form, a six-line stanza form, a trimeter line of iambic and anapestic feet, and a rhyme scheme of a, b, b, a, a, b. He effectively combines rhythm and rhyme to contribute to the evocation of mood and expression of theme. This skilful use of a fixed form is typical of the Aesthetic movement.

Another poem in the same volume which expresses delight in external nature is "Loch Torridon."<sup>1</sup> This poem is narrative: it relates a walk toward the coast as night falls, a vision of the waters from a window at dawn, the experience of swimming and then journeying in a small boat through the waves. These various scenes are described and attention is focussed on the narrator's reaction to all of these situations. Thus "Loch Torridon" includes narrative, descriptive, and lyrical elements. The stanzas are of varying length, meter, and rhyme scheme depending upon the tone, which

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 111-117. See Appendix A, pp. 343-347, for this poem.

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varies with the experience of the moment and the speaker's reaction to it.

The first stanza describes the coming of nightfall as the narrator and his companion walk through the moors seeking, but not finding, shelter. The stanza consists of thirteen lines varying in length from three to six feet. The rhyme scheme is a, a, b, c, c, b, d, d, e, d, e, c, c. The meter is iambic. The meter is in keeping with the effect being created. For example, in line two there is a variation from the regular iambic: "Stars hurrying forth on stars, as snows on snows." The result is increased emphasis on the first syllable of "hurrying," then the added unaccented syllable causes a faster movement, imitating the hurrying which is being described. Also there is use of enjambement to extend the movement into line three, without any complete pause until the end of line three. This, combined with the repeated "stars" and repeated "snows," and the simile comparing the stars to flakes of snow, emphasizes the vast number of stars which appear so quickly. Line five is a very short line, "Scarce traversed ere the day"; this also is a run-on line and the thought completed by the one word, "Sank" (i.6). Here again the meter fits the mood, the idea conveyed in "Scarce" is that of brevity, which combines with the concept of hurrying in the preceding verses. The poet is implying

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that the sun has sunk all too quickly and that they are hurrying to reach their destination. The shortness of line five which is a trimeter line contributes to the idea of brevity, of the time having passed more quickly than expected; so that the travelers find themselves, now, unexpectedly, in darkness.

The choice of diction contributes to this impression: "Hurrying," "haste," and "speed"; these words are ascribed to the stars, but they also, indirectly, reflect the mood of the speaker. In much the same way, the day that has passed is described as "blithe and strange and strenuous" (i.13); these words, too, reflect the speaker's own feelings. Through description of nature the speaker expresses his sense of haste now, at nightfall, and his delight at his outing. The description of the district in which the travelers are walking is sensuous; for example, "soft Maree's dim quivering breast" (i.8). "Vague" is a suitable word used to describe the miles traveled since it suggests, not only the indefinite number of miles, but also, with the coming of night, the vague or hazy appearance of the road and of everything about the travelers. The tone of this stanza is happy and light, expressing delight in nature.

Stanza two describes the steep path the travelers follow downward in the darkness until they sense the presence

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of the sea. This realization is something felt, not seen, in the darkness. The tone of stanza two is again happy and tranquil, with a certain otherworldly or unreal quality conveyed in the awareness of something which cannot be seen. The traveler states, "We felt but saw not what the hills would keep / Sacred awhile" (ii.26-27), and describes the sea which he knows is there but cannot see as "sweet and strange as heaven might be" (ii.29).

Stanzas three, four, and five continue the description of the speaker's feelings in the silence of the night; the sense of delight evoked by the silence, and by the fragrance of the sea which, in the darkness, tells the travelers of its nearness. They hear the soft sound of the rippling waters as their path brings them to the shelter they were seeking.

Stanza six describes night as the traveler sleeps. The mood is dreamy, almost entranced. In the stillness of the night he is aware of the silent, unseen presence of mountain, stars, and sea. The imagery is tactile: "Skies and waters were soft and deep:" (vi.86), "soft night" (vi.94), "touch of the sea's breath" (vi.96). Synaesthesia is used; for example, "soft as darkness and keen as light" (vi.100). The diction is imprecise, with words such as "shadow," "soundless," "sense," "shade," and "soft." The

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rhythm is incantatory and extremely musical with much use of alliteration, particularly of "s" and "sh," and assonance of long "o" sounds. The incantatory effect is accentuated by the repetitive structure; for example, five lines begin similarly: "All night long" (vi.85), "All above us" (vi.89), "All around us" (vi.91), "All unseen" (vi.95), and "All unheard" (vi.97). The effect is lulling and hypnotic, in keeping with the strange, unreal world between dreams and sleep which is being described, a world in which the unseen presence of the sea still seems to be felt. The incantatory effect produced by rhythm, sound, and repetition; the imprecise, evocative diction; and the use of synaesthesia are symbolist techniques, suitably used here to evoke the strange, unreal world between sleeping and waking.

There is a startling, abrupt change of mood with stanza seven, which describes early morning as the traveler looks out the window at the scene, then as he swims in the sea. The immediate, sharp, kinetic image which opens the stanza introduces the complete change of tone: "And the dawn leapt in at my casement: and there, as I rose, at my feet" (vii.101). The diction of this stanza is concrete; the verbs are kinetic. The most forceful image is that of the chain of the night broken, thus setting free the hills and sky. The waves are alive as the swimmer leaps into them finding them

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"sweeter to swim in than air" (vii.115). His excitement and joy are repeatedly ascribed to the waves, which are described as "live wide wavelets that shuddered with joy" (vii.106), "panting and laughing with light" (vii.107), and "kindled and stung to delight" (vii.108). The tone is joyous, with a much livelier, excited joy than in any previous stanzas, expressing now the traveler's delight in his early morning experience of the sea.

Emphasis in the final stanza is upon the grandeur and sublimity of the sea. The poem concludes with a description of the same scene, now seen from a small boat in which the traveler passes through a cleft in the rocks into the sea. The sea itself is boundless, a vast kingdom, another world.

This poem reflects a romantic delight in external nature. The tone throughout is joyous, at times carefree, at other times more quiet and dreamy, and toward the end excited, and, finally, exalted by the grandeur of the sea. There is great variety in rhythm and meter, in keeping with the varying tone. Stanza length varies from four to thirty-two lines, meter from one to six feet. The rhyme scheme varies greatly; in several stanzas rhyming couplets are used; yet in others a complex rhyme scheme is used; for example, in stanza one the rhyme scheme is a, a, b, c, c, b, d, d, e, d, e, c, c.

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"Loch Torridon" is aesthetic in its romantic delight in nature, concern with craftsmanship, emphasis on the musical quality of words, non-didacticism, and concentration on the sensuous beauty of nature.

"Nympholept"<sup>1</sup> expresses the mixture of rapture and fear which fills the speaker on a warm, silent, breathless summer noon in the wood. In every aspect of nature the speaker feels the presence of the god Pan; and the awareness of the presence of this god fills him with delight, awe, and fear. The tone is at times hushed, languorous, admiring, fearful, and exalted.

Of this poem, one critic remarks:

Metrically the poem is as admirable as it is in its emotion and exaltation: for Swinburne has managed to convey in harmonies that are clangorous and almost strident an effect after which other poets (Mallarmé, for example) have groped hesitatingly in faltering rhythms and images suggesting in tones barely above a whisper.<sup>2</sup>

Swinburne, himself, has referred to "Nympholept" as one of the best things he has done.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 68-81.

<sup>2</sup>Chew, Swinburne, p. 215.

<sup>3</sup>Letters, Vol. VI, p. 153. In a letter to William Sharp dated October 6, 1901, Swinburne says, "I am pleased to find the Nympholept in a leading place, [in the volume Lyrical Poems, edited by Sharp] as I think it one of the best and most representative things I ever did."

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In style this poem is symbolist. Rather than precise description or imagery, vague, suggestive, sensuous imagery is used purposefully so that the description of nature evokes emotion. The poet makes considerable use of the musical quality of words to evoke mood. The poem is non-didactic, expressing the sensuous beauty of nature and the intense emotional response of the experiencer to the sensuous natural setting.

The setting is established in the first stanza: the silent, sunlit, summer noon in the woods. The final line of this stanza establishes the speaker's mood, "Ah, why should an hour that is heaven for an hour pass hence?" (1.7). The god, Pan, is first referred to in the second stanza, as the speaker states that he would not dare sleep lest "God" be angered that his gift of such a perfect moment is disdained. In its effect upon nature, noon is seen as surpassing any other time of day; the whole wood seems to be imbued with the presence of this god. His presence is conveyed through sense impressions: the perfume of the earth, the silence, the motionless leaves, the light and warmth. The speaker conveys his own sensations as he feels this presence of Pan: sensations that combine delight with terror, awe with joy, love with fear. The poem is directed primarily to conveying

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these sensations and emotions. Rhythm, imagery, sound, and diction combine to achieve this evocation of mood.

The imagery appeals to all the senses, but the images are not precise. There is no detailed picture painted of the forest. There are many references to flowers and plants, but in such unspecific evocative phrases as "fervid and silent flowers" (1.45), "dense ferns deepen" (1.69), "the moss glows warm" (1.69). The most specific picture is that in stanza ten of the tall, slender firs whose branches form a roof screening the floor of the wood from the sun. There are no references to colours. There is appeal to the olfactory sense. "The perfume of earth" (1.15) is referred to, and later "the perfume of grasses and flowers" (1.239). The absence of sound and movement is continually stressed, adding to a hushed, mystical mood. The air is "breathless" (1.44), "the bent-grass heaves not" (1.48), "the couch-grass quails not" (1.48), "the wide wood's motionless breast" (1.52). The tactile imagery is reduced to such words as "soft" and "keen." As the poem progresses there is less and less imagery and more direct evocation of the emotions associated with the felt presence of the god.

The diction throughout is very sensuous. The setting itself, the mood evoked by it, the felt presence of the god--all are expressed with sensuous diction. The sun, and by

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association noon, are described as having a sensual effect; for example, in stanza three:

The perfume of earth possessed by the sun pervades  
 The chaster air that he soothes but with sense of sleep.  
 Soft, imminent, strong as desire that prevails and fades,  
 The passing noon that beholds not a cloudlet weep  
 Imbues and impregnates life with a sense more deep  
 (11.15-19)

This effect of the sunlight is continued in stanza four:

"But the might of the noon, though the light of it pass  
 away, / Leaves earth fulfilled of desires and of dreams that  
 last;" (11.26-27), and in stanza five: "For the deep mid  
 mystery of light and of heat that seem / To clasp and pierce  
 dark earth, and enkindle dust" (11.33-34).

Though the emphasis is on stillness, yet there are many verbs of motion used; but these are verbs with connotations of sensation and emotion, particularly the emotions of fear and wonder: for example, "heaves," "trembles," "quivers," "palpitates," "tremulous," "trembling," "quake," "shudders," "quail," "shivers." To describe the overwhelming effect of the god, such verbs are used as "invasive," "imbues," "pervades," "quicken." Besides the nouns denoting nature: "sun," "leaves," "skies," "wood," and "flowers," there are many nouns denoting emotion which are used repetitiously, such as "rapture," "terror," "fear," "love," "dread," "wrath," "passion," "anguish."

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The meter of the poem is pentameter, with mixed iambic and anapestic feet. The rhyme scheme is a, b, a, b, b, a, b. There is much alliteration and assonance. The rhythm and sound combine with diction and imagery in evocation of mood. For example, the more excited feeling evoked in the speaker is reinforced by the kinetic nouns of

Smiling and singing, wailing and wringing of hands,  
 Laughing and weeping, watching and sleeping still  
 Proclaim but and prove but thee,  
 (ll.127-219)

The more dreamy, languorous mood is seen in the slower movement of the following: "Sleep lies not heavier on eyes that have watched all night / Than hangs the heat of the noon on the hills and trees" (ll.36-37). Here the sounds are soft, with the hushed sound of the alliterated "h" predominating and with many long "o" vowels.

The overall effect of the poem is a sensuous and emotional evocation of mood. The speaker seeks to evoke the mood which the setting has wrought upon him. This mood is one of mixed awe and fear, rapture and terror, and is due to his overwhelming sensation of the presence in this silent, still wood of the great god, Pan. The speaker finally arrives at the state where "Heaven is as earth, and as heaven to me / Earth:" (ll.271-272).

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The philosophy expressed within this poem is similar to that naturalist philosophy expressed in "Hertha" in 1871. It is more explicit in "Nympholept" than it was in "The Palace of Pan."<sup>1</sup> For example, Hertha, as earth goddess, is present in all things:

I the gram and the furrow,  
 The plough-cloven clod  
 And the plowshare drawn thorough,  
 The germ and the sod,  
 The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower,  
 the dust which is God.<sup>2</sup>

Pan, in "Nympholept" is present in all things:

But in all things evil and fearful that fear may scan,  
 As in all things good, as in all things fair that fall,  
 We know thee present and latent, the lord of man;  
 In the murmuring of doves, in the clamouring of winds  
 that call  
 And wolves that howl for their prey; in the midnight's  
 pall,  
 In the naked and nymph-like feet of the dawn, O Pan,  
 And in each life living, O thou the God who art all.  
 (xviii)

The point of view of the two poems "Hertha" and "Nympholept" is different. In "Hertha" the earth-goddess speaks to man; in "Nympholept" man experiences the presence of the vital spirit which is present in all nature, including man. In "Hertha" the evolutionary naturalistic philosophy is elucidated; in "Nympholept" it is apprehended through an

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<sup>1</sup>See above, Chapter Five, Section One, pp. 240-244.

<sup>2</sup>Works, Vol. II, ll. 36-40.

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experience. In both poems, however, the same vital spirit, which in each case is symbolized by an earth deity, is perceived as present in good and evil, in man and in all things of nature. It is equally true in "Nympholept" as Beach states of Swinburne's philosophy in Songs Before Sunrise (1871), "Man is a parcel of the same vital energy that rolls in the sea, that flies with the bird, that opens with the bud."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century Poetry, p. 459.

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## Section 2

Poems Published in A Channel Passage  
and Other Poems (1904)

In 1904 Swinburne published A Channel Passage and Other Poems, the last volume of his poetry to be published in his lifetime. A Channel Passage and Other Poems contains many poems dealing with political themes and poems honouring remembered friends. Some of these had appeared much earlier in periodicals. Of these, three poems written in the 1880's dealing with Home Rule have been discussed.<sup>1</sup> That Swinburne intended this volume to deal primarily with political and personal themes is evident from the following remarks in a letter to Arthur Symons dated November 12, 1900:

I have now got all my odds and ends together except one--a series of four sonnets, headed 'Apostasy,' which I dare say you never saw. It appeared, I think, in 1886, but in what paper I forget. I want to reprint it as part of a selection of poems dealing with political and personal matters.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter Four, Section Three, pp. 200-204, for a discussion of these three poems: "The Commonweal: A Song for Unionists," "The Question," and "Apostasy."

<sup>2</sup>Letters, Vol. VI, p. 148. In a footnote to this letter Lang states that Swinburne is "presumably" referring to the volume A Channel Passage and Other Poems. This writer agrees.

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"A New Year's Eve"<sup>1</sup> is a poem written in remembrance of Christina Rossetti who had died three days previously, December 29, 1894, as stated in the dedicatory epilogue. The poem was first published in The Nineteenth Century, February, 1895 and reprinted in A Channel Passage and Other Poems (1904).

The principal symbol used throughout the poem is the star; its various qualities are applied to Christina Rossetti. The poem laments her passing and associates her with the brilliant stars of the cold, clear New Year's night. The tone is elegiac in its lamentation at the loss of this poet and her song, but the tone also includes admiration and joy at the recollection of her work.

Stanza one establishes the setting and evokes the mood by reflecting upon the stars of the New Year's evening, their coldness and their brilliance. The word "cold" is repeated three times; this coldness is linked with death: the stars are "Cold . . . as death," and "Cold as the cast-off garb that is cold as clay." The brilliance of the stars is stressed by repetition of "strong" and "splendid": "The stars are strong," "Cold and splendid," "Splendid and strong as a spirit intense as light."

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 234-235. See Appendix A, pp. 348-349, for this poem.

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The second stanza shifts attention to the sense of loss. The mood is melancholy as the speaker recalls the passing of this soul (Christina Rossetti) and her song from the world. The alliteration of "s," "m," and "w," all soft sounds, and the consonance of the long "o" sounds contribute to the melancholy tone, by creating a slow, soft sound in keeping with the sense of loss expressed in the stanza. The sense of loss is carried over into stanza three with the melancholy repetition of "Not here, not here" which begins the stanza. The recollection of Miss Rossetti's poetry is combined with the traditional New Year's image of the ringing bell: her song is described as a "carol of joy" which will no longer ring. Though reiterating here the awareness of loss, the diction associates a sense of joy with the poetry of Miss Rossetti; for example, "carol of joy" and "Ring rapture." In stanza four, recalling that it is scarcely three days since Miss Rossetti was alive, life is portrayed in images which accentuate its limitations, fettered by time and surrounded by darkness, as the sea surrounds and restricts the earth.

In contrast to earthly life, the next stanza describes the afterlife as a liberation, as a life partaking of the same qualities as dawn and the rising sun, beyond anything we can visualize. Miss Rossetti's song is described as

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"music of stars that chime," a comparison which takes up again the association of Miss Rossetti with the stars.

Stanza six continues to reflect upon the beauty of her poetry which is now lost to us. The repeated negative in the fourth line, "There is none . . . not one" emphasizes once more the sense of loss. The next stanza again reiterates the star motif as the song which is lost to us is compared to "waves of light on a starry shore." A further image from nature is used to describe the effect of her song, "The grey gloom quickened and quivered: the sunless place / Thrilled." In stanza nine the speaker asserts that a love which is not of this earth has brought the poet now to the life for which she had been longing. This is no doubt a recognition of the religious nature of Miss Rossetti. There is a questioning note at the beginning of the final stanza, as the speaker wonders about the afterlife. However, the final tone is a hopeful one, with a return once more to the star symbol: if the dead are far away and yet still alive, this soul, which on earth directed its song heavenward, now "Sings, loves, and shines as it shines for us here a star."

The poem is written in quatrain stanzas with a linking rhyme scheme: a, a, b, a; b, b, c, b; c, c, d, c; etc. The linking rhyme, in which the rhyme of line three becomes the rhyme of lines one, two, and four of the following

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stanza, helps to unify the poem; the thought progresses, usually overlapping, into the following stanza in the same way. The quatrain with the same rhyme in lines one, two, and four, but with line three different was used by Fitzgerald in the Rubaiyat. This rhyme scheme is considered to have contributed to the slow movement, as it does here. Swinburne had used the Rubaiyat quatrain in *Laus Veneris*,<sup>1</sup> in 1866, but in a more demanding form with the rhyme in line three repeated in line three of the following stanza; for example, a, a, b, a; c, c, b, a; d, d, e, d; f, f, e, d. "A New Year's Eve," almost thirty years later, demonstrates Swinburne's use of an even more difficult stanza form. The slow, stately movement in this poem is in keeping with the elegiac tone. The primary image of the star initiated in the first stanza is woven throughout the poem, and includes the effective concept of the music of the poet's song as music of the stars. The tone is mixed, admiration and joy aroused by remembrance of the poet's song mingled with the mourning sense of loss.

The concern for craftsmanship necessary to use effectively such a demanding form is characteristic of the Aesthetes. There is a melancholy tone at the loss of a friend. This, however, is not the artificial melancholy

<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. I, pp. 146-161.

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characteristic of the decadent poets of the 1890's, but a genuine expression of regret at the loss of an individual and the loss of her great talent. This melancholy tone is, also, mingled with admiration and joy at the recollection of her poetry. The star is a suitable symbol of a brilliant person who will continue to be remembered, to shine on the world through the immortality of her song which is "as music of stars that shine."

Swinburne's admiration for Christina Rossetti and genuine regret at her death are very evident. He had known her from the time of his close association with Dante Gabriel Rossetti in London in 1862, and makes frequent reference to her in his letters to William Michael Rossetti, one of his most frequent correspondents. Swinburne dedicated A Century of Roundels (1883) to Christina Rossetti. Also, he wrote "A Ballad of Appeal," published in A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems (1884), in which he appealed to her to write more poetry.

Swinburne also wrote, particularly in the 1890's, occasional poems to celebrate public occasions. Several examples will be cited. These poems show Swinburne's participation in the increasing trend to political and patriotic poetry toward the end of the nineteenth century.

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"Trafalgar Day,"<sup>1</sup> was written in celebration of the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, October 21, 1895. "The Centenary of the Battle of the Nile"<sup>2</sup> celebrated that anniversary August, 1898. Both of these poems use the same form: eight four-line stanzas with linking rhyme a, a, b, a; b, b, c, b; c, c, d, c; etc. Both poems are hortatory and laudatory, praising Nelson whose name shall always be remembered for the glory he brought to England.

The poem "Cromwell's Statue,"<sup>3</sup> is written with the same stanzaic form as the two preceding poems discussed. A footnote to the poem explains the particular reason for this poem: Cromwell's statue had been "Refused by the party of reaction and disunion in the House of Commons on the 17th of June 1895."<sup>4</sup> The poet asserts that Cromwell does not need a monument of stone or bronze. His fame will endure because of his deeds: he won command of the sea for England; he made England respected by all nations of Europe. "Earth has known / No lordlier presence." The poem is dated June 20, 1895.

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

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The Boer War became the occasion for several poems by Swinburne in which he ardently supported the cause of England against the Boers. Many have criticized Swinburne for his position in this War and have maintained that it was a reversal of his previous support of republicanism and hatred of tyranny. Swinburne's letters at this time show that, so far as he was concerned, there had been no reversal on his part. He saw the Boers as would-be tyrants who wished to enslave the natives of South Africa. The cause of the British, then, was the just one--against such tyranny.

In a letter to his sister, Isabel, dated September 24, 1899, Swinburne stated his opinion of the Boers very clearly:

I had all but forgotten what I had 'made a note of' to tell you. A week or two since I received a request to let my name be added to a committee of sympathizers with that unspeakable old villain Paul Kruger and his lying thieving murdering Boers; a committee convened to protest against the wickedness of the Government which (as far as I can see) is very seriously to blame for not giving the rascals far shorter shrift--by the despatch of an ultimatum months ago. I think you would have approved of the note which informed these worthies that I was about the very last man in England to allow my name to be associated with theirs.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the sentiments expressed above, the note Swinburne sent to the committee was remarkably restrained. It

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. VI, p. 142.

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consisted of one terse sentence: "I am about the last man in England who would allow his name to be added to your Committee."<sup>1</sup>

The letter which most clearly expressed Swinburne's attitude to the Boer War and his reasons for this attitude was written to Duncan C. McVarish, a chaplain to the British forces in South Africa from 1899 to 1901. Swinburne also sent this letter to the Saturday Review for publication.<sup>2</sup>

In this letter Swinburne said:

I have always done my best to express my life-long horror and hatred of all tyrants. It would be singular if I had abstained from expressing my sentiments with regard to the cruellest and most faithless tyrants and slavedrivers of our time-- because they happen to be also the most treacherous and malignant enemies of my country.<sup>3</sup>

Swinburne maintained that the Boers intended to establish "a reign of terror and slavery and torture for all dark races from Cape Town to Zambesi," after driving the English out. It is obviously then in the cause of freedom that Swinburne took his stand, a fervently patriotic one, in the Boer War.

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. VI, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 154, footnote of editor.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 154. The entire text of this letter is printed in Appendix B of this thesis, pp. 362-363.

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Two poems concerning this war are discussed here. The first, "The Transvaal,"<sup>1</sup> is a public statement fervently supporting the British stand at the beginning of the Boer War. This poem, which has the date October 9, 1899 inscribed at the end, was published in The Times, October 11, 1899,<sup>2</sup> and later in A Channel Passage and Other Poems (1904).

"The Transvaal" is a Petrarchan sonnet in which the thought division occurs within the eighth line. The octave asserts that we have too long behaved as Cromwell's England never did, for we accept wrong from men who, like wolves, fight women and children. The sestet expresses the idea that there are scarcely words with which to express our loathing of those who dishonour God's name with prayers turned to curses, and who defy the truth whose witness, England, comes forth now to punish these "dogs, agape with jaws afoam." The final words urge, "Strike, England, and strike home." The poem is serious, fervent, and angry in tone. The octave urges England to remember her great heritage when she is faced with such enemies. The sestet pictures the enemy as

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, p. 292. See Appendix A, p. 350, for this poem.

<sup>2</sup>October 9, 1899 Britain rejected an ultimatum sent by the Transvaal. October 11 the Orange Free State joined the Transvaal. October 12 war broke out.

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blasphemous, mad dogs, sufficient reason for England, long patient, to strike.

"Astraea Victrix"<sup>1</sup> celebrates England's victory in the Boer War. Serious in tone, public in theme, using the same stanza form throughout, this poem may be considered a Horatian ode. England is addressed. The main symbol used is that of England as a star outshining the sun, its light viewed by all nations. The poem expresses the joy of seeing this light, momentarily obscured by darkness, shining brilliantly once more. The title contributes to the symbolism. In naming England "Astrae"<sup>2</sup> the poet links her with justice. England is thus seen as victorious justice, now shining forth as a star in the world.

The poem begins by addressing England whose light upon the sea outshines the sun, and whose fame now writes her name higher than "song may soar or faith may gaze" (i.8). The second stanza recalls the dark months when the "heartless hounds of hatred" (ii.11) bayed loudly against her; these are

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<sup>1</sup>Works, Vol. VI, pp. 296-299. See Appendix A, pp. 351-353, for this poem.

<sup>2</sup>In classical mythology, Astrae is the constellation Virgo, identified with Justice. In the Golden Age she lived among men, but later because of the wickedness of men, she withdrew to the sky. Harvey, The Oxford Companion to the Classics, p. 54.

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now saddened to see their hopes fade. Following stanzas continue to extol England triumphant, not as were the empires of bygone days but as a commonweal, free. England's action is described in terms of a brilliant flame higher than the sun, which for a while had been darkened by winds and storm. Now the tide has turned; England is returned to power, and all behold her star once more shining over Europe. As in the past, Europe sees that English men are unlike the slaves and tyrants found where men are kept as bondsmen or where anarchy rules. Following stanzas turn attention to the enemy, commenting on England's generosity in not loosing on the enemy those whom they had formerly enslaved. The enemy's baseness is described; this included cruelty to women and children. Despite this, England has not treated them as harshly as they justly deserved. The final stanza acclaims freedom "whose name is England" (xii.91); fame records that earth shall never see another to equal her.

This poem is less vituperative than some other patriotic poems of Swinburne. The enemy is still described harshly, with such diction as "Knaves and slaves at heart" (vi.41), "torturer" (ix.68), "murderous fraud" (x.73), and "hearts where hell's craft works" (x.74). Despite this, the emphasis is on England: her victory, her brilliance, the freedom which is integral to her. The symbolism contributes

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to the unity of the poem; throughout the poem England is a star; light is associated with her, darkness with her enemy, wind and storm with the war and the howling of her enemies, the tide with her resurgent power. Each stanza consists of eight lines, with the rhyme scheme a, a, b, c, c, b, d, d; the meter is predominantly iambic. The rhythm is wavelike because of the conjunction of rhyme scheme: a, a, b, c, c, b, d, d, and verse length: three-three-five-three-three-five-four-six. There is a sense of completeness at the end of the stanza achieved by the rhyming couplet and the longer final line. The movement is regular, contributing a stateliness to the serious tone. As a public celebration of his country's victory this is a successful poem. It is important to note that Swinburne once more is rejoicing in the victory of freedom over slavery and of truth over deceit, in celebrating England's victory over the Boers.

Public and patriotic poetry became increasingly popular in England during this period, the early 1900's. Much of this poetry was a rhetorical celebration of British imperialism at the time when the British Empire was at its zenith. C. K. Stead in The New Poetic notes that patriotic poetry became, in the early twentieth century the most popular and widely read poetry:

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The popular poets then (1909-1916) were not those who offered the complex qualities usually associated with good poetry, but those whose minds ran at the level of public expectation. Poetry was acceptable when it effectively versified Imperialist sentiments, the public school spirit, or patriotic fervour; otherwise it was unlikely to be widely read.<sup>1</sup>

Further, Stead notes an interesting survey to discover popular poets:

In 1913 the Journal of Education held a plebiscite to discover the most popular poets in England, still living. Kipling received twice as many votes as his nearest rival, William Watson. Robert Bridges (not the same kind of poet, but one whose diction was recognizably 'beautiful') was third. Alfred Noyes was fourth.<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising that the type of poetry generally considered as characteristic of the Edwardian age was this political, rhetorical, and patriotic verse. The kinds of poetry which reacted against this (Georgian, Imagist, Sitwellian) was to appear at the time this patriotic verse was at its peak of popularity. Swinburne published more patriotic and political poetry in the volume under discussion, A Channel Passage and Other Poems (1904) than in earlier ones. He included in this volume poems printed in periodicals in the 1880's. It is quite possible that one reason for

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<sup>1</sup>C. K. Stead, The New Poetic, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1967, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

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this is Swinburne's realization that in the early 1900's political, rhetorical, patriotic poetry was becoming increasingly prominent. In writing his poetry of public statement and occasional poems to celebrate public events Swinburne was in one of the main currents of poetry in the transition period.

Poems examined in this chapter show that, despite publication of more public and patriotic poetry at this time, Swinburne continued to write aesthetic and symbolist poetry, and to demonstrate, by the variety of meter and stanza form, his continued mastery of the craftsmanship of poetry.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general conclusion and summary of this thesis and to indicate areas of further research.

In Chapter One, a brief summary of Swinburne's life was given, with attention directed to the years 1880 to 1909, and to those aspects of his earlier life which were considered to be of significance to that period. The second section of this chapter examined the period 1880 to 1920 as an age of transition. Recent critics were cited to confirm that this age differs from both Victorian and Contemporary eras in attitudes and interests, and encompasses a wide variety of literary trends. These same critics support the use of the term "transition" for this age.

In the period of transition, important literary trends were aesthetic, symbolist, decadent, and political-patriotic. Because Aestheticism, Decadence, and Symbolism are interrelated and not always clearly defined, it was considered essential to establish definitions of these terms. Chapter Two established these definitions, and also identified Swinburne's relationship to these three movements, which began very early in his career. This chapter concluded

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with a summary, in chart form, of the characteristics of aesthetic, decadent, and symbolist poetry.

Both Decadence and Symbolism stem from the "art for art's sake" movement. In Decadence, the desire to shock and the cult of the artificial led to such subjects as sexual perversion, sadism, death, and dying things; to a search, in life as well as in art, for new and strange sensations, in style for bizarre images and striking paradoxes. The tone of decadent poetry was frequently melancholy or despairing. The Symbolist trend became concerned with expressing the mysterious and invisible by means of evocative language and imagery, and stress on the affiliation of poetry with music through sound and musical structure. The tone was frequently melancholy, due often to an awareness of the transience of life.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five examined poetry of Swinburne from 1880 to 1909. Aesthetic and decadent elements are apparent in the poetry of Swinburne throughout the age of transition. Although there is less evidence of the more shocking elements of eroticism and perversion which were present in the earlier Poems and Ballads (1866), there is still considerable evidence of sensuousness, escapism, and melancholy. "A Ballad of Sark" (1884) is aesthetic in the rich, sensuous description; it has decadent overtones in the harsh descriptions of

man's helplessness against the forces of nature. "By the North Sea" (1880) possesses both aesthetic and decadent elements; some sections of the poem express in languorous tone the characteristically aesthetic yearning to escape from the weariness of life; others are more intensely desolate in tone, manifesting a preoccupation with the dreary and desolate in nature, and containing such shocking elements as a parody of the Apostle's Creed and harsh images of death and destruction, such as, "earth with dead men's bones is rotten." "After Sunset" (1884) also contains harsh images of death, such as the image of the "cloud-enshrouded corpse" of day being lowered into the grave. "A Solitude" (1882) is decadent in the hopeless and desolate tone and dismal images, but possesses also the Parnassian element of hard, clear lines which express theme and tone without ornamentation and without didacticism.

The longing to escape, which is characteristic of many aesthetic works, is noted in several poems. "To a Seamew" (1889) expresses the speaker's longing for the freedom of the seamew, in a tone primarily joyous, but mixed with melancholy at the disparity between the bird's lot and man's. There is a dreamy, languorous tone, evinced by the appearance of sea and shore at neap-tide, in "Neap-Tide" (1889); a dreary, melancholy tone and images of death and desolation contribute a decadent note to this poem. "A Swimmer's Dream"

(1894) expresses in a languorous, dreamy tone an aesthetic attraction to a timeless, unreal world experienced by a swimmer borne along by the waves. Delight in the sensuous beauty of nature is evident in "Loch Torridon" (1894) which contains narrative, descriptive, and lyrical elements skillfully conveyed in a variety of stanza and metrical patterns. The earlier poem "Off Shore" (1880) manifests a delight in the sensuous beauty of external nature, sea and sun, exalting the sun as God. The unusual stanza form of "Hertha" (1871) is used in this poem.

The roundel form, derived by Swinburne from the rondeau in 1883, shows his continued interest in the fixed forms. Two of the roundels examined, "Aperotos Eros" and "The Lute and the Lyre" are decadent in tone and theme; the third, "Ventimiglia," demonstrates the hard, clear lines of the Parnassian aspect of aestheticism. The ballade is another of the old fixed forms first used by Swinburne in 1866, in which he shows a continued interest during the transition period. This is seen by his use of this form for "A Ballad of Sark" (1884), "The Ballade of Truthful Charles" (1889), and "The Ballad of Melicertes" (1894).

Symbolist elements are also evident in poetry of Swinburne throughout the transition period. In "After Sunset" (1882), the possibility of life after death is reflected upon in symbolist manner; external nature is used to evoke

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the speaker's mood. "A Dirge" (1894) uses the image of the tolling bell to reflect the speaker's emotions at the death of his friend, evoking inner mood through the medium of a concrete symbol. Imprecise, evocative imagery and emphasis on the sound qualities of words in "To a Seamew" evoke mood in symbolist fashion. Sonnet Five of "A Sequence of Sonnets on the Death of Robert Browning" (1894) uses suggestive and evocative imagery to honour Browning and his poetry. Many symbolist techniques are evident in "Music: An Ode" (1894): musical structure in which the same theme is developed in a different way in each stanza; emphasis on musical qualities of words through use of much alliteration, assonance, and repetitive rhyme; suggestive rather than precise diction. "The Palace of Pan" (1894) also uses symbolist devices; rhythm and sound create an incantatory tone which combines with evocative diction to express a mysterious, otherworldly atmosphere. "A Swimmer's Dream" uses suggestive, repetitive diction and the resources of sound and rhythm to evoke the dreamlike quality of the swimmer's inner experience. "Nympholept" (1894) is a symbolist poem which evokes the rapture and fear of the experiencer who senses the presence of the god, Pan, in nature.

Although symbolist elements are present in Swinburne's poetry throughout the transition period, it has been found that poems most characteristically symbolist are those

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which were written in the latter part of this period, published in Astrophel and Other Poems (1894). This was the period during which the Symbolist Cénacle in France, under the leadership of Mallarmé, was most widely celebrated, and when English writers, such as Symons and Moore, were beginning to write critical assessments of the major French Symbolists. Specifically aesthetic and decadent qualities are less evident in the later poems. Largely political-patriotic and personal poems are found in Swinburne's final volume in 1904, which he, himself, described as "a selection of poems dealing with political and personal matters."<sup>1</sup> Some of these poems are elegies mourning dead friends, many are poems dealing with political issues.

In his political and patriotic poetry throughout the age of transition, Swinburne demonstrated his continued support of the freedom of man; this had been the central theme of Songs before Sunrise (1871). The poems in which Swinburne criticized the House of Lords in the 1880's express the point of view of one who opposes unwarranted, inherited authority as detracting unfairly from the freedom of man. In "Quia Nominor Leo" (1882), Swinburne continued to oppose despotism which he saw represented by Papal authority. This attitude is similar to that of "Hymn to Proserpine" (1866),

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. VI, p. 48.

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written in reaction to the pronouncement of Papal infallibility.

Poems supporting the Unionists against the advocates of Home Rule for Ireland vary in form and tone: "The Question" (1887) is angry and bitter, "Apostasy" (1889) is more restrained; "The Ballade of Truthful Charles" (1889) is light, derisive satire; "The Union" (1904) is a simple rallying song. Again, Swinburne equated his position on this question with his earlier support for Mazzini in his struggle for a free and united Italy. Swinburne explained this clearly in letters to the Times in 1887: he was supporting union over disunion.

A further cause supported by Swinburne, in the conviction that he supported liberty, is the British position in the Boer War. "The Transvaal" (1904) and "Astrae Victrix" (1904) are two of the poems which express this stand. "The Transvaal," written at the beginning of the war, urges, "Strike, England, and Strike, Home." "Astraea Victrix" extols Britain as she vanquishes the foe, once more protecting the freedom of man. Thus, from the 1880's to the early 1900's, Swinburne supported in his poetry political causes which he equated with democracy and liberty.

Besides these three major issues in which Swinburne took much interest, and in which he saw himself once more as the champion of the rights of man, there were other occasions

during the transition period when Swinburne wrote patriotic and public poetry. "The Commonweal" (1889) is a joyous, song-like celebration of the glories of England, stressing her political and intellectual freedom, on the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's coronation. "The Armada" (1889) combines narrative and rhetoric in a lengthy celebration of the tricentenary of England's victory over the Spanish Armada. Swinburne's final volume A Channel Passage and Other Poems (1904) devoted considerably more space than did earlier ones to public and patriotic poetry. This includes poems to celebrate public occasions, such as "Trafalgar Day" commemorating the anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar and "The Centenary of the Battle of the Nile." The late 1890's and early 1900's was a period in the transition age when public and patriotic poetry was becoming very popular; thus Swinburne's increasing interest in this kind of poetry placed him in a main current of interest of the transition period.

Parody and satire also became increasingly popular in England during the age of transition. Thus, Swinburne's use of parody and satire place him in another major area of interest of the transition period. "Poeta Loquitor" (1880) parodies his own poetry; "Disgust" (1881) parodies Tennyson's. "Rondeau Parisiens" (1885) is an angry, satiric denunciation of France for criticizing English morals. "The Ballade of Truthful Charles" (1889) is a light, derisive satire of

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Charles Parnell, leader of the Irish movement for Home Rule. Satire, and often bitter irony, is the mode of criticism of many of Swinburne's political poems, such as his attack on the House of Lords, "Vos Deos Laudamus" (1884) and on the supporters of Irish Home Rule in "Apostasy" (1889).

Whether writing public, aesthetic, or symbolist poetry, Swinburne continued to demonstrate the mastery of the craftsmanship of poetry evident in his earlier works. He used a great variety of meters and stanza forms. These include the ballade and the roundel, forms which demonstrate his continued interest in the old French forms. Also, he used the unusual five-line stanza form of "Hertha" in "Off Shore" and the linked quatrain in "A New Year's Eve." The sonnet form is used by Swinburne to express a variety of themes in public, aesthetic, and symbolist poetry. "To a Sea-Mew" is written in an unusual eight-line stanza which contains only two rhymes and repeats the first and second lines as the seventh and eighth. This same stanza form was used by Swinburne in 1866 in "The Match" with the same meter, rhyme scheme, and use of feminine rhyme. Although differing in theme, the two poems are similar in nostalgic, yearning tone for what can never be. Swinburne continued to use a variety of meters and stanza forms in his late political-patriotic poetry.

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There is a continuity of interest evident in Swinburne from 1866 through the final period of his career. It has been demonstrated that aesthetic and decadent elements present in earlier poetry continued in this later period. His interest in fixed forms, which continued from his early work through the age of transition, has been discussed.

Swinburne continued through the transition period to use the sea as a major objective correlative in a variety of ways. The sea is seen as an escape in "A Swimmer's Dream" and as a destructive force in "By the North Sea" and "Neap-tide," as a source of melancholy tone in "A Ballad of Sark," as a symbol of a timeless reality in "By the North Sea," as a source of sensuous pleasure in "Off Shore" and "A Swimmer's Dream" and of a more perverse pleasure in "By the North Sea."

Swinburne's naturalist philosophy, in which he joyfully accepted the evolutionary process, was seen earlier in "Hertha" and "Prelude," Songs before Sunrise (1871). Essentially the same philosophy is expressed in "Off Shore," "The Palace of Pan," and "Nympholept." The method of expression of this philosophy differs in the later poetry. In "Hertha," the earth goddess addresses her child, man, and directly explains that she is the source of all things, including man. In "Nympholept" the symbolist method is used to evoke the sense of realization within man that he is a part of all

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nature, and is one with the spirit which is present in all nature.

Swinburne's attitude to Christianity remained the same insofar as his hatred for the dogmatic aspect, particularly the despotism he saw in the Pope, was concerned. In 1866 "Hymn to Proserpine" was prompted by the newly proclaimed doctrine of papal infallibility. In 1882 "Quia Nominor Leo" was prompted by the tyranny and ambition for power which he saw in the Roman Catholic Church.

Swinburne's advocacy of freedom for man expressed in Songs before Sunrise (1871) is consistent with the political position taken by him during the age of transition; in his opposition to the House of Lords, which is one of his main political interests of the early 1880's; in his opposition to Home Rule for Ireland in the 1880's and 1890's; in his defence of the British position in the Boer War in the late 1890's and early 1900's; and also in his consistent opposition to organized religion.

This thesis has demonstrated that Swinburne is a transition poet whose work during this period, 1880 to 1909, includes aesthetic, decadent, symbolist, and political-patriotic elements--all major characteristics of this period. His poetry demonstrates his continued interest in such major themes as freedom and evolutionary naturalism. It is also evident from the variety of theme, tone, and form which

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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Swinburne used in this period that the flexibility and skillful craftsmanship of his earlier work continued in the age of transition.

This thesis is not an exhaustive study of the poetry of Swinburne during this period. Several areas of research are here suggested: an in depth analysis of the poems of this period; studies of Swinburne's patterns of imagery; studies of the relation between his critical theory and poetic works after 1880; examination of long poems of this period, such as "A Tale of Balen" and "Tristram of Lyonesse,"<sup>1</sup> which have not been discussed in this thesis. There are areas of Swinburne's relationship to Aestheticism and Decadence which also deserve further research, such as the significance of his early involvement in English aesthetic and decadent trends. Fuller examination needs to be made of Swinburne's relationship to French writers;<sup>2</sup> this could include both the influence of French writers on Swinburne's prose and poetry from his early years and Swinburne's influence on these writers and on later French symbolist

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<sup>1</sup>The use of parallelism and contrast, which unify this poem thematically and structurally, is discussed by Kerry McSweeney, "The Structure of Swinburne's 'Tristram of Lyonesse'," Queen's Quarterly, Vol. LXXV, 1968, pp. 690-702.

<sup>2</sup>The influence of Gautier and Baudelaire on Swinburne has been referred to above, Chapter Two, pp. 42-48.

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writers.<sup>1</sup> Mention has been made of Swinburne's influence on Pater.<sup>2</sup> A fuller investigation as to the extent of this influence on both Pater's prose style and on his aesthetic theories is warranted. Swinburne's humour is evident in letters as well as poetry. This, too, deserves further consideration.

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<sup>1</sup>Reference has been made to statements of French critics concerning Swinburne's poetry in Chapter Two, Section Three, pp. 88-89.

<sup>2</sup>See above, Chapter Two, Section One, pp. 33-36.

## APPENDIX A

## THE GHOST OF IT

In my poems, with ravishing rapture,  
Storm strikes me, and strokes me, and stings;  
But I'm scarcely the bird you might capture  
Out of doors in the thick of such things.  
I prefer to be well out of harm's way,  
When tempest makes tremble the tree,  
And the wind with armipotent arm-sway  
Makes soap of the sea.

Hanging hard on the rent rags of others  
Who before me did better, I try  
To believe them my sisters and brothers,  
Though I know what a low lot am I.  
Truth dawns on time's resonant ruin  
Frank, fulminant, fragrant and free,  
And apparently this is the doing  
Of wind on the sea.

Fame flutters in front of pretension  
Whose flag-staff is flagrantly fine,  
And it cannot be needful to mention  
That such beyond question is mine.  
It's plain as a newspaper leader  
That a rhymester who scribbles like me  
May feel perfectly sure that his reader  
Is sick of the sea.

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## DISGUST

A DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE<sup>1</sup>

A woman and her husband, having been converted from free thought to Calvinism, and being utterly miserable in consequence, resolve to end themselves by poison. The man dies but the woman is rescued by application of the stomach-pump.--[A.C.S.]

## I

PILLS? talk to me of your pills? Well, that, I must say, is cool.  
 Can't bring my old man round? he was always a stubborn old fool.  
 If I hadn't taken precautions--a warning to all that wive--  
 He might not have been dead, and I might not have been alive.

## II

You would like to know, if I please, how it was that our troubles began?  
 You see, we were brought up Agnostics, I and my poor old man.  
 And we got some idea of selection and evolution, you know--  
 Professor Huxley's doing--where does he expect to go!

## III

Well, then came trouble on trouble on trouble--I may say, a peck--  
 And his cousin was wanted one day on the charge of forging a cheque--  
 And his puppy died of the mange--my parrot choked on its perch.  
 This was the consequence, was it, of not going weekly to church?

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<sup>1</sup>Footnote one of the editor's following the title of poem reads: "A parody of Tennyson's Despair."

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## IV

So we felt that the best if not only thing that remained  
to be done  
On an earth everlastingly moving about a perpetual  
sun,  
Where worms breed worms to be eaten of worms that  
have eaten their betters--  
And reviewers are barely civil--and people get spiteful  
letters--  
And a famous man is forgot ere the minute hand can  
tick nine--  
Was to send in our P.P.C., and purchase a packet of  
strychnine.

## V

Nay--but first we thought it was rational--only fair--  
To give both parties a hearing--and went to the  
meeting-house there,  
At the curve of the street that runs from the Stag to  
the old Blue Lion.  
'Little Zion' they call it--a deal more 'little' than  
'Zion.'

## VI

And the preacher preached from the text, 'Come out  
of her.' Hadn't we come?  
And we thought of the shepherd in Pickwick--and  
fancied a flavour of rum  
Balmily borne on the wind of his words--and my  
man said, 'Well,  
Let's get out of this, my dear--for his text has a  
brimstone smell.'

## VII

So we went, O God, out of chapel--and gazed, ah God,  
at the sea.  
And I said nothing to him. And he said nothing to  
me.

## VIII

And there, you see, was an end of it all. It was obvious,  
in fact,  
That, whether or not you believe in the doctrine  
taught in a tract,

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Life was not in the least worth living. Because, don't  
 you see?  
 Nothing that can't be, can, and what must be, must.  
 Q.E.D.  
 And the infinitesimal sources of Infinite Unideality  
 Curve in to the central abyss of a sort of a queer  
 Personality  
 Whose refraction is felt in the nebulae strewn in the  
 pathway of Mars  
 Like the parings of nails AEonian--clippings and  
 snippings of stars--  
 Shavings of suns that revolve and evolve and involve  
 and at times  
 Give a sweet astronomical twang to remarkably hobbling  
 rhymes.

## IX

And the sea curved in with a moan--and we thought  
 how once--before  
 We fell out with those atheist lecturers--once, ah,  
 once and no more,  
 We read together, while midnight blazed like the  
 Yankee flag,  
 A reverend gentleman's work--the Conversion of Colonel  
 Quagg.  
 And out of its pages we gathered this lesson of doctrine  
 pure--  
 Zephaniah Stockdolloger's gospel--a word that deserves  
 to endure  
 Infinite millions on millions of infinite AEons to come--  
 'Vocation,' says he, 'is vocation, and duty duty.  
 Some.'

## X

And duty, said I, distinctly points out--and vocation,  
 said he,  
 Demands as distinctly--that I should kill you, and  
 that you should kill me.  
 The reason is obvious--we cannot exist without  
 creeds--who can?  
 So we went to the chemist's--a highly respectable  
 church-going man--  
 And bought two packets of poison. You wouldn't have  
 done so?--Wait.  
 It's evident, Providence is not with you, ma'am, the  
 same thing as Fate.  
 Unconscious cerebration educes God from a fog,

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But spell God backwards, what then? Give it up?  
     the answer is, dog.  
 (I don't exactly see how this last verse is to scan,  
 But that's a consideration I leave to the secular man.)

## XI

I meant of course to go with him--as far as I pleased--  
     but first  
 To see how my old man liked it--I thought perhaps  
     he might burst.  
 I didn't wish it--but still it's a blessed release for  
     a wife--  
 And he saw that I thought so--and grinned in derision  
     --and threatened my life  
 If I made wry faces--and so I took just a sip--and he--  
 Well--you know how it ended--he didn't get over me.

## XII

Terrible, isn't it? Still, on reflection, it might have  
     been worse.  
 He might have been the unhappy survivor, and  
     followed my hearse.  
 'Never do it again?' Why, certainly not. You don't  
 Suppose I should think of it, surely? But anyhow--  
     there--I won't.

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## AFTER SUNSET

Si quis piorum Manibus locus.

## I

Straight from the sun's grave in the deep clear west  
 A sweet strong wind blows, glad of life: and I,  
 Under the soft keen stardawn whence the sky  
 Takes life renewed, and all night's godlike breast  
 Palpitates, gradually revealed at rest  
 By growth and change of ardours felt on high,  
 Make onward, till the last flame fall and die  
 And all the world by night's broad hand lie blest.  
 Haply, meseems, as from that edge of death,  
 Whereon the day lies dark, a brightening breath  
 Blows more of benediction than the morn,  
 So from the graves whereon grief gazing saith  
 That half our heart of life there lies forlorn  
 May light or breath at least of hope be born.

## II

The wind was soft before the sunset fled:  
 Now, while the cloud-enshrouded corpse of day  
 Is lowered along a red funereal way  
 Down to the dark that knows not white from red,  
 A clear sheer breeze against the night makes head,  
 Serene, but sure of life as ere a ray  
 Springs, or the dusk of dawn knows red from grey,  
 Being as a soul that knows not quick from dead.  
 From far beyond the sunset, far above,  
 Full toward the starry soundless east it blows  
 Bright as a child's breath breathing on a rose,  
 Smooth to the sense as plume of any dove;  
 Till more and more as darkness grows and glows  
 Silence and night seem likest life and love.

## III

If light of life outlive the set of sun  
 That men call death and end of all things, then  
 How should not that which life held best for men  
 And proved most precious, though it seem undone  
 By force of death and woful victory won,  
 Be first and surest of revival, when  
 Death shall bow down to life arisen again?

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So shall the soul seen be the self-same one  
That looked and spake with even such lips and eyes  
As love shall doubt not then to recognise,  
And all bright thoughts and smiles of all time past  
Revive, transfigured, but in spirit and sense  
None other than we knew, for evidence  
That love's last mortal word was not his last.

## A LAST LOOK

Sick of self-love, Malvolio, like an owl  
That hoots the sun rerisen where starlight sank,  
With German garters crossed athwart thy frank  
Stout Scottish legs, men watched thee snarl and  
scowl,  
And boys responsive with reverberate howl  
Shrilled, hearing how to thee the springtime stank  
And as thine own soul all the world smelt rank  
And as thine own thoughts Liberty seemed foul.  
Now, for all ill thoughts nursed and ill words given  
Not all condemned, not utterly forgiven,  
Son of the storm and darkness, pass in peace.  
Peace upon earth thou knewest not: now, being  
dead,  
Rest, with nor curse nor blessing on thine head,  
Where high-strung hate and strenuous envy cease.

## QUIA NOMINOR LEO

## I

WHAT part is left thee, lion? Ravenous beast,  
 Which hadst the world for pasture, and for scope  
 And compass of thine homicidal hope  
 The kingdom of the spirit of man, the feast  
 Of souls subdued from west to sunless east,  
 From blackening north to bloodred south aslope,  
 All servile; earth for footcloth of the pope,  
 And heaven for chancel-ceiling of the priest;  
 Thou that hadst earth by right of rack and rod,  
 Thou that hadst Rome because thy name was God,  
 And by thy creed's gift heaven wherein to dwell;  
 Heaven laughs with all his light and might above  
 That earth has cast thee out of faith and love;  
 Thy part is but the hollow dream of hell.

## II

The light of life has faded from thy cause,  
 High priest of heaven and hell and purgatory;  
 Thy lips are loud with strains of oldworld story,  
 But the red prey was rent out of thy paws  
 Long since: and they that dying brake down thy laws  
 Have with the fires of death-enkindled glory  
 Put out the flame that faltered on thy hoary  
 High altars, waning with the world's applause  
 This Italy was Dante's: Bruno died  
 Here: Campanella, too sublime for pride,  
 Endured thy God's worst here, and hence went home.  
 And what art thou, that time's full tide should shrink  
 For thy sake downward? What art thou, to think  
 Thy God shall give thee back for birthright Rome?

## ON THE RUSSIAN PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS

O SON of man, by lying tongues adored,  
By slaughterous hands of slaves with feet red-shod  
In carnage deep as ever Christian trod  
Profaned with prayer and sacrifice abhorred  
And incense from the trembling tyrant's horde  
Brute worshippers or wielders of the rod,  
Most murderous even of all that call thee God,  
Most treacherous even that ever called thee Lord,  
Face loved of little children long ago,  
Head hated of the priests and rulers then,  
If thou see this, or hear these hounds of thine  
Run ravening as the Gadarean swine,  
Say, was not this thy Passion, to foreknow  
In death's worst hour the works of Christian men?

January 23, 1882.

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APEROTOS EROS

STRONG as death, and cruel as the grave,  
Clothed with cloud and tempest's blackening breath,  
Known of death's dread self, whom none outbrave,  
    Strong as death,

LOVE, brow-bound with anguish for a wreath,  
Fierce with pain, a tyrant-hearted slave,  
Burns above a world that groans beneath.

Hath not pity power on thee to save,  
Love? hath power no pity? Nought he saith,  
Answering: blind he walks as wind or wave  
    Strong as death.

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## 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.

## THE LUTE AND THE LYRE

DEEP desire, that pierces heart and spirit to the root,  
Finds reluctant voice in verse that yearns like soaring  
fire,  
Takes exultant voice when music holds in high pursuit  
Deep desire.

Keen as burns the passion of the rose whose buds  
respire,  
Strong as grows the yearning of the blossom toward the  
fruit,  
Sounds the secret half unspoken ere the deep tones tire.

Slow subsides the rapture that possessed love's flower-  
soft lute,  
Slow the palpitation of the triumph of the lyre:  
Still the soul feels burn, a flame unslaked though these  
be mute,  
Deep desire.

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## A BALLAD OF SARK

HIGH beyond the granite portal arched across  
 Like the gateway of some godlike giant's hold  
 Sweep and swell the billowy breasts of moor and moss  
 East and westward, and the dell their slopes enfold  
 Basks in purple, glows in green, exults in gold.  
 Glens that know the dove and fells that hear the lark  
 Fill with joy the rapturous island, as an ark  
 Full of spicery wrought from herb and flower and  
 tree.  
 None would dream that grief even here may disembark  
 On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Rocks emblazoned like the mid shield's royal boss  
 Take the sun with all their blossom broad and bold.  
 None would dream that all this moorland's glow and  
 gloss  
 Could be dark as tombs that strike the spirit acold  
 Even in eyes that opened here, and here behold  
 Now no sun relume from hope's belated spark  
 Any comfort, nor may ears of mourners hark  
 Though the ripe woods ring with golden-throated  
 glee,  
 While the soul lies shattered, like a stranded bark  
 On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Death and doom are they whose crested triumphs toss  
 On the proud plumed waves whence mourning  
 notes are tolled.  
 Wail of perfect woe and moan for utter loss  
 Raise the bride-song through the graveyard on the  
 wold  
 Where the bride-bed keeps the bridegroom fast in  
 mould,  
 Where the bride, with death for priest and doom for  
 clerk,  
 Hears for choir the throats of waves like wolves that  
 bark,  
 Sore anhungered, off the drear Eperquerie,  
 Fain to spoil the strongholds of the strength of Sark  
 On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Prince of storm and tempest, lord whose ways are dark,  
 Wind whose wings are spread for flight that none  
 may mark,

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Lightly dies the joy that lives by grace of thee.  
Love through thee lies bleeding, hope lies cold and  
stark,  
On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

## ON A COUNTRY ROAD

Along these low pleached lanes, on such a day,  
 So soft a day as this, through shade and sun,  
 With glad grave eyes that scanned the glad wild way,  
 And heart still hovering o'er a song begun,  
 And smile that warmed the world with benison,  
 Our father, lord long since of lordly rhyme,  
 Long since hath haply ridden, when the lime  
 Bloomed broad above him, flowering where he came.  
 Because thy passage once made warm this clime,  
 Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each year that England clothes herself with May,  
 She takes thy likeness on her. Time hath spun  
 Fresh raiment all in vain and strange array  
 For earth and man's new spirit, fain to shun  
 Things past for dreams of better to be won,  
 Through many a century since thy funeral chime  
 Rang, and men deemed it death's most direful crime  
 To have spared not thee for very love or shame;  
 And yet, while mists round last year's memories climb,  
 Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each turn of the old wild road whereon we stray,  
 Meseems, might bring us face to face with one  
 Whom seeing we could not but give thanks, and pray  
 For England's love our father and her son  
 To speak with us as once in days long done  
 With all men, sage and churl and monk and mime,  
 Who knew not as we know the soul sublime  
 That sang for song's love more than lust of fame.  
 Yet, though this be not, yet, in happy time,  
 Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Friend, even as bees about the flowering thyme,  
 Years crowd on years, till hoar decay begrime  
 Names once beloved; but, seeing the sun the same,  
 As birds of autumn fain to praise the prime,  
 Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

## A SOLITUDE

SEA beyond sea, sand after sweep of sand,  
Here ivory smooth, here cloven and ridged with flow  
Of channelled waters soft as rain or snow,  
Stretch their lone length at ease beneath the bland  
Grey gleam of skies whose smile on wave and strand  
Shines weary like a man's who smiles to know  
That now no dream can mock his faith with show,  
Not cloud for him seem living sea or land.

Is there an end at all of all this waste,  
These crumbling cliffs defeatured and defaced,  
These ruinous heights of sea-sapped walls that slide  
Seaward with all their banks of bleak blown flowers  
Glad yet of life, ere yet their hope subside  
Beneath the coil of dull dense waves and hours.

## VOS DEOS LAUDAMUS

## THE CONSERVATIVE JOURNALIST'S ANTHEM

'As a matter of fact, no man living, or who ever lived--not CAESAR or PERICLES, not SHAKESPEARE or MICHAEL ANGELO--could confer honour more than he took on entering the House of Lords.'--Saturday Review, December, 15, 1883.

'Clumsy and shallow snobbery--can do no hurt.'--Ibid.

## I

O LORDS our Gods, beneficent, sublime,  
 In the evening, and before the morning flames,  
 We praise, we bless, we magnify your names.  
 The slave is he that serves not; his the crime  
 And shame, who hails not as the crown of Time  
 That House wherein the all-envious world acclaims  
 Such glory that the reflex of it shames  
 All crowns bestowed of men for prose or rhyme.  
 The serf, the cur, the sycophant is he  
 Who feels no cringing motion twitch his knee  
 When from a height too high for Shakespeare nods  
 The wearer of a higher than Milton's crown.  
 Stoop, Chaucer, stoop: Keats, Shelley, Burns, bow  
 down:  
 These have no part with you, O Lords our Gods.

## II

O Lords our Gods, it is not that ye sit  
 Serene above the thunder, and exempt  
 From strife of tongues and casualties that tempt  
 Men merely found by proof of manhood fit  
 For service of their fellows: this is it  
 Which sets you past the reach of Time's attempt,  
 Which gives us right of justified contempt  
 For commonwealths built up by mere men's wit:  
 That gold unlocks not, nor may flatteries ope,  
 The portals of your heaven; that none may hope  
 With you to watch how life beneath you plods,  
 Save for high service given, high duty done;  
 That never was your rank ignobly won:  
 For this we give you praise, O Lords our Gods.

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## III

O Lords our Gods, the times are evil: you  
Redeem the time, because of evil days.  
While abject souls in servitude of praise  
Bow down to heads untitled, and the crew  
Whose honour dwells but in the deeds they do,  
From loftier hearts your nobler servants raise  
More manful salutation: yours are bays  
That not the dawn's plebeian pearls bedew;  
Yours, laurels plucked not of such hands as wove  
Old age its chaplet in Colonos' grove.  
Our time, with heaven and with itself at odds,  
Makes all lands else as seas that seethe and boil;  
But yours are yet the corn and wine and oil,  
And yours our worship yet, O Lords our Gods.

December 15, 1883.

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## CLEAR THE WAY!

CLEAR the way, my lords and lackeys! you have had  
 your day.  
 Here you have your answer--England's yea against  
 your nay:  
 Long enough your house has held you: up, and clear  
 the way!

Lust and falsehood, craft and traffic, precedent and  
 gold,  
 Tongue of courtier, kiss of harlot, promise bought  
 and sold,  
 Gave you heritage of empire over thralls of old.

Now that all these things are rotten, all their gold  
 is rust,  
 Quenched the pride they lived by, dead the faith and  
 cold the lust,  
 Shall their heritage not also turn again to dust?

By the grace of these they reigned, who left their  
 sons their sway:  
 By the grace of these, what England says her lords  
 unsay:  
 Till at last her cry go forth against them--Clear the  
 way!

By the grace of trust in treason knaves have lived  
 and lied:  
 By the force of fear and folly fools have fed their  
 pride:  
 By the strength of sloth and custom reason stands  
 defied.

Lest perchance your reckoning on some latter day be  
 worse,  
 Halt and hearken, lords of land and princes of the  
 purse,  
 Ere the tide be full that comes with blessing and with  
 curse.

Where we stand, as where you sit, scarce falls a  
 sprinkling spray;  
 But the wind that swells, the wave that follows, none  
 shall stay:  
 Spread no more of sail for shipwreck: out, and clear  
 the way!

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## A WORD FOR THE COUNTRY

MEN, born of the land that for ages  
 Has been honoured where freedom was dear,  
 Till your labour wax fat on its wages  
 You shall never be peers of a peer.  
 Where might is, the right is:  
 Long purses make strong swords  
 Let weakness learn meekness:  
 God save the House of Lords!

You are free to consume in stagnation:  
 You are equal in right to obey:  
 You are brothers in bonds, and the nation  
 Is your mother--whose sons are her prey.  
 Those others your brothers,  
 Who toil not, weave, nor till,  
 Refuse you and use you  
 As waiters on their will.

But your fathers bowed down to their masters  
 And obeyed them and served and adored.  
 Shall the sheep not give thanks to their pastors?  
 Shall the serf not give praise to his lord?  
 Time, waning and gaining,  
 Grown other now than then,  
 Needs pastors and masters  
 For sheep, and not for men.

If his grandsire did service in battle,  
 If his grandam was kissed by a king,  
 Must men to my lord be as cattle  
 Or as apes that he leads in a string?  
 To deem so, to dream so,  
 Would bid the world proclaim  
 The dastards for bastards,  
 Not heirs of England's fame.

Not in spite but in right of dishonour,  
 There are actors who trample your boards  
 Till the earth that endures you upon her  
 Grows weary to bear you, my lords.  
 Your token is broken,  
 It will not pass for gold:  
 Your glory looks hoary,  
 Your sun in heaven turns cold.

## APPENDIX A

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They are worthy to reign on their brothers,  
 To contemn them as clods and as carles,  
 Who are Graces by grace of such mothers  
 As brightened the bed of King Charles.  
     What manner of banner,  
     What fame is this they flaunt,  
 That Britain, soul-smitten,  
     Should shrink before their vaunt?

Bright sons of sublime prostitution,  
 You are made of the mire of the street  
 Where your grandmothers walked in pollution  
 Till a coronet shone at their feet.  
     Your graces, whose faces  
     Bear high the bastard's brand,  
 Seem stronger no longer  
     Than all this honest land.

But the sons of her soldiers and seamen,  
 They are worthy forsooth of their hire.  
 If the father won praise from all free men,  
 Shall the sons not exult in their sire?  
     Let money make sunny  
     And power make proud their lives,  
 And feed them and breed them  
     Like drones in drowsiest hives.

But if haply the name be a burden  
 And the souls be no kindred of theirs,  
 Should wise men rejoice in such guerdon  
 Or brave men exult in such heirs?  
     Or rather the father  
     Frown, shamefaced, on the son,  
 And no men but foemen,  
     Deriding, cry 'Well done'?

Let the gold and the land they inherit  
 Pass ever from hand into hand:  
 In right of the forefather's merit  
 Let the gold be the son's, and the land.  
     Soft raiment, rich payment,  
     High place, the state affords;  
 Full measure of pleasure;  
     But now no more, my lords.

Is the future beleaguered with dangers  
 If the poor be far other than slaves?  
 Shall the sons of the land be as strangers  
 In the land of their forefathers' graves?

## APPENDIX A

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Shame were it to bear it,  
 And shame it were to see:  
 If free men you be, men,  
 Let proof proclaim you free.

'But democracy means dissolution:  
 See, laden with clamour and crime,  
 How the darkness of dim revolution  
 Comes deepening the twilight of time!  
 Ah, better the fetter  
 That holds the poor man's hand  
 Than peril of sterile  
 Blind change that wastes the land.

'Gaze forward through clouds that environ;  
 It shall be as it was in the past:  
 Not with dreams, but with blood and with iron,  
 Shall a nation be moulded to last.'  
 So teach they, so preach they,  
 Who dream themselves the dream  
 That hallows the gallows  
 And bids the scaffold stream.

'With a hero at head, and a nation  
 Well gagged and well drilled and well cowed,  
 And a gospel of war and damnation,  
 Has not empire a right to be proud?  
 Fools prattle and tattle  
 Of freedom, reason, right,  
 The beauty of duty,  
 The loveliness of light.

'But we know, we believe it, we see it,  
 Force only has power upon earth.'  
 So be it! and ever so be it  
 For souls that are bestial by birth!  
 Let Prussian with Russian  
 Exchange the kiss of slaves:  
 But sea-folk are free folk  
 By grace of winds and waves.

Has the past from the sepulchres beckoned?  
 Let answer from Englishmen be--  
 No man shall be lord of us reckoned  
 Who is baser, not better, than we.  
 No coward, empowered  
 To soil a brave man's name:  
 For shame's sake and fame's sake,  
 Enough of fame and shame.

## APPENDIX A

314

Fame needs not the golden addition;  
Shame bears it abroad as a brand.  
Let the deed, and no more the tradition,  
Speak out and be heard through the land.  
Pride, rootless and fruitless,  
No longer takes and gives:  
But surer and purer  
The soul of England lives.

He is master and lord of his brothers  
Who is worthier and wiser than they.  
Him only, him surely, shall others,  
Else equal, observe and obey.  
Truth, flawless and awless,  
Do falsehood what it can,  
Makes royal the loyal  
And simple heart of man.

Who are these, then, that England should hearken,  
Who rage and wax wroth and grow pale  
If she turn from the sunsets that darken  
And her ship for the morning set sail?  
Let strangers fear dangers:  
All know, that hold her dear,  
Dishonour upon her  
Can only fall through fear.

Men, born of the landsmen and seamen  
Who served her with souls and with swords,  
She bids you be brothers, and free men,  
And lordless, and fearless of lords.  
She cares not, she dares not  
Care now for gold or steel:  
Light lead her, truth speed her,  
God save the Commonweal!

## APPENDIX A

315

## A WORD FROM THE PSALMIST

Psalm xciv. 8

'Take heed, ye unwise among the people:  
 O ye fools, when will ye understand?'  
 From pulpit or choir beneath the steeple,  
 Though the words be fierce, the tones are bland.  
 But a louder than the Church's echo thunders  
 In the ears of men who may not choose but hear;  
 And the heart in him that hears it leaps and wonders,  
 With triumphant hope astonished, or with fear.  
 For the names whose sound was power awaken  
 Neither love nor reverence now nor dread;  
 Their strongholds and shrines are stormed and  
 taken,  
 Their kingdom and all its works are dead.

## II

Take heed: for the tide of time is risen:  
 It is full not yet, though now so high  
 That spirits and hopes long pent in prison  
 Feel round them a sense of freedom nigh,  
 And a savour keen and sweet of brine and billow,  
 And a murmur deep and strong of deepening strength.  
 Though the watchman dream, with sloth or pride for  
 pillow,  
 And the night be long, not endless is its length.  
 From the springs of dawn, from clouds that sever,  
 From the equal heavens and the eastward sea,  
 The witness comes that endures for ever,  
 Till men be brethren and thralls be free.

## III

But the wind of the wings of dawn expanding  
 Strikes chill on your hearts as change and death.  
 Ye are old, but ye have not understanding;  
 And proud, but your pride is a dead man's  
 breath.  
 And your wise men, toward whose words and signs ye  
 hearken,  
 And your strong men, in whose hands ye put your  
 trust,  
 Strain eyes to behold but clouds and dreams that darken,

## APPENDIX A

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Stretch hands that can find but weapons red with  
 rust.  
 Their watchword rings, and the night rejoices,  
 But the lark's note laughs at the night-bird's  
 notes--  
 'Is virtue verily found in voices?  
 Or is wisdom won when all win votes?

## IV

'Take heed, ye unwise indeed, who listen  
 When the wind's wings beat and shift and  
 change;  
 Whose hearts are uplift, whose eyeballs glisten,  
 With desire of new things great and strange.  
 Let not dreams misguide nor any visions wrong you:  
 That which has been, it is now as it was then.  
 Is not Compromise of old a god among you?  
 Is not Precedent indeed a king of men?  
 But the windy hopes that lead mislead you,  
 And the sounds ye hear are void and vain,  
 Is a vote a coat? will franchise feed you,  
 Or words be a roof against the rain?

## V

'Eight ages are gone since kingship entered,  
 With knights and peers at its harnessed back,  
 And the land, no more in its own strength centred,  
 Was cast for a prey to the princely pack.  
 But we pared the fangs and clipped the ravening  
 claws of it,  
 And good was in time brought forth of an evil thing,  
 And the land's highname waxed lordlier in war  
 because of it,  
 When chartered Right had bridled and curbed the  
 king.  
 And what so fair has the world beholden,  
 And what so firm has withstood the years,  
 As Monarchy bound in chains all golden,  
 And Freedom guarded about with peers?

## VI

'How think ye? know not your lords and masters  
 What collars are meet for brawling throats?  
 Is change not mother of strange disasters?  
 Shall plague or peril be stayed by votes?

Out of precedent and privilege and order  
 Have we plucked the flower of compromise, whose  
 root  
 Bears blossoms that shine from border again to border,  
 And the mouths of many are fed with its temperate  
 fruit.  
 Your masters are wiser than ye, their henchmen:  
 Your lords know surely whereof ye have need.  
 Equality? Fools, would you fain be Frenchmen?  
 Is equity more than a word indeed?

## VII

'Your voices, forsooth, your most sweet voices,  
 Your worthy voices, your love, your hate,  
 Your choice, who know not whereof your choice is,  
 What stays are these for a stable state?  
 Inconstancy, blind and deaf with its own fierce babble,  
 Swells ever your throats with storm of uncertain  
 cheers:  
 He leans on straws who leans on a light-souled rabble;  
 His trust is frail who puts not his trust in peers.'  
 So shrills the message whose word convinces  
 Of righteousness knaves, of wisdom fools;  
 That serfs may boast them because of princes,  
 And the weak rejoice that the strong man rules.

## VIII

True friends, ye people, are these, the faction  
 Full-mouthed that flatters and snarls and bays,  
 That fawns and foams with alternate action  
 And mocks the names that it soils with praise.  
 As from fraud and force their power had first beginning,  
 So by righteousness and peace it may not stand,  
 But by craft of state and nets of secret spinning,  
 Words that weave and unweave wiles like ropes of  
 sand,  
 Form, custom, and gold, and laws grown hoary,  
 And strong tradition that guards the gate:  
 To these, O people, to these give glory,  
 That your name among nations may be great.

## IX

How long--for haply not now much longer--  
 Shall fear put faith in a faithless creed,  
 And shapes and shadows of truths be stronger

In strong men's eyes than the truth indeed?  
If freedom be not a word that dies when spoken,  
If justice be not a dream whence men must wake,  
How shall not the bonds of the thraldom of old be  
broken,  
And right put might in the hands of them that break?  
For clear as a tocsin from the steeple  
Is the cry gone forth along the land,  
Take heed, ye unwise among the people:  
O ye fools, when will ye understand?

## RONDEAUX PARISIENS

## i.

Chaste France is ashamed of such infamies--common  
elsewhere--  
As never, O never, in Paris were dreamt of or named;  
At the mention of London, and vices habitual there,  
Chaste France is ashamed.

She covers the maidenly face which herself has  
proclaimed  
As purer and fairer than any most pure and most fair,  
And averts from corruption her eyes with abhorrence  
inflamed.

How well it becomes her, that virginal innocent air!  
How shameful it seems that such virtue was ever  
defamed!  
For now at a whisper of evil, her children declare,  
Chaste France is ashamed.

## APPENDIX A

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## TO A SEAMEW

When I had wings, my brother,  
 Such wings were mine as thine:  
 Such life my heart remembers  
 In all as wild Septembers  
 As this when life seems other,  
 Though sweet, than once was mine;  
 When I had wings, my brother,  
 Such wings were mine as thine.

Such life as thrills and quickens  
 The silence of thy flight,  
 Or fills thy note's elation  
 With lordlier exultation  
 Than man's, whose faint heart sickens  
 With hopes and fears that blight  
 Such life as thrills and quickens  
 The silence of thy flight.

Thy cry from windward clanging  
 Makes all the cliffs rejoice;  
 Though storm clothe seas with sorrow,  
 Thy call salutes the morrow;  
 While shades of pain seem hanging  
 Round earth's most rapturous voice,  
 Thy cry from windward clanging  
 Makes all the cliffs rejoice.

We, sons and sires of seamen,  
 Whose home is all the sea,  
 What place man may, we claim it;  
 But thine--whose thought may name it?  
 Free birds live higher than freemen,  
 And gladlier ye than we--  
 We, sons and sires of seamen,  
 Whose home is all the sea.

For you the storm sounds only  
 More notes of more delight  
 Than earth's in sunniest weather:  
 When heaven and sea together  
 Join strengths against the lonely  
 Lost bark borne down by night,  
 For you the storm sounds only  
 More notes of more delight.

## APPENDIX A

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With wider wing, and louder  
 Long clarion-call of joy,  
 Thy tribe salutes the terror  
 Of darkness, wild as error,  
 But sure as truth, and prouder  
 Than waves with man for toy;  
 With wider wing, and louder  
 Long clarion-call of joy.

The wave's wing spreads and flutters,  
 The wave's heart swells and breaks;  
 One moment's passion thrills it,  
 One pulse of power fulfils it  
 And ends the pride it utters  
 When, loud with life that quakes,  
 The wave's wing spreads and flutters,  
 The wave's heart swells and breaks.

But thine and thou, my brother,  
 Keep heart and wing more high  
 Than aught may scare or sunder;  
 The waves whose throats are thunder  
 Fall hurtling each on other,  
 And triumph as they die;  
 But thine and thou, my brother,  
 Keep heart and wing more high.

More high than wrath or anguish,  
 More strong than pride or fear,  
 The sense or soul half hidden  
 In thee, for us forbidden,  
 Bids thee nor change nor languish,  
 But live thy life as here,  
 More high than wrath or anguish,  
 More strong than pride or fear.

We are fallen, even we, whose passion  
 On earth is nearest thine;  
 Who sing, and cease from flying;  
 Who live, and dream of dying:  
 Grey time, in time's grey fashion,  
 Bids wingless creatures pine:  
 We are fallen, even we, whose passion  
 On earth is nearest thine.

The lark knows no such rapture,  
 Such joy no nightingale,

## APPENDIX A

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As sways the songless measure  
 Wherein thy wings take pleasure:  
 Thy love may no man capture,  
   Thy pride may no man quail;  
 The lark knows no such rapture,  
   Such joy no nightingale.

And we, whom dreams embolden,  
   We can but creep and sing  
 And watch through heaven's waste hollow  
 The flight no sight may follow  
 To the utter bourne beholden  
   Of none that lack thy wing:  
 And we, whom dreams embolden,  
   We can but creep and sing.

Our dreams have wings that falter,  
   Our hearts bear hopes that die;  
 For thee no dream could better  
 A life no fears may fetter,  
 A pride no care can alter,  
   That wots not whence or why  
 Our dreams have wings that falter,  
   Our hearts bear hopes that die.

With joy more fierce and sweeter  
   Than joys we deem divine  
 Their lives, by time untarnished,  
 Are girt about and garnished,  
 Who match the wave's full metre  
   And drink the wind's wild wine  
 With joy more fierce and sweeter  
   Than joys we deem divine.

Ah, well were I for ever,  
   Wouldst thou change lives with me,  
 And take my song's wild honey,  
 And give me back thy sunny  
 Wide eyes that weary never,  
   And wings that search the sea;  
 Ah, well were I for ever,  
   Wouldst thou change lives with me.

BEACHY HEAD, September 1886.

## A BABY'S EPITAPH

APRIL made me: winter laid me here away asleep.  
Bright as Maytime was my daytime; night is soft  
and deep:  
Though the morrow bring forth sorrow, well are ye  
that weep.

Ye that held me dear beheld me not a twelvemonth  
long:  
All the while ye saw me smile, ye knew not whence  
the song  
Came that made me smile, and laid me here, and  
wrought you wrong.

Angels, calling from your brawling world one un-  
defiled,  
Homeward bade me, and forbade me here to rest  
beguiled:  
Here I sleep not: pass, and weep not here upon  
your child.

## APPENDIX A

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## NEAP-TIDE

Far off is the sea, and the land is afar:  
 The low banks reach at the sky,  
 Seen hence, and are heavenward high;  
 Though light for the leap of a boy they are  
 And the far sea late was nigh.

The fair wild fields and the circling downs,  
 The bright sweet marshes and meads  
 All glorious with flowerlike weeds,  
 The great grey churches, the sea-washed towns,  
 Recede as a dream recedes.

The world draws back, and the world's light wanes,  
 As a dream dies down and is dead;  
 And the clouds and the gleams overhead  
 Change, and change; and the sea remains,  
 A shadow of dreamlike dread.

Wild, and woful, and pale, and grey,  
 A shadow of sleepless fear,  
 A corpse with the night for bier,  
 The fairest thing that beholds the day  
 Lies haggard and hopeless here.

And the wind's wings, broken and spent, subside;  
 And the dumb waste world is hoar,  
 And strange as the sea the shore;  
 And shadows of shapeless dreams abide  
 Where life may abide no more.

A sail to seaward, a sound from shoreward,  
 And the spell were broken that seems  
 To reign in a world of dreams  
 Where vainly the dreamer's feet make forward  
 And vainly the low sky gleams.

The sea-forsaken forlorn deep-wrinkled  
 Salt slanting stretches of sand  
 That slope to the seaward hand,  
 Were they fain of the ripples that flashed and twinkled  
 And laughed as they struck the strand?

## APPENDIX A

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As bells on the reins of the fairies ring  
The ripples that kissed them rang,  
The light from the sundawn sprang,  
And the sweetest of songs that the world may sing  
Was theirs when the full sea sang.

Now no light is in heaven; and now  
Not a note of the sea-wind's tune  
Rings hither: the bleak sky's boon  
Grants hardly sight of a grey sun's brow--  
A sun more sad than the moon.

More sad than a moon that clouds beleaguer  
And storm is a scourge to smite,  
The sick sun's shadowlike light  
Grows faint as the clouds and the waves wax eager,  
And withers away from sight.

The day's heart cowers, and the night's heart quickens:  
Full fain would the day be dead  
And the stark night reign in his stead:  
The sea falls dumb as the sea-fog thickens  
And the sunset dies for dread.

Outside of the range of time, whose breath  
Is keen as the manslayer's knife  
And his peace but a truce for strife,  
Who knows if haply the shadow of death  
May be not the light of life?

For the storm and the rain and the darkness borrow  
But an hour from the suns to be,  
But a strange swift passage, that we  
May rejoice, who have mourned not to-day, to-morrow,  
In the sun and the wind and the sea.

## THE COMMONWEAL

## A SONG FOR UNIONISTS

MEN, whose fathers braved the world in arms against  
 our isles in union,  
 Men, whose brothers met rebellion face to face,  
 Show the hearts ye have, if worthy long descent and  
 high communion,  
 Show the spirits, if unbroken, of your race.

What are these that howl and hiss across the strait  
 of westward water?  
 What is he who floods our ears with speech in flood?  
 See the long tongue lick the dripping hand that smokes  
 and reeks of slaughter!  
 See the man of words embrace the man of blood!

Hear the plea whereby the tonguester mocks and  
 charms the gazing gaper--  
 'We are they whose works are works of love and peace;  
 Till disunion bring forth union, what is union, sirs,  
 but paper?  
 Break and rend it, then shall trust and strength  
 increase.'

Who would fear to trust a double-faced but single-  
 hearted dreamer,  
 Pure of purpose, clean of hand, and clear of guile?  
 'Life is well-nigh spent,' he sighs; 'you call me  
 shuffler, trickster, schemer?  
 I am old--when young men yell at me, I smile.'

Many a year that priceless light of life has trembled,  
 we remember,  
 On the platform of extinction--unextinct;  
 Many a month has been for him the long year's last--  
 life's calm December:  
 Can it be that he who said so, saying so, winked?

No; the lust of life, the thirst for work and days with  
 work to do in,  
 Drove and drives him down the road of splendid  
 shame;  
 All is well, if o'er the monument recording England's  
 ruin

## APPENDIX A

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Time shall read, inscribed in triumph, Gladstone's  
name.

Thieves and murderers, hands yet red with blood and  
tongues yet black with lies,  
Clap and clamour--'Parnell spurs his Gladstone  
well!'  
Truth, unscared and undeluded by their praise or  
blame, replies--  
'Is the goal of fraud and bloodshed heaven or  
hell?'

Old men eloquent, who truckle to the traitors of the  
time,  
Love not office--power is no desire of theirs:  
What if yesterday their hearts recoiled from blood  
and fraud and crime?  
Conscience erred--an error which to-day repairs.

Conscience only now convinces them of strange  
though transient error:  
Only now they see how fair is treason's face;  
See how true the falsehood, just the theft, and blame-  
less is the terror,  
Which replaces just and blameless men in place.

Place and time decide the right and wrong of thought  
and word and action;  
Crime is black as hell, till virtue gain its vote;  
Then--but ah, to think or say so smacks of fraud or  
smells of faction!--  
Mercy holds the door while Murder hacks the  
throat.

Murder? Treason? Theft? Poor brothers who  
succumb to such temptations,  
Shall we lay on you or take on us the blame?  
Reason answers, and religion echoes round to wonder-  
ing nations,  
'Not with Ireland, but with England rests the  
shame.'

Reason speaks through mild religion's organ, loud  
and long and lusty--  
Profit speaks through lips of patriots pure and  
true--

## APPENDIX A

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'English friends, whose trust we ask for, has not  
England found us trusty?  
Not for us we seek advancement, but for you.

'Far and near the world bears witness of our wisdom,  
courage, honour;  
Egypt knows if there our fame burns bright or  
dim.  
Let but England trust as Gordon trusted, soon shall  
come upon her  
Such deliverance as our daring brought on him.

'Far and wide the world rings record of our faith,  
our constant dealing,  
Love of country, truth to friends, contempt for foes.  
Sign once more the bond of trust in us that here  
awaits but sealing,  
We will give yet more than all our record shows.

'Perfect ruin, shame eternal, everlasting degradation,  
Freedom bought and sold, truth bound and treason  
free.'  
Yet an hour is here for answer; now, if here be yet  
a nation,  
Answer, England, man by man from sea to sea!

June 30, 1886.

## APPENDIX A

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## APOSTASY

Et Judas m'a dit: Traître!--Victor Hugo.

## I

TRUTHS change with time, and terms with truth.  
 To-day  
 A statesman worships union, and to-night  
 Disunion. Shame to have sinned against the  
 light  
 Confounds not but impels his tongue to unsay  
 What yestereve he swore. Should fear make way  
 For treason? honour change her livery? fright  
 Clasp hands with interest? wrong pledge faith  
 with right?  
 Religion, mercy, conscience, answer--Yea.

To veer is not to veer: when votes are weighed,  
 The numerous tongue approves him renegade  
 Who cannot change his banner: he that can  
 Sits crowned with wreaths of praise too pure to fade.  
 Truth smiles applause on treason's poisonous plan:  
 And Cleon is an honourable man.

## II

Pure faith, fond hope, sweet love, with God for guide,  
 Move now the men whose blameless error cast  
 In prison (ah, but love condones the past!)  
 Their subject knaves that were--their lords that ride  
 Now laughing on their necks, and now bestride  
 Their vassal backs in triumph. Faith stands fast  
 Though fear haul down the flag that crowned her  
 mast  
 And hope and love proclaim that truth has lied.

Turn, turn, and turn--so bids the still small voice,  
 The changeless voice of honour. He that  
 stands  
 Where all his life he stood, with bribeless  
 hands,  
 With tongue unhired to mourn, reprove, rejoice,

## APPENDIX A

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Curse, bless, forswear, and swear again, and  
 lie,  
 Stands proven apostate in the apostate's eye.

## III

Fraud shrinks from faith: at sight of swans, the  
 raven  
 Chides blackness, and the snake recoils aghast  
 In fear of poison when a bird flies past.  
 Thersites brands Achilles as a craven;  
 The shoal fed full with shipwreck blames the  
 haven  
 For murderous lust of lives devoured, and vast  
 Desire of doom whose feast is mercy's fast:  
 And Bacon sees the traitor's mark engraven  
 Full on the front of Essex. Grief and shame  
 Obscure the chaste and sunlike spirit of Oates  
 At thought of Russell's treason; and the name  
 Of Lilton sickens with superb disgust  
 The heaving heart of Waller. Wisdom dotes.  
 If wisdom turns not tail and licks not dust.

## IV

The sole sweet land found fit to wed the sea,  
 With reptile rebels at her heel of old,  
 Set hard her heel upon them, and controlled  
 The cowering poisonous peril. How should she  
 Cower, and resign her trust of empire? Free  
 As winds and waters live the loyal-souled  
 And true-born sons that love her: nay, the bold  
 Base knaves who curse her name have leave to be  
 The loud-tongued liars they are. For she, beyond  
 All woful years that bid men's hearts despond,  
 Sees yet the likeness of her ancient fame  
 Burn from the heavenward heights of history, hears  
 Not Leicester's name but Sidney's--faith's, not fear's  
 Not Gladstone's now but only Gordon's name.

## THE BALLADE OF TRUTHFUL CHARLES

Charles Stuart, the crownless king whose hand  
 Sways Erin's sceptre,--so they sing,  
 The bards of holy Liarland--  
 Can give his tongue such scope and swing,  
 So smooth of speech, so sure of sting,  
 That all who feel its touch must dread it:  
 But now we hear it witnessing--  
 "I meant to cheat you when I said it."

Base England felt his vocal brand  
 Burn on her blushless brow, and cling  
 Like fire: though grave and calm and bland,  
 His voice could touch so deep a string,  
 That souls more pure than flowers in spring  
 Were moved to follow where he led; it  
 Rang out so true: we hear it ring--  
 "I meant to cheat you when I said it."

Convinced, appalled, confused, unmanned,  
 We see, spashed black with mud they fling,  
 Parnells and Pigotts lie or stand;  
 We see their faith, how pure a thing,  
 Their cause, how past all challenging;  
 We read their creed, as Gladsniff read it  
 And worshipped. Then a word takes wing--  
 "I meant to cheat you when I said it."

Prince of pure patriots, "blameless king,"  
 Is this conducive to your credit?  
 No shift, no plea but this to bring?  
 "I meant to cheat you when I said it."

A SEQUENCE OF SONNETS  
ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING

## V

Among the wondrous ways of men and time  
He went as one that ever found and sought  
And bore in hand the lamplike spirit of thought  
To illumine with instance of its fire sublime  
The dusk of many a cloudlike age and clime.  
No spirit in shape of light and darkness wrought,  
No faith, no fear, no dream, no rapture, nought  
That blooms in wisdom, nought that burns in crime,  
No virtue girt and armed and helmed with light,  
No love more lovely than the snows are white,  
No serpent sleeping in some dead soul's tomb,  
No song-bird singing from some live soul's height,  
But he might hear, interpret, or illumine  
With sense invasive as the dawn of doom.

## APPENDIX A

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## A SWIMMER'S DREAM

NOVEMBER 4, 1889

Somno mollior unda

## I

DAWN is dim on the dark soft water,  
 Soft and passionate, dark and sweet.  
 Love's own self was the deep sea's daughter,  
 Fair and flawless from face to feet,  
 Hailed of all when the world was golden,  
 Loved of lovers whose names beholden  
 Thrill men's eyes as with light of olden  
 Days more glad than their flight was fleet.

So they sang: but for men that love her,  
 Souls that hear not her word in vain,  
 Earth beside her and heaven above her  
 Seem but shadows that wax and wane.  
 Softer than sleep's are the sea's caresses,  
 Kinder than love's that betrays and blesses,  
 Blither than spring's when her flowerful tresses  
 Shake forth sunlight and shine with rain.

All the strength of the waves that perish  
 Swells beneath me and laughs and sighs,  
 Sighs for love of the life they cherish,  
 Laughs to know that it lives and dies,  
 Dies for joy of its life, and lives  
 Thrilled with joy that its brief death gives--  
 Death whose laugh or whose breath forgives  
 Change that bids it subside and rise.

## II

Hard and heavy, remote but nearing,  
 Sunless hangs the severe sky's weight,  
 Cloud on cloud, though the wind be veering  
 Heaped on high to the sundawn's gate.  
 Dawn and even and noon are one,  
 Veiled with vapour and void of sun;  
 Nought in sight or in fancied hearing  
 Now less mighty than time or fate.

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The grey sky gleams and the grey seas glimmer,  
 Pale and sweet as a dream's delight,  
 As a dream's where darkness and light seem dimmer,  
 Touched by dawn or subdued by night.  
 The dark wind, stern and sublime and sad,  
 Swings the rollers to westward, clad  
 With lustrous shadow that lures the swimmer,  
 Lures and lulls him with dreams of light.

Light, and sleep, and delight, and wonder,  
 Change, and rest, and a charm of cloud,  
 Fill the world of the skies whereunder  
 Heaves and quivers and pants aloud  
 All the world of the waters, hoary  
 Now, but clothed with its own live glory,  
 That mates the lightning and mocks the thunder  
 With light more living and word more proud.

## III

Far off westward, whither sets the sounding strife,  
 Strife more sweet than peace, of shoreless waves  
 whose glee  
 Scorns of the shore and loves the wind that leaves  
 them free,  
 Strange as sleep and pale as death and fair as life,  
 Shifts the moonlight-coloured sunshine on the sea.

Toward the sunset's goal the sunless waters crowd,  
 Fast as autumn days toward winter: yet is seems  
 Here that autumn wanes not, here that woods and  
 streams  
 Lose not heart and change not likeness, chilled and  
 bowed,  
 Warped and wrinkled: here the days are fair as  
 dreams.

## IV

O russet-robed November,  
 What ails thee so to smile?  
 Chill August, pale September,  
 Endured a woful while,  
 And fell as falls an ember  
 From forth a flameless pile:

## APPENDIX A

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But golden-girt November  
 Bids all she looks on smile.

The lustrous foliage, waning  
 As wanes the morning moon,  
 Here falling, here refraining,  
 Outbraves the pride of June  
 With statelier semblance, feigning  
 No fear lest death be soon:  
 As though the woods thus waning  
 Should wax to meet the moon.

As though, when fields lie stricken  
 By grey December's breath,  
 These lordlier growths that sicken  
 And die for fear of death  
 Should feel the sense requicken  
 That hears what springtide saith  
 And thrills for love, spring-stricken  
 And pierced with April's breath.

The keen white-winged north-easter  
 That stings and spurs thy sea  
 Doth yet but feed and feast her  
 With glowing sense of glee:  
 Calm chained her, storm released her,  
 And storm's glad voice was he:  
 South-wester or north-easter,  
 Thy winds rejoice the sea.

## V

A dream, a dream is it all--the season,  
 The sky, the water, the wind, the shore?  
 A day-born dream of divine unreason,  
 A marvel moulded of sleep--no more?  
 For the cloudlike wave that my limbs while cleaving  
 Feel as in slumber beneath them heaving  
 Soothes the sense as to slumber, leaving  
 Sense of nought that was known of yore.

A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,  
 A peace more happy than lives on land,  
 Fulfils with pulse of diviner pleasure  
 The dreaming head and the steering hand.  
 I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,

## APPENDIX A

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The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,  
And close mine eyes for delight past measure,  
And wish the wheel of the world would stand.

The wild-winged hour that we fain would capture  
Falls as from heaven that its light feet clomb,  
So brief, so soft, and so full the rapture  
Was felt that soothed me with sense of home.  
To sleep, to swim, and to dream, for ever--  
Such joy the vision of man saw never;  
For here too soon will a dark day sever  
The sea-bird's wing from the sea-wave's foam.

A dream, and more than a dream, and dimmer  
At once and brighter than dreams that flee,  
The moment's joy of the seaward swimmer  
Abides, remembered as truth may be.  
Not all the joy and not all the glory  
Must fade as leaves when the woods wax hoary;  
For there the downs and the sea-banks glimmer,  
And here to south of them swells the sea.

THE BALLAD OF MELICERTES  
 IN MEMORY OF THÉODORE DE BANVILLE

Death, a light outshining life, bids heaven resume  
 Star by star the souls whose light made earth divine.  
 Death, a night outshining day, sees burn and bloom  
 Flower by flower, and sun by sun, the fames that shine  
 Deathless, higher than life beheld their sovereign sign.  
 Dead Simonides of Ceos, late restored,  
 Given again of God, again by man deplored,  
 Shone but yestereve, a glory frail as breath.  
 Frail? But fame's breath quickens, kindles, keeps in ward,  
 Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Mother's love, and rapture of the sea, whose womb  
 Breeds eternal life of joy that stings like brine,  
 Pride of song, and joy to dare the singer's doom,  
 Sorrow soft as sleep and laughter bright as wine,  
 Flushed and filled with fragrant fire his lyric line.  
 As the sea-shell utters, like a stricken chord,  
 Music uttering all the sea's within it stored,  
 Poet well-beloved, whose praise our sorrow saith,  
 So thy songs retain thy soul, and so record  
 Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Side by side we mourned at Gautier's golden tomb:  
 Here in spirit now I stand and mourn at thine.  
 Yet no breath of death strikes thence, no shadow of gloom,  
 Only light more bright than gold of the inmost mine,  
 Only steam of incense warm from love's own shrine.  
 Not the darkling stream, the sundering Stygian ford,  
 Not the hour that smites and severs as a sword,  
 Not the night subduing light that perisheth,  
 Smite, subdue, divide from us by doom abhorred,  
 Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Prince of song more sweet than honey, lyric lord,  
 Not thy France here only mourns a light adored,  
 One whose love-lit fame the world inheriteth.  
 Strangers too, now brethren, hail with heart's accord  
 Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

## APPENDIX A

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## MUSIC: AN ODE

## I

Was it light that spake from the darkness, or music  
 that shone from the word,  
 When the night was enkindled with sound of the sun  
 or the first-born bird?  
 Souls enthralled and entrammelled in bondage of seasons  
 that fall and rise,  
 Bound fast round with the fetters of flesh, and blinded  
 with light that dies,  
 Lived not surely till music spake, and the spirit of  
 life was heard.

## II

Music, sister of sunrise, and herald of life to be,  
 Smiled as dawn on the spirit of man, and the thrall  
 was free.  
 Slave of nature and serf of time, the bondman of life  
 and death,  
 Dumb with passionless patience that breathed but  
 forlorn and reluctant breath,  
 Heard, beheld, and his soul made answer, and communed  
 aloud with the sea.

## III

Morning spake, and he heard: and the passionate  
 silent noon  
 Kept for him not silence: and soft from the mounting  
 moon  
 Fell the sound of her splendour, heard as dawn's in  
 the breathless night,  
 Not of men but of birds whose note bade man's soul  
 quicken and leap to light:  
 And the song of it spake, and the light and the darkness  
 of earth were as chords in tune.

## APPENDIX A

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## THE UNION

## I

THREE in one, but one in three,  
 God, who girt her with the sea,  
 Bade our Commonweal to be:  
     Nought, if now not one.  
 Though fraud and fear would sever  
 The bond assured for ever,  
 Their shameful strength shall never  
     Undo what heaven has done.

## II

South and North and West and East  
 Watch the ravens flock to feast,  
 Dense as round some death-struck beast,  
     Black as night is black.  
 Stand fast as faith together  
 In stress of treacherous weather  
 When hounds and wolves break tether  
     And Treason guides the pack.

## III

Lovelier than thy seas are strong,  
 Glorious Ireland, sword and song  
 Gird and crown thee: none may wrong,  
     Save thy sons alone.  
 The sea that laughs around us  
 Hath sundered not but bound us:  
 The sun's first rising found us  
     Throned on its equal throne.

## IV

North and South and East and West,  
 All true hearts that wish thee best  
 Beat one tune and own one quest,  
     Staunch and sure as steel.  
 God guard from dark disunion  
 Our threefold State's communion,  
 God save the loyal Union,  
     The royal Commonweal!

## APPENDIX A

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## THE PALACE OF PAN

## INSCRIBED TO MY MOTHER

SEPTEMBER, all glorious with gold, as a king  
 In the radiance of triumph attired,  
 Outlightening the summer, outsweetening the spring,  
 Broods wide on the woodlands with limitless wing,  
 A presence of all men desired.

Far eastward and westward the sun-coloured lands  
 Smile warm as the light on them smiles;  
 And statelier than temples upbuilt with hands,  
 Tall column by column, the sanctuary stands  
 Of the pine-forest's infinite aisles.

Lute worship, too fervent for praise or for prayer,  
 Possesses the spirit with peace,  
 Fulfilled with the breath of the luminous air,  
 The fragrance, the silence, the shadows as fair  
 As the rays that recede or increase.

Ridged pillars that redden aloft and aloof,  
 With never a branch for a nest,  
 Sustain the sublime indivisible roof,  
 To the storm and the sun in his majesty proof,  
 And awful as waters at rest.

Man's hand hath not measured the height of them;  
 thought  
 May measure not, awe may not know;  
 In its shadow the woofs of the woodland are wrought;  
 As a bird is the sun in the toils of them caught,  
 And the flakes of it scattered as snow.

As the shreds of a plumage of gold on the ground  
 The sun-flakes by multitudes lie,  
 Shed loose as the petals of roses discrowned  
 On the floors of the forest engilt and embrowned  
 And reddened afar and anigh.

Dim centuries with darkling inscrutable hands  
 Have reared and secluded the shrine  
 For gods that we know not, and kindled as brands

## APPENDIX A

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On the altar the years that are dust, and their sands  
Time's glass has forgotten for sign.

A temple whose transepts are measured by miles,  
Whose chancel has morning for priest,  
Whose floor-work the foot of no spoiler defiles,  
Whose musical silence no music beguiles,  
No festivals limit its feast.

The noon's ministration, the night's and the dawn's,  
Conceals not, reveals not for man,  
On the slopes of the herbless and blossomless lawns,  
Some track of a nymph's or some trail of a faun's  
To the place of the slumber of Pan.

Thought, kindled and quickened by worship and  
wonder  
To rapture too sacred for fear  
On the ways that unite or divide them in sunder,  
Alone may discern if about them or under  
Be token or trace of him here.

With passionate awe that is deeper than panic  
The spirit subdued and unshaken  
Takes heed of the godhead terrene and Titanic  
Whose footfall is felt on the breach of volcanic  
Sharp steeps that their fire has forsaken.

By a spell more serene than the dim necromantic  
Dead charms of the past and the night,  
Or the terror that lurked in the noon to make frantic  
Where Etna takes shape from the limbs of gigantic  
Dead gods disanointed of might,

The spirit made one with the spirit whose breath  
Makes noon in the woodland sublime  
Abides as entranced in a presence that saith  
Things loftier than life and serener than death,  
Triumphant and silent as time.

PINE RIDGE, September 1893.

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## A DIRGE

A BELL tolls on in my heart  
As though in my ears a knell  
Had ceased for awhile to swell,  
But the sense of it would not part  
From the spirit that bears its part  
In the chime of the soundless bell.

Ah dear dead singer of sorrow,  
The burden is now not thine  
That grief bade sound for a sign  
Through the songs of the night whose morrow  
Has risen, and I may not borrow  
A beam from its radiant shrine.

The burden has dropped from thee  
That grief on thy life bound fast;  
The winter is over and past  
Whose end thou wast fain to see.  
Shall sorrow not comfort me  
That is thine no longer--at last?

Good day, good night, and good morrow,  
Men living and mourning say.  
For thee we could only pray  
That night of the day might borrow  
Such comfort as dreams lend sorrow:  
Death gives thee at last good day.

## APPENDIX A

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## LOCH TORRIDON

To E. H.

The dawn of night more fair than morning rose,  
 Stars hurrying forth on stars, as snows on snows  
 Haste when the wind and winter bid them speed.  
 Vague miles of moorland road behind us lay  
 Scarce traversed ere the day  
 Sank, and the sun forsook us at our need,  
 Belated. Where we thought to have rested, rest  
 Was none; for soft Maree's dim quivering breast,  
 Bound round with gracious inland girth of green  
 And fearless of the wild wave-wandering West,  
 Shone shelterless for strangers; and unseen  
 The goal before us lay  
 Of all our blithe and strange and strenuous day.

For when the northering road faced westward--when  
 The dark sharp sudden gorge dropped seaward--then,  
 Beneath the stars, between the steeps, the track  
 We followed, lighted not of moon or sun,  
 And plunging whither none  
 Might guess, while heaven and earth were hoar and black,  
 Seemed even the dim still pass whence none turns back:  
 And through the twilight leftward of the way,  
 And down the dark, with many a laugh and leap,  
 The light blithe hill-streams shone from scaur to steep  
 In glittering pride of play;  
 And ever while the night grew great and deep  
 We felt but saw not what the hills would keep  
 Sacred awhile from sense of moon or star;  
 And full and far  
 Beneath us, sweet and strange as heaven may be,  
 The sea.

The very sea; no mountain-moulded lake  
 Whose fluctuant shapeliness is fain to take  
 Shape from the steadfast shore that rules it round,  
 And only from the storms a casual sound:  
 The sea, that harbours in her heart sublime  
 The supreme heart of music deep as time,  
 And in her spirit strong  
 The spirit of all imaginable song.

Not a whisper or lisp from the waters: the skies were  
 not silenter. Peace

## APPENDIX A

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Was between them; a passionless rapture of respite as  
 soft as release.  
 Not a sound, but a sense that possessed and pervaded  
 with patient delight  
 The soul and the body, clothed round with the comfort  
 of limitless night.

Night infinite, living, adorable, loved of the land  
 and the sea:  
 Night, mother of mercies, who saith to the spirits in  
 prison, Be free.  
 And softer than dewfall, and kindlier than starlight,  
 and keener than wine,  
 Came round us the fragrance of waters, the life of the  
 breath of the brine.  
 We saw not, we heard not, the face or the voice of the  
 waters: we knew  
 By the darkling delight of the wind as the sense of the  
 sea in it grew,  
 By the pulse of the darkness about us enkindled and  
 quickened, that here,  
 Unseen and unheard by us, surely the goal we had faith  
 in was near.  
 A silence diviner than music, a darkness diviner than  
 light,  
 Fulfilled as from heaven with a measureless comfort  
 the measure of night.

But never a roof for shelter  
 And never a sign for guide  
 Rose doubtful or visible: only  
 And hardly and gladly we heard  
 The soft waves whisper and welter,  
 Subdued, and allured to subside,  
 By the mild night's magic: the lonely  
 Sweet silence was soothed, not stirred,  
 By the noiseless noise of the gleaming  
 Glad ripples, that played and sighed,  
 Kissed, laughed, recoiled, and relented,  
 Whispered, flickered, and fled.  
 No season was this for dreaming  
 How oft, with a stormier tide,  
 Had the wrath of the winds been vented  
 On sons of the tribes long dead:  
 The tribes whom time, and the changes  
 Of things, and the stress of doom,  
 Have erased and effaced; forgotten  
 As wrecks or weeds of the shore

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In sight of the stern hill-ranges  
 That hardly may change their gloom  
 When the fruits of the years wax rotten  
 And the seed of them springs no more.  
 For the dim strait footway dividing  
 The waters that breathed below  
 Led safe to the kindest of shelters  
 That ever awoke into light:  
 And still in remembrance abiding  
 Broods over the stars that glow  
 And the water that eddies and welters  
 The passionate peace of the night.

All night long, in the world of sleep,  
 Skies and waters were soft and deep:  
 Shadow clothed them, and silence made  
 Soundless music of dream and shade:  
 All above us, the livelong night,  
 Shadow, kindled with sense of light;  
 All around us, the brief night long,  
 Silence, laden with sense of song.  
 Stars and mountains without, we knew,  
 Watched and waited, the soft night through:  
 All unseen, but divined and dear,  
 Thrilled the touch of the sea's breath near:  
 All unheard, but alive like sound,  
 Throbbled the sense of the sea's life round:  
 Round us, near us, in depth and height,  
 Soft as darkness and keen as light.

And the dawn leapt in at my casement: and there, as  
 I rose, at my feet  
 No waves of the landlocked waters, no lake submissive  
 and sweet,  
 Soft slave of the lordly seasons, whose breath may  
 loose it or freeze;  
 But to left and to right and ahead was the ripple  
 whose pulse is the sea's.  
 From the gorge we had travelled by starlight the  
 sunrise, winged and aflame,  
 Shone large on the live wide wavelets that shuddered  
 with joy as it came;  
 As it came and caressed and possessed them, till pant-  
 ing and laughing with light  
 From mountain to mountain the water was kindled and  
 stung to delight.  
 And the grey gaunt heights that embraced and con-  
 strained and compelled it were glad,

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And the rampart of rock, stark naked, that thwarted  
and barred it, was clad  
With a stern grey splendour of sunrise: and scarce  
had I sprung to the sea  
When the dawn and the water were wedded, the hills and  
the sky set free.  
The chain of the night was broken: the waves that  
embraced me and smiled  
And flickered and fawned in the sunlight, alive,  
unafraid, undefiled,  
Were sweeter to swim in than air, though fulfilled  
with the mounting morn,  
Could be for the birds whose triumph rejoiced that  
a day was born.

And a day was arisen indeed for us. Years and the  
changes of years  
Clothed round with their joys and their sorrows, and  
dead as their hopes and their fears,  
Lie noteless and nameless, unlit by remembrance or  
record of days  
Worth wonder or memory, or cursing or blessing, or  
passion or praise,  
Between us who live and forget not, but yearn with  
delight in it yet,  
And the day we forget not, and never may live and may  
think to forget.  
And the years that were kindlier and fairer, and  
kindled with pleasures as keen,  
Have eclipsed not with lights or with shadows the light  
on the face of it seen.  
For softly and surely, as nearer the boat that we gazed  
from drew,  
The face of the precipice opened and bade us as birds  
pass through,  
And the bark shot sheer to the sea through the strait  
of the sharp steep cleft,  
The portal that opens with imminent rampires to right  
and to left,  
Sublime as the sky they darken and strange as a spell-  
struck dream,  
On the world unconfined of the mountains, the reign of  
the sea supreme,  
The kingdom of westward waters, wherein when we swam we  
knew  
The waves that we clove were boundless, the wind on our  
brows that blew

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Had swept no land and no lake, and had warred not on  
tower or on tree,  
But came on us hard out of heaven, and alive with the  
soul of the sea.

## APPENDIX A

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## A NEW YEAR'S EVE

Christina Rossetti died December 29, 1894

The stars are strong in the deeps of the lustrous night,  
Cold and splendid as death if his dawn be bright;  
Cold as the cast-off garb that is cold as clay,  
Splendid and strong as a spirit intense as light.

A soul more sweet than the morning of new-born May  
Has passed with the year that has passed from the  
world away.

A song more sweet than the morning's first-born song  
Again will hymn not among us a new year's day.

Not here, not here shall the carol of joy grown strong  
Ring rapture now, and uplift us, a spell-struck throng,  
From dream to vision of life that the soul may see  
By death's grace only, if death do its trust no wrong.

Scarce yet the days and the starry nights are three  
Since here among us a spirit abode as we,  
Girt round with life that is fettered in bonds of time,  
And clasped with darkness about as is earth with sea.

And now, more high than the vision of souls may climb,  
The soul whose song was as music of stars that chime,  
Clothed round with life as of dawn and the mounting sun,  
Sings, and we know not here of the song sublime.

No word is ours of it now that the songs are done  
Whence here we drank of delight as in freedom won,  
In deep deliverance given from the bonds we bore.  
There is none to sing as she sang upon earth, not one.

We heard awhile: and for us who shall hear no more  
The sound as of waves of light on a starry shore  
Awhile bade brighten and yearn as a father's face  
The face of death, divine as in days of yore.

The grey gloom quickened and quivered: the sunless  
place  
Thrilled, and the silence deeper than time or space

## APPENDIX A

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Seemed now not all everlasting. Hope grew strong,  
And love took comfort, given of the sweet song's grace.

Love that finds not on earth, where it finds but wrong,  
Love that bears not the bondage of years in throng  
Shone to show for her, higher than the years that mar,  
The life she looked and longed for as love must long.

Who knows? We know not. Afar, if the dead be far,  
Alive, if the dead be alive as the soul's works are,  
The soul whose breath was among us a heavenward song  
Sings, loves, and shines as it shines for us here a star.

## THE TRANSVAAL

PATIENCE, long sick to death, is dead. Too long  
Have sloth and doubt and treason bidden us be  
What Cromwell's England was not, when the sea  
To him bore witness given of Blake how strong  
She stood, a commonweal that brooked no wrong  
From foes less vile than men like wolves set free  
Whose war is waged where none may fight or flee--  
With women and with weanlings. Speech and song  
Lack utterance now for loathing. Scarce we hear  
Foul tongues that blacken God's dishonoured name  
With prayers turned curses and with praise found  
shame  
Defy the truth whose witness now draws near  
To scourge these dogs, agape with jaws afoam,  
Down out of life. Strike, England, and strike home.

October 9, 1899.

## ASTRAEA VICTRIX

ENGLAND, elect of time,  
 By freedom sealed sublime,  
 And constant as the sun that saw thy dawn  
 Outshine upon the sea  
 His own in heaven, to be  
 A light that night nor day should see withdrawn,  
 If song may speak not now thy praise,  
 Fame writes it higher than song may soar or faith  
 may gaze.

Dark months on months beheld  
 Hope thwarted crossed, and quelled,  
 And heard the heartless hounds of hatred bay  
 Aloud against thee, glad  
 As now their souls are sad  
 Who see their hope in hatred pass away  
 And wither into shame and fear  
 And shudder down to darkness, loth to see or hear

Nought now they hear or see  
 That speaks or shows not thee  
 Triumphant; not as empires reared of yore,  
 The imperial commonweal  
 That bears thy sovereign seal  
 And signs thine orient as thy natural shore  
 Free, as no sons but thine may stand,  
 Steers lifeward ever, guided of thy pilot hand.

Fear, masked and veiled by fraud,  
 Found shameful time to applaud  
 Shame, and bow down thy banner towards the  
 dust,  
 And call on godly shame  
 To desecrate thy name  
 And bid false penitence abjure thy trust:  
 Till England's heart took thought at last,  
 And felt her future kindle from her fiery past.

Then sprang the sunbright fire  
 High as the sun, and higher  
 Than strange men's eyes might watch it undis-  
 mayed:  
 But winds athwart it blew  
 Storm, and the twilight grew

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Darkness awhile, an unenduring shade:  
 And all base birds and beasts of night  
 Saw no more England now to fear, no loathsome light.

All knaves and slaves at heart  
 Who, knowing thee what thou art,  
 Abhor thee, seeing what none save here may see,  
 Strong freedom, taintless truth,  
 Supreme in ageless youth,  
 Howled all their hate and hope aloud at thee  
 While yet the wavering wind of strife  
 Bore hard against her sail whose freight is hope and  
 life.

And now the quickening tide  
 That brings back power and pride  
 To faith and love whose ensign is thy name  
 Bears down the recreant lie  
 That doomed thy name to die,  
 Sons, friends, and foes behold thy star the same  
 As when it stood in heaven a sun  
 And Europe saw no glory left her sky save one.

And now, as then she saw,  
 She sees with shamefast awe  
 How all unlike all slaves and tyrants born  
 Where bondmen champ the bit  
 And anarchs foam and flit,  
 And day mocks day, and year puts year to scorn,  
 Our mother bore us, English men,  
 Ashamed of shame and strong in mercy, now as then.

We loosed not on these knaves  
 Their scourge-tormented slaves:  
 We held the hand that fain had risen to smite  
 The torturer fast, and made  
 Justice awhile afraid,  
 And righteousness forego her ruthless right:  
 We warred not even with these as they;  
 We bade not them they preyed on make of them their  
 prey.

All murderous fraud that lurks  
 In hearts where hell's craft works  
 Fought, crawled, and slew in darkness: they that  
 died  
 Dreamed not of foes too base

## APPENDIX A

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For scorn to grant them grace:  
Men wounded, women, children at their side,  
Had found what faith in fiends may live:  
And yet we gave not back what righteous doom would  
give.

No false white flag that fawns  
On faith till murder dawns  
Blood-red from hell-black treason's heart of hate  
Left ever shame's foul brand  
Seared on an English hand:  
And yet our pride vouchsafes them grace too great  
For other pride to dream of: scorn  
Strikes retribution silent as the stars at morn.

And now the living breath  
Whose life puts death to death,  
Freedom, whose name is England, stirs and thrills  
The burning darkness through  
Whence fraud and slavery grew,  
We scarce may mourn our dead whose fame fulfils  
The record where her foes have read  
That earth shall see none like her born ere earth be  
dead.

## APPENDIX B

Appendix B contains letters of Swinburne from which excerpts have been cited in this thesis and which are deemed of sufficient concern to this thesis to be cited here in their entirety. Item I, letter dated February 24, 1887, from Swinburne to his mother, Lady Jane Henrietta Swinburne, refers to the death of Philip Burke Marston, in memory of whom "A Dirge" was written.<sup>1</sup> Item II, letter dated May 3, 1887, from Swinburne to the Editor of the Times, and Item III, a second letter, dated May 7, 1887, from Swinburne to the Editor of the Times, explain Swinburne's position on the question of Home Rule for Ireland.<sup>2</sup> Item IV, letter dated November 12, 1901, from Swinburne to Duncan McVarish, also published in Saturday Review, makes clear Swinburne's attitude to the Boer War.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, Vol. V, pp. 181-182. For discussion of "A Dirge," see above, Chapter Five, Section One, pp. 246-250.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 188-190, 190-191. For discussion of Swinburne's poems concerning Home Rule, see above, Chapter Four, Section Three, pp. 198-206, and Chapter Five, Section One, pp. 237-240.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 154-155. For discussion of Swinburne's poems concerning the Boer War, see above, Chapter Five, Section Two, pp. 269-275.

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## ITEM I

1411. TO LADY JANE HENRIETTA SWINBURNE

Text: Leith, pp. 125-27.

The Pines, February 24, 1887

. . . And now I come to the subject which has been almost the only thing I have been able to think of for five minutes together for the last ten days. You will have seen in the Athenaeum--if not before--the announcement of the death<sup>1</sup> of my beloved friend Philip Marston; his poor father sent me a note announcing it on the very day that he--as I do hope and trust and believe--passed from a life of such suffering and sorrow as very few can have known to a happy one. I am sure you will be as glad (or almost as glad) as I am to remember your kindness in helping me, and his good friend (unknown to me otherwise) Mrs. Craik,<sup>2</sup> to provide against risk of want for him. I don't know whether I ought to wish that you had known him, because if you had you could not help any more than we can being very unhappy at the sense of his loss. But of course I do feel it would have been most cruel and selfish and wicked even to wish that his life should have been prolonged--tho' nobody quite knows (not even Watts, I think) what a pleasure it was to me to have him here and talk to him and read to him and see his poor blind eyes become so expressive of pleasure and emotion that nothing but the vague direction of their look reminded one that they could see nothing. And I did so want to get him nearer, so that I might have seen him oftener and spent more time in reading to him. It was so beautiful and interesting to see how he enjoyed being read to. And his affection and gratitude for such very very little kindness as one could show him would explain--if you had seen us together--why I have been so much more unhappy than I ought to have been at the news of his release; even though his sorrows were such as to make one half inclined to believe in the terrible old superstition of an evil star. Think of a child born with a beautiful gift of poetry, and a most affectionate nature, and the most beautiful face I ever saw in a man--Watts was saying the other day,

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<sup>1</sup>Feb. 14, 1887.

<sup>2</sup>Dinah Maria Mulock Craik (born 1826), novelist, essayist, and godmother to Marston, died Oct. 12, 1887.

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'Though Philip was the handsomest man I ever saw, one never thought of calling him handsome,' and I said, 'No, he was too beautiful'--and so he was; not the least effeminate, but in feature and expression far above such a word as 'handsome'--and then think of this child struck blind in infancy--and when he grew up being engaged to a beautiful young lady who loved him as he deserved to be loved, and died suddenly just before the time appointed for their marriage--and then finding such comfort as he could in the affection of a sister who was devoted to him and travelled with him abroad and was (one could see) as nice as darling A[lice] could have been to me under the circumstances--and then losing her too!

When I heard of that (I mean of Miss Eleanor Marston's death) I felt almost horrified at such an accumulation of miseries on one poor fellow's head--and that one so humble and loveable and patient and bright and brave. I can't help wishing (in spite of what I said before) that you had known him.

Everybody who did, I am quite sure, loved him. . . .

. . . I have tried to put a little bit of my affection and sorrow into some poems which are going to appear directly with a memorial article by Watts<sup>3</sup> (enlarged from his notice in the Athenaeum of Philip's death--I was actually going to write 'poor Philip's death'--but, thank God, it isn't 'poor' Philip any more now).

<sup>3</sup>This plan was evidently dropped. Watts' memorial article appeared in the Athenaeum on Feb. 19, enshrining the sonnet by Swinburne reprinted, as "Via Dolorosa" (Bonchurch, 6, 163), in AOP as the title-poem of a sequence of eight sonnets in memory of Marston. Four other poems in the same volume also memorialize him.

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## ITEM II

1418. TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMESText: The Times (May 6, 1887), p. 4.

May 3 [1887]

Sir

I observe with considerable amusement that, in consequence of having assailed the advocates of disunion, and spoken with disrespect of the firm of Parnell, Gladstone, and Company (unlimited in liability),<sup>1</sup> I have had the honour to be denounced by their respectable representatives in the Press as an apostate, a convert, or a renegade from principles which I formerly maintained. It is difficult to suppose that such denunciations can be meant to convey any serious reproach; for it is not difficult, but simply impossible, to imagine that to an admiring disciple of Mr. Gladstone the epithet of renegade or apostate can seem other than a term of compliment--if not indeed of adulation. But as I am not conscious of having ever deserved the honour of a share in the good or evil repute of the most versatile and the most verbose of politicians, I must ask leave not merely to disclaim it, but to disprove the imputation of having incurred it.

Certain nameless persons, into whose identity I have not the slightest inclination to inquire, have thought it worth while to remind or inform those who may care to listen that just 20 years ago I wrote some lines<sup>2</sup> appealing against the sentence of death pronounced on the three Irishmen who were executed at Manchester for the homicide of a policeman, committed in the attempt to rescue a countryman of theirs from his custody. I would do the same thing again to-morrow, with as little hesitation as I would--if I had the power--commit to penal servitude the politicians who accept the money or the support of avowed assassins. Those three men, if their case was not misreported, were no more to be classed with the dynamiters and other professors of crime who seem now to be the backbone of the Disunionist party than they

<sup>1</sup>In "The Question" (Bonchurch, 6, 267-70), published in the Daily Telegraph (Apr. 29, 1887) and reprinted in CPOP (see below, Letter 1438).

<sup>2</sup>"An Appeal to England."

were to be classed with the heroes and martyrs of Italian or Hungarian independence. They did not shoot down their victim unawares, without warning or giving him a chance between his duty and his life. He died nobly in the discharge of his duty; but they did not kill him basely or treacherously. There may be no legal difference, but the moral difference is immeasurable, between these homicides and the infamous cowards who committed, or the more infamous cowards who approve, or the yet more infamous cowards who accept money and support from those who approve the crime of the Phoenix Park.

So much for that. But when Disunionist writers are good enough to appeal from me to men towards whom I have always professed--and perhaps have done something to prove--the most cordial devotion and loyalty, the question passes from the region of serious debate into the sphere of the broadest comedy. I do not wish to bring into question, on a matter so unworthy of such an invocation, the sacred name and the beloved memory of Giuseppe Mazzini. I do not know on what ground the champions of disunion may think fit to appeal to his authority. I do know that for more than a few years I had the honour--deserved or undeserved by the deepest love and reverence that man can give to man--of being admitted to his intimate converse and assured of his affectionate regard. And I do know that he would have been as likely to approve or to condone the crimes of the Mafiosi and Camorristi--the Land Leaguers and the National Leaguers of the disaffected provinces of the Italian kingdom--as to intrigue for the re-establishment of Austrian or Papal tyranny. And, I may be permitted to add, I think that if he could possibly have expressed to me any sympathy with the Radical champions of disunion or the Irish doorkeepers of crime, I might possibly have taken courage to ask him how so incongruous and illogical a sympathy could be reconciled with the principles to which his life had been devoted, or how so preposterous and immoral a toleration could be explicable in a man whose first political action was to revolt against Carbonarism--a far more excusable or justifiable form of lawlessness than Parnellism--and to suppress it, singlehanded, by the simple force of precept and example.

What Mazzini would have said on the immediate Irish question--though, perhaps, I may have at least as good a right to assume as any anonymous anarchist--I can only infer from the evidence of his whole life and the witness of all his writings. That he would have contradicted the one and stultified the other I must decline to believe. But, happily, I am able to cite the opinion of the illustrious patriot and Republican to whose unsolicited kindness I am indebted for

my first introduction to Mazzini. Immediately on the appearance in The Times of some verses in which I expressed, to the best of my poor ability, my estimate of the electoral question at issue between Englishmen and Gladstonites, I received a letter full of the most generous applause and the most cordial sympathy from Karl Blind, who had kindly and readily permitted me to mention the fact, and, if I thought fit, to publish his letter in vindication of my character for consistency as consistency is understood by politicians who have not turned so many coats--to say nothing of under-clothing--as the venerable captain of the Gladstonites and lieutenant of the Parnellites. But, indeed, it seems to me that the question is too wide and deep for personal considerations to be admitted to more than momentary and casual notice.

Algernon Charles Swinburne

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## ITEM III

1419. TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMESText: The Times (May 11, 1887), p. 14.

The Pines, Putney-hill, S.W.,

May 7 [1887]

Sir

It may interest those of your readers who believe in such an unfashionable creed as the existence of political principle and the merit of political consistency to be assured, on better authority than any man's conjecture and induction from evidence or probability, what was the exact opinion of Mazzini on the question still in debate between England and the Irish Disunionists. I am authorized by the writer to make public the following extract from a letter which was hesterday addressed to me by Karl Blind:--

As to Mazzini, I can bear witness from a long friendship, down to his death, that he, the champion of the Unionist principle in nationality matters, was utterly opposed to the dissolution of the Legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland. Ever since 1848, as may be seen from his writings, he even pointed to the maintenance of 'British unity' (taking that word as used on the coin of the United Kingdom), in opposition to the Young Ireland party, as an example for the formation of a united Italy. I had occasion often enough to speak with him on this subject when it was a burning question--for instance, during the Fenian attempts.

How, indeed, should the advocate of that Italian unity, which was so bitterly fought against by Irish brigades for the sake of a Roman archpriest pretending to world dominion--how should Mazzini, of all men, have wished to see a kind of Roman "States of the Church" reared up in Ireland--that is, a stronghold of the worst enemy of freedom, from whose sally-ports progressive England, the friend of Italian patriots in their days of distress, might be mortally wounded?

After this it would be superfluous to recommend the champions of dissolution and disunion, in their speeches or their writings, henceforward to let alone the name of the

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man who conceived and accomplished, through the power of his teaching and his example, the union of disunited Italy.

Algernon Charles Swinburne

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## ITEM IV

1769. TO DUNCAN C. MCVARISH<sup>1</sup>MS: British Museum. Published: Saturday Review  
(Nov. 16, 1901).

The Pines, Putney Hill, S.W.,

November 12, 1901

Sir

As you remind me, I have always done my best to express my lifelong horror and hatred of all tyrants. It would be singular if I had abstained from expressing my sentiments with regard to the cruellest and most faithless tyrants and slavedrivers of our time--the Boers of Transvaal--because they happen to be also the most treacherous and malignant enemies of my country. It was the tyrant's principle which impelled them, when slavery had been abolished in the British colonies, to fly from the detested presence of freedom, equity, and rational fraternity, with the noble purpose of establishing an independent oligarchy of slaveholders. It was the tyrant's instinct which induced them to make helots of the outlanders. Of all imaginable calamities which could have befallen humanity in our time, the greatest would have been the success of the Boers in their alternately avowed and disavowed conspiracy to drive civilization, liberty, and progress from South Africa by driving the English into the sea, and proceeding to establish a reign of terror and slavery and torture for all dark races from Cape Town to the Zambesi.

I should have thought it impossible for any man to put so monstrous a misconception as yours on the verses<sup>2</sup> in which I have expressed my thankfulness for the difference between English and German treatment of women and children in time of war. What were the orders issued and signed by Bismarck and his pious master during the Franco-German campaign you may see, if your memory needs refreshing, by reference to a

<sup>1</sup>Chaplain to the Forces in South Africa, 1898-1901, where he earned a medal and two clasps. He died in (apparently) 1929.

<sup>2</sup>"The Death of Colonel Benson" (Bonchurch, 6, 295), published in the Saturday Review (Nov. 9, 1901) and reprinted in CPOP.

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recent number of the Times. The most audacious madness of mendacity will hardly venture to deny, in face of such historic evidence, that the men who have now the inconceivable impudence to revile us for giving inadequate and insanitary shelter to women and children would assuredly have left them out or driven them out to die on the veldt. I congratulate my countrymen on their superior humanity, and you 'construe' my congratulations as a 'rebuke'! It is incredible--or rather it would be, if your written words were not now under my eyes.

I will only add that if retaliation in kind on those who deliberately inflict unnecessary suffering and cruel death on the innocent and helpless could ever possibly be condoned or extenuated--I do not think, I need hardly say, that it could --it would be so if such retribution were exacted for the hellish atrocities of the Boer women who stood between Englishwomen with their dying babies in their arms and the water, a drop of which might have saved their lives on the horrible journey by rail at the end of which they were dead of thirst. God forbid that Englishmen or Englishwomen should echo the ferocious benediction of the Psalmist<sup>3</sup> on those who do as they have been done by--in so monstrous a case as this. But would any one but an Englishman be able to thank God that his countrymen had not done so?

I am, Sir,

Yours sincerely,

A. C. Swinburne

As I have decided to send this letter to the Saturday Review for publication this week, I have taken the liberty of sending with it a copy of your letter, the sentiments of which are so good and so admirably expressed. I do not think you will object to my doing this; but if you do, a word from you by return of post would reach me early enough to prevent its appearance in print.

<sup>3</sup>Psalm 83.

## APPENDIX C

This appendix contains correspondence with The British Museum, London, England, which holds the manuscripts of Swinburne's poetry. Item I, letter dated February 21, 1969, requests information regarding the date of writing of two poems in Swinburne's posthumously published poems: "Evening by the Sea," and "Sonnet." Item II, reply from The British Museum dated March 6, 1969, tentatively dates "Evening by the Sea" as written 1859-1860 and "Sonnet" in the 1860's. Item III, letter dated July 28, 1969, requests information regarding the setting to music of two poems of Swinburne: "Music: An Ode" and "The Union." Item IV, reply from the Department of Manuscripts, The British Museum, dated August 11, 1969, notes a referral of this request to the Music Room, The British Museum. Item V, reply from the Music Room, The British Museum, dated August 13, 1969, states that the music for "Music: An Ode" is available only with permission of copyright owners. Item V also notes that no trace can be found of music for "The Union" by Arthur Sullivan.

330 Driveway, Apt. 407,  
OTTAWA 1, Ontario, Canada.

February 21, 1969.

Keeper,  
Dept. of Manuscripts,  
The British Museum,  
London, W.C.1,  
England.

Dear Sir,

I am doing some research for my doctoral dissertation on the poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne.

In The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne Bonchurch Edition, edited by Sir Edmund Gosse, C.B., and Thomas Wise, Volume 6, Posthumous Poems are two poems in which I am particularly interested:

"Evening by the Sea", p. 339

"Sonnet" (which begins, "Ah, face and hands  
and body beautiful,") p. 369.

In the Bibliography, Volume 20 of The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne these two poems are among those previously (prior to the 1917 Posthumous Poems) unpublished.

Would you know from the manuscripts in your keeping the date or estimated date of the writing of these two poems? I am particularly interested in learning whether they were written before or after 1880.

Thank you for any assistance you can give me in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

*Lorraine McMullen*

(Miss) Lorraine McMullen.

Department of Manuscripts,  
THE BRITISH MUSEUM,  
LONDON, W.C.1.

6th March 1969

Miss Lorraine Mcullen,  
330 Driveway, Apt. 407,  
Ottawa 1,  
Ontario, Canada.

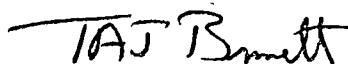
Dear Madam,

The Keeper of Manuscripts has asked me to reply to your letter of 21 February.

I am currently engaged in cataloguing the MSS. in T. J. Wise's Ashley Library here, and also in preparing a critical edition of Swinburne's poetry. As far as 'Evening by the Sea' is concerned, I would date it tentatively 1859/1860. The MS. is entitled 'Evening by the Sea' in a later hand, and is an autograph draft of five stanzas and two and a half cancelled lines, possibly of another stanza. It is written on both sides of two octavo leaves (forming a single sheet) of the writing paper of the Oxford Union Society. The hand, the paper, and the style of the stanzas suggest a date towards the end of Swinburne's time at Oxford. The evidence of cancelled lines suggests that the last stanza as printed should in fact stand third.

As for the sonnet, there is no positive external evidence for dating such as a watermark, but the style of the poem, the form of the hand, and the ink make me think it was written in the 1860's. I would certainly consider that it was written before 1880.

Yours faithfully,



(T. A. J. Burnett)  
Assistant Keeper

330 Driveway, Apt. 407,  
Ottawa, Ontario,  
July 28, 1969.

Mr. T. A. J. Burnett,  
Assistant Keeper,  
Department of Manuscripts,  
The British Museum,  
London W.C.1,

Dear Mr. Burnett,

In doing research for my doctoral thesis on the poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne, I note that his poem "Music: An Ode", printed in Astrophel and Other Poems (1894), was set to music for soprano, solo, chorus and orchestra by Charles Wood. I would appreciate if you could tell me whether there has been a recording made of "Music: An Ode" or whether the music is available.

Also, Swinburne's poem "The Union", first printed in The Nineteenth Century, May 1893, was intended to be set to music. Swinburne was interested in having the musical score done by Arthur Sullivan. Would you have any information as to whether a musical score ever was composed by Sullivan.

I am most grateful for any assistance you can give me in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

*Lorraine Mc Mullen*

(Miss) Lorraine McMullen

DEPARTMENT OF MANUSCRIPTS,  
THE BRITISH MUSEUM,  
LONDON, W.C.1.

11th August 1969

Miss L. McMullen,  
330 Driveway, Apt. 407,  
Ottawa 1,  
Ontario,  
CANADA.

Dear Miss McMullen,

Thank you for your letter of 28 July.

I am forwarding your enquiry to the Music Room here,  
who I think will be better able to tell you about editions  
of the settings of 'Music: An Ode' and 'The Union'.

Yours sincerely,



p.p. (T. A. J. Burnett)  
Assistant Keeper

MUSIC ROOM,

THE BRITISH MUSEUM,  
LONDON, W.C.1.

AIRMAIL

P.B./MUSIC/OWN/JH

13th August, 1969.

Miss L. McMullen,  
330 Driveway, Apt. 407,  
Ottawa 1,  
Ontario,  
Canada.

Dear Madam,

Your letter to Mr. Burnett of the Department of Manuscripts has been passed to me.

I regret that I am unable to trace a setting of "The Union" by Sullivan, but we have a vocal score of Charles Wood's setting of "Music. An Ode" published in 1893 by Augener. I am afraid we are not allowed to lend material from our collections. We can, however, provide you with microfilms, but in this case there is the difficulty that the works of Charles Wood are still in copyright. We could, therefore, not make a microfilm without written permission from the copyright owners. Augener's publications are now the property of Galliard Limited (Queen Anne's Road, Southtown, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England). If you feel that a microfilm would answer your purposes you should write to Galliard Limited and ask them to write to us granting permission for a microfilm to be made. We should then be able to act.

Yours faithfully,



O. W. Neighbour  
Assistant Keeper

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## ABSTRACT OF

Poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne  
in the Age of Transition: 1880-1909

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate some of the poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne written between 1880 and 1909 and to assess his contribution to poetry of the age of transition.

During the period from 1880 to 1909, Swinburne lived a retired life at Putney. Nevertheless, he wrote a considerable amount of poetry. The period under discussion, 1880 to 1909, is becoming increasingly recognized as a period of transition, sufficiently different from both Victorian and contemporary periods to be considered as a separate era. Major literary trends of this era are Aestheticism, Decadence, Symbolism, and Public-patriotic poetry.<sup>1</sup>

Decadence and Symbolism are closely related; both stem from the "art for art's sake" movement. In Decadence there was desire to shock and the cult of the artificial which led to such subjects as sexual perversion, sadism,

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<sup>1</sup>Two other literary trends of importance in the transition period are Imagist and Georgian, but these movements became significant in the decade following Swinburne's death in 1909.

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death, and dying things; to a search, in art and in life, for new and strange sensations. In style this led to use of bizarre images and startling paradoxes. The tone of decadent poetry was frequently melancholy or despairing. The symbolist trend became concerned with expressing the mysterious and invisible by means of evocative language and imagery, and stress on the affiliation of poetry with music. The tone was frequently melancholy, due largely to an awareness of the transience of life.

Swinburne had evinced interest in the concepts of "art for art's sake" early in his career, and his first volume of poetry was considered both aesthetic and decadent. In these characteristics he was influenced by both English and French writers.

In Swinburne's poetry between 1880 and 1909, may be found aesthetic, decadent, and symbolist elements, thus demonstrating his contribution to these three literary trends. At the same time, he also wrote patriotic and public poetry. Swinburne's participation in these literary trends is evident throughout the entire period; however, he wrote more political and patriotic poetry after 1895, and published, at that time, some political poems which were written earlier.

During the age of transition, a continuation of many

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interests present in Swinburne's early poetry can be seen. Aesthetic and decadent elements, themselves, are a continuation of characteristics present in Poems and Ballads (1866). Criticism of the House of Lords in the 1880's and support of the British position in the Boer War are seen by Swinburne as similar to his earlier endorsement of Mazzini and a free and united Italy. Associated with support of freedom is Swinburne's hatred of despotism which he criticizes in Papal authority in the 1880's and which he had criticized in 1866 in "Hymn to Proserpine." Swinburne's interest in the old fixed forms during the age of transition is seen in his use of the ballade form and of the roundel which he, himself, derived from the rondeau. This interest was evident earlier, in his publication of two rondeaux and a ballade in 1866. Essentially the same naturalist philosophy seen in poems of the transition period was expressed by Swinburne in poems of Songs before Sunrise (1871).

Variety in theme, tone, objective correlative pattern, and form are evident in poetry of Swinburne between 1880 and 1909 examined in this thesis. This variety shows Swinburne's flexibility and his mastery of the craftsmanship of poetry.

Thus, poetry of Swinburne from 1880 to 1909 demonstrates his contribution to aesthetic, decadent, symbolist,

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and political-patriotic trends--all of which are major literary trends of the age of transition. Continuation of many of Swinburne's earlier interests is also seen in this poetry. The variety of poetry written during this period demonstrates his skilful craftsmanship and flexibility.

This thesis submitted in 1969 to the Department of English Literature in the Faculty of Arts, the University of Ottawa, Canada, in view of obtaining the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, comprises three hundred and eighty pages.