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SWINBURNE AND THE DIVINE MARQUIS:
A STUDY IN THE AESTHETICS OF EVIL

by

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A Thesis

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To Teresa, with special gratitude.

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ABSTRACT

This study of Algernon Charles Swinburne is restricted primarily to poetry written by him between 1862, when he first read works by Donatien Alphonse Francois, comte de Sade, and the publication of Songs before Sunrise in 1871. The argument of the thesis is that Swinburne's development as a poet is in significant measure the result of affinities which he discovered between his own antitheism and de Sade's treatment of the relation between nature and theology.

De Sade attacks eighteenth-century rationalist efforts to interpret nature as benevolently ordered and reflecting divine purpose. He argues against the view that nature reflects divine will. A logical examination of moral values, he claims, reveals that what we normally consider to be evil is good, and vice versa (e.g., by following nature, it is good to plunder, rape and kill, for in this world virtue suffers and vice prospers).

Swinburne initially supports de Sade's position that absolute values do not exist in a universe which has no centre of divine authority. Aesthetic, like moral values, need to rest upon some foundation other than theistic belief. The opening chapter of the thesis thus discusses the nature of de

Sade's philosophy as it first appeared to Swinburne, and considers some of the manifestations of Sadean influences in his work as early as 1861, before he had read de Sade. The following chapters provide a more detailed analysis of the use which Swinburne makes of Sadean elements in his poetry.

In his choice and rendering of subject matter, Swinburne turns de Sade's doctrine of evil into an aesthetic of evil. The first major example of this appears in Atalanta in Calydon, which is examined in terms of Swinburne's debt to de Sade for the theology of evil which the play explores.

In Poems and Ballads of 1866, many of the poems which were first composed between 1862 and 1864, reveal Swinburne's interest in de Sade's portrayal of cruelty as intrinsic to life. The poet, in his own penchant for mixing pain with pleasure, found an additional affinity between himself and de Sade. Swinburne depicts this paradoxical relation between pleasure and pain as one of the cruelties natural to the human condition.

In Songs before Sunrise we observe how Swinburne moves beyond de Sade in the discovery of a politically inspired direction for his poetry. Here, Swinburne continues to accept de Sade's view of the indifference of the universe to man's existence, but he depicts man as able to liberate himself from nature's meaningless processes and to create a world which serves his collective needs and interests.

PREFACE

It is generally agreed among Swinburne scholars that the poet's most vital years were between 1862 and 1871. The prolific nature of Swinburne's work is evident in the eighteen volumes which comprise the Bonchurch Edition of his poetry and prose, in the subsequently published material, including Cecil Y. Lang's six volumes of letters, and in the unpublished manuscripts at the British Museum and elsewhere. Although the greatest body of his work was written after 1871, and consists of such important volumes as Bothwell, Erechtheus, Poems and Ballads (Second and Third Series), Songs of the Springtides, Mary Stuart, as well as critical studies on Chapman, Charlotte Brontë, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, it is difficult to imagine that this phase of Swinburne's career will ever command as much notice as the earlier period. Undoubtedly, some of Swinburne's best poetry has suffered neglect as a result of attention which has focused upon the exciting and stormy years during which, virtually single-handedly, he assaulted the moral-aesthetic bastion of established Victorian attitudes toward art.

The approach taken by this study of Swinburne is fully

cognizant of the laudable, extensive and often painstaking scholarship which has gone into making him comprehensible to present and future generations. The intent of this thesis is to show that in addition to the importance to Swinburne's development of such figures as Walter Savage Landor, Victor Hugo and William Blake, the Marquis de Sade provided him with a sense of direction in his approach to the Victorian dread of a meaningless universe. Swinburne was the first Englishman to grapple seriously with the provoking assertion, as amplified in the writings of de Sade, that mankind's significance in the universe amounts to no more than that of an ordinary by-product of nature's processes, and that he is destined for no better end than a compost heap.

At a time when de Sade's writings were read in England only by the socially privileged, and were relished mainly because they titillated the Victorian taste for the forbidden, Swinburne was the one talented mind with the foresight, even at his then young age, to see in de Sade's work the humorous and philosophic treatment of perennial questions about man's place and sense of value in the world. Swinburne, because of his own sense of the absurd, and because he was not awed by conventional moral attitudes toward life and art, understood de Sade better than his Victorian contemporaries. Like de Sade, whom Guillaume Apollinaire describes as the "esprit le plus libre qui ait encore existé," Swinburne pursued the question of liberty in life and art beyond established moral

constraints. De Sade was among the first writers in the Christian world to argue articulately that God is no longer the basis of moral authority. An extension of this viewpoint is de Sade's thesis that it is the idea of God which reigns tyrannically over man, and is the source of his misunderstandings of the nature of the physical world in which he lives. The idea of God, consequently, has led man to create a system of moral values which is incompatible with the true nature of things. The belief that nature is an expression of God's benevolence and sense of order, and that man should therefore "follow nature," provides de Sade with his basis for inverting the traditional moral order. Nature, for him, creates only in order to destroy, to satisfy its innate appetite for matter. For man to rob, rape and kill (i.e., to commit evil), is therefore good, since in doing so man emulates nature. Swinburne's adaptation of de Sade's technique of inversion to his own aesthetic practices is here presented as an essential factor to be considered in any interpretation of Swinburne's poetry from 1862, when he first read de Sade, up to and including Songs before Sunrise, published in 1871.

De Sade's antitheism, his philosophy of nature, his depiction of pleasure and pain, and his inversion of traditional moral values, were characteristics for which Swinburne felt early affinities. The impact of de Sade on his theory and practice of aesthetics is most apparent in such works as Atalanta in Calydon and Poems and Ballads (1866). In Songs

before Sunrise, Swinburne does not reject his former connections to de Sade, but transcends them by attempting to show that, although the universe is an indifferent and meaningless environment, man must cut out of it a world which is purposeful for himself. After Songs before Sunrise, Swinburne's ontological views do not significantly alter, but his concern with de Sade no longer occupies a central position in his work.

In the course of my research and writing, I have used the Bonchurch Edition of The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, edited by Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise (1925-1927), only where better edited sources were not available. In the cases of Atalanta in Calydon, Poems and Ballads and Songs before Sunrise, references are to the Chatto and Windus editions (1904-1906), the printing of which were supervised by Swinburne.

Chapter I

SWINBURNE AND DE SADE: THE AESTHETICS OF EVIL

The process by which the aesthetic values underlying Swinburne's best known works evolved, particularly Atalanta in Calydon (1865), Poems and Ballads (1866) and Songs Before Sunrise (1871), has too generally been attributed to conventional sources; i.e., his early interest in and study of Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, his tutelage in Classics under Benjamin Jowett at Balliol, his familiarity with French culture owing to his Anglo-French background. All of these factors, of course had an influential bearing on the development of his literary achievements. Further, when we consider his extensive use of medieval and renaissance lyric forms, it is also apparent that he imitated and mastered them with great success.

Beneath the external trappings of Swinburne's verse, however, he is the most unconventional English poet of the nineteenth century, perhaps of any century. Underlying the structure of his verse there is a sustained depiction of a world the likes of which exists nowhere else in the poetry which preceded his. The cruelty, lust and pain which pervade his early poetry is as lyrically rendered as the dawning promise of Republicanism in his later work. Pain, unhap-

piness and evil are as inherent to the human condition as pleasure, joy and good. The experience of them may be lessened or increased in degree by the actions of man, but they cannot be eliminated. Pleasure can never eclipse pain; joy can never thwart unhappiness; and good can never conquer evil. For one to exist without the other is like trying to imagine infinity with one end cut off. All of these experiences are states of mind and body, and are thus inextricably bound together. They are not the creation of, nor do they in any way depend upon, the percipient influence of an outside agent--neither God nor Satan. They have only to do with man and his peculiar psychic and biological nature. The result of Swinburne's view of the human experience is his creation of a universe somewhat akin to Blake's, stripped of the mythology and allegory, but characterized by the brute power of forces which are simultaneously creative and destructive, although blind and indifferent, against which are pitted the passions and imagination of man. It is an open-ended universe in which man struggles, on the basis of his internal and individual needs, to discover a meaningful relation between the self and the intrusive world of external reality (e.g., nature, as it exists apart from his understanding or control of it). His depiction of a cruel and lustful universe is the first radical attempt of significance in English poetry to come to terms with a cosmos that is devoid of a god, Christian or otherwise. The idea of a benevolent universe

existing between the gates of Heaven and those of Hell, in which human salvation or damnation was regarded as a simple matter of right moral choice, began to deteriorate with increasing momentum by the mid-ninetheenth century.

Swinburne's complete acceptance of the universe as Godless, virtueless, and unfathomable, is unparalleled by any major English poet before him. Apart from those conventions which have to do with art, and are good for art and for no other purpose, Swinburne dismissed the entire tradition of aesthetics which was based upon any form of didacticism, social utility, or morality. His poetry is the expression of his cerebral and visceral responses to the world at large; it is not an expression of a doctrine, philosophy, or, metaphysics of any kind; in short, it is not the product of intellectual learning. Therefore, before going on to a detailed consideration of specific works, it will be useful to outline the conditions which shaped and sharpened his sensibilities. These include his personal life, particularly the experience of Eton, and the writers with whom he shared an affinity, the nature of which tended to reinforce his own instincts.

The earliest published or unpublished extant reference to Donatien Alphonse François, Comte de Sade (1740-1814), made by Swinburne, appears to be in his poem, "Charenton en 1810,"[1] written when Swinburne was twenty-four years old. He wrote the poem in anticipation of the time when he would

be permitted to read de Sade's Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu.[2] The youth who narrates the poem (obviously Swinburne himself) is twenty-two years old: "Il tressaillit. / L'enfant lisait ce soir Justine" (l. 76).[3] The Marquis, the "arch-Unmentionable" of the nineteenth century, appears to him in a kind of medieval dream vision, where his apparition is of a mythological grandeur:

> Tout se courbait devant ce veillard titanique,
> La Haine avec l'Amour, le Mal avec le Bien:
> On sentait, à le voir rire et songer, que rien,
> Ni le Désir dont l'oeil éblouissant étonne,
> Ni l'Homme qui rugit, ni Dieu qui trompe et tonne,
> Ni l'affreuse Vertu, gouge au coeur ulcéré,
> N'aurait su mettre un pli sur ce front vénéré.
> [ll. 8-14]

This titanic and immortal historian of the world's cruelties, looms ubiquitous and god-like in the young poet's imagination. He is the incarnation of the oldest of primordial archetypes: ". . . la Mort / Avait peur á l'aspect du satyre sublime" (ll. 2-3).

The identity of this gargantuan figure is not revealed to the naif until the end of the poem, and not before Swinburne is able to indulge in a favourite blasphemy (one which he provides endless evidence of sharing with de Sade: flouting the impotence of God). This frightful but venerable shape who appears to him is

> L'homme Suprême, élan de la nature altière,
> Qui prend Dieu par l'oreille et l'appelle compère,
> Regarde l'infini, le nargue et lui dit Tu . . .
> [ll. 99-101]

The apotheosis of de Sade[4] becomes complete when toward the

end of the poem, the youth asks,

> Qui donc est-tu, vieillard? d'où viens-tu? qui t'a fait
> Cet air triste d'un Dieu qui frappe et qui se tait?
> Quelle main surhumaine a posé ce sourire
> Sur ta lèvre orgeuilleuse et blême?
> . . . . . .
> "--Enfant, dit le vieillard, je m'appelle de Sade."
> [ll. 109-112, 116]

What emerges from this passage, and is progressively reinforced throughout the poem, is that the once mortal de Sade becomes a figure of Promethean defiance, immortalized without the aid of a "main surhumaine." The reduction of God to a puerile and mischievous grey-beard represents the sort of blasphemy which only de Sade and Swinburne had the daring to contrive in their respective times. The primary nexus between this scandalous, revolutionary, philosopher-novelist of the late eighteenth century and his young English disciple, is found in their attitudes toward nature, and the question of whether or not it is God-centred.

The fear which people had, and which many still have, that de Sade represented the coming of the anti-Christ, was undoubtedly well-founded. To Swinburne, however, de Sade's views of nature contained an important truth about man's relation to himself, society, and to the natural world. Christianity, as commonly professed, was the real perversion. It sustained (if not invented) the beliefs that man was created in the image of an all-perfect God and that this God created order. This distortion was further compounded by eighteenth-

century Deists who saw in their scrutiny of the natural order what they believed to be evidence of design and reason, and who insisted that man must emulate the natural order in the laws by which he governs himself. In addition to bestowing order on the nature of things, this God presided over the destiny of man judiciously and benevolently, and would punish him for evil behaviour and reward him for good behaviour, if not in this world, in the next.

The consequences of this theology for Swinburne as well as de Sade, whose opposition to it resulted in thirty years of confinement,[5] was an unacceptable curtailment of individuality and freedom. Each in various ways, came to regard man's presumption of a deity in nature, or anywhere else in the universe, with contempt. "L'idée d'une telle chimère est . . . le seul tort que je ne puisse pardonner à l'homme," says de Sade's Madame Delbène.[6] Writing from the Vincennes prison, to his wife, in November, 1783, he asks for a copy of the Baron d'Holbach's Système de la Nature (1770) which he admired because it weakens and logically destroys the basis for belief in God:

> . . . le sisteme c'est bien rellement et bien incontestablement le baze de ma philosophie et j'en suis sectateur jusquau martir sil le fallait . . . un livre d'ore er un mot, un livre qui devroit etre dans toutes les bibliotheques et dans toutes les tetes un livre qui sappe et detruit a jamais la plus dangereuse, et la plus odieuse de toutes les chimeres, celle qui a fait le plus verser de sang sur la terre et que l'univers entier devroit se reunir a culbuter et a anneantir

> sans ressource, si les individus qui composent cet univers avaient la plus petite idee de leur tranquilite. Pour moi j'avoue que j'en suis a ne pouvoir pas concevoir quil y ait des gens qui y tiennent encore, et je suis tres persuade que ce ne peut etre de bonne foi . . . Car il est bien certain que le theisme ne peut pas tenir un instant a l'examen et il faut n'avoir jamais etudie la plus legere operation de la nature pour ne pas reconnoistre quelle agit seul et sans aucune cause premiere, qui n'expliquee rien et qui au contraire veut elle meme etre appliquee n'est que le nec plus ultra de l'ignorance.[7]

In desiring to destroy what he regards as the source of human bloodshed, and to promote the interests of human happiness, de Sade voices some high-minded aims. What has to be annihilated, however, is not just the institution of the Church, but the very concept which underpins civilization as we know it: theism. As Simone de Beauvoir notes, "Extreme in everything, de Sade could not adapt himself to the deist compromises of his time."[8]

Many recent knowledgeable commentators on de Sade regard him as an arch-moralist, an heroic, misunderstood, romantic, revolutionary reformer,[9] whose reputation has suffered because of his scatalogical depictions of sexual behaviour. Until recently, this notion has successfully served to conceal the philosophic thrust of de Sade. More serious attention is currently being focused upon the intense and obsessively laboured dialectic between the abstract (Virtue) and the concrete (Nature) which takes place in his novels. The point of nearly all his writings is aimed at

the influence of theism in general and Christianity in particular, the moral values of which he considers to be the principal fallacy underlying the structure of social institutions. Christianity, and the Deistic philosophy of nature which attempted to make religious belief scientific, are regarded by de Sade as no more than variations on a theistic theme. Ultimately, such beliefs are the means by which corrupt priests, businessmen and politicians satisfy their lust for crime. Christianity weakens the resistance of the sheep on their way to the slaughter, while Deistic rationalizations (based on a mimetic approach to nature) provide the libertines in his novels with a cosmic justification for their abuse of power. The idea of God, and the eighteenth-century interpretation of nature as reflecting order and reason, are thus regarded by de Sade as the boldest of lies ever perpetrated by man. In the one case, God does not exist, and if he did, he could only be considered as cruel and evil; in the other, the real character of nature is violent, murderous, and the source of all evil.

Throughout de Sade's works there is a significant distribution of social types who represent the key institutions of western society.[10] Justine, in the novel which takes her name, rescues Monsieur Saint-Florent, a Lyon merchant, from the murderous grasp of Coeur-de-Fer's bandits. As the pair are making their way through the woods, and at a safe dis-

tance from the gang, Saint-Florent knocks Justine unconscious, rapes and robs her. Several years later she arrives in Lyon where she again meets up with him. He has become a modern-day Gille de Rais,[11] and is in a position to manipulate the entire economic structure of the province in order to provide himself with virginal victims. He tries to recruit Justine to work for him by securing children for his debauches. Being still virtuous, she angrily refuses this promising career, and leaves. Still later, framed on a charge of infanticide and arson, and incarcerated at Lyon, she asks a priest to hear her confession, whereupon he rapes her. She then summons the influential Saint-Florent, expecting that in return for once having saved his life, he may be persuaded to grant her some aid. Upon arriving, he is indignant to discover that it is Justine who makes this request:

> -- Quoi! c'est vous? me dit-il en jetant sur moi des yeux de mépris, je m'étais trompé sur la lettre; je la croyais d'une femme plus honnête que vous, et que j'aurais servie de tout mon coeur; mais que voulez-vous que je fasse pour une imbécile de votre espèce? Comment, vous êtes coupable de cent crimes tous plus affreux les uns que les autres, et quand on vous propose un moyen de gagner honnêtement votre vie, vous vous y refusez opiniâtrement: On ne porta jamais la bêtise plus loin.[12]

Here is the grotesque comedy of life. In refusing to deceive and exploit for him, she had refused to follow Nature, and thereby refused to earn an honest living; hence the basis for Saint-Florent's moral outrage at her request for aid now.

On the ruse of pretending to help her, she is brought to his mansion, where he and the judge, Monsieur de Cardoville who sentences her to death on the following day, both force her to submit to their libertine delights. Each of these gentlemen is subsequently granted the administration of a province in recognition of his services to the State.

Earlier in the novel, Justine has been held captive in a secluded Benedictine monastery at Sainte-Marie-des-Bois, run by Dom Severino (an Italian, closely related to the Pope), and along with a bevy of other maidens, is subjected to the endless perversities of four monks. Dom Severino, "l'homme le plus libertin de son siècle," later leaves the monastery, having been named by His Holiness to the post of "général de l'ordre des Bénédictins."[13]

On another occasion, after being tied to some trees by the Comte de Bressac and set upon by dogs because she would not help him murder his mother, she goes to the surgeon, Rodin, for aid. Taken into service in his household, she is later branded on the shoulder with the mark of a thief because she tries to prevent him from conducting a fatally experimental operation upon his daughter. Some years later, she reads in a newspaper that Rodin has been named First Surgeon to the Empress of Russia with all the emoluments accompanying that post:

> Un jour que je jetais par hasard les yeux sur une gazette étrangère, quelle fut ma surprise d'y re-

> connaître encore le crime couronée, et d'y voir au pinacle un des principaux auteurs de mes maux! Rodin, ce chirugien de Saint-Marcel, cet infâme qui m'avait si cruellement punie d'avoir voulu lui épargner le meurtre de sa fille, venait, disait ce journal, d'être nommé premier chirurgien de l'Impératrice de Russie, avec des appointements considérables. Qu'il soit fortuné, le scélérat, me dis-je, qu'il le soit, dès que la providence le veut! et toi, souffre, malheureuse créature, souffre sans te plaindre, puisqu'il est dit que les tribulations et les peines doivent être l'affreux partage de la vertu; n'importe, je ne m'en dégoûterai jamais."[14]

That she stalwartly refuses ever to lose her taste for "les peines" while others are rewarded for vice, is bitterly ironic. It is therefore no surprise that Justine has so much in common with the heroines of Samuel Richardson, especially since de Sade admired his older English contemporary so much.[15] Apparently, he construed the misfortunes of Pamela and Clarissa as ironic, as any honest reader of those exempla of "virtue" must occasionally, if not frequently, suspect.

The above accounts are sufficient to illustrate de Sade's often monotonously repated view of the respective fortunes and misfortunes of vice and virtue in society. The success of crime is endemic in nature, and he continuously reinforces this image of the social order as rooted in crime and hypocrisy and driven by some cosmic sexual appetite.

This appetite is the expression of nature's egoism. In Justine; Coeur-de-Fer, the bandit leader who captures the virtuous heroine and tries to bugger her while delivering a

philosophic discourse, argues that society is by nature unjust, and that the poor man should quit that society and go elsewhere:

> . . . pris dans cette position, ce qu'il reste de mieux à faire à un tel homme, n'est-il pas de se soustraire à cette société injuste, pour n'accorder des droits qu'à une société différente, qui, placée dans la même position que lui, ait pour intérêt de combattre, par la réunion de ses petits pouvoirs, la puissance plus étendue qui voulait obliger le malheureux à céder le peu qu'il avait pour ne rien retirer des autres?[16]

In so doing, the poor man is simply following nature, where egoism is the first if not only law; therefore, when Justine objects that such a philosophy would result in a perpetual state of warfare, Coeur-de-Fer agrees, pointing out that such is the state of nature. Since in de Sade the raw struggle for survival at the human level parallels so closely the later observations of Darwin in the natural world, it is not surprising that Victorians found the sober scientist only slightly more tolerable than the depraved philosopher.

It is from such arguments as the above that de Sade often launches his attack on the Encyclopaedists, toward whom, being a matérialistic determinist himself (witness his request for D'Holbach's Systèmes), he is often ambiguous, though never hesitant in his opinion of Rousseau's Contrat Social, in regard to which, Coeur-de-Fer continues his discussion, en passant, with Justine:

> Cependant la société n'est composée que d'êtres faibles et d'êtres forts; or, si le pacte dut

> déplaire aux forts et aux faibles, il s'en fallait donc de beaucoup qu'il ne convînt à la société, et l'état de guerre, qui existait avant, devait se trouver infiniment préférable, puisqu'il laissait à chacun le libre exercice de ses forces et de son industrie dont il se trouvait privé par le pacte injuste d'une société, enlevant toujours trop à l'un et n'accordant jamais assez à l'autre; donc l'être vraiment sage est celui qui, au hasard de reprendre l'état de guerre qui régnait avant le pacte, se déchaine irrevocablement contre ce pacte, le viole autant qu'il le peut, certain que ce qu'il retirera de ces lésions sera toujours supérieur a ce qu'il pourra perdre, s'il se trouve le plus faible; car il l'était de même en respectant le pacte; il peut devenir le plus fort en le violant; et si les lois le ramènent à la classe dont il a voulu sortir, le pis aller est qu'il perde la vie, ce qui est un malheur infiniment moins grand que celui d'exister dans l'opprobre et dans la misère.[17]

Having satisfactorily established, to himself at least, that man's natural state of warfare is preferable to the inequities of the Social Contract, he throws a devastating question to Justine which, from a criminal's point of view, requires more than philosophic rhetoric to answer: "Voilà donc deux positions pour nous; ou le crime qui nos rend heureux, ou l'échafaud qui nous empêche d'être malheureux. Je le demande, y a-t-il a balancer, belle Thérèse, et votre esprit trouversa-t-il un raisonnement qui puisse combattre ce-lui la?"[18] Here, according to de Sade, is a conflict for mankind of cosmic dimensions: the unavoidable choice between the pleasures of vice or the sorrows of virtue. That his philosophy became obsessed with defending vice, should not blind critics to the possibility that his moral intensity became so self-

consuming, and increasingly inspired by bitterness, that like Milton, he could easily be construed as being of the devil's party. He establishes in his metaphysics an equilibrium between good and evil, which turns into an ironic Manichean dualism, a corruption of Christianity[19] that Swinburne like de Sade, was quick to attack, as we shall see later. In nature, this conflict is manifested by passive and active principles: the active being a predatory, egoistic gratification, associated with vice, while the passive is characterized by a failure to act in the interests of gratification and survival--namely, virtue.

Further on in the novel, the Comte de Bressac tells Justine:

> A l'égard de crime de la destruction de son semblable, sois-en certaine, chère fille, il est purement chimérique. Le pouvoir de détruire n'est pas accordé à l'homme; il a tout au plus celui de varier les formes; mais il n'a pas celui de les anéantir: or toute forme est égale aux yeux de la nature; rien ne se perd dans le creuset immense où se variations s'éxecutent; toutes les portions de matières qu'y tombent en rejaillissent incessamment sous d'autres figures, et quels que soient nos procédés sur cela, aucun ne l'outrage sans doute, aucun ne saurait l'offenser.[20]

Nature is the supreme democrat, because she has no preferences and no prejudices; ergo, nature is "cruel", and the moral outrage of the Christian or democrat in the face of this assertion is in contradiction to his basic philosophic position. That is why, in order to be consistent, the moral or deistic thinker who tries to ground his philosophic

abstractions in nature, is forced, in his own mind, to alter the form of nature into an absurdly inverted condition by believing that it exists in a state of benevolent harmony. The connection between nature, as a manifestation of active and passive forces (or stronger and weaker forces, in a Darwinian sense), and established concepts of good and evil, is a central factor linking Swinburne and de Sade. It provides the basis of repudiation, in de Sade's case, of the moral law, and in Swinburne's, of the moral foundation attributed to aesthetics.

In writing his companion novels, Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu and L'histoire de Juliette ou les prospérités du vice, de Sade created a modern moral allegory which challenges, to a disturbing degree, many of the basic assumptions underlying western civilization. Juliette is the active (egoistic) force in nature; Justine is the passive (selfless) force. The one represents vice, the other virtue. Vice is rewarded; Virtué is deflowered, humiliated, condemned, and finally struck down by the "Dieu juste."[21] The framework of these novels is particularly interesting. Justine and Juliette are sisters. While very young, both are dispossessed from a convent school because their parents die, leaving them without money. After discussing what they will do in an effort to support themselves, Justine chooses to follow the path of virtue in the hope of earning a res-

pectable station in life (de Sade found it necessary to write several thousand pages, in order to recount her subsequent misfortunes). The first and continuing mistake she makes in pursuing her chosen career (in the course of which she becomes the victim of one outrage after another), is to expect that because she is virtuous, happiness, if not fortune, will eventually follow. Her passive nature, her relentless devotion to virtue, and her blind expectation of reward, result in her becoming, in effect, an unconscious masochist, as she repeatedly puts herself into the hands of various libertines who use her for the purpose of gratifying their instinctive, biological drives which, de Sade argues, are the first concerns of happiness. At the very end, she is ironically rescued from the gallows by Juliette, who arrives in a coach and six. Under the protective care of her older sister, Justine begins to believe that her virtue has finally been rewarded, when a bolt of lightning descends from Heaven and pierces her heart.

Contrarily, Juliette had chosen to pursue a life of vice, and immediately entered a whorehouse. By the age of twenty-six, she had married well and become a countess, whereupon she murdered her husband; further, "elle ruina trois ambassadeurs étrangers, quatre fermiers généraux, deux évêques, un cardinal et trois chevaliers des Ordres du roi."[22] And, in order to teach her father (who, it turns out, did not really

die) a lesson in filial obligations, she seduces and murders him in a scene of incredible debauchery. Needless to say, she ends up as one of the most influential and respected women in Europe.

Characters such as Richardson's Pamela, who gains position and respectability in exchange for her virginity, and Clarissa, who dies because she will not submit either to the economic coercion of her family, or to the ardent assaults of Lovelace, would find a ready place in the novels of de Sade. The natures of both Pamela and Clarissa are very deeply involved in the violence which is inflicted upon them. Both are victims of the middle-class moral conventions to which they have been educated. Oddly enough, Richardson's characters, undoubtedly owing to the force of his imagination, often emerge as grimly realistic in spite of the intentions with which he originally conceived them.

Reference was made earlier to de Sade as a modern moral allegorist; in this sense he is more perceptive than Richardson because his approach to moral experience is the product of a much clearer philosophy of moral reality. Vice and Virtue in his novels are intended to reflect the logical consequences of a dualistic Christianity, the moral concepts of which took root in a Manicheism which it was never entirely successful in shedding, and bequeathed to it the association of evil with things having to do with biological reality. To

de Sade, sexual and other forms of physical gratification are as intrinsic to human nature as they are to the rest of nature, and that is the point on which he predicates all questions concerning morals and ethics. That this is not a profound observation is, of course, quite true, but his thesis, shared by Swinburne and fundamental to his aesthetic views, is that in spite of the physical behaviour which has governed the natural world since the dawn of man, the cultured world of the Christian age has persisted in its attempt to structure a moral system divorced from the material basis of nature. The consequence has been a schizophrenic division of man into two disparate personalities: the good man and the evil man; Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais; Jekyll and Hyde. This divisiveness, historically, has characterized western culture throughout the broad spectrum of its experience of life, from moral leadership, through art and philosophy, and even down to present-day political questions.

De Sade's characters can repeatedly make outrageous remarks, such as "Le système de l'amour du prochain est une chimère que nous devons au christianisme et non pas à la nature,"[23] which remain truisms in spite of the fact that they are spoken, in this case, by a dissolute monk such as Clément, while he is taking his pleasure with Justine. He continues his blasphemous philosophy by describing each man as essentially alone in the universe and ruled primarily by subjective concerns.

"Mais l'homme dont vous parlez est un monstre!" Justine objects. "L'homme dont je parle est celui de la nature,"[24] Clément responds, with monkish simplicity. The human condition is only one of many in nature which is subject to the laws of the struggle for survival, which he describes by an analogy of wolves to lambs:

> Des loups qui mangent ses agneaux, des agneaux dévorés par les loups, le fort qui sacrifie le faible, le faible la victime du fort, voilà la nature, voilà ses vues, voilà ses plans; une action et une réaction perpétuelles, une foule de vices et de vertus, un parfait équilibre, en un mot, résultant de l'égalité du bien et de-mal sur la terre; équilibré éssentiel au maintien de astres, à la végetation, et sans lequel tout serait à l'instant détruit.[25]

This equilibrium of good and evil in nature is a constant theme in de Sade, as in Swinburne. If we are to take de Sade seriously on any count, it must be particularly on his insistence that man's sense of a moral order be truthfully founded on the natural rather than supernatural order. Clément continues his sermon by noting the folly of man's failure to do this.

> O Thérèse, elle serait bien étonnée, cette nature, si elle pouvait un instant raisonner avèc nous et que nous lui disions que ces crimes qui la servent, que ces forfaits qu'elle exige et qu'elle nous inspire, sont punis par des lois qu'on nous assure être l'image de siennes. Imbécile, nous répondrait-elle, dors, bois, mange et commets sans peur de tels crimes quand bon te semblera: toutes ces prétendues infamies me plaisent, et je les veux, puisque je te les inspire. Il t'appartient bien de régler ce qui m'irrite, ou ce qui me délecte! Apprends que tu n'as rien dans toi qui ne m'appartienne, rien que je n'y aie placé par des raisons

> qu'il ne te convient pas de connaître; que la plus abominable de tes actions n'est, comme la plus vertuese d'un autre qu'une de manières de me servir.[26]

Here and elsewhere de Sade, or at least one of his "naturalist" philosophers, asserts that the moral order has been inverted by man who, through his sophistries, claims that his laws are in imitation of Nature's. Inherent in Nature's reply is the view that since she inspires crime in man, in order to truly follow her, he must embrace as good that which has been ordinarily judged to be evil, and recognize that when trying to do good, by discouraging or banishing crime, he is committing evil. In consequence, the Manichean doctrine is reversed and real order is restored; matter, or the physical world, becomes the paramount source of human gratification. It is to things of this world that man must address his attentions, since there is nothing beyond our immediate existence except the grave. Justine's feeling of revulsion at this philosophy is explained by Clément as the simple result of not having habituated ourselves to our fundamental egoism, which we mistakenly call evil: "accoutumons-nous . . . au mal, nous n'y trouverons bientôt plus que des charmes."[27]

While de Sade's libertines always anticipate objections to their philosophy with ready answers, such as the above, it is odd that their victims never question whether or not this philosophy is often as sophistical as that which sup-

ports the prevailing morality against which it is aimed. Given the fact that de Sade was acutely aware of popular sophistries in his own day--to which Justine is explicitly addressed--it is difficult not to believe that the omission of such a question is, perhaps, intended to beg for it. Such ambiguities point out both the danger of indiscriminately identifying de Sade with his libertines, and the need for a more methodical approach to what actually takes place in his novels. The failure to distinguish between de Sade and his characters is evident even in the work of a Sadean scholar as prestigious as Maurice Blanchot, whose succinct summary of the philosophy of de Sade's libertines is inexplicably attributed to the author. The concluding sentence of his summary is: "La plus grand douleur des autres compte toujours moins que mon plaisir. Qu'importe, si, je dois acheter la plus faible jouissance par un assemblage inoui de forfaits, car la jouissance me flatte, elle est en moi, mais l'effet du crime ne me touche pas, il est hors de moi."[28] Having spent more than a third of his life in confinement, de Sade obviously knew that this was not true. That little effort has been made to separate the philosophy of the man from his dramatis personae is probably the result of the enormous difficulty of the task. The extent to which de Sade played devil's advocate in his views toward nature is not presently at all clear. That he regarded himself as a philosopher is

evident in his letters as well as in his fiction. For instance, in one of the more interesting letters to his wife, dated November, 1783, before the Revolution, it appears that with a little dissembling he probably could have made the conditions, if not the term of his confinement less of a burden:

> Ma façon de penser, dites-vous, ne peut être approuvee. Et que m'importe? Bien fou est celui qui adopte une façon de penser pour les autres! Ma façon de penser est le fruit de mes réflexions; elle tient a mon existence, à mon organisation. Je ne suis pas la maître de la changer; je le serais, que je ne le ferais pas. Cette façon de penser que vous blâmez fait l'unique consolation de ma vie; elle allège toutes mes peines en prison, elle compose tous mes plaisirs dans le monde et j'y tiens plus qu'à la vie. Ce n'est point ma façon de penser qui a fait mon malheur, c'est celle des autres.[29]

The tone, as well as the substance of such remarks, does not suggest a man who patently adheres to a philosophy in which ends justify means. He claims, in the same letter, that his extremism in certain matters "est l'ouvrage des persecutions de mes tyrans." Furthermore, "Ce ne sont pas les opinions ou les vices des particuliers qui nuisent a l'Etat; ce sont les moeurs de l'homme public qui seules influent sur l'administration générale." It is the morals of public men, not the vices of private men, which affect the state. The immunity enjoyed by corrupt public officials in contrast to the punishment he suffers because of the criminality of his private sexual life, rouses his ire more than any other factor:

> Que le roi corrige les vices du gouvernement qu'il en réforme les abus, qu'il fasse pendre les ministres qui le trompent ou qui le volent, avant que de réprimer les opinions ou les goûts de ses sujets! Encore un coup, ces goûts et ces opinions n'ébranleront pas son trône et les indignités de ceux qui l'approchent le culbuteront tôt ou tard.

Six years later, his prophecy becomes fact.

Regardless of the extent to which de Sade shared in the philosophy of his hero-villains, Blanchot's perspective on the Sadean man is worth noting:

> Nous ne disons pas que cette pensée soit viable. Mais elle nous montre qu'entre l'homme normal qui enferme l'homme sadique dans une impasse et le sadique qui fait de cette impasse une issue, c'est celui-ce qui en sait le plus long sur la vérité et la logique de sa situation et qui en a l'intelligence la plus profonde, au point de pouvoir aider l'homme normal à se comprendre lui-même, en l'aidant à modifier les conditions de toute comprehension.[30]

What de Sade--or the Sadean man, at least--has to offer the normal man, is an opportunity to become more complete--that is, to live more in accord with nature as it really is, without the compulsions of criminal desperation. Conditional to doing this, of course, is a willingness to alter radically the bases on which his moral perceptions have been predicated.

As de Sade's doctrine of evil is found in nature, and is applied in such a way as to invert the conventional notion of moral reality, Swinburne similarly takes the conventional notion of the beautiful, in the sense that it was associated with the good, and inverts it in a way which

permits him to represent evil aesthetically. This is what crucially links him to de Sade.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the traditional moral aesthetic was characterized by the insistence that the perception of artistic beauty was a moral function on the part of both the artist and the public. John Ruskin, as late as 1870, announced that "The great arts . . . have had and can have but three principal directions of purpose:--First, that of enforcing the religion of men; secondly, that of perfecting their ethical state; thirdly, that of doing them material service."[31] As early as 1846, with the publication of the second volume of Modern Painters, he defined the "Theoretic faculty" as

> concerned with the moral perception and appreciation of ideas of beauty. And the error respecting it is considering and calling it Aesthetic, degrading it to a mere operation of sense, or perhaps worse, of custom, so that the arts which appeal to it sink into a mere amusement, ministers to morbid sensibilities, ticklers and fanners of the soul's sleep.[32]

The early aesthetic proclivities in Swinburne's art-for-art's-sake attitude ran directly counter to this dictum. His choice, as well as his rendering, of subject matter, particularly in a work such as the first Poems and Ballads, violated another Ruskinian dictum, that "The choice of high subject involves all conditions of right moral choice."[33]

Theophile Gautier, from which Swinburne derived much of his early critical stance, had objected in France to "beaux

sermons qui ont remplacé dans les feuilles publiques la critique littéraire . . ."[34] Ruskin's view that "The duty of the painter is the same as that of the preacher,"[35] may have represented the English middle-class attitude more literally than its author's, but in Charles Kingsley's praise for Tennyson's In Memoriam (1850), the moral aesthetic rises to evangelical heights. The publication of that "noblest Christian poem which England has produced for two centures," made Tennyson the "deliberate champion of vital Christianity, and of an orthodoxy the more sincere because it has worked upward through the abyss of doubt; the more mighty for good because it justifies and consecrates the aesthetics and the philosophy of the present age."[36] Swinburne's critical response to such views in his review of Les Fleurs du Mal in 1861, echoes the sentiments of Gautier:

> A French poet is expected to believe in philanthropy, and break off on occasion in the middle of his proper work to lend a shove forward to some theory of progress. 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. No other form of art is so pestered with this impotent appetite for meddling in quite extraneous matters; but the mass of readers seem actually to think that a poem is the better for containing a moral lesson or assisting in a tangible and material good work.[37]

On the questions of art and morality, it is not possible to serve "both masters."[38]

De Sade, in his doctrine of evil, had inverted, on the

philosophic level, the moral poles of belief by depicting nature as evil, positing that if it is good to follow nature, it is therefore good to pursue evil; hence, virtue is punished and vice rewarded. Swinburne, similarly, explores an aesthetic of evil, and looks to pain, sensuality, crime and death for his subject matter. The nature which he portrays in most of his poetry before Songs Before Sunrise is a sinister one.

It is significant that in his youthful and naive vision of de Sade, Swinburne sees in him the power, in Coleridgean terms, to dissolve, diffuse and dissipate, "in order to recreate . . . to idealize and unify."[39] In "Charenton en 1810" Nature's two great antagonists, Good and Evil, unite in paying homage to this mysterious figure:

> Tout se courbait devant ce vieillard titanique,
> La Haine avec l'Amour, le Mal avec le Bien.

The old Titan is of the gods. He has been gripped by the soiled claws of the Empire, and smiled disdainfully; has experienced everything without being overcome by it, because his appetite for experience is insatiable:

> Cet homme avait de dieux à lui.
> Il vit tout, mais jamais il ne fut ébloui
> Un appétit grouillait dans son âme profonde
> Plus grand que Bonaparte et plus grand que le mond.
> [ll. 69-72]

The facts regarding the date of "Charenton" not only prove Gosse wrong in assuming that Swinburne had read de Sade before writing it, but the poem also reveals that Swinburne had a fascination with the cruelties of the Roman Decadence

even prior to reading de Sade. A re-run of the horrors from Suetonius unfold before the youth in the poem, which he describes as

> Les sublimes ébats du vieux monde romain,
> Tous ceux qui furent grands et qu'on appelle infâmes.
> [ll. 82-83]

Gosse's mistake regarding de Sade's influence on the poem is typical of the misunderstandings of which this friend, biographer and censorial editor of the "complete" works is guilty concerning the influences which contributed to the shaping of the poet's peculiar nature. In attributing the blame for Swinburne's bouts of deviance to people like de Sade, Sir Richard Burton, John Nichol and John Thomson, he overlooks in his The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne,[40] the profounder significance of Swinburne's experience at Eton (i.e., the floggings which he delighted so much in receiving).[41] In an appendix, "Swinburne at Eton," however, he reprints a letter from Lord Redesdale (Swinburne's cousin with whom he attended Eton), noting:

> It was at Eton that he began to feel his wings. His bringing up at home had been scrupulously strict. His literary diet the veriest of pap. His precocious brain had been nourished upon food for babes. Not a novel had he been allowed to open, not even Walter Scott's. Shakespeare he only knew through the medium of his precious brown Bowdler.[42]

Cecil Lang notes that of Swinburne's life up to 1865 little is known;[43] but while he may have begun to try his wings at Eton, it is also evident, at least from his own letters in

subsequent years, and from the reams of overt, as well as thinly-disguised flagellatory material he wrote about schoolboy experiences on the block, that birching induced in him an ecstasy which often stimulated his imagination to dwell upon morbid forms of torture. It is astounding that Gosse was able to overlook these Etonian experiences when he recorded the following in his Confidential Paper on Swinburne:

> This mania for suffering pain, whatever it was, I think remained dormant until 1861 [sic], when it was violently developed by Swinburne's borrowing and gloating over that atrocious book by the Marquis de Sade, "Justine; ou les Malheurs de la Vertu." For some time, for months and even years, allusions and quotations from this book, in Swinburne's correspondence, show what a profound impression it made upon his mind.[44]

That Swinburne made such references throughout his lifetime, would be a more accurate statement.

It may have been Gosse's sense of Victorian propriety and blind respect for "things British" which prevented him from speculating about the effects on Swinburne of one of the more pathological aspects of nineteenth-century life in England: the Public Schools. The Reverend Thomas Bowdler, that keen observer of moral hazards, however, was quick to see them as "the very seats and nurseries of vice."[45] The blunt description of that system, by Wayland Young, is long overdue:

> The Arnoldian public school was only partly an institution for the instruction of Christians and gentlemen, it was also an institution for the formation of mechanistic Manichees. In an atmosphere of spying, flogging, repression and fear . . . generations of men were educated in a carefully

> maintained ignorance of the fact that fucking is pleasure, and pleasure for both parties, is the nodal point of the family (an institution which was praised in all other respects), and is free from disastrous consequences.[46]

Young goes on to make some interesting observations about the effects which Public Schools had upon the administrators of the Empire, noting that these "retentive machine-men of the nineteenth-century English bourgoisie . . . turned up in Rangoon or Nairobi, bombarding surprised Buddhists and animists with distorted energy. One of the nostalgic phrases about the British Empire is: 'Never has the world had so boyish a master.' It is true."[47]

In light of the testimony to Swinburne's strict upbringing, and regardless of the fact that we know little about his childhood, it appears safe to speculate that Eton contributed greatly to channeling his dormant mania for pain in a direction which made his later enjoyment of normal sexual relationships impossible. It was at Eton that he learned the art of loving pain and, consequently, acquired an important affinity to de Sade. We know that throughout his life there were few women whom he saw frequently, and even fewer with whom he had any kind of relationship approaching intimacy. Among the latter, there appear to have been, on available evidence, only two: his cousin, Mary Gordon, and his mistress, for a brief time (probably his only one), the star of Mazeppa, Adah Menken.[48]

In addition to Eton, one of the more germane periods in those obscure years of Swinburne's life up to 1865, would un-

doubtedly have been that of his relationship with Mary Gordon who, before she died in 1926 (then Mrs. Disney Leith), took care to deprive posterity of letters, and passages from letters, which contained anything "Private."[49] It is also disappointing that virtually nothing exists in Swinburne's letters which provide us with any significant insights to his relationship with her. There are numerous passages in Love's Cross Currents and Lesbia Brandon, however, which can be construed as autobiographical.

Though written in 1862, before Mary was married, Love's Cross Currents[50] ironically anticipates the thwarting of Swinburne's own marital hopes, and unfolds a story of passion entwined in potentially incestuous love involving two young men who are each in love with a married cousin; one of the youths is named Reginald (a pseudonym often used by Swinburne in his flagellation writings; e.g., Reginald's Flogging and The Flogging Block[51]), a striving young poet with an "engouement for foreign politics and liberation campaigns," as Lady Midhurst describes him.[52] There is a striking passage here, undoubtedly inspired by the many rides which the poet took with Mary, on horseback, along the rugged coast of the Isle of Wight. The manner by which he freezes his memory of her--like the stopped frame of a motion picture--is brilliant:

> I never saw her look so magnificent; her hair was blown down and fell in heavy uncurling heaps to her waist; her face looked out of the frame of it, hot and bright, with the eyes lighted, expanding

> under the lift of those royal wide eyelids of hers. I could hardly speak to her for pleasure . . . I rode between her and the sea, a thought behind; a gust of wind blowing off land drove a wave of her hair across my face, upon my lips; she felt it somehow, I suppose, for she turned and laughed.[53]

The connection between the two becomes electric in the tactile image of the strand of hair across his lips which triggers her enticing laugh. There is no cruelty here, but the potential for it is very great. As suggested by Jean Overton Fuller, it is quite possible that Mary Gordon is later absorbed into his Mary Stuart.[54]

It is worth noting here, that in a letter to his sister Alice during the winter of 1863, while visiting with Mary, he says:

> My greatest pleasure just now is when [Mary] practices Handel on the organ; but I can hardly behave for delight at some of the choruses. I care hardly more than I ever did for any other music; but that is an enjoyment which wants special language to describe it, being so unlike all others. It crams and crowds me with old and new verses, half-remembered and half-made, which new ones will hardly come straight afterwards: but under their influence I have done some more of my Atalanta which will be among my great doings if it keeps up with my own last scenes throughout.[55]

Mrs. Leith, in her biography of Swinburne's boyhood (more aptly described as a biographic note), recalls that "the first time I ever heard the opening chorus, 'When the hounds of Spring are on Winter's traces,' was on horseback,"[56] while she and Swinburne were riding together during the above mentioned visit.

However, it is in Lesbia Brandon,[57] an unfinished novel begun after the completion of Love's Cross Currents, and involving descendants of the family of the earlier novel,[58] that a marked Sadean influence emerges. In comparison to Love's Cross Currents, it is far more typical, in its rendering of image and theme, of the later work, especially Poems and Ballads (1866), which was to launch him into brilliant but notorious fame. The treatment of incest, flogging, lesbianism, androgyny, as cruel expressions of the natural order, clearly operate within a Sadean framework. Speaking of the sea, he says, "All cruelties and treacheries, all subtle appetites and violent secrets of the sea, were part of her divine nature, adorable and acceptable to her lovers," among whom Swinburne was one of the most devoted. There is a lengthy passage in the novel, from which this quotation is extracted, that describes the manner in which nature impressed itself upon the senses of the young hero, Herbert. Assuredly, the passage is a recollection of Swinburne's youth on the Isle of Wight:

> Well broken in to solitude and sensitive of all outward things, he found life and pleasure enough in the gardens and woods, the downs and the beach. Small sights and sounds excited and satisfied him; his mind was as yet more impressible than capacious, his senses more retentive than his thoughts. Water and wind and darkness and light made friends with him; he went among beautiful things without wonder or fear. For months he lived and grew on like an animal or a fruit: and things seemed to deal with him as with one of these; earth set herself to caress and amuse him; air blew and rain fell and leaves changed to his great delight.[59]

This keen awareness of the elements of nature--particularly water--is the predominant source of his imagery in the later poetry. There are interesting echoes here of Wordsworth's recollections of the "coarser pleasures" of his "boyish days,/ And their glad animal movements all gone by":[60]

> He was no sample of infant faith or infant thought; he was very generally and admirably ignorant, neither saint nor genius, but a small satisfied pagan. The nature of things had room to work in him, for the chief places in his mind were not preoccupied by intrusive and unhealthy guests wheeled in and kept up by machinery of teaching and preaching. There was matter in him fit to mould into form and impregnate with colours; and upon this life and nature were at work, having leisure and liberty to take their time.[61]

If we can take such passages as autobiographic accounts of how the sensitivities and impressions of his youth developed, it stands to reason that his aesthetic awareness was sharply honed on the ambiguities of creation and destruction, pleasure and pain, which exist in the natural world.

Lady Midhurst who, under different circumstances, would have made a marvelous older Juliette, provides Herbert with a lesson in Sadean philosophy:

> "Don't get any notions of providential justice into your head; it doesn't pay except in Carlyle--and the Bible of course," said Lady Midhurst, reverently. "You can read both by and by; meantime, I advise you to adapt yourself to the nature of things . . . One must face the misfortunes of virtue in this universe my dear child, and put up with the prosperities of vice."[62]

She later provides him with a theory that beauty represents a rebellion against the politics of nature:

> "I fear sometimes that nature is a democrat. Beauty you see is an exception; and exception means rebellion against a rule, infringement of a law. That is why people who go in for beauty pure and plain--poets and painters and all the tail trash of the arts, besides all men who believe in life--are all born aristocrats on the moral side. Nature, I do think, if she had her own way, would grow nothing but turnips; only the force that fights her, for which we have no name, now and then revolts; and the dull soil here and there rebels into a rose. We all grow into wall-fruit and vegetables; but some remember what they were like in flower. The nature of things beats us in the long run, and we grow old all over, inside and outside. The comfort is that there will always be flowers after us to protest against the cabbage commonwealth and insult the republic of radishes."[63]

The passage is a remarkable metaphor of a complete theory of aesthetics, devoid of any moral or pragmatic aims, in which nature, as in de Sade, is sardonically described as democratic; but Swinburne makes the artist into a Promethean figure in the struggle against nature which inevitably defeats us.

Unfortunately, the political sections of Lesbia Brandon are among the most fragmented parts of the novel, although the influence of Hugo and Giuseppe Mazzini is unmistakable. It is noteworthy, however, that the juxtaposing of sensual and political concerns, more characteristic in this case of de Sade than Hugo, is so extensive. A courtesan (Leonora Harley) and an Italian patriot (Attilio Mariani), both of whom are failures, occupy polarized positions in Herbert's world. Swinburne tells us: "These two names are here again bracketed together, that the two extremes of nature may be confronted with each other, in their likeness and after their kind; soul al-

most without body, and body almost without soul: neither man nor woman complete in their own way."[64] The one is a pure idealist, the other a pure materialist. The dualistic man, as depicted here, is impotent in both his aspects. The political theme of the novel seems itself to hang, incomplete, somewhere between Hugo and de Sade.

It would be interesting to know to what extent the unfinished state of his novel stems from the contemporaneous convergence in Swinburne's mind of the two authors who were to influence him most dramatically: Hugo, the philosopher of the soul, and de Sade, the philosopher of the body--the proto-Marxist and the proto-Freudian, respectively. Such paradoxical enthusiasms were entirely in keeping with Swinburne's character. After comparing Christ and de Sade in a letter to William Michael Rossetti, he says, "I hope I have not bored you with this most heterogeneous amalgam of the Marquis and the Galilean, with neither of whom, I know, you sympathize as much as I do."[65] Again, shortly after this, he tells him, "there are (witness my works passim) two writers whom I cannot refrain from quoting, God, and de Sade. I am aware that they are both obscene and blasphemous."[66]

Reviewing Les Misérables for the Spectator throughout 1862, Swinburne was hyperbolic in his praise, calling it "the greatest epic of a soul transfigured and redeemed, purified by heroism and glorified through suffering."[67] Hugo is "the

greatest tragic and dramatic poet since the age of Shakespeare."[68] That his admiration for Jean Valjean is intricately connected to the process by which that epitome of Hugo's heroes is transfigured into a reborn Christ, may come as a surprise to readers who are accustomed to being assaulted by Swinburne's avowals of atheism and other blasphemies. On the whole, what is more surprising is that in the course of his life he has so little to say, apart from passing comments, about Christianity or Christ; the former, when he does refer to it, is generally regarded as a scourge to civilization; and as for Christ, the view which he expresses to his sister later in life is unlikely to have been inconsistent with that held in the early 'sixties. Speaking to her of Mazzini, he remarks, "Ever since I knew him I have been able to read the Gospels with such power of realizing and feeling the truth of the human character of Christ as I have never felt before."[69] It is exclusively the humanity rather than the alleged divinity of Christ that Swinburne finds heroic; the source of whatever divinity Christ might have lies solely in his humanity and not vice versa. The same is true of Valjean, who is transfigured from an unseeing, unthinking, unfeeling wreck of humanity to a man capable of acts of heroic selflessness. Mazzini is likewise heroic. Along with de Sade, at least as viewed in Swinburne's eyes, they are men who held out in defense of unpopular beliefs and were consequently martyred because of them

(figuratively, in Valjean's case). In brief, they were principled rebels.

It may be, as Cecil Lang asserts, that it was Hugo who "fashioned Swinburne behind and before";[70] this is most evident in the high standards for literature with which he supplied Swinburne; as poet, dramatist and novelist, Hugo was master of all literary media, and brought a dignity and grace to literature, the scope of which, for Swinburne at least, had not been seen since Shakespeare. Like Villon whom, of medieval poets, Swinburne placed second only to Dante (finding him greater even than Chaucer),[71] it was the mastery of execution and the variety of subject matter--which included everything between Hell and Heaven--that Swinburne most admired in Hugo, and in this sense there is no doubt that he considered Hugo an infinitely greater artist than de Sade. But the essential point here, is that it was not Hugo who, in the early 'sixties, inspired Swinburne with the fatalist universe which informs works such as Atalanta in Calydon and Poems and Ballads of 1866. When Hugo looked at the wretchedness of the poor people of Paris, he saw in every criminal and gamin a potential revolutionary and idealist; indeed, his entire concept of revolution in Les Misérables is based on a belief in historical progression, of recurring but advancing cycles--an evolution of revolution--which appears to be working toward enlightenment. There is nothing in this view comparable

to de Sade's metaphysics of evil. It is therefore not from Hugo, but de Sade, that Swinburne derives his aesthetic exploration of evil.

Swinburne bestowed praise on other writers with considerable declamation and hyperbole; such panegyrics were not the product of easily pleased tastes, as a reading of any of his mature criticism soon reveals, but of his sincere belief that no amount of praise could do justice to the talents of great minds. His admiration for them, however, rarely impeded his perception of their failings or his willingness to point them out. Such is the case with both Hugo and de Sade.

At the time of reviewing Les Misérables, Swinburne was still under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite art-for-art's sake attitude, as is apparent in his principal objection to Hugo's novel:

> This infusion of the intensest unmixed lyrical passion into things political is, of course, an offence and an irritation to the analytic intellect, which is much given to abrogate to itself the right of solution for all practical matters. And, indeed we may reasonably grudge the time and labour--still more the faith and hope and fervent vigour of mind--lavished on social subjects, and all kinds of actual wrongs and remedies; such of us at least as regard a good work of art as the first of all good deeds for an artist, and would consider a fresh Hamlet or a new Ruy Blas cheaply purchased by the hanging without trial of a dozen innocent men.[72]

The aesthetic priorities here may be derived from Baudelaire and Gautier, but the ethics are Sadean. The extent to which his position here is serious or affected, is difficult to tell,

as is the case with his initial response to de Sade's Justine.

It was Richard Monckton Milnes (1809-1885), elevated to the peerage as Lord Houghton in 1863, who introduced Swinburne to the actual works of de Sade in early August, 1862,[73] when the poet first visited Fryston and explored the inner sanctum of Milnes' library of forbidden books. On October 15, 1861, Swinburne had written to Milnes reminding him of a promise, "which I do not forget, that I am yet to live and look upon the mystic pages of the martyred marquis de Sade; ever since which, the vision of that illustrious and ill-requited benefactor of humanity has hovered by night before my eyes."[74] This vision took its shape in "Charenton en 1810" where we see de Sade depicted as a titanic sexual force; a smiling spirit of pagan lust, who "semblait le Priape assis sous le feuillage" (l. 60). He is also presented as a magnificent atheist, contemptuous of the Infinite.

James Pope-Hennessy tries to play down the image of Milnes as a sinister corrupter, created by such writers as Lafourcade, Hare and Praz,[75] by pointing out that the nature of Milnes' library, and the fact that he introduced the young, birch-worshipping Swinburne to Justine, has drawn undue notoriety upon him. It is more to the point, claims Pope-Hennesey, that "From the outset Milnes' attitude to Swinburne was helpful and avuncular. His influence was a constructive one," since he urged Swinburne to give up writing border ballads

and translations from Boccaccio.[76] That Swinburne, however, in his letters to Milnes, often refers to him as his "chastiser,"[77] and had "covenanted" with him to write a "schoolmaster's autobiography" of a flagellatory nature,[78] suggests that Milnes' interest in him was more than avuncular. In fact, among Milnes' contemporaries, he was reputed to be fond of the particularly English vice, flagellation. William Hardman records in his memoirs for 1866, while commenting on an account in The Daily News of the mode of flogging women in Jamaica, that "the whipping of women would have gratified the senses of Lord Houghton (Monckton Milnes) and would probably have culminated in his asking to be similarly castigated himself!"[79] Writing to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Swinburne describes a brutal and bloody flogging about which he has recently heard. He refers amusingly to Milnes as "mon vieux" and "that venerable but unctuous eel," wishing he had been by to hear--it would have made him wriggle and bubble with enjoyment till his teeth came out."[80]

Milnes, apparently anxious to hear about the effects of Justine upon the young poet, received a letter from him, dated August 18, 1862, which provides some of the clearest and most perceptive criticism yet written on de Sade. Swinburne expresses unequivocal disappointment:

> You retain my Charenton and desire me to clear my head of the subject. I am in a very fair way to do so; for I have just read "Justine ou les Malheurs de la Vertu." As you seemed anxious to know

> its effect on me I mean to give you a candid record, avoiding paradox or affectation.[81]

Continuing, he says of Justine, "it appears to me a most outrageous fiasco. I looked for some sharp and subtle analysis of lust--some keen dissection of pain and pleasure . . ." (This "dissection" he would undertake to perform himself, later in Atalanta in Calydon and Poems and Ballads.) He expected subtlety from de Sade because, as in "Charenton," he envisioned an artist who combined the great and timeless paradoxes of pleasure and pain in the human (or microcosmic) world and creation and destruction in the natural (or macrocosmic) world. To his disappointment he found that de Sade "takes bulk and number for greatness. As if a crime of great extent was necessarily a great crime; as if a number of pleasures piled one on another made up the value of a single and perfect sensation of pleasure."

While promising Milne a "candid" account of his response to Justine, "avoiding paradox or affectation," his letter immediately adopts precisely those characteristics. While levelling some solid objections against the Marquis, Swinburne's tone becomes comic; in an apostrophe to de Sade, he is like an acolyte divesting the Master of his evil garb, thereby exposing him as a sheep in wolf's clothing, berating him all the while from Teufelsdrockhian heights:

> Tenez, my friend, Arch-Professor of the Ithyphallic Science as you are, will you hear the truth once for all? You take yourself for a great pagan physiolo-

> gist and philosopher--you are a Christian ascetic bent on earning the salvation of the soul through the mortification of the flesh. You are one of the family of St. Simeon Stylites.

Instead of combining and resolving the dichotomy between soul and body, which appears to be what he expected in 1861 when he referred to him as the "Mystic" and "ill-requited benefactor of humanity," the Marquis merely reverses the moral order, thereby maintaining essentially the old Manichean corruption of Christian dualism which divided mankind against itself: ". . . by the simple process of reversing anyone may write as good a Justine as yours." Swinburne had expected to find an ecstatic rendering of pain and pleasure indistinguishably coupled; undoubtedly, the mystery of mysteries for him at this time. Here, too, he will surpass the master. Instead of being a "burlesque Prometheus," de Sade is only a "very serious Simeon Stylites--in an inverted posture. You worship the phallus as those first ascetics worshipped the cross; you seek your heaven by the very same road as they sought theirs." Swinburne thus expresses his "final judgment on a matter of some curiosity and interest to me"; but such a remark conveys rather obvious "affectation" when we consider that in his correspondence, at least as late as 1906, he still uses phrases from Justine;[82] moreover, de Sade's philosophy of nature dominates Swinburne's poetry until at least 1866. There are innumerable references to de Sade in his letters; those to Milnes often begin with Sadean salutations and are signed with the

names of characters from de Sade's novels, occasionally even as "A. F. de Sade."[83] In fact, he comes to regard the future as belonging to de Sade. Having been unsuccessful in convincing Theodore Watts-Dunton, his moral guardian and personal caretaker for the last thirty years of his life, of the merits of de Sade, he writes to him on July 18, 1874:

> I deeply grieve at the incurable blindness and stiff-neckedness as of a new Pharoah which keeps you still in the gall of prejudice of a Great Man. . . . I cannot but think that God must have hardened your heart--if en est très capable; and nothing else could account for the insensibility to the peculiar but surpassing merits of the Marquis. But, as the immortal man himself predicted, the day and the age will come when statues will be erected to him in the streets of every town--and, I would fain add, sacrifices offered to his deathless and honoured memory (I say not of what kind) at the bottom of every pedestal.[84]

Among the extant correspondence of Swinburne, the letter to Milnes castigating de Sade appears to be the first and only one written in this vein, a factor which casts in a contradictory light his assertions of being unaffected by the "Blessed" and "Divine" Marquis, as he later refers to him. In fact, on December 2, 1868, he ends a letter to James McNeill Whistler by noting, "this day is the 54th anniversary of the death of that great and good man."[85] From 1862 onward, his enthusiasm for de Sade is one of the most consistent elements of his thinking.

It is to Swinburne's credit, however, that the letter to Milnes is not contradictory; that it might appear inconsis-

tent is a confusion resulting from a failure to recognize the remarkable perspicacity and integrity of Swinburne's critical sense. He continued to admire de Sade not in violation of the objections he made in 1862, but because a prisoner of Vincennes, the Bastille, Bicêtre and Charenton, withstood the relentless persecution which he suffered at the hands of the state, and continued to insist on the human rather than divine origin of values.

That Swinburne expected to return, through some mysterious alembic in de Sade's writings, to the pre-Christian world of pagan freedom in which man is at one with nature--both his own and external nature--is evident in "Charenton" and in his expressions of disappointment to Milnes. In spite of the fact that de Sade failed to live up to the fantasy which resulted from Swinburne's prolonged anticipation of reading him, the Sadean perspective on nature retained its hold on him.

How or when Swinburne first heard of de Sade will only be clarified if new evidence regarding his life before 1865 should turn up. It may have been from Milnes, but a more likely source is of John Nichol, an agnostic and a republican enthusiast from whom, according to Jean Overton Fuller, Swinburne "learned to care for Italian liberty and admire Mazzini."[86] Nichol, an old school friend, eagerly shared Swinburne's delight in the forbidden. T. Earle Welby, in a

display of outdated Victorian moral sensibility, makes the following cryptic remark reflecting on the relationship between Swinburne and Nichol:

> The poet's visit to him in 1878, at Glasgow, where Nichol was Professor of English Literature, was among the least fortunate of his expeditions; and over what happened when Nichol lodged for a short while at Putney, where Bacchus could be honoured only in the Professor's bedroom, I must draw a veil.[87]

It is important to note at this point that any attempt to approach Swinburne's theory of aesthetics as objectively evolved will ultimately fail, no matter how internally consistent and well documented it may be. When attempting to understand his approach to art, we should bear in mind the point he makes in regard to Wuthering Heights: "The book is what it is because the author was what she was; this is the main and central fact to be remembered."[88] Like de Sade, Swinburne was basically a romantic, and "Since the Romantic theory," as Mario Praz observes, "asserted that the best means of expressing passions was to feel them, people sought, instead of translating spontaneous acts of life into the realm of art, to experience in actual life the monstrous suggestions of imagination fed upon literary horrors."[89] As with de Sade, Swinburne's known acts of libertinage probably did not justify the notoriety which surrounded them. That he delighted and indulged in some masochistic rites at a secret house in St. John's Wood, we know; that he occasion-

ally indulged in homosexual relations with Simeon Solomon or John Nichol, or both, may be true also; that he drank beyond what he could tolerate and behaved weirdly,[90] is documented by Victorian scandal mongers and intimate associates alike. We know that he enjoyed acting as a girl, and at one time was excited by a project to pass him off "for the British Mademoiselle de Maupin."[91] There is nothing here, however, of demonic behaviour or criminal excess, the likes of which we find recorded in J.-K. Huysmans' personal account of a Black Mass in Là-Bas, where it is asserted that the "Le culte du Démon n'est pas plus insane que celui de Dieu," and an ordained priest soils the host and feeds it to a group of frenzied women.[92] There is nothing to approach the horror of Gilles de Rais' infanticides, or the exploits of Restif de la Bretonne who, while spurning de Sade's cruelty toward women in his L'antijustine (1798), and claiming to be a follower of Rousseau, boasted to have had 217 daughters by the time he was sixty; presumably, he never recorded the number of sons, since the daughters were his potential source of incest, a subject which spurred him to the production of novels totalling 194 volumes.[93]

Clearly, Swinburne would not qualify in this league of libertines, but he does to an extent illustrate the sort of romantic phenomenon described by Praz. More to the point, the sensual experience of the world, and the asethetic trans-

figuration of that experience, was in his early years almost an obsession, as evidenced, in the extreme, by his pleasurable association of pain with scent, as seen in the following selection from a letter to Milnes in February, 1863. Speaking probably of an Eton tutor named James Leigh Joynes,[94] he says:

> I have known him (I am really speaking now in my own person) prepare the flogging-room (not with corduroy or onion but) with burnt scents; or choose a sweet place out of doors with smell of firewood. This I call real delicate torment. Please tell me what you think. Once, before giving me a swishing that I had the marks of for more than a month (so fellows declared that I went to swim with), he let me saturate my face with eau-de-Cologne. I conjecture now, on looking back to that "rosy hour with eyes purged by the euphrasy and rue" of the Marquis de Sade and his philosophy, that, counting on the pungency of the perfume and its power over the nerves, he meant to stimulate and excite the senses by that preliminary pleasure so as to inflict the acuter pain afterwards on their awakened and intensified susceptibility. If he did, I am still gratified to reflect that I beat him; the poor dear old beggar overreached himself, for the pleasure of smell is so excessive and intense with me that even if the smart of birching had been unmixed pain, I could have borne it all the better for that previous indulgence. Perhaps he had no such idea, and I, grown over-wise through perusal of Justine and Juliette, now do him more than justice; but he was a stunning tutor; his one other pet subject was metre and I firmly believe that my ear for verses made me rather a favourite. I can boast that of all the swishings I ever had up to seventeen and over, I never had one for a false quantity in my life. (Can you say the same? I should imagine you metrical as a boy.) One comfort is, I made it up in arithmetic, so my tutor never wanted reasons for making rhymes between his birch and my body.
>
> You must excuse my scribbling at this rate when I once begin, for the sake of that autobiographical fact about perfume and pain, which you

> can now vouch for as the experience of a real live boy. I always wanted to know if other fellows shared the feeling. Conceive trying it in a grove of budding birch-trees scented all over with the green spring. Ah-h-h![95]

It becomes apparent, in statements such as this, that a great part of Swinburne's aesthetic sense derived from the intense and simultaneous experience of pain and pleasure during the early years of his life. The juxaposition of these experiences created a paradigm of impressions from which descend his recurring images of burning and sweetness in all their varieties. Phrases such as, the "sweet place out of doors with smell of firewood," "real delicate torment," "the pleasure of smell is so excessive and intense," "perfume and pain," must have been carefully considered by him, which leaves little doubt that he was aware of what he was doing. In fact, nowhere in his work is there a hint of guilt or a suggestion that he believed there was anything abnormal in these predilections. The candor, the absolute lack of rationalization, by which Swinburne refers to and discusses his enjoyment of flogging, is not far removed from the tone he often adopts when enthusiastic about some particular work of art.

It is therefore to be expected that in his treatment of nature we find such an interplay between pleasure and cruelty. It is not a depiction strictly in imitation of de Sade; on the contrary, he complains, again to Milnes, that de Sade does not exploit nature sufficiently:

> Il est dommage que ce cher et digne marquis n'ait pas imaginé des supplices de mer. J'ai vue la semaine passé un effect admirable de bourrasque sur les grèves de la côte du nord. En contemplant les grandes larmes blanche et roussâtres de cette mer houleuse, et les rochers crénelés qui souf-flaient l'écume par mille bouches et mille narines de pierre, j'ai trouvé des supplices à faire bander un cadavre.[96]

A morbid comment, but it is illustrative of an interesting distinction between de Sade and Swinburne, the former of whom never uses metaphoric language, though it might be profitable to approach him by dealing with each of his works, _in toto_, as an elaborate metaphor.

Important to the consideration of any theory of aesthetics is the issue of nature, its influence on changing concepts of reality, and the manner by which this reality is reflected in art. Simone de Beauvoir, in her now-famous essay, "Must We Burn Sade?", provides a cogent distinction in her analysis of de Sade's treatment of nature which has a bearing on the aesthetic connection with Swinburne:

> There was nothing new in the idea that nature is evil. Hobbes, with whom de Sade was familiar and whom he quotes freely, had declared that man is a wolf to man and that the state of nature was one of war. . . . De Sade had no trouble finding any number of arguments to support the thesis which was implied in his erotic experience and which was ironically confirmed by society's imprisoning him for having followed his instincts. But what distinguishes him from his predecessors is the fact that they, after exposing the evil of nature, set up, in opposition to it, a morality which derived from God and society, whereas de Sade, though rejecting the first part of the generally accepted credo: 'Nature is good; let us follow her', paradoxically retained the second. Nature's example

> has an imperative value, even though her law be one of hate and destruction.[97]

De Beauvoir goes on to suggest that in de Sade's view of nature there is "the idea that she is governed by an evil genius." There are endless examples of this, such as when the Comte de Bressac tells Justine, "Ah! si le meurtre n'etait pas une des actions de l'homme que remplit le mieux ses intentions, permettrait-elle qu'il s'opérât?"[98] The principal mistake which people make, according to the Comte, is to assume that in nature's eyes "cet animal à deux pieds lui coûte plus que celle d'un vermisseau . . ."[99]

Reality must be based in nature; the fact that there are ever changing modes of reality is primarily the result of our changing ideas concerning the structure of nature, depending upon whether we see it as benevolent or indifferent, ordered or chaotic, or as spiritually or materially driven. Good and evil, the poles between which moral reality continually changes its aspect, are notions which are rooted in theism and which continually affect the shape of art. Until the modern period--particularly the twentieth century--there is not a protagonist or antagonist in literature who does not directly appeal to our sense of good and evil.

Swinburne, encouraged by what he found in de Sade, is the first English poet to deliberately and intelligently break away from this moral framework. Though, in much of his poetry up to and including 1866, he often exploits the notion

of an evil genius at work in nature, one does not get the impression that his viewpoint is anthropomorphic or meant to represent anything other than a metaphoric treatment of a kind of Hardyan chance and circumstance. Seldom, if ever, is nature portrayed as an ebullient plotter of mankind's torture and destruction, as in the works of de Sade, where nature is in fact the chief protagonist. Whereas de Sade personifies concrete nature as an abstract evil genius, Swinburne often personifies abstractions, such as Love, Desire, Time and Death.

In the Sadean cosmos, nature always operates on an active, never passive, principle; it destroys in order to create new things to destroy. In his description of nature, however, it is never the details that he depicts (that is, the shape or movement of trees, the smell of flowers, the seasonal changes, or the splendour of mountains), but always the operating principle, the mechanism which drives it. In Swinburne, however, the cruelties of nature are rarely separated from the pleasures it affords the senses; the good and evil of nature, are coaxial.

Swinburne was able to accept a de Sade who behaved like a Stylites, but not a Tennyson who behaved like a Pantheist. De Sade erred on the side of passion, while Tennyson suffered from aesthetic if not moral cowardice. Fundamentally, his objection to each is the same: their anthropomorphism. He

regarded Tennyson's religious paradoxes as theological absurdities, and parodied them in "The Higher Pantheism in a Nutshell":

> God, whom we see not, is: and God, who is not, we see:
> Fiddle, we know, is diddle: and diddle we take it, is dee.

On the whole, however, his opinion of Tennyson, like that of de Sade, was based on candor and a clear sense of artistic integrity. At his best, Tennyson is seen as the greatest lyric poet of the age, and there is much that is praised in works such as In Memoriam, Maud and, later, "Rizpah." But Swinburne wanted a "virile" literature, "large, liberal and sincere," dealing with "the full life of man and the whole nature of things."[100] Tennyson's greatest failing is in being a moral rationalist and in cultivating an effeminate poetry by popularizing the idyllic form.[101] Though for years Swinburne was barely able to tolerate Tennyson, in 1881 he hails the publication of "Rizpah" as a poem in itself establishing, unequivocally, Tennyson's greatness. A dramatic monologue, spoken by a dying mother bemoaning the loss of her hanged son, whose bones she has secretly collected, "Rizpah" is a poem which, apart from its superb lyricism, probably appealed to Swinburne because of its depiction of cruel justice, and a woman whose love for her lost son eclipses her own desire for Christian salvation. Mostly, however, Swinburne appears to have been impressed that Tennyson could cre-

ate so movingly the maternal mind and spirit. It is interesting that even at such a late date, Swinburne's discussion of art and artists is cast in sexual terms, for he saw in the poem, "perfect proof once more of the deep truth that great poets are bisexual; male and female at once. . . ."[102] Here, too, we see his view of the artist as a resolver of opposites, restoring the dualities of good and evil, pain and pleasure, love and hate, male and female, to their primal oneness.

Swinburne found in William Blake a combination of the best in Tennyson (lyric beauty) and the best in de Sade (the courage to deny God). That he began his "William Blake" in 1863, as a review of Alexander Gilchrist's Life of William Blake, and by 1866 had turned it into a book-length critical study of Blake, suggests that Swinburne was, during these years, preoccupied in working out for himself the major aesthetic problem of the nineteenth century: the relation between art and morality. Blake had treated of politics and morality in his poetry, but he did not preach political or moral precepts, the moral and political world being only one factor in the overall cosmology of man, a creature divided body against soul by Urizen (God), who has created good and evil. In many ways, Blake was the Promethean spirit which Swinburne had hoped to find fully developed in de Sade. Julian Baird penetrates to the very core of Swinburne's relation to Blake and de Sade when he observes that "Swinburne

sees Sade as operating within the framework of the very premises against which he seeks to rebel. Rather than asserting the dignity of the flesh as indissolubly wedded to spirit, Sade mortifies the flesh by accepting the old error of asceticism that flesh and spirit are divisible."[103] An art based on the espousal of evil and pain was no more acceptable than one based on virtue and the promise of Heaven, the difference being only that between the Manichee and his mirrored reflection.

With Shelley and Blake, Swinburne would assert that imagination--not reason--is the higher human faculty and spawning ground of art. Religion, in Blake's view, and especially in its teleological concerns, is the offspring of Reason; it has separated good from evil, soul from body, and has thereby created morality. According to Swinburne, art cannot serve purposes other than its own:

> Handmaid of religion, exponent of duty, servant of fact, pioneer of morality . . . she would be none of these things though you were to bray her in a mortar. All the battering in the world will never hammer her into fitness for such an office as that. It is at her peril if she tries to do good. . . . Her business is not to do good on other grounds, but to do good on her own. . . . Art for art's sake first of all, and afterwards we may suppose all the rest shall be added to her . . .[104]

This view on art for art's sake, as we shall see later, is modified before he writes Songs Before Sunrise. Hugo's failure to adhere to this principle, as noted in "A Study of Les Misérables," is less culpable than Tennyson's failure, be-

cause in Les Misérables the moral intent is accidental, and because the work is great enough to outshine its flaws. Morality is not an art; it is the product of reason and therefore more properly designated a science; and, as Swinburne asserts, "The betrothal of art and science were a thing harder to bring about and more profitless to proclaim than the "marriage of heaven and hell."[105]

Swinburne's definition of what he sees as Blake's creed tells us more, perhaps, about Swinburne than Blake: ". . . as long as a man believes all things he may do anything; scepticism (not sin) is alone damnable, being the one thing purely barren and negative; do what you will with your body, as long as you refuse it leave to disprove or deny the life eternally inherent in your soul."[106] Body and spirit must join together to shatter the chains of moral restraint which delimit the scope of mental as well as physical action and frustrate creative potential: "The body shall not deny, and the spirit shall not restrain; the one shall not prescribe doubt through reasoning; the other shall not preach salvation through abstinence."[107] It therefore becomes necessary to deny the myth that good and evil are separate forces external to man.

Swinburne not only rescued Blake, as claimed by Cecil Lang,[108] but it is a credit to his genius and courage that in the midst of an age, and (as some thought) a universe, governed by the Victorian moral machine, he was able to per-

ceive and note the amazing connection between Blake and de Sade, "the mystical evangelist and the material humourist." It may be reasonably said that as Blake was considered mad in his own time (the principle charge which Gilchrist's biography tried to counter), so is de Sade in ours, and probably for similar reasons. For our world to accept de Sade on his own terms is almost as terrifying a prospect as it was for Victorians to accept Blake. To seriously consider, let alone accept as reality, the view that we live in an indifferent and Godless universe, without metaphysical significance, is too awesome a threat to the values on which our major institutions, religious and political are founded.

Swinburne sees de Sade and Blake "join hands" in their views on "The God of Nature," and provides us with "a paraphrase or 'excursus' on a lay sermon by a modern pagan philosopher [de Sade] of more material tendencies," with which to compare Blake's view in Jerusalem.[109] In Chapter III of Jerusalem, the God of Nature is the Deist God. According to Blake: "He never can be a Friend to the Human Race who is the Preacher of Natural Morality or Natural Religion."[110] It is to this God that Swinburne compares de Sade's depiction of nature: "Behold, the ages of men are dead at her feet; the blood of the world is on her hands; and her desire is continually toward evil, that she may see the end of things which she hath made. Friends, if we would be one with nature, let us continually do evil with our might."[111] The God of

Nature, because it is arbitrary, is even crueller than the Old Testament God (Blake's "God of this World"--Satan, the punisher of sin), under whose sovereignty de Sade, Blake and Swinburne might at least have been able to announce, with the speaker of Hardy's "Hap":

> If but some vengeful god would call to me
> From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
> Know that thy sorrow is my ecstacy,
> That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting.
> Then would I bear it, clench myself and die . . .

But there is no God, only the myth of a Creator whose object it is to bind us and against whose restraints only man can act as saviour: ". . . if Prometheus cannot, Zeus will not deliver us."[112]

Blake comes as close to de Sade in his views on liberty as in his depiction of nature. Speaking of Blake's doctrine of liberty as expressed in "Proverbs of Hell," Swinburne recognizes, though he is not specific about it, echoes from the philosophy of de Sade's libertines, and is unable to conceal a sense of apprehension:

> Again; 'He who desires but acts not breeds pestilence.' 'Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.' The doctrine of freedom could hardly run further or faster. Translated into rough practice, and planted in a less pure soil than that of the writer's mind, this philosophy might bring forth a strange harvest.[113]

Such an observation reveals the youthful Swinburne as possessing a mind that is balanced in its perceptions. His love of freedom, his defiance of moral and aesthetic convention, was uncompromising without being reckless. The view often expres-

sed by casual readers of Swinburne, that a work such as Poems and Ballads was written primarily to shock a stodgy Victorian society (and there is evidence he took some delight in so doing), ignores the fact that these poems were written over a period of nine years (1857-1865) and, as he explains throughout "Notes on Poems and Reviews," were primarily experiments in form and theme. He did not use literature for cynical ends. Most of what he wrote in mockery of British attitudes was intended for private viewing, a point concerning which he was quick to defend himself after the publication of Poems and Ballads:

> Byron and Shelley, speaking in their own persons, and with what sublime effect we know, openly and insultingly mocked and reviled what the English of their day held most sacred. I have not done this. I do not say that if I chose, I would not do so to the best of my power; I do say that hitherto I have seen fit to do nothing of the kind.[114]

What offended reviewers in those poems was not his disrespect for English manners or creeds, but his choice of subject and manner of treating it. The outraged response to the poems was the expression of a society and an age which was prepared to reduce art to a series of rules predicated upon pragmatic and moral objectives.

Swinburne's uncompromising stance on matters of art and morality is what makes him so significant a figure in English literature. He did not, like Tennyson, seek comfort in reaffirming the credibility of Christianity and the doctrine of

the immortal soul; or, like Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold, try to distill from the past absolute and therefore timeless moral and aesthetic values; or, like Newman, or even later figures such as Dowson, Johnson, Beardsley and Wilde, die a convert. The lack of religious conflict in his work reflects his non-theistic approach to reality. What is at issue, is not the existence or non-existence of God, immortality or moral values. His concern is with the experiential nature of life, such as pain and pleasure, love and hate, freedom and servitude. Where others struggled to come to terms with conflicts which resulted from the assumption of a god-centered universe (i.e., with abstract forces external to the human condition), Swinburne sought to clarify and come to terms with the inner realities of the human condition, and with outer realities to the extent that they are governable (i.e., political realities). He therefore discarded conventional notions of, and approaches to, the problem of good and evil. His lengthy and tenacious concern with de Sade was not a blind or frivolous one, but the result of the crucial and disturbing question which that author raises in regard to human values: If there is no God, or absolute standard for moral or ethical behaviour external to man, how does he learn to live with himself and others? The growing discrepancies between assumptions about the spiritual and cosmic significance of man, and the increasing sense (especially among artists) of the insignificance of man in the totality of things, developed into the

modern angoisse of the twentieth century, and has since vented itself, on the one hand, in expressions of nihilism and absurdism, and on the other, in existentialist attempts to deal with the problems of being. Swinburne was neither nihilist nor absurdist; nor is the extent to which he may or may not have been an existentialist a particularly relevant question. The concern of the artist, in his view, is neither to praise an illusory god, nor to damn the universe as unjust for being without a palpable and divine presence. Man alone, as he often emphasizes in "William Blake," is the sole saviour.

Western culture did not need de Sade in order to begin to face the problem of what man was to do in a now-Godless universe: the question was already in the air by the time of the French Revolution, but de Sade was the most persistent and articulate questioner. The effect of it became increasingly evident in the internalization of aesthetic values which began with the Romantics, when the depiction of reality in art, instead of reflecting the external world, began to give expression to the internal condition of man, to the reality of the individual mind in the individual body, adrift in a universe governed by the laws of chance and circumstance. De Sade was unequivocal and dramatically unconventional in his approach to this condition of man, and has frightened people ever since. Swinburne accepted de Sade's description of the human condition as essentially accurate, and was the first English poet

whose [redacted] is solely the product of a personal experience of the natural world, and of a notion of art which did not presume or attempt to advance, a moral or purposeful order on the nature of things.

Notes

1. Referring to this as "Swinburne's horrible poem," Edmund Gosse mistakenly cites it as an example of the bad influence which de Sade had on Swinburne, claiming that the poem "came into existence immediately after he borrowed that particular book" (meaning, Justine), which would have placed the date of the poem no earlier than mid August, 1862. See Appendix to The Swinburne Letters, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), VI, 244 (hereafter cited as Letters). Swinburne, however, had not yet read de Sade when he wrote "Charenton." Cecil Lang came across an early manuscript of the poem, the leaves of which are watermarked 1861, dated at the end, "Dimanche, 27 octobre, 1861," now in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge (New Writings by Swinburne) (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1964), p. 178. De Sade was confined for fourteen years in the asylum at Charenton, but the significance of 1810 eludes me.

2. De Sade wrote three versions of Justine: Les infortunes de vertu (not published until 1930); Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu (1791); and a "preposterously ruttish and scatalogical" version, La Nouvelle Justine ou le Malheurs de la Vertu (1797), which was read by Swinburne. (Lang, Letters, I, 54n).

3. The poem is reprinted in New Writings by Swinburne.

4. Sometime after June, 1862, according to Lang's calculations, Swinburne composed a sham review of a totally fictitious book: "Les Abîmes Par Ernest Clouët," which he nearly succeeded in getting published in the Spectator. Swinburne takes on the persona of a Philistine reviewer who complains about Clouet's admiration for de Sade: "He annoints with a rancid oil of consecration the heads of men too infamous for open reference. A writer of monstrous books is with him 'a farce of nature--a spark blown by the wind of creation from the great palpitating source of generative fire hidden at the heart of the world.'" Clouet, whose aim is "To justify the ways of Satan to man," describes de Sade as a Promethean figure, in terms which are similar to those used by Swinburne in

Charenton." New Writings by Swinburne, pp. 99, 101.

5. Jean Paulhan, "The Marquis de Sade and His Accomplice," in The Marquis de Sade: Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, and Other Writings, trans. Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 6.

6. From L'histoire de Juliette, in Oeuvres Complètes du Marquis de Sade, ed. Gilbert Lély (Paris: Au Cercle du Libre Precieux, 1966), VIII, 30. Hereafter cited as Oeuvres.

7. Oeuvres Complètes, XII, 418-419. Lely retains original spelling and punctuation. Swinburne was "flattered" to discover that his handwriting was similar to de Sade's, and was amused by its "most incredible spelling." Letters, I, 83.

8. Must We Burn Sade?, trans. Annette Michelson (London: Peter Nevill, 1953), p. 58.

9. The most interesting and articulate exception being Albert Camus (The Rebel), who maintains that de Sade's philosophy is ultimately negative and nihilistic.

10. The exception is the military, though in Aline et Valcour de Sade says in a footnote that, "il est assurement peu de plus mauvaises écoles que celle des garnisons, peu où un jeune homme corrompe plus tôt et son ton et ses moeurs." Oeuvres, IV, 282.

11. Marshal-Baron Gilles de Rais (1404-1440) was a powerful nobleman and ardent supporter of Joan of Arc whom he fought beside. After her death, he became increasingly involved in black magic and murderous orgies, during which he slaughtered over two hundred, mostly male children, in less than ten years. When tried, he was unable to perjure himself against the Bible. Asked by the interrogator who induced him to commit these crimes, he answered, "No one. I was led to do them by my own will and imagination alone, for the pleasure and gratification of my senses, and to gratify my taste for debauchery." D. B. Wyndham Lewis, The Soul of Marshall Gilles de Raiz (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1952), pp. 8, 174, 182. De Sade and Swinburne often refer to de Rais as a man of splendid accomplishments in evil. See lines 37-38 of "Charenton en 1810."

12. Oeuvres, III, 324.

13. Ibid., pp. 190, 221.

14. Ibid., p. 255

15. See "Idée sur les romans" (1800), an erudite and interesting view of the development of the novel. Oeuvres, X, 3-22.

16. Oeuvres, III, 93.

17. Ibid., pp. 93-94.

18. Ibid., p. 94

19. Mani (215-275), a Persian teacher who had embraced Christianity, taught that matter belonged to the forces of darkness and that the universe was in a constant battle between the forces of darkness and the forces of light. It was therefore our duty not to reproduce. The sect was declared heretical by Rome. Wayland Young, in pointing out that St. Augustine was a Manichee for nine years, between the formative ages of nineteen and twenty-five, remarks that "It was not Christ who triumphed in the Albigensian Crusade, it was Mani himself. It seemed he was defeated, but he had won nearly a thousand years before, when St. Augustine left his sect, but carried with him the Manichean, dualist, anti-life, anti-fucking cast of mind." Eros Denied (New York, 1964), p. 196.

20. Oeuvres, III, 118.

21. Ibid., III, 337.

22. Ibid., p. 64.

23. Ibid., p. 208.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 209.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Lautréamont et Sade (Saint-Amand: Bussière, 1967), p. 24.

29. Oeuvres, XII, 409-410.

30. Lautréamont et Sade, pp. 74-75.

31. "Lectures on Art," Works, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (1903-1912), XX, 46.

32. Works, II, i, 4.

33. Ibid., IV, iii, 24.

34. "Préface" to Mademoiselle de Maupin (Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1966), p. 10.

35. Works, II, i, 4.

36. Literary and General Essays (London: Macmillan, 1888), p. 104.

37. "Charles Baudelaire," Complete Works, ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas J. Wise (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), XIII, 417.

38. "William Blake," Complete Works, XVI, 135.

39. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographic Literaria (New York: Dutton, 1906), p. 50.

40. The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, Bonchurch Edition (1925-1927), 20 vols. Repranted by Russell and Russell, 1968.

41. Swinburne's flagellant writings are tediously extensive. The Flogging-Block, composed by him over a period of nineteen years (1862-1891), is described in the title as "An Heroic Poem" consisting of "A Prologue and Twelve Eclogues." It is written in the form of a play, complete with stage directions and scene numbers. The "Prologue" opens:

> I sing the Flogging-Block. Thou, red-cheek'd
> Muse,
> Whose Hand the Blood of smarting Boys imbues,
> Scholastic Dame, revered of State and Church,
> Whose Lords to be have writhed beneath the
> Birch.

Further on, there is an interesting description of the poet's need to be flogged:

> And most the Nurslings of the Muse require
> the Lash that sets their Lyrick Blood on Fire,
> The Lash that ever when the cry keeps Time,
> When Stroke to Stroke responds in glowing Rhyme,
> And still the humbled Bottom hails the Rod
> sublime
> Till heart and Head the rhythmic Lesson learn
> From Wounds that redden and from Stripes that burn.

Some of the "Eclogues" (titled, "Algernon's Flogging," "Reginald's Flogging," "Percy's Flogging," etc.) contain their own prologues, epilogues and extensive "notes." The manuscript consists of 170 folio pages, with illustrations by Simeon Soloman, and has never been published. The British Museum, Ashley MS. 5256. The Whippingham Papers (London, 1888), of which 250 rather lavish copies were privately printed (the British Museum contains T. J. Wise's personal copy; Ashley, 4395), includes at least two contributions by Swinburne: "Arthur's Flogging" (in fifty-two stanzas of eight lines each), and "Reginald's Flogging" (in ninety-four quatrains), both of which are signed "Etonensis." The late date is an interesting testimony to Swinburne's life-long passion for the subject.

43. ". . . nobody yet knows, to cite only one instance, precisely why he was withdrawn from Eton." "Introduction," Letters, I, xlvii.

44. Emphasis mine. The paper is reprinted as an appendix to The Swinburne Letters, VI, 244.

45. Quoted by Lytton Strachey, "Dr. Arnold" "Eminent Victorians" (London: Chatto and Windus, 1921), p. 181.

46. Eros Denied, p. 239.

47. Ibid., pp. 39-40.

48. Adah Menken was hired by Dante Gabriel Rossetti for the purpose of trying to introduce some kind of sexual normality to Swinburne's life. The affair lasted for about six weeks, whereupon Adah is supposed to have returned the money to Rossetti and, as recounted in Gosse's Confidential Paper, remarked that "'I can't make him understand that biting's no use!'" Letters, VI, 246.

49. Lang, "Introduction," Letters, I, xxxii.

50. The merits of this only example of completed, mature prose fiction by Swinburne has led Edmund Wilson to remark: "How one wishes that Swinburne had been allowed to make his full contribution to English fiction!" "Swinburne of Capheaton and Eton," in The Novels of A. C. Swinburne (New York: Noonday Press, 1963), p. 22.

51. "Reginald's Flogging" was contributed to The Whippingham Papers (see n. 41).

52. The Novels of A. C. Swinburne, pp. 99-100.

53. Ibid., p. 93.

54. Swinburne (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), p. 115.

55. Letters, I, 93.

56. See Mrs. Disney Leith, The Boyhood of Algernon Charles Swinburne (London: Chatto and Windus, 1917), p. 19.

57. First published by Randolph Hughes (London: The Falcon Press, 1952) in an edition replete with notes and commentary. His evidence that Wise's dates for the writing of the manuscript (1859-1867) are wrong, is convincing, though not conclusive. According to Hughes, it was begun in late 1863 or early 1864, and discontinued probably in early 1867. Lesbia Brandon, pp. 197-200.

58. Mrs. Leith is wrong when she says "The plot was in no way connected with his late novel, 'Love's Cross Currents.'" The Boyhood of Algernon Charles Swinburne, p. 26.

59. The Novels of A.C. Swinburne, p. 196.

60. "Tintern Abbey" (ll. 73-74).

61. The Novels of A. C. Swinburne, pp. 198-199.

62. Ibid., pp. 248-249.

63. Ibid., p. 306.

64. Ibid., p. 352.

65. Letters, I, 188 (September 1866).

66. Ibid., p. 195 (October 10, 1866).

67. "Victor Marie Hugo," Complete Works, XIII, 8.

68. Ibid., p. 4.

69. Letters, VI, 168 (June 1, 1903).

70. New Writings by Swinburne, p. 221.

71. Letters, III, 164-165. He tells John Nichol (April 2, 1867), "No poet known to me ever put so much work of the high quality and of such incredible and 'infinite

variety,' ranging from an old mother's knee to the brothel and the gallows and back, up to heaven and down again in alternate passions of tears and laughter of self-contempt, into the compass of less than 200 pages . . ."

72. "Victor Marie Hugo," pp. 167-168.

73. James Pope-Hennessey, Monckton Milnes, The Flight of Youth 1851-1885 (London: Constable, 1951), p. 136.

74. Letters, I, 46.

75. Georges Lafourcade, La Jeunesse de Swinburne (Paris: Université de Strassbourg, Les Belles Lettres, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), 2 vols.; Humphrey Hare, Swinburne: A Biographical Approach (London: Witherby, 1949); Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony, trans. Angus Davidson (Cleveland and New York: Meridian, 1956.

76. Monckton Milnes, p. 129.

77. For this and similar allusions, see Letters, I, 49, 62, 66-69, 121.

78. Letters, I, 67 (December 27, 1862).

79. The Hardman Papers, ed. S. M. Ellis (London: Constable, 1930), p. 91.

80. Letters, III, 75-76.

81. Ibid., I, 53-54.

82. Ibid., VI, 200. A letter to W. M. Rossetti, written from "The Pines" on September 16 (Swinburne was sixty-nine) begins, "S'il existe!"--part of a phrase often quoted by him from Justine. When quoted in full, it loosely translates, "If he exists, Justine, this God of yours, what a bugger he is!"

83. A Letter to Milnes (December 27, 1862) begins:

> Salus in X Priapo et Ecclesiâ
> Sub invocation Beatissimi Donatiani de Sade
>
> Mon Cher Rodin . . .

Rodin is a major character in Justine who runs a school in which he sexually abuses children. He is also an amateur surgeon. In a letter to Charles Augustus Howell

(September, 1866). Swinburn signs himself as de Sade. Letters, I, 66, 179.

84. Ibid., II, 313-314.

85. Ibid., I, 314.

86. Swinburne, p. 36.

87. A Study of Swinburne (New York: Kennikat Press, 1968), p. 57. First published 1926.

88. "Emily Brontë," Miscellanies (London: Chatto and Windus, 1895), p. 264.

89. The Romantic Agony (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 21.

90. Gosse, in his Confidential Paper, records: ". . . he would gradually fix his stare upon the bottle as if he wished to fascinate it, and then, in a moment, flash or pounce upon it, like a mongoose on a snake, drawing it towards him as though it resisted and had to be struggled with. Then, if no one had the presence of mind to interfere, a tumbler was filled in a moment, and Swinburne had drained it to the last drop, sucking-in the liquid with a sort of fiery gluttony, tilting the glass into his shaking lips, and violently opening and shutting his eyelids. It was an extraordinary sight, and one which never failed to fill me with alarm, for after that the Bacchic transition might come at any moment." Letters, VI, 241.

91. Swinburne complains in a letter to Milnes (February, 1863) that he is too old to pass for a girl, otherwise he would like to answer an ad in the Liverpool Daily Post for a twenty-year old governess "willing to give corporal punishment" in her care of three boys. As an alternative, he suggests to Milnes, "At least let us find out more about it; we may perhaps come to know him [the advertiser] and take part in the scenes that must ensue . . ." Letters, I, 76-77. It would be interesting to know how serious he was about this plan.

92. Joris-Karl Huysman, Là-Bas (Paris: Libraire Plon, 1917), pp. 361, 378. First published 1891.

93. Eros Denied, p. 81.

94. Letters, I, 77 n.

95. Ibid. 78.

96. Ibid., 66-67. (December 27, 1862).

97. Must We Burn Sade?, p. 58.

98. Oeuvres, III, 120.

99. Ibid., p. 118.

100. "Notes on Poems and Reviews," reprinted in Swinburne Replies, ed. C. K. Hyder (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1966), pp. 30-33.

101. Ibid., pp. 31-32.

102. "Tennyson and Musset," Miscellanies, p. 221.

103. "Swinburne, Sade and Blake: The Pleasure-Pain Paradox," Victorian Poetry, 9 (1971), 50.

104. "William Blake," Complete Works, VI, 137.

105. Ibid., p. 144.

106. Ibid., p. 142.

107. Ibid., p. 143.

108. "Introduction," Letters, I, xviii.

109. The paraphrase, as noted by Lafourcade, is an amalgam of excerpts from Justine and Juliette. La Jeunesse de Swinburne, II, 355-356.

110. The Prophetic Writings of William Blake, ed. D. J. Sloss and J. P. R. Wallis, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), I, 539.

111. "William Blake," p. 203n.

112. Ibid., p. 202.

113. Ibid., p. 240.

114. "Notes on Poems and Reviews," Swinburne Replies, p. 18.

Chapter II

ATALANTA IN CALYDON AND THE THEOLOGY OF EVIL

Swinburne's concern with de Sade from 1862 to 1866 parallels Jacob's wrestling with the angel for his birthright. The unique and solitary nature of man within the known universe was clear to him at an early age. His discovery of de Sade inspired in him the confidence necessary to advance his conviction that the world is a purposeless creation-- or, if it has a purpose, that this purpose is completely obscure and totally unlike mankind's conventional interpretations of it; that is, as intelligent, beneyolent and ordered. However, de Sade's portrayal of the human condition, while essentially compatible with Swinburne's, had simply inverted the moral metaphysics of Christianity. Nevertheless, for Swinburne, de Sade had set the course for future struggles to come to terms with the nature of human existence, although in his attack upon the prevailing moral order, he had reduced man to being merely a compost heap for nature's banal processes. Therefore, while championing de Sade's frontal assault upon theology, Swinburne also sought to rescue man from the ignoble depths to which de Sade had consigned him.

Swinburne was raised as an Anglo-Catholic. His most

definitive statement on the evolution of his theological views is provided in a letter which he wrote to E. C. Stedman in 1875, where he recalls that as a child he would go into "unashamed ecstasies of adoration when receiving the Sacrament."[1] His comments in that letter are central, not only to gaining a fundamental grasp of what he attempted to accomplish in Atalanta in Calydon, but to an understanding of his work as a whole. He goes on to say:

> As my antitheism has been so much babbled about, perhaps I may say here what I really do think on religious matters. Having been as child and boy brought up a quasi-Catholic, of course I went in for that as passionately as for other things . . . then when this was naturally stark dead and buried, it left nothing to me but a turbid nihilism: for a Theist I never was; I always felt by instinct and perceived by reason that no man could conceive of a personal God except by brute Calibanic superstition or else by true supernatural revelation; that a natural God was the absurdest of all human figments; because no man could by other than apocalyptic means--i.e., by other means than a violation of the laws and order of nature--conceive of any other sort of divine person than man with a difference--man with some qualities intensified and some qualities suppressed--man with the good in him exaggerated and the evil excised. This, I say, I have always seen and avowed since my mind was ripe enough to think freely. . . . Men give him [God] the qualities they prefer in themselves or about them. E.g., the God of the Christians is good for domestic virtue, bad for patriotic. A consistently good Christian cannot, or certainly need not, love his country. Again, the god of the Greeks and Romans is not good for the domestic (or personal in the Christian sense) virtues, but gloriously good for the patriotic. But we who worship no material incarnation of any qualities, no person, may worship the divine humanity, the ideal of human perfection and aspiration, without worshipping any God, any person, any fetish at all. . . . Perhaps you will think this is only clarified

nihilism, but at least it is no longer turbid.[2] His awareness of the anthropomorphic basis of theism, and of the need for mankind to come to terms with a universe which is indifferent to his existence, could not be more unequivocally stated. They are concerns which are intrinsic to Atalanta. His intense yearnings to believe in a religious reality were eventually quelled by his intellectual skepticism. As Cecil Lang remarks: "Like many others, Swinburne cast off his theology in college. For the remainder of his life his antitheism was absolute, and from this particular point of view his letters show no development, no retreat, no wavering, no arrière-pensées whatever. As an antitheist he was perfectly consistent."[3] De Sade naturally appealed to Swinburne's "turbid nihilism," not because he had anything especially new to teach the young poet, but because he confirmed in him ideas which had already taken root.

The question of the relation between God and evil is frequently, perhaps obsessively, explored in de Sade's Juliette. The Prince de Francaville, the richest nobleman and libertine in Naples, asks the sort of pointed questions about God which are often echoed in Atalanta:

> Dans toutes les contrées de la terre . . . on nous annonce qu'un Dieu s'est revélé. Qu'a-t-il appris aux hommes? Leur prouve-t-il evidemment qu'il existe? Leur enseigne-t-il ce qu'il est, en quoi son essence consiste? Leur explique-t-il clairement ses intentions . . . ses plans? . . . Ce qu'on nous assure qu'il a dit de ses plans s'accorde-t-il avec les effets que nous voyons? Non, sans doute

> . . . . La conduite révélée de cet infame Dieu répond-elle aux idées magnifiques qu'on voudrait nous donner de sa sagesse, de sa bonté . . . de sa justice . . . de sa bienfaisance, de son pouvoir suprême? Nullement . . .

His thesis concerning the "abominable Dieu" has to do with the disparities resulting from our expectations of a benevolent deity and the realities of life which contradict this conception.

A more important scene in Juliette occurs toward the end of part two, in the theological debate between Saint-Fond and the rest of Juliette's band of libertines. In opposition to other members of the group, Saint-Fond argues for the existence of God and of the immortal human soul, positing, however, that God is evil, and that man has his origins in the universal womb of evil to which he inevitably returns when he dies: "Je lève les yeux sur l'univers, je vois le mal, le désordre et le crime y regner partout en despotes. Je rabaisse mes regards sur l'être le plus intéressant de cet univers, je le vois également pétri de vices, de contradictions, d'infamies . . ."[5] God exists, and "le mal est son essence." Therefore, evil pervades the universe:

> N'en doutons pas, le mal, ou du moins ce que nous nommons ainsi, est absolument utile à l'organisation vicieuse de ce triste univers. Le Dieu qui l'a formé est un être vindictif, très barbare, très méchant, très injuste, très cruel, et cela, parce que la vengeance, la barbarie, la méchanceté, l'iniquité, la scélératesse, sont des mondes nécessaires aux ressorts de ce vaste ouvrage, et dont nous ne nous plaignons que quand ils sont nuisent: patients, le crime a tort;

> agents, il a raison. Or, si le mal, ou du moins ce que nous nommons tel, est l'essence, et de Dieu qui a tout créé, et des individus formés à son image, comment ne pas être certain que les suites du mal doivent être éternelles? C'est dans le mal qu'il a créé le monde; c'est par le mal qu'il le soutient; c'est par le mal qu'il le perpetue; c'est impregnée de mal que la créature doit exister; c'est dans le sein du mal qu'elle retorne après son existence.[6]

In such a universe, only the evil man can be a good man, since evil is the essence of the Supreme Being. What is normally called the virtuous man, is merely a weak man who will have to suffer all the more in the afterlife because of his failure in this one to comply with God's evil design:

> Quand vous avez vu que tout était vicieux et criminel sur le terre, leur dira l'Être suprême en méchanceté, pourquoi vous etes-vous égarés dans le sentiers de la vertu? Vous annoncai-je par quelque chose que ce monde fût fait pour m'être agréable? Et les malheurs perpétuels dont je couvrais l'univers ne devaient-ils pas vous convaïncre que je n'aimais que le désordre, et qu'il fallait m'imiter pour me plaire? Ne vous donnai-je pas chaque jour l'exemple de la destruction? Pourquoi ne détruisiez-vous pas? Les fléaux dont j'écrasais le monde, en vous prouvant que le mal était toute ma joie, ne devaient-ils pas vous engager à servir mes plans par le mal? On vous disait que l'humanité devait me satisfaire: et quel est donc l'âcte de ma conduite où vous m'ayez vu bienfaisant? Est-ce en vous envoyant des pestes, de guerre, civiles, des maladies, des tremblements de terre, des orages? Est-ce en secouant perpétuellement sur vos têtes tous le serpents de la discorde, que je vous persuadai que le bien était mon essence? Imbécile!"[7]

It is quite possible that Swinburne's "supreme evil, God," was derived from this passage, with its "Être suprême en méchanceté" and its repeated references to a universe racked by plagues and wars.

In Atalanta, as the following explication will attempt to show, the assumptions that God exists, that nature is benevolently ordered, and that mankind must morally govern himself by conventions which originate in the fear of God, are all unabashedly challenged. The candour and vigour of Swinburne's attack owes much to his admiration of de Sade as a philosophic martyr. The Sadean hypothesis, that if God exists, he must be evil, provided Swinburne with the basis of a dramatic and unorthodox theme which, cast in the form of a well-wrought Greek tragedy, he was able to bring before an unsuspecting Victorian public.

Atalanta, published in February, 1865, in a small edition of 500 copies, was unexpectedly a quick sell-out, and a second edition of 1,000 copies was issued in July. The reviews were for the most part a mixture of praise for the poetic language and imagination of the play and complaints against its length and lack of clarity, but apart from Milnes, surprisingly little notice was taken of its antitheism. Milnes, in the Edinburgh Review, praises it without approving of it, but the degree of cushioned criticism and moral aloofness in his review, far outweigh the praise: Atalanta "risks much to win largely, and doesnot spare to shock the many to charm the instructed few." Milnes strongly objects to the play's "defective moral tone", and to "The relations of the personages of the drama to the invisible world." He is quick to perceive the offenseiveness of its theology, but instead of attributing it to Swinburne's creed, he criticizes it as a failure in the "historical and

artistic view" which the play develops: ". . . we shall look in vain for any precedent for the naked defiance of the Supreme, the bitter and angry antitheism, which is here represented as the ruling passion." Although he must have known that this theology was derived from de Sade, he again disguises the source (possibly in an effort to protect himself as well as Swinburne) by attributing it to Byron: "Mr. Swinburne must set before himself some other philosophical idea than Manfred with a distinction, if he intends to occupy much place in the minds of the present generation of Englishmen."[8]

Swinburne's response to the review is interesting if somewhat vague. Apparently, he did not at first know that it was written by Milnes. It is odd that Milnes did not inform him in advance, especially since they were in frequent contact with each other. Writing to Milnes circa July 11, he says, "I should like to see the Post, it must be far more amusing than the Edinburgh . . ."[9] Subsequent to the writing of this letter, Swinburne discovered, either through Milnes or another source, that the Edinburgh article was written by his friend, for he writes to him again, several days later: "I was about to write you a word of thanks for your article when I received the copy you sent me this morning." The implication is that Swinburne discovered the source of the review elsewhere, and Milnes, anticipating the inevitability of this, sent on a copy of it. Since Swinburne had previously

stated his amusement at the review, the sincerity of his remarks in this last letter is difficult to determine. More significant, however, is that his debt to de Sade is made explicit:

> Nothing yet said or written about the book has given me nearly as much pleasure. Especially I have to thank you for the tone in which you refer to my expressed regard for Landor . . . . I only regret that in attacking my Anti-Atheism you have wilfully [emphasis mine] misrepresented its source. I should have bowed to the judicial sentence if instead of 'Byron with a difference' you had said 'de Sade with a difference.' The poet, thinker, and man of the world from whom the theology of my poem is derived was a greater than Byron. He, indeed, fatalist or not, saw to the bottom of gods and men.[10]

Swinburne not only borrows his theology from de Sade, but in the process also adopts a characteristic technique of that "man of the world," whose extreme obscenity and blasphemy are the results of inverting the established and taken-for-granted assumptions by which man governs himself in the Christian world. We have seen this technique at work in the outrageous philosophies of de Sade's libertines, who continuously reverse traditional moral values.

In another letter to Milnes, still on the subject of Atalanta, written about a week later than the above, he uses his whimsical Etonian pose in response to his critical chastisement by some of the reviewers, especially in the Athenaeum and the Spectator:

> The moral and religious question I give up at once. I let down my breeches, pull up my shirt,

> and kneel down (for the hundredth time) on the flogging block, without a word. If you apply a rod soaked in brine for that offense I confess I deserve it. I did shirk Chapel. I did take to profane swearing instead of singing in the choir. I am fully prepared for a jolly good swishing in consequence. . . . Only don't say with my old friend of the Spectator that it isn't Greek--because it is. I recognize in that attack [by the Spectator] the avenging hand of outraged virtue, mindful how nearly that paper was induced, through a shameless trick . . . to admit into its chaste pages a flaming eulogy of M. le Marquis de Sade.[11]

In "giving up" the moral and religious question, Swinburne is not recanting a philosophic or theistic position, since he never believed in the theism of Atalanta to begin with, but merely confesses to having been "naughty." It is precisely the same tone he uses throughout his still unpublished flagellation "epic," The Flogging-Block,[12] where each schoolboy, who faces the inescapable application of the rod for misdemeanors such as tardiness at school or church, vows never to commit similar offences in the future. In "Eclogue I. Algernon's Flogging," for instance, there is hardly an effort to disguise the autobiographical elements. The "Rod" actually becomes a character in the scene:

> Rod: (Whipping Algernon's bottom again).
> Algernon: Oh!
> Rod: Swish!

The Master who inflicts the whipping becomes merely an extension of the Rod:

> And his bottom for once is red as his hair.
> Nay, I fancy his bottom's the redder for once.
> I'll make you remember this flogging, you dunce:

I'll teach your duty to me and to God.

Master and school, God and church, are inseparable from the instrument of punishment. The cruelties of family life, by which parents consign their sons to the torments imposed by the officials of school and church is also repeatedly linked to the theme of punishment. The relation between The Flogging-Block and Atalanta will be further dealt with at another point.

The "flaming eulogy" of de Sade, which the Spectator nearly printed, is an extremely clever hoax written by Swinburne in 1862: "Les Abîmes. Par Ernest Clouët."[13] In it, Swinburne adopts the persona of a Philistine reviewer. One of the purposes of Les Abîmes, ostensibly, is "'éviscérer Dieu.'" The reviewer quips: "A caesarean operation performed on the 'Supreme Being' would be a feat worth chronicling in the annals of spiritual surgery."[14] Yet this is what Swinburne himself has been concerned with and what he will do in Atalanta. Clouët is quoted as regarding de Sade as "a force of nature -- a spark blown by the wind of creation from the great palpitating source of generative fire hidden at the heart of the world."[15] The great secrets of life are to be found in the depths of evil, and de Sade is regarded as a dark Prometheus who can unlock hitherto impassable doors. Clouët, a poet as well as novelist and critic, expresses his theory of aesthetics: "Le mal a pour moi quelque chose de

mystérieux et de saint.'"[16] The exploration of vice and crime leads to new sources of beauty. Clouët is out "To justify the ways of Satan to man. . . . Having as a first step demolished 'le Dieu ganache des eunuques et des bourgeois' he rushes into a rapid analysis of crime of a kind probably never before set down in human language."[17] Clouët's method is really de Sade's, and tends to indicate that this hoax was written by Swinburne subsequent to his reading of de Sade. In any case, the "eulogy" to de Sade is quoted by the reviewer from a fictitious article by Clouët, titled, "Prométhée":

> Au milieu de toute cette bruyante épopée impériale, on voit passer en flamboyant cette tête foudroyée, cette vaste poitrine sillonée d'éclairs, l'homme-phallus, profil auguste et cynique, grimace de titan épouvantable et sublime; on sent circuler dans ces pages maudites comme un frisson d'infini, vibrer sur ces lèvres brûlées comme un souffle d'idéal orageux. Approchez, et vous entendrez palpiter dans cette charogne boueuse et sanglante des artères de l'âme universelle, des veines gonflées de sang divin. Ce cloaque est tout pêtri d'azur; il y a dans ces latrines quelque chose de Dieu. Fermez l'oreille au cliquetis des baionnettes, au jappement des canons; détournez l'oeil de cette marée montante de batailles perdues ou gagnées; alors vous verrez se détacher sur cette ombre un fantôme, immense, éclatant, inexprimable; vous verrez poindre au-dessus de toute une époque semée d'astres la figure énorme et sinistre du marquis de Sade.[18]

De Sade, the phallic man, is not only conceived of as the most powerful personage of the age, but as opening the way to the new aesthetics of evil. Swinburne indirectly identifies himself as of the same school of Clouët, when the reviewer of

Les Abîmes complains:

> It is deplorable that the space of a few months should have witnessed the appearance of two such effusions on the same loathsome subject as Félicien Cossu's infamous poem of Charenton, and this abominable notice in Les Abîmes: it looks really as though there are now alive a small and unsavoury crew of writers who cannot keep their fingers from poking and paddling in this mire.[19]

Cecil Lang's publication of the Swinburne Letters (1962) and New Writings by Swinburne (1964) provides the means of dispelling forever the doubts about Swinburne's lifelong allegiance to de Sade, and forces us at last to take him at his word when he speaks of the Marquis' influence on Atalanta. In "Charenton en 1810" we see the intense enthusiasm with which he anticipates the prospect of reading de Sade; in Love's Cross Currents, and especially in Lesbia Brandon, his concern with de Sade is pervasive; similarly, his essay on "Clouet" and his letters abound with whimsical as well as earnest references to de Sade.

Clearly, from 1862 on, Swinburne was much preoccupied with finding an outlet for his interest in de Sade. His complaint to Milnes, in the letter of August 18, 1862, that de Sade failed to provide a "sharp and subtle analysis of lust" and a "keen dissection of pain and pleasure," led him, in a sense, to outdo de Sade in these areas. Atalanta is his major single work modeled after de Sade; however, it is not in this play that he focuses on the theme of lust, but in poems which he was contemporaneously writing and which

were to be published later in Poems and Ballads, First Series, 1866. Atalanta involves a more specific Sadean concern, of ontological dimensions--the question of the nature of evil in a universe over which it is assumed that a deity presides. What is of interest here is that there is no evidence to suggest that Swinburne ever, during his literary career, believed either in the existence of evil or good as metaphysical realities symbolized by Satan or God. Swinburne's antitheism, like de Sade's, has suffered a misinterpretation based upon the specious assumption that because he attacked God as evil, he must have been, even if negatively, a theist. Such is the approach taken by William R. Rutland: "When he wrote Atalanta he believed passionately in a god . . . without a god he could not be; but the god he believed in was not good but evil."[20] Lafourcade has been one of the few critics to approach the question without falling into the sort of critical fallacy to which Rutland succumbs:

> . . . ce Dieu personnel n'est, pour Swinburne, qu'une hypothèse; le théisme est pour lui un système intenable et faux. . . . Ayant à coeur de démonter l'inanité du théisme, il entreprend de représenter, dans Atalanta, la conclusion logique à laquelle est amenée l'âme de celui qui croit en un Dieu personnel: désespoir, blasphèmes, révoltes. Il ne dit pas avec Voltaire: <<Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer>>, mais bien <<Si Dieu existait, il faudrait l'insulter>>.[21]

Atalanta is more than an exercise in the execution of Hellenic form: it is a working out of the problem of evil in

a world which assumes a deity at its centre, and it is in this context that Swinburne develops the Sadean hypothesis, that if God exists, he must be evil.

Despite the title Atalanta in Calydon, the primary character in the play is not Atalanta. She appears only twice, and considering the number of lines which she delivers, she ranks among the secondary characters, along with Oeneus, Plexippus and Toxeus. She is, however, an inspiring figure for Meleager who sees in her purity and courage an example for men to follow. In this sense, she embodies the godlike in man. When Meleager tells her that "we praise / Gods, found because of thee adorable" (ll. 911-912), he thereby refutes the view, advanced earlier in the play by Althaea and the Chorus, of a dualistic universe characterized by cruel gods and a helpless, victimized mankind. For Swinburne, as for de Sade, such an interpretation of the universe is the grim but logical product of the theistic imagination.

Meleager, as we shall see, is not governed by religious or social conventions. He is a figure of rebellion against restrictive forms of orthodoxy, a believer in the goodness of life, and an advocate of change. He also represents an early attempt on Swinburne's part to provide a third dimension to the Sadean view of a world characterized by active, victorious evil, and passive, victimized virtue. The latter world is that of Calydon as seen through the eyes of Althaea

and the Chorus. Between them they deliver two-thirds of the lines in the play and articulate the principal theme of cosmic evil.

Althaea, however, is the chief single character in Atalanta. As a result of her theological views she undergoes a metamorphosis by which she becomes the embodiment of the cruel earth-mother, acquiring characteristics which typify de Sade's rendering of nature as an unconscionable murderess gleefully devouring her own children. It is important to note, again, that this was the image of nature which de Sade advanced in answer to that branch of Deistic thought which believed that man could find in nature the necessary guides for moral and religious living.

As is clear in the letter to Stedman, it was Swinburne's view that theism has its origin in the anthropomorphic imagination, a view for which he found strong support in the works of de Sade. In this connection, the dramatic context of Atalanta presents a very obvious, but generally understressed factor which is crucial to the most elementary consideration of the play: Calydon has been under siege by an indestructible and devastating boar which has been killing the people and destroying the crops. The creature has been inflicted as a plague upon the city by the goddess Artemis in her jealous and vindictive wrath, the cause of which, traditionally, is thought to be an oversight on the part of Oeneus, the king, in failing to pay sacrificial homage to the goddess. However,

when recounting Meleager's martial glories, Althaea reminds her son that when Aetolia was invaded by "Thessalian hoofs," Meleager, supported by Ares, defeated them:

> . . . for ye twain stood
> God against god, Ares and Artemis,
> And thou the mightier; wherefore she unleashed
> a Sharp-toothed curse thou too shalt overcome.
> [ll. 556-559]

It is of interest, as Morse Peckham points out, that the Thessalian invasion of Aetolia appears to be an invention of Swinburne's.[22] The most logical explanation for this is that Swinburne wanted, through Althaea's eyes, to focus Artemis' hostility on Meleager rather than Oeneus. By so doing he could account for Artemis' sending Atalanta, her favourite devotee, to lift a plague which she herself has cast upon Calydon. Her motivation in doing so is to lead Meleager to commit an act (the slaying of his uncles, Plexippus and Toxeus) the nature of which reinforces Althaea's Sadean vision of cosmic cruelty and leads her to murder her own son.

The imagery which supports the major thematic motifs in Atalanta, in every case suggests a cruel paradox which serves to emphasize the transitory nature of happiness, a point which further supports Swinburne's claim to Milnes, cited earlier, that the play "is" Greek. This theme is carried beyond its Classical treatment, however, by his depiction of the cruelty of existence as being exacerbated by man's belief in gods. If gods or God exist, the theological centre of creation must, by the nature of the struggle for survival, be evil.

The play begins on a note which is Manichean in nature, in which light struggles against darkness. It is dawn, and the Huntsman has prayed "all night," to Artemis, "A light for dead men and dark hours," whose "eye's beam" is "Hidden and shown in Heaven," to take pity on Calydon. This appeal is followed by a petition to Apollo, sun-god and twin brother to Artemis:

> O fair-faced sun, killing the stars and dews
> And dreams and desolation of the night!
> [ll. 17-18]

The darkness which has befallen Calydon is symbolized by the grotesque boar, whose "blind hulk" heaves "out of ooze and slime" (ll. 1273, 1289). He is the evil rampant in Calydon, inflicted upon the people by the avenging goddess. The struggle between light and darkness continues throughout the play, though it is more evident in the first half.

It is also paralleled by contrasting images of the seasons and by images of pursuit and flight. Spring is the season during which the action takes place, and there is joyous anticipation of the festival of Bacchus in the Chorus' opening ode:

> When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
> The mother of months in meadow or plain
> Fills the shadows and windy places,
> With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
> And the brown bright nightingale amorous
> Is half assuaged for Itylus,
> For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
> The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.
> [ll. 65-72]

Spring chases off the winter as day drives out the night. The myth of Itylus, cited by the Chorus, is dramatically fitting, since the nightingale (the transformed Procne who, like Althaea, slew her son) is "half assuaged," and the suggestion is that "all the pain" begins to ebb in this regenerative season now at hand.

Artemis is again called upon in the following stanza, as "Maiden most perfect, lady of light." The naive Chorus does not at this point charge her with the darkness that has reigned in Calydon, but is desperate to appease her:

> Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
> Fold our hands round her knees and cling?
> [ll. 80-81]

Fearful, they would readily humble themselves before her, yet they believe that with the day and the spring comes also the season of forgiveness:

> For winter's rains and ruins are over,
> And all the seasons of snows and sins;
> The days dividing lover and lover,
> The light that loses, the night that wins.
> [ll. 89-92]

In this opening chorus there is a depiction of nature teeming with sensuality, engaged in the raw process of procreation:

> The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
> Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,
> The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
> From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
> And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
> And the oat is heard above the lyre,
> And the hoofed heel of a satyr crushes
> The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.
> [ll. 97-104]

The marvelous compression of sound, image and meaning in the concluding two lines is characteristic of Swinburne at his best. The process taking place is irrepressible and unalterable. It is the overpowering sexual drive in nature, as exemplified in the oat "being heard above the lyre." Like de Sade, Swinburne never underestimates the power of natural forces. There is a season for man as well as the rest of nature, when Pan and Bacchus must prevail. Satyr and god dance with, and delight, Maenad and Bassarid:

> And soft as lips that laugh and hide
> The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
> And screen from seeing and leave in sight
> The god pursuing, the maiden hid.
> [ll. 109-112]

Maenads were human, wine-frenzied, female followers of Bacchus or Dionysus, who roamed the woods and hills, and were known to tear apart men and eat their flesh. Coincident with the splendour of creation is also the cruelty of violence:

> The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
> Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
> The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
> Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
> The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
> But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
> To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
> The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.
> [ll. 113-120]

Images of animal, man and god thus merge indistinguishably in this opening choric ode. They are powerful images which unify the human and the divine, and underscore the character of nature as a mixture of creation and rapacity, where cunning and brute force (the wolf) often overcome beauty and innocence

(the fawn).

Swinburne's description of this phenomenon in nature is a choice example of the "sharp and subtle analysis of lust" which he was so disappointed not to have found in de Sade. The ode is an inspired celebration of nature which seduces our moral sensibilities into a state of quiesence and awakens our aesthetic propensities, thereby enabling us to grasp the awesome beauties of nature's inconsistencies. Here is nature as it really is, without Wordsworthian moral overtones on the one hand, or Sadean polemics on the other. Nature is neither evil nor good, but beautiful and brutal.

This burst of joy by the chorus of Bacchantes immediately follows the Prologue, thereby establishing in the play an initial sense of regeneration and restored order. In turn, however, it is followed by Althaea's jarring moral intrusion. Her entrance has the effect of turning the light atmosphere of pagan delight and revelry into one of veritable wrong-doing: "What do ye singing? What is this ye sing?" (l. 121). The mood of the play rapidly becomes fraught with expectations of disaster. The images of pursuit in the first and last lines of the Parode, underscore the Chorus' ability to grasp and accept the central paradox of nature. The first line ("When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces") indicates that the season of death has ended and that replenishment is at hand. The concluding line ("The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies") expresses an awareness that, concurrent

with the growth of new life in the world, is the predatory principle in nature: the stronger forces will overcome the weaker ones. Althaea's response is a grim parody of these lines. Using similar imagery, she reverses the tone and intent of the Chorus: "Night, a black hound, follows the white fawn day . . ." (l. 125). By introducing night and day into the imagery, she adds a temporal element which is intended to make the Chorus acutely aware of the brevity of good fortune.

The Chorus debates with her in an attempt to assuage her bitterness towards the gods, whom she accuses of sending man poison for wine, gall for milk, and curses in exchange for prayers. In an attempt to counterbalance this view, the Chorus asks her, "Have they not given life, and the end of life?" (l. 156). Althaea, however, does not answer, but continues her accusations against the sadistic gods:

> Lo, where they heal, they help not; thus they do,
> They mock us with a little piteousness,
> And we say prayers, and weep; but at the last,
> Sparing awhile, they smite and spare no whit.
> [ll. 157-160]

The Chorus remains perplexed as to why Althaea should still be vexed with the gods when Artemis is about to allow the boar to be slain, but it soon emerges that the source of Althaea's agitation is her conviction that Artemis is merely supplanting the old curse with a new one: "Love" (l. 184). Behind her hatred of Atalanta, is the dread that Meleager will be distracted from adherence to traditional law and

duty. In her fear that her son may be governed by love rather than duty, there are strong echoes from Chastelard which, as noted earlier, was completed just before Swinburne undertook Atalanta. Calydon, like Scotland, is a land without mercy, pity, or love (Mary Stuart's complaint against the Scottish hatred of the French is that "They loathe us for our love").22 Althaea seems to be a deliberate counter-type to Mary Stuart and, as the voice of law and vengeance, becomes a far more manifest presence than the threatening John Knox, who always remains in the background of Chastelard. It is Althaea who introduces the notion of a Sadean universe governed by crime and destruction, and who turns the Chorus away from their celebration of the rites of spring.

The disorder in nature which she sees as perpetrated by the gods, cannot be avoided by man, but within the human community it is possible, to a degree, for man to buttress himself against these vicissitudes through living by law and duty. Althaea allows no place for love, however, since it is an unpredictable and ungovernable element. As she listens to her son and brothers quarrelling, she concludes:

> . . . this most,
> This most moves me, that for wise men as for fools
> Love is one thing, an evil thing, and turns
> Choice words and wisdom into fire and air.
> And in the end shall no joy come, but grief . . .
> [ll. 207-211]

The Chorus later amplifies the themes that both love and God are evil, but we should be cautious about too readily

accepting these as Swinburne's views, remembering, first, that for him God is hypothetical, and second that love is evil only for those who regard it within the total workings of nature as a means by which the gods amuse themselves in their torture of mankind. In Atalanta the gods are evil: it is Artemis who sends Atalanta to Calydon in order for Meleager to fall fatally in love with her; hence, it is in the anthropomorphic climate of the play that love emerges as evil.

When speaking of love or God, the Chorus speaks only for itself and Althaea. In Swinburne's view, there is no outside agency, benevolent or vindictive, which governs human affairs. Atalanta is a mirror which reflects the human assumption that a God or gods exist. If this is true (as the Chorus assumes), then logically the gods and whatever they promote must be evil, given the natural paradoxes and tragedies of life. If one rationally interprets nature as a divine creation, then it just as rationally follows that the Creator is a sinister Being. Writing to W. M. Rossetti (January 8, 1870), Swinburne says, speaking of Blake's Urizen:

> At the tottering throne of that dignitary I have just discharged the most formidable piece of artillery yet cast or launched in his direction--the best stanzas of 'Hertha' strike such a blow at the very root of Theism that, I can confidently assure you, compared to them my chief chorus in Atalanta might have been signed by Dr. Watts [Isaac Watts (1674-1748)], the hymnist, and Anactoria by Mr. Keble. I have broken the back (not only of God, but) [sic] of the poem in ques-

tion by this time . . .[23]

His "chief chorus" (ll. 1038-1204) labels God "the supreme evil." The "root of theism" which Swinburne attacks is man's belief in an external source of salvation. To Swinburne, it was the idea of mankind caught in a struggle between supreme good and supreme evil which led to the establishment by society of reactionary moral codes, to which, like de Sade, he was unequivocally opposed.

Althaea's belief in the evil nature of the gods derives from the disparities between her rational sense of order and justice, and her observations of natural phenomena. Like de Sade's Saint-Fond, who constantly cites the cruelties of the universe as evidence of the evil nature of things, she, being also a theist, must likewise conclude that the universe is governed by an evil deity. The disorder which has reigned in Calydon is attributed to the jealous vengeance of Artemis and to the conditions of Meleager's birth (whose span of life is associated with an unconsumed fire-brand), factors which embitter her toward the arbitrary justice of the Fates.

Meleager, however, does not live in dread of the gods or the Fates who contrived the peculiar conditions of his birth. Indeed, recounting to the Chorus Meleager's birth, Althaea notes that:

> : . . those grey women with bound hair
> Who fright the gods frighten not him, he laughed
> Seeing them . . .
>
> [ll. 276-278]

Althaea fears for Meleager's life because he will not be governed by her weighty moral rule. She records, in the same speech, a precognitive dream of Meleager's death:

> I dreamt, and saw this black brand burst on fire
> As a branch bursts in flower, and saw the flame
> Fade flower-wise, and Death came and with dry lips
> Blew the charred ash into my breast; and love
> Trampled the ember and crushed it with swift feet.
> [ll. 284-288]

This image of Love as fatally cruel is not borne out in the play, whether the reference is to Love in the abstract, or specifically to Atalanta. Althaea, whose self-fulfilling prophecies render her more Hebraic than Greek (it is by her hand that Meleager dies), becomes a victim of excessive devotion to tradition and duty. Consequently, the harangues against love in the play are the product of her distorted mind.

Her effect upon the populace is immediately evident in the first Stasimon, where the Chorus, in an ode on the creation of man, takes up her pessimistic theme, thereby reversing the tone of the Parode. The first stanza is remarkable in that nearly every line is built upon a paradox and conveys a sense of bitter resignation:

> Before the beginning of years
> There came to the making of man
> Time, with a gift of tears;
> Grief, with a glass that ran;
> Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
> Summer, with flowers that fell;
> Remembrance fallen from heaven,
> And madness risen from hell;
> Strength without hands to smite;
> Love that endures for a breath:

Night, the shadow of light,
And life, the shadow of death.'
[ll. 314-325].

From here on, except for a brief respite, Althaea broods over a Calydon without joy in the season of joy. That Swinburne intended her to exemplify the intrusion of Judeo-Christian traditions into the world of Hellenic sensibilities, is obvious. Citing numerous Biblical paraphrases in Swinburne's imagery, H. A. Hargreaves observes that, "he must have perused the Bible constantly, noting the many passages which could support his conviction that God is 'the supreme evil.'"[24]

An additional ambiguity appears in the Chorus' reference to "The holy spirit of man" (l. 341), which is described as having been

. . . wrought with weeping and laughter,
And fashioned with loathing and love
With life before and after
And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span
[ll. 334-340]

In spite of the excessive cruelty of man's condition, the Chorus, unlike Althaea, remains throughout the play a defiant champion of man. The idea of God may be evil, but for the Chorus man is affirmed through his physical reality, and he is good. Swinburne's sympathies for the heroically defiant potential in man never fail. It is this defiant and striving spirit, in Swinburne as in Blake, which is deemed "holy."

Ironically, the heroic in man derives from the very

qualities and talents which the gods have provided for his torment: namely, his perceptive and communicative abilities, which are the basic resources of creativity. Light, love and beauty, are the three blessings with which man has been cursed, but out of them he can forge a Promethean grandeur. They are, as the Chorus recognizes, the source of his holiness and his torment:

> They gave him light in his ways,
> And love, and a space for delight,
> And beauty and length of days,
> And night, and sleep in the night.
> His speech is a burning fire;
> With his lips he travaileth;
> In his heart is a blind desire,
> In his eyes a foreknowledge of death . . .
> [ll. 350-357]

Communication is thus rendered nearly impossible as man attempts to express the "blind" desires of the heart, and perception is marred by the foreknowledge of death.

Following this first ode by the full Chorus, Meleager enters with Althaea, and a new and brilliantly balanced struggle ensues between the initial buoyancy of the play, as established in the Parode, and the subsequent moroseness of Althaea which has clouded the spring morning's sun. Meleager's opening speech exudes confidence in the new day. Like the sun which he praises, he bursts through the dark pall which his mother has cast over Calydon:

> O sweet new heaven and air without a star,
> Fair day, be fair and welcome, as to men
> With deeds to do and praise to pluck from thee.
> Come forth a child, born with clear sound and light,

> With laughter and swift limbs and prosperous looks;
> That this great hunt with heroes for the hounds
> May leave thee memorable and us well sped.
> [ll. 362-368]

Maleager makes his appeal not to a divinity, but to the joyous waking of the day--he is filled with a sense of air, sound, light and laughter. It is Althaea who warns him that "the gods hear men's hands before their lips" (l. 370). She emphasizes the virtues of "things done," "labouring men," and "the deed." Meleager, however, is so exhilarated by the approaching armies from surrounding dominions that in his eyes the gods must be favourable: "The gods give all these fruit of all their works" (l. 380). Here the contrast is apparent between his vigorous tendency to see the good in things, and Althaea's compulsive, theological paranoia. As the armies pass before them in the distance, Meleager points out and praises the heroes among them. Last to pass by are "Toxeus and the violent-souled / Plexippus, over-swift with hand and tongue" (ll. 445-446). Meleager is quick to excoriate his uncles' egotism. The accuracy of his assessment of them is borne out in the course of the play. When Althaea attempts to defend her brothers, Meleager counters: "Yea, all things have they, save the gods and love" (l. 453). This begins the debate between Hellenic and Hebraic values, as Althaea immediately responds: "Love thou the law and cleave to things ordained" (l. 454).

Meleager is governed by imagination rather than law and

things ordained. In fact, he represents the three characteristics championed by the Chorus: light, love and beauty. His opinion of those who worship the ordained is that "Law lives upon their lips whom these applaud" (l. 455, where he refers to Toxeus and Plexippus). His uncles, in their blind respect for law and tradition, foreshadow the Pharisees of the coming new order. Meleager champions the principles of change and creativity. This attitude is reflected in his answer to Althaea's question: "What god applauds new things?" (l. 456). "Zeus," answers Meleager, "hath fear and custom under foot" (l. 457). At this point, the co-influential doctrines of Blake and de Sade merge. Zeus, according to Meleager, "is not less himself than his own law" (l. 459). In other words, Zeus is more human than Althaea in her devotion to the rigidities of the law. Zeus is passionate, not cold. He is not less than his laws because, like de Sade's Nature, he changes them when he cannot live with them: "But what he will remoulds and discreates," as Meleager points out. Zeus, then, is unlike Urizen, the god of this world, of Althaea's world. She is tied to the linear--almost biological--view of life, and therefore complains that Zeus does not will that "each thing lives its life" (l. 462). Meleager, who believes in the possibility of improving the human condition, corrects her by noting that each thing must not only live, "but lighten and lift up higher" (l. 463). Althaea

sees aspiration as pride, and objects that "Pride breaks itself and too much gained is gone" (l. 464).

In the lengthy speech by Althaea which follows this exchange, she urges Meleager to constantly "serve law" (l. 466). To do otherwise is "sin" (l. 472) which is visited by "swift hounds of violent death" (l. 473). She therefore counsels him to adopt a safe stance in the face of life:

> Be man at one with equal-minded gods,
> So shall he propser; not through laws torn up,
> Violated rule and a new face of things.
> [ll. 474-476]

Meleager must submit himself to "fate,"

> And set thine eyes and heart on hopes high-born
> And divine deeds and abstinence divine.
> [ll. 538-539]

Her insistence on abstinence and obedience is hardly Hellenic; rather, it represents an attempt to impose artificial and external restraints on the creative expression of human energy. Her warnings are the result of a natural theology derived from the association of disaster with human sinfulness. It is a threatening theology which must ultimately create a single, all-powerful God, supreme in his power to punish, as we learn later in the play. Althaea's great concern is that her son may neglect his princely duties and be seduced from his heroic destiny by a passion for Atalanta. Included in her notion of "violated rule" is any departure from the traditional roles of the sexes. Like her arrogant brothers, her complaint against Atalanta, which gains support within the

Chorus (ll. 570-571), is that "A woman armed makes war upon herself . . . " (l. 477).

Oeneus says of the positions taken by Meleager and Althaea, respectively:

> Nor thee I praise, who art fain to undo things done:
> Nor thee, who art swift to esteem them overmuch.
> [ll. 627-628]

He agrees with Althaea's objection to Meleager's attraction for Atalanta, but for different reasons. He pointedly cautions his son to beware of falling in love with Atalanta because she is "Unlovable; no light for a husband's house . . . " (l. 636). His advice turns out to be well-founded, but is irrelevant to the situation at hand. It is not ill-requited love that results in Meleager's death, but his sense of justice which is violated by Althaea's brothers. The boar is ultimately slain, and to that extent Meleager fulfills his heroic destiny. Oeneus is a weak figure in the play, self-satisfied in the wisdom which he has derived from being a king, "Full of past days and wise from years endured" (l. 626). By the end of the play, it is the dying Meleager who is giving Oeneus advice, and Oeneus who considers Meleager "a perfect man / In fight, and honourable in the house of peace" (ll. 2197-2198).

Althaea's dread of Atalanta is soon echoed by the Chorus in its ode to Aphrodite, but is expressed in the form of a generalized and amplified bitterness toward love. Dramatically, the ode is very powerful since it has the effect, in

the first stanza with its pentameters made light and lengthy by images of air and by dominating anapests, of seeming to restore a sense of well-being:

> We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair: thou
> art goodly, O Love;
> Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of
> a dove.
> Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of
> the sea;
> Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment
> of thee.
>
> [ll. 719-722]

This last line, at first, appears to foreshadow the unity of body and soul which Swinburne later portrays in "Hertha." However, from this point on, Love acquires a sinister aspect and becomes, metaphorically, a Baudelairean fleur du mal, as the ode turns into a bitter lament on the sufferings which mankind has endured at her hands. The sense of bitterness is intensified by the sudden shortening to trimeter verses:

> For an evil blossom was born
> Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood
> Blood-red and bitter of fruit,
> And the seed of it laughter and tears,
> And the leaves of it madness and scorn;
> A bitter flower from the bud,
> Sprung of the sea without root,
> Sprung without graft from the years.
>
> [ll. 729-736]

In this description of Aphrodite's birth, the Chorus reminds us of the violence of Love's origins in the Greek theogeny. The Titans were born of a union between Uranus and Gaia (Heaven and Earth). Preceding Cronus' ascendence to the leadership of the gods, he cut off the genitals of his father, Uranus, and flung them into the sea; from the severed phallus

of Uranus, Aphrodite was born. It is the physical aspect of Love which the Chorus emphasizes here: Love "without root" or "without graft from the years." Aphrodite is a "fleshly blossom" (l. 746), who destroyed the weft of the world" (l. 737), who separated body from soul, and introduced guilt and sin, pleasure and pain. She is the goddess of love that is simultaneously the goddess of death. Her creation is described in images of destruction, which again suggest the blood-drenched world of de Sade. Love in Swinburne's ode combines the sexual appetite of Juliette with the destructive appetite of nature.

The Chorus' Sadean depiction of nature portrays man as having been a victim of torment even before Love came along to increase his woes:

> Was there not evil enough,
> Mother, and anguish on earth
> Born with a man at his birth,
> Wastes underfoot, and above,
> Storm out of heaven, and dearth
> Shaken down from the shining thereof,
> Wrecks from afar overseas
> And peril of shallow and firth,
> And tears that spring and increase
> In the barren places of mirth,
> That thou, having wings of a dove
> Being girt with desire for a girth,
> That thou must come after these,
> That thou must lay on him love?
>
> [ll. 786-799]

The agonies which man was subject to before the birth of Love stemmed from natural (externally induced) sources, but Love planted the seeds of internal suffering as well. With or without Love, however, the natural condition of man was an

evil one.

The ode begins with an alluring description of Love, but concludes with an image of man as Love's withering victim. Swinburne thus creates a tug of war between the moral and aesthetic poles of our sensibilities. Through the juxtapositioning of pleasure and pain, love and duty, and good and evil, he presents the world of Calydon as torn by a dualistic frame of mind, for which Althaea is principally responsible. The resulting dialectic calls to mind an effect characteristic of de Sade's novels, in which nature is so personified as to become both protagonist and antagonist in the incessant debates between vice and virtue. In Atalanta, the imagery corresponding to this debate (e.g., winter/spring, night/day, etc.) is carefully iterated, creating a kind of da capo effect. Following the conclusion to the ode, this effect is reintroduced by the first entrance of Atalanta, whose "Sun, and clear light among green hills and day / Late risen" (ll. 867-868) not only thrusts back the gloom of the Chorus, but revives the tenor introduced in the Prologue, the Parode, and by Meleager. The resulting optimism and light-hearted gaiety parallels and conflicts with Althaea's Weltschmerz.

It is not Atalanta, but Althaea, who emerges as one of Swinburne's femmes fatales. Atalanta is painfully aware of the price she must pay in the service of Artemis, and stands in the play as a selfless, liberating figure, not as a Venusian tormentor. She reminds the people of Calydon that,

> . . . I shall have no man's love
> For ever, and no face of children born
> Or feeding lips upon me or fastening eyes
> For ever, nor being dead shall kings my sons
> Mourn me and bury, and tears on daughters' cheeks
> Burn; but a cold and sacred life, but strange,
> But far from dances and the back-blowing torch,
> Far off from flowers or any bed of man,
> Shall my life be for ever . . . .
>
> [ll. 967-975]

She is not "mighty minded" nor does she desire rewards. Upon concluding her task in Calydon, she says, "I shall go hence and no man see me more" (l. 1018). Her speech sways Oeneus entirely to her side, and he orders Toxeus and Plexippus to cease their opposition to her and attend to the hunt.

The Chorus, which has been listening to this three-way debate, is not convinced that there is any substance to the reconciliation effected by Oeneus, for in the third Stasimon which follows, they again focus on the ineffectiveness of human speech. Here, the attack upon the gods is more blasphemous than in the first Stasimon, and culminates in a desire, of Sadean proportions, to assassinate the penultimate God. Speech contains a "thorn for peril and a snare for sin" (l. 1038). The Chorus, cynical toward the possibility of achieving understanding through speech, regard it as merely another example of the cruel machinery devised by the gods:

> For the gods very subtly fashion
> Madness with sadness upon earth:
> Not knowing in any wise compassion;
> Nor holding pity of any worth;
> And many things they have given and taken,
> And wrought and ruined many things . . .
>
> [ll. 1055-1060]

In de Sade's novels, nature is consistently portrayed as an evil genius who governs the processes of creation and destruction. This depiction of her as a malevolent goddess, a conscious and active promoter of evil, is not, however, the result of any theism on de Sade's part, but of his use of personification as a literary device. Reflected in his rendering of the goddess Nature is an ironic treatment of eighteenth-century philosophic efforts to portray nature as a rational process. The Panglossian tenet that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds, provides de Sade's libertines with the basis of a totally hedonistic rationale for the perpetration of any crime which the imagination is capable of devising. By viewing the operations of nature as a rational rather than mechanical process, it is logical to conclude that her acts of destruction are willful and criminal. Therefore, crime is for the best.

The gods in Atalanta are similarly intended as cruel personifications of chance and circumstance. The author of creacion must be evil, for in his design for man, he has "circled pain about with pleasure, / And girdled pleasure about with pain . . ." (ll. 1069-1070). The gods, like de Sade's Nature, lust for human sorrow. The Chorus asks if human tears serve as

> Food for the famine of the grievous sea,
> A great well-head of lamentation
> Satiating the sad gods? . . .
>
> [ll. 1079-1081]

The image effectively mirrors the relation between man, nature, and gods. Life is eternally engulfed by cosmic grief. It is therefore folly for mankind to continue pounding at the gilt doors of heaven, the true substance of which is cold iron. The very floors of heaven "are paven with our pain" (ll. 1086-1089). Man is an "outcast, strayed between bright sun and moon" (l. 1096).

Although Swinburne often portrays the human condition in terms nearly as bleak as de Sade's, he nevertheless recognizes in man the potential for heroic independence from theological beliefs which ultimately disillusion and embitter him. This potential is embodied in the figure of Meleager. It is not until Songs Before Sunrise, however, that this theme of independence becomes fully amplified.

Even the Chorus in Atalanta contains, in some measure, the seeds of heroic action. The Chorus may be mistaken in its anthropomorphism, but at least it wishes to rebel against its divine tormentors. In what may be an expression of Swinburne's lifelong respect for Landor's justification of tyrannicide, the Chorus is made to desire that the gods be poisoned by the very "wine of time" which they have concocted for man: "That life were given them as a fruit to eat / And death to drink as water . . ." (ll. 1120-1121). They would like to see them "grieve as men, and like slain men be slain" (l. 1129). Atalanta thus powerfully anticipates the increasing sense of

alienation from religious faith which was to become more widespread toward the end of the century, particularly as expressed in the work of Hardy, where man is also depicted as often unwittingly and tragically aiding the Immanent Will in its destructive course. Theistic creeds which foster the belief that man's salvation is dependent upon adhering to a set of moral values assumed to be the absolute dicta of a rational Creator, were regarded by Swinburne and de Sade alike as the chief sources of human sorrow, not only because such creeds are illusory, but because they tend to detract from and often thwart the more urgent human need to discover the values appropriate to one's individual needs in this life. As perceived by de Sade, theism, particularly in the form of Christianity, has inculcated, if not legislated, impossible moral expectations which have been co-opted by tyrants to pervert, suppress and abuse mankind. It is against this condition humaine that de Sade cries out, through the voice of Madame Delbène:

> L'idée d'une telle chimère est, je l'avoue, le seul tort que je ne puisse pardonner à l'homme. . . . Je ne finirais pas, Juliette, s'il fallait me livrer à toute l'horreur que m'inspire l'exécrable système de l'existence d'un Dieu: mon sang bouillons à son nom seul; il me semble voir autour de moi, grand je l'entends prononcer, les ombres palpitantes de tous les malheureux que cette abominable opinion a détruite sur la surface du globe; elles m'invoquent, elles me conjurent d'employer tout ce que m'ai pu recevoir de forces ou de talent, pour extirper de l'âme de mes semblables l'idée du dégoutant fantôme qui les fit périr sur la terre.[25]

This view of God as the highest of evils forms the basis of Swinburne's theology in Atalanta.

In the third Stasimon antitheistic rebellion reaches its climax. It is here that the specifically Judeo-Christian concept of God comes under attack. There have been rumours in Calydon of the God of gods--a supreme God:

> For now we know not of them; but one saith
> The gods are gracious, praising God; and one,
> When hast thou seen or hast thou felt his breath
> Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,
> Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death?
> None hath beheld him, none
> Seen above other gods and shapes of things,
> Swift without feet and flying without wings,
> Intolerable, not clad with death or life,
> Insatiable, not known of night or day,
> The lord of love and loathing and of strife
> Who gives a star and takes a sun away;
> Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife
> To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay;
> Who turns the large limbs to a little flame
> And binds the great sea with a little sand;
> Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame;
> Who shakes the heaven and ashes in his hand;
> Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,
> Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,
> Smites without sword, and scourges without rod;
> The supreme evil, God.
>
> [ll. 1130-1151]

This is an "intolerable" and "insatiable" God. He is the principal divider of body and soul, "Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife / To the earthly body . . ." He represents the coming of the dualistic and vengeful, Judeo-Christian God (ll. 1146-1147). As God among gods, He embodies all the evils of the previous deities, and is therefore supreme in evil. Like de Sade's Nature, He has created man

as an outlet for His hatred (l. 1152). He has invented the sins which plague mankind (ll. 1175-1176) and cause him to turn upon himself. The Chorus reaches a state of ecstasy in returning hatred for hatred:

> Lo, with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,
> Lo, with ephemeral lips and casual breath,
> At least we witness of thee ere we die
> That these things are not otherwise, but thus;
> That each man in his heart sigheth, and saith,
> That all men even as I,
> All we are against thee, against thee, O God most high.
> [ll. 1186-1192]

The concluding stanza, which immediately follows the above, takes a curious turn. An abrupt change in metre serves to emphasize a change in tone and attitude of the Chorus, while at the same time presenting an ironic though logical conclusion to the opening theme of the ode, having to do with the perils of speech:

> But ye, keep ye on earth
> Your lips from over-speech,
> Loud words and longing are so little worth;
> And the end is hard to reach.
> For silence after grievous things is good,
> And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,
> And shame, and righteous governance of blood,
> And lordship of the soul.
> But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,
> And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root;
> For words divide and rend;
> But silence is most noble till the end.
> [ll. 1193-1204]

The ambiguities of this stanza are perplexing. On one level, it stands to reason that if the gods supplied man with speech only to advance his suffering, the best way to nullify such divine chicanery is to remain silent. Such an interpretation

is perhaps adequate on the strictly literal and contextual levels of the play. However, the question arises as to why the Chorus, when clearly hurling Swinburnean epithets against God, should suddenly switch to promoting the virtue of silence, thereby advancing a totally un-Swinburnean stance. Nowhere else in the Chorus is the archaic personal pronoun adopted, although it is repeatedly used by Althaea in her authoritarian aspect, and perhaps signifies, in this case, her prevailing dominance over the mood of the Chorus. The concluding stanza thus has the effect of rendering the Chorus as frozen and mute as the figures on Keats' Grecian urn. If "words divide and rend" and silence is noble, the Chorus is in effect denying that there is any merit in a criticism of life, as any society that believes in omnipotent gods must conclude.

We should not be surprised if it appears that Swinburne is advancing his own brand of moral criticism here, especially when we recall that he not only admired Matthew Arnold's belief, as expressed in "The Study of Poetry," that art should be a criticism of life, but that he also allowed for the expression of moral ideas in art. He observes in his essay "Wordsworth and Bryon": "All sane men must be willing to concede the truth of an assercion which [Arnold] seems to fling down as a challenge from the ethical critic to the aesthetic --that a school of poetry divorced from any moral idea is a

school of poetry divorced from life."[26] He goes on to caution, however, that "a school of poetry subordinated to any school of doctrine, subjugated and shaped and utilized by any moral idea to the exclusion of native impulse and spiritual instinct, will produce work fit to live when the noblest specimens of humanity are produced by artificial incubation."[27] While Swinburne is never an advocate of a moral aesthetic (a principal factor distinguishing him from other Victorians), he also never seriously takes the position of a purist in the art-for-art's sake question. Lafourcade succinctly clarifies his moral-aesthetic position when he observes that

> Swinburne's poetry is never absolutely free from moral ideas, and is alternately an apology of atheism, radicalism, sadism, or patriotism . . . by 'Art for Art's sake', Swinburne merely meant the independence of Art from moral virtue, or rather the dependence of Virtue on Art, as, in the true Baudelairian spirit, a real work of art could not fail to have a moral soul without which it might not exist.[28]

That Swinburne found de Sade too moralistic is the most striking testimony to the radical difference which existed between his aesthetic position and that of his contemporaries. His early cognizance of de Sade's moralizations ranks him among the first of commentators to see de Sade objectively and artistically. The moral stance in Atalanta is similar to that which de Sade adopts, though less intense and neurotic. It is indirect, and less polemical than, for instance, Saint-Fond's loquacious attack on "l'Être suprême en méchanceté,"

or Cardinal Bernis' "Ode à Priape" with its

> Foutre des Saints et de la Vierge,
> Foutre des Anges et de Dieu![29]

There is, however, another verse in Juliette which is modeled on a sonnet by Jacques Vallée, an associate of Théophile de Viau (on whom Swinburne wrote his essay, "Théophile"), the first two lines of which express a spirit more in keeping with that of the notorious ode in Atalanta:

> Sot Dieu! tes jugements sont plains de'atrocité,
> Ton unique plaisir consiste à l'injustice . . .[30]

This penchant for blasphemy which runs throughout de Sade and is strongly concentrated in Juliette was likely the evil genius which inspired the theology of Atalanta, where the Creator is portrayed, in Sadean terms, as the evil motor of the universe.

As noted earlier, the theological dialectics of Atalanta are directly rooted in Swinburne's experience of de Sade's works, where the goodness or evilness of actions are depicted as determined by the human attitude toward God or nature. Ironically, then, it is a difference in opinion which morally and fatally divides Althaea and Meleager. The Chorus, swayed to Althaea's position through most of the play, like de Sade's antitheistic spokesmen, continuously cite experiential evidence to support their position, though in fact it rests upon the assumption that God exists.

In the fourth Episodé (ll. 1205-1373), news arrives at

the palace that the boar has been slain. Althaea's response is one of immediate relief accompanied by unexpected praise for the gods, as she orders some of the populace to

> . . . bring flowers and crown
> These gods and all the lintel, and shed wine,
> Fetch sacrifice and slay, for heaven is good.
> [ll. 1227-1229]

In the Herald's lengthy descriptions of the battle against the boar, Meleager is metamorphosed into a figure of Apollonian grandeur. Standing beside Atalanta, he was "like a sun in spring that strikes / Branch into leaf and bloom into the world" (ll. 1244-1245). The imagery of light and growth with which he has been described earlier in the play thus continues. Dauntless, he confronted the boar head on: "Right in the wild way of the coming curse" (l. 1327), he stood "like a god" (l. 1331). The Herald's speech concludes with a call for celebration and thanksgiving, "For fallen is all the trouble of Cayldon" (l. 1361). Althaea continues to praise the gods. It is again the anthropomorphizing bent of her imagination which now causes her to associate fair circumstances with fair deities:

> Look fair, O gods and favourable; for we
> Praise you with no false heart or flattering mouth,
> Being merciful, but with pure souls and prayer.
> [ll. 1368-1370]

The Chorus immediately amplifies the new mood in Calydon which Althaea has sanctioned. Artemis,

> Thou, O queen and holiest,
> Flower the whitest of all things,
> [ll. 1400-1401]

is now regarded as kind and just, turning toward Calydon "A benignant blameless brow" (ll. 1430).

Anthropomorphism forms the theological centre of Atalanta. Therefore, when at the apex of triumphant celebration a tragic reversal takes place in the deaths of Toxeus and Plexippus at the hands of Meleager, it becomes apparent that Althaea's reversion to a view of the gods as supremely sadistic is inevitable and more intense than ever. Her experience of evil has progressed through three levels, narrowing from the cosmic, to the secular, to the personal, producing in her an emotional and mental state, the psychological logic of which is masterfully displayed by Swinburne. On the cosmic level, she believes that the gods cruelly determine our lives by casting lots (l. 309); on the secular level, she sees in the devastation of Calydon divine vindictiveness, and asserts that any deviation from a rigid devotion to law and duty will only worsen matters; and on the personal level she is torn in her sympathies and ultimately destroyed by the gods as a result of the slaying of her brothers by her son. The death of her brothers must be avenged out of duty, the execution of which makes her, like the gods, vindictive. Althaea becomes a victim of her own obsession, for in killing Meleager she kills herself as well (ll. 1758, 1805, 1898). Upon learning of the slayings, another debate concerning the gods takes place with the Chorus. Althaea believes she is overcome by

perverse gods: "The gods are many about me; I am one" (l. 1504), "They are strong, they are strong; I am broken, and these prevail" (l. 1508). She attributes to the gods her divided psyche, which is pitted against itself in having to choose between avenging her slain brothers, as duty commands, which can only be done by casting the brand of Meleager's life into the flames, or allowing her son to live and thereby failing in her duty to her brothers. As if aware of the moral impossibility of her choices, and out of shame at the dark forces with which she is predisposed to ally herself, she says, "I would I were not here in sight of the sun" (l. 1511).

Clearly, however, her case against Meleager is extraordinarily weak. Unlike Ovid, whose account of the slaying of Toxeus and Plexippus depicts Meleager as driven by prideful rage, Swinburne carefully chose to cast Meleager in an heroic role as defender of Atalanta, who "Smote not nor heaved up hand" (l. 1545) even though she was viciously attacked. In fact, in Swinburne's version, Meleager was assaulted by his uncles and killed them in self defense, as is reported to Althaea by the Messenger. After the slaying, Oeneus himself

> . . . bade bear hence
> These made of heaven infatuate in their deaths,
> Foolish; for these would baffle fate, and fell.
> And these passed on, and all men honoured her,
> Being honourable, as one revered of heaven.
> [ll. 1553-1557]

Atalanta and Meleager are exonerated of any wrong or prideful doing.

The rationalization about siblings and sons with which Swinburne supplies Althaea is not very satisfactory from an artistic point of view:

> For all things else and all men may renew;
> Yea, son for son the gods may give and take,
> But never a brother or sister any more.
> [ll. 1673-1675]

Aside from Swinburne's facileness on this point, Althaea's reaction against Meleager emerges as the product of hysteria, the outcome of inordinate jealousy and possessiveness. As the Chorus again tries to assuage her anger (initially toward the gods, now toward her son), she answers:

> But these [her brothers] the gods too gave me, and these my son,
> Not reverencing his gods nor mine own heart
> Nor the old sweet years nor all venerable things,
> But cruel, and in his raving like a beast,
> Hath taken away to slay them; yea, and she
> She the strange woman, she the flower, the sword,
> Red from spilt blood, a mortal flower to men,
> Adorable, detestable--even she
> Saw with strange eyes and with strange lips rejoiced,
> Seeing these mine own slain of mine own, and mé
> Made miserable above all miseries made,
> A grief among all women in the world,
> A name to be washed out with all men's tears.
> [ll. 1687-1699]

There is no basis whatsoever in the play to support her charges against either Meleager or Atalanta: Meleager's crime is not in failing to reverence his gods, but in failing to reverence the gods of his mother; Atalanta's crime is that she inspires love but awakens maternal jealousies in Althaea,

whose attitude toward her is ironically contradictory: Atalanta is a "flower" and a "sword," "adorable" and "detestable."

Althaea's transfiguration to an earth-mother, ravenous for destruction (from l. 1506, "They rend me, they divide me, they destroy," to l. 1945, "My name is a consuming"), takes on distinct parallels to de Sade's metaphoric rendering of nature as a universal mother whose greatest joy is in murdering her own creations. In the same way that de Sade's Nature is portrayed as the logical outcome of philosophies which advocate following nature for moral guidelines, Althaea's metamorphosis is the result of her commitment to the position that sin is the consequence of failing to follow one's duty according to ordained laws. When the Chorus tries to persuade her that the slaying of her brothers was more circumstantial than wilful ("is this not also a god, / Chance, and the wheel of all necessities?" ll. 1700-1701), she is unable to see the order of things as other than fixed. It is not a violation of civil law, but moral law that is at issue, and for that Meleager must be fatally tormented by fire. Althaea, initially, is divided between her maternal self and her more abstract sense of duty, which is predicated upon absolute principles:

> My spirit is strong against itself, and I
> For these things' sake cry out on mine own soul
> That it endures outrage . . .
>
> [ll. 1704-1706]

It is necessary for her to call upon the gods to liberate her from servitude to natural feelings. Like Lady Macbeth, calling to be unsexed and filled with cruelty, Althaea cries out:

> O great gods,
> Make me as you or as the beasts that feed,
> Slay and divide and cherish their own hearts . . .
> [ll. 1713-1715]

She realizes that she must become unnatural in order to slay her son, but the source of her strength is drawn from a theology whose grim character is reflected in the bloody workings of nature. The struggle to rid herself of maternal instincts results in the emergence and domination in her personality of a cruel desire for vengeance. Like the gods, she assumes the power to give and take life. Summoning the destructive capabilities in her nature, she becomes a scourge upon the house of Oeneus, unleashing fire and shedding blood:

> For that is done that shall be, and mine hand
> Full of the deed, and full of blood mine eyes,
> That shall see never nor touch anything
> Save blood unstanched and fire unquenchable.
> . . . . . .
> Fire in the roofs, and on the lintels fire.
> Lo ye, who stand and weave, between the doors,
> There; and blood drips from hand and thread,
> and stains
> Threshold and raiment and me passing in
> Flecked with the sudden sanguine drops of death.
> [ll. 1780-1790]

Before entering the palace to throw the "brand" of Meleager's life into the fire, she becomes fully transmogrified: "I am fire, and burn myself . . ." (l. 1805). What the gods

in their cruelty were unable to accomplish, she will now do. When the Chorus wails that "The house is broken," Althaea answers:

> Woe, woe for him that breaketh; and a rod
> Smote it of old, and now the axe is here.
> [ll. 1806-1808]

The Chorus attributes this madness which now consumes Althaea to supreme evil: "An end is come, an end; this is of God" (l. 804). Althaea's action thus serves as Swinburne's example of the consequences of a moral system which, when founded on an absolute and rigid external authority, forces mankind to turn upon itself when it fails to satisfy the demands of that system. The image of the rod, dominant in Swinburne's incononography of pain, is consummately appropriate here, being a carry-over from other, unpublished works such as the Flogging-Block, where the rod symbolizes the punitive authority of church, school and family.

Seen in this light, Althaea's comparison of the human to the divine condition becomes little more than another rationalization for the infliction of punishment:

> But all the gods will, all they do, and we
> Not all we would, yet somewhat; and one choice
> We have, to live and do just deeds and die.
> [ll. 1760-1762]

Out of context, this would be a laudable statement. However, it is predicated upon the assumption that the gods exist; that what they will to do has no moral authority beyond themselves; and that man lacks the daring to exercise free will.

Althaea believes that she has the example of the gods on her side, but killing Meleager is not a "just deed"--it is an act of self-righteous authority punishing the transgressions of the disobedient. In contrast, Meleager's deed was just. In fact, Althaea is, like the gods, indifferent to the circumstances of his actions, and is motivated to take vengeance in order to honour the spirit of her dead mother, Eurythemis who, like herself, was once a queen, and had

> . . . borne her daughter like a queen,
> Righteous; and though mine own fire burn me too,
> She shall have honour and these her sons, though dead.
> [ll. 1777-1779]

As queen, she is acutely aware of the dignity of her position. Early in the play, for instance, she tells the Chorus, "Look you, I speak not as one light of wit, / But as a queen speaks, being heart-vexed . . ." (ll. 201-202). The fact that she does become light of wit is the result of her inability to distinguish between her queenly role and her maternal one. How else would a heart-vexed queen speak, save as an ordinary woman? Consequently, she abandons her humanity and becomes the representative of vindictive authority. The tragic flaw which leads the house of Oeneus to ruin, therefore, is Althaea's obedience to the dead, and to the tyranny of past traditions which have infected and atrophied religious, political, and domestic values.

In the fifth Stasimon which follows, the Chorus sings an ode to Fate (ll. 1809-18550), the creation of God's "bitter

jealousy" and the means by which He vitiates man's hopes for freedom. It is an "unfathered flame" (l. 1819) which delivers sorrows upon man not simply as punishment for wrongs done, but suddenly and at random, without cause or explanation. Even the gods are unable to alter Fate: "Nor any god can lighten fate" (l. 1833). Earlier, we are told, "Alas that time is stronger than strong men, / Fate than all gods . . ." (ll. 1791-1792). The oppressive sense of the supreme evil of God is thus intensified. The description of Fate foreshadows the transfigured Althaea, making the two practically indistinguishable, so that once again it is clear that cosmic cruelty is compounded by human complicity. Fate is "The daughter of doom, the mother of death, / The sister of sorrow . . ." (ll. 1830-1831). Its cruelty toward man is likened, in terms which are characteristically Sadean, to nature's indifference:

> For death is deep as the sea,
> And fate as the waves thereof.
> Shall the waves take pity on thee
> Or the southwind offer thee love?
> [ll. 1839-1842]

Nature, indeed the entire cosmic order in de Sade and Swinburne, is lacking in love or pity, which are exclusively the creations of human sensibility.

Althaea's mad entrance at the opening of the sixth Episode, immediately following the above ode, is a rare dramatic tour de force in the play. Indeed, performed well, it could

rank among the great scenes in drama. Entering from the palace where she has just cast the brand into the flames, she is completely transformed. In contrast to her first entrance, when her doom-laden melancholy quells the rejoicing of the Chorus ("What do ye singing? what is this ye sing?"), she now enters insanely euphoric. Having transcended her feelings of maternal compassion, she claims to dominate the realms of sorrow and laughter, having gathered within herself the powers of cruelty which characterize fate, gods and nature:

> Ho, ye that wail, and ye that sing, make way
> Till I be come among you. Hide your tears,
> Ye little weepers, and your laughing lips,
> Ye laughers for a little; lo mine eyes
> That outweep heaven at rainiest, and my mouth
> That laughs as gods laugh at us. Fate's are we,
> Yet fate is ours a breathing-space; yea, mine,
> Fate is made mine for ever; he is my son,
> My bedfellow, my brother. You strong gods,
> Give place unto me; I am as any of you,
> To give life and to take life. Thou, old earth,
> That has made man and unmade; thou whose mouth
> Looks red from the eaten fruits of thine own womb;
> Behold me with what lips upon what food
> I feed and fill my body; even with flesh
> Made of my body. Lo, the fire I lit
> I burn with fire to quench it; yea, with flame
> I burn up even the dust and ash thereof.
>
> [ll. 1856-1873]

As the cruel earth-mother, she is incarnadine with the blood of her own offspring. Apart from de Sade's works, there are few precedents in literature which link so consistently and unapologetically the potential for human cruelty to the indifferent destructiveness which characterizes the natural forces of the world. Cecil Lang's succinct comment about

Althaea's state of mind in relation to the overall existential problem at the root of Atalanta is worth citing at this point:

> Swinburne's bone-bred antitheses (unity and division, pleasure and pain, desire and restraint, growth and stasis, etc.) combined with the traditional Greek problem of fate vs free will shadow forth the dark ambiguities of existence--in the imagery and in the very characters as well as in the subject matter. As the governing symbol of the burning brand shows, neither fate nor free will is quite absolute (Fate imposes, man disposes) . . .[31]

Necessary to our comprehension of the action thus far is the realization that Althaea's "willful" act does not stem from the rectitude of her judgment, but from her superstitious mind, which resolves to imitate the behaviour of imaginary gods in meting out justice; hence, her actions, like divine actions, are dehumanized. In her final speech, at the end of the sixth Episode, she explains to the Chorus her slaying of Meleager as follows:

> I that did this will weep not nor cry out,
> Cry ye and weep; I will not call on gods,
> Call ye on them; I will not pity man,
> Shew ye your pity . . .
>
> [ll. 1905-1909]

She has become the incarnation of the earlier, pitiless image of Fate, which is primarily a metaphor for the unpredictable circumstances which man interprets as directed personally at him, but which are created by chance and time, or by natural forces.

In this last speech, her transfiguration into earth-

mother continues to develop along Sadean lines through the grotesque description which she gives of her own experience of absorbing the now dying Meleager back into her universal body:

> Yea the smoke bites me, yea I drink the steam
> With nostril and with eyelid and with lip
> Insatiate and intolerant; and mine hands
> Burn, and fire feeds upon mine eyes; I reel
> As one made drunk with living, whence he draws
> Drunken delight; yet I, though mad for joy,
> Loathe my long living and am waxen red
> As with the shadow of shed blood; behold,
> I am kindled with the flames that fade in him,
> I am swollen with subsiding of his veins,
> I am flooded with his ebbing, my lit eyes
> Flame with the falling fire that leaves his lids
> Bloodless; my cheek is luminous with blood
> Because his face is ashen.
>
> [ll. 1912-1925]

In a final recognition of the element of compassionate motherhood within her, she becomes aware of her divided nature:

> I am severed from myself, my name is gone,
> My name that was a healing, it is changed,
> My name is a consuming.
>
> [ll. 1943-1945]

Her departed name that was a "healing" and is now gone, was her motherhood. As Althaea returns to her mortal self, the pathos of this moment of self-recognition adds a subtle and moving touch to the tragic progress of the play, particularly in the last two lines which she delivers:

> From this time
> Though mine eyes reach to the end of all these things,
> My lips shall not unfasten till I die.
>
> [ll. 1945-1947]

Her former righteousness is gone, but we are left with another

of the "dark ambiguities" of the play: do her fastened lips signify remorse, or a now quiet conviction that hers was a "just deed"? Is this final act of silence designed to foil the gods or to assuage her conscience? Is this a case of applying the tantalizing hypothesis that "silence after grievous things is good," that it is "most noble to the end"? All are simultaneously true, insofar as they are consequences of the view that evil is an absoluce or palpable presence which can only be counteracted by mankind's conforming to a narrow and universal standard of behaviour. Belief in the metaphysical reality of evil derives from human incomprehension in the face of the paradoxes of life (principally symbolized in this play by the brand. The human mind attempts to order and explain the external world, to give it a structure. The mental construct of that world is what is termed reality. But often, what are assumed to be the laws operating in the world are discovered to be invalid, and as we attempt to adapt to new laws, our conception of reality changes. When caught between the claims of irreconcilable values, we become more or less schizophrenic and, at the extreme, completely withdraw from life. Althaea's vow of eternal silence is, psychologically, a logical conclusion to her earlier wish to remove herself from the "sight of the sun." Her complete mental breakdown is movingly described by the Chorus:

> She wept and she had no pity;
> Trembled and felt no fears.
>
> [ll. 1952-1953]

There are several artless ambiguities which seem to mar what remains of the play from this point on. For example, Meleager's question to his mother,

> Wilt thou bring forth another
> To feel the sun's beams
> When I move among shadows a shadow and wail by
> Impassable streams?
>
> [ll. 2079-2080]

appears purely rhetorical, the implication being that she will not. Yet later on he says, "this house / Shall bear much better children . . ." (ll. 2245-2246). Similarly, the image of his moving, a wailing shadow, among shadows in the after life, conflicts with other statements denying any existence beyond the present one: "For the dead man no home is" (l. 2132) and "in death / There is no comfort and none aftergrowth" (ll. 2202-2203).

Such difficulties aside, the main feature of the rather lengthy Commus which concludes Atalanta is a final verification of Meleager's heroic stature, his superior wisdom, and his forgiveness of his mother. Although wishing he had been slain in the commission of a glorious act, Meleager tells his father, "Yet with clean heart I die and faultless hand, / Not shamefully . . ." (ll. 2188-2189). Oeneus answers with a moral tribute to his son:

> Child, I salute thee with sad heart and tears,
> And bid thee comfort, being a perfect man
> In fight, and honourable in the house of peace.
> The gods give thee fair wage and dues of death,
> And me brief days and ways to come at thee.
>
> [ll. 2196-2200]

Meleager, realizing that this is the only life that matters, cautions his father:

> Pray thou thy days be long before thy death,
> And full of ease and kingdom. Seeing in death
> There is no comfort and none aftergrowth.
> . . . . . .
> Live thou and take thy fill of days and die
> When thy day comes; and make not much of death
> Lest ere thy day thou reap an evil thing.
> [ll. 2201-2208]

Meleager's love of life is particularly noteworthy in that it is not bolstered by the comforting belief in a life after death. He does not attribute human misfortune to the gods, nor is he obsessed with the presence of evil in the world. It would be a mistake to suppose that because Swinburne's rendering of evil in the play is based upon a theological hypothesis (i.e., that if God exists, he must be evil), the play is merely an exercise in sophistry. Whether deities exist or not, the human condition still involves suffering the cruelties of meaninglessness and death. Meleager's transcendence of the painful contradictions in life is the result of his moral courage; he therefore exemplifies, in the terms which Swinburne uses in the letter to Stedman, "the ideal of human perfection and aspiration . . ." There is a significant parallel between Swinburne's treatment of Meleager and his views on Friederick II, whose

> clear, cold purity of pluck, looking neither upwards nor around for any help or comfort, seems to be a much wholesomer and more admirable state of mind than Cromwell's splendid pietism. And then who would not face all chances if he were

> convinced that the Gods were on his side and personally excited about his failure or success?[32]

Moral courage is the quality most consistently lauded in Swinburne's many effusive expressions of hero worship. As we saw earlier, he scores Milnes for lacking moral courage and praises de Sade for having it. Though he does not share de Sade's fatalism, he admires his lifelong insistence on the total indifference of the universe to mankind's existence. Gods are "figments," he says in the Stedman letter; consequently, so are beliefs in eschatology. Meleager's affirmation of the reality of life before death, rather than after it, represents, therefore, the positive dimension of antitheism in Atalanta. If Swinburne's atheism was grounded in de Sade, as there seems good reason to believe, then it follows that his reference to de Sade as a "benefactor of mankind" is not entirely whimsical, for who else, besides Swinburne himself, tried so diligently to break the back of God?

Significantly, in spite of Swinburne's dislike for Euripides, he chose a quotation from the extant fragment of the lost Meleager as an epigraph for the title page of Atalanta: ". . . each man dying is earth and shadow; the nothing sinks into nothingness."[33] Similar views recur in de Sade, nowhere more ironically stated than by Pope Pius VI, who tells Juliette: "Le principe de la vie, dans tous les êtres, n'est autre que celui de la mort . . ."[34]

The concluding lines of the second dedicatory poem to

Landor echo the theme of Atalanta. W. R. Rutland's prose translation is as follows:

> Brief time and fate will conquer mortals. Now they have pleasure and now pain; and ever the light harmeth them, or the darkness covereth them, weeping. And the sleep of death snatcheth them away waking. But for these of the dead that have closed in the grave, neither darkness nor light of the sun shall wound them again. Nor ever unto those who rejoice, nor ever unto those who mourn shall come vision of dreams in sleep, or a reality in waking. But they all forever have one abiding place, immortal in place of mortality and beautiful in place of evil.[35]

Man's immortality is in death, and the greatest attainment of beauty seems to be in his release from an existence which is by nature "evil," owing to man's experience of pleasure and pain as inextricably mixed in this life. Taken in the narrow sense, this view does not accurately reflect Swinburne's maturer outlook on life, death and evil. Undoubtedly, it is the expression of youthful and romantic cynicism.

In Meleager's advice to his father, there is a Landorian stoicism concerning life and death which, by way of contrast, underscores Althaea's absorption with the incongruities of the world. Her obsession with finding evil at the root of human sorrow, the expression of a theistic impulse, makes of her the agent as well as the victim of an evil universe. Meleager, who accepts the fact that death is an inevitable part of life, blames neither the gods nor his mother for his end. His ambiguous forgiveness of Althaea can only be adequately comprehended by bearing in mind the image of nature which

Swinburne apparently derived from de Sade:

> Thou too, the bitter mother and mother-plague
> Of this my weary body--thou too, queen,
> The source and end, the sower and the scythe,
> The rain that ripens and the drought that slays,
> The sand that swallows and the spring that feeds,
> To make me and unmake me--thou, I say,
> Althaea, since my father's ploughshare, drawn
> Through fatal seedland of a female field,
> Furrowed thy body, whence a wheaten ear
> Strong from the sun and fragrant from the rains
> I sprang and cleft the closure of thy womb,
> Mother, I dying with unforgetful tongue
> Hail thee as holy and worship thee as just
> Who art unjust and unholy . . .
>
> [ll. 2209-2222]

Althaea's transformation into the Sadean earth-mother is the result of her becoming the supreme perpetrator of crime. De Sade presents nature as "just" in the sense that she is a law unto herself. She conceives her creations only for the purpose of destroying them. Her laws are unalterable. They are "unjust" in appearance only, because man imposes his own expectations of virtue and compassion upon them.

Meleager is not, however, a mouthpiece for the Sadean viewpoint, although he takes cognizance of it. For him, Althaea, in her earth-mother aspect, is just and holy inasmuch as she follows the destructive and predatory dictates of Nature. However, in so doing she is unholy and unjust because she violates her basic humanity. Meleager's response to her action is, therefore, balanced: it takes into account the cruel irony imposed on man as a result of his belief that nature is of divine origin and should be followed, but at the same time

opposes to the mindless destruction which is the consequence of acting upon this belief a moral code derived from instinctive human feelings of love and compassion.

Meleager can forgive his mother because, in the larger scheme of things, she has become a victim of natural processes. He tells her,

> I would thou hadst let me live; but gods averse,
> But fortune, and the fiery feet of change,
> And time, these would not, these tread out my life,
> These and not thou; me too thou hast loved, and I
> Thee; but this death was mixed with all my life,
> Mine end with my beginning: and this law,
> This only, slays me, and not my mother at all.
> [ll. 2234-2240]

His reference to "law" lends a somewhat Darwinian overtone to the point being made. The principle of life, in Sadean terms, is death. But apart from natural processes, Meleager is also aware of factors--fortune, change and time--which, depending on the nature of human responses to them, hasten or delay the arrival of death. These are the elements of experience upon which man has modeled his gods, who are arbitrary, unpredictable and insentient, and are therefore the chief sources of human anxiety. It is in this context that they are referred to in the final words of the play, when the Chorus asks:

> Who shall contend with his lords
> Or cross them or do them wrong?
> Who shall bind them as with chords?
> Who shall tame them as with song?
> Who shall smite them as with swords?
> For the hands of their kingdom are strong.

The hands of their kingdom are strong because they are human

hands, and there is nothing more destructive than man when he acts against himself. This is the very theme embodied in the portrayal of Althaea.

In approaching Swinburne's treatment of nature, Morse Peckham percipiently remarks:

> Man is the product of nature, but the consequence of his appearance at the end of the evolutionary process is that to give himself importance, to find value in the world, he must project upon the universe the illusions of his religious insanity. Nature is herself equivocal, ambiguous, full of antinomies; she is the womb and the tomb, destructive and creative, equally indifferent to the joys and the sufferings of men, which are but by-products of her endless and pointless creative activity.[36]

Atalanta has not fared well in the hands of many critics who have failed to perceive the importance of the Sadean background to Swinburne's conceptions of nature.[37] Approaches to the play have traditionally rested upon the assumption that it is of limited merit: e.g., that Swinburne was experimenting in an attempt to write a pure Greek tragedy; that Atalanta is a disguised portrayal of personal experiences of family strife--a nineteenth-century treatment of the problems created by the generation gap; that the tragedy in the play is the consequence of a violation of the balance between human and divine law; that the theme of the play is an expression of inverted evangelicalism; and that it verifies Swinburne's belief in a god, albeit an evil one. It is not difficult to find supporting evidence for most of these views, but each is

disturbingly incomplete and has the appearance of being an attempt to grasp at straws.

William R. Rutland's attempt to construe the evil theology of Atalanta in such a way as to demonstrate Swinburne's belief in theism, completely misses the point of the play. His remark on Handel, in this connection, at best overstates the case: ". . . it is very astonishing to think that such verses as these perhaps owe much to the music that has never, unless it be by Bach, been surpassed as the triumphant expression of perfect faith in the blessing and honour and glory and power that are to Him Who reigneth for ever and ever."[38] It is assumed apparently, that we are to forget the prolific body of non-Christian work by Handel. Besides, it was undoubtedly the pagan side of Handel's interests which, in Swinburne's eyes, gave him a position in the world of music akin to that held by Walter Savage Landor in the world of poetry.

It was to Landor that Swinburne dedicated Atalanta, to which he prefixed two original elegies in Greek to the memory of the then recently dead poet. W. B. D. Henderson's assertion that Atalanta "was suggested by a passage in Landor's Hellenics . . ."[39] is, however, pure speculation. Even if this were true, evidence of any significant influence by Landor on Atalanta is lacking; Henderson himself fails to provide us with any. It appears more reasonable to suggest that Atalanta's connection to Landor derives from Swinburne's admiration of

the pure Hellenism of Landor's verse. It seems likely that he desired to emulate the authenticity of tone and sentiment in Landor which had impressed him from the age of twelve when he was at Eton.

That Swinburne himself became increasingly disenchanted with Atalanta in subsequent years (as is evident in the Letters) should not obscure the fact that apart from its failures, which are fewer and less grievous than have been generally supposed, it contains some of the best of his dramatic verse as well as his finest lyrics. Furthermore, long-standing refusals to consider the play in terms of its real dynamics, coupled with attempts to mask its purport, have undoubtedly stifled opportunities to appreciate it on the basis of its genuine merits. Few other works in the course of English literature had so directly challenged the staleness of philosophic, aesthetic, and religious assumptions underpinning the ideology of an epoch. That Atalanta does this without lapsing into cynical nihilism, and continues to champion the human potential for individuality and moral, spiritual and political liberty, makes it a play with relevance to the existentialist concerns of contemporary thought. Atalanta provided Swinburne with an opportunity to clarify the affinities he shared with de Sade regarding ideas about theology and, simultaneously, to demonstrate that man is capable of achieving nobility, be it in a universe devoid of God, or one in which God is the supreme evil.

Notes

1. The Swinburne Letters, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (new Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), III, 13. Hereafter cited as Letters.

2. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

3. "Introduction," Letters, I, xxiv

4. Oeuvres Complètes du Marquis de Sade, ed. Gilbert Lely (Paris: Au Cercle du Libre Precieux, 1966), IX, 370. Hereafter cited as Oeuvres.

5. Ibid., VIII, 383.

6. Ibid., pp. 383-384.

7. Ibid., p. 386.

8. "Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon," Edinburgh Review (July, 1865), pp. 213-214.

9. Letters, I, 124.

10. Ibid., 124.

11. In 1862 Swinburne had nearly succeeded in cozening R. H. Hutton, then Editor of the Spectator, to print his hoax articles on "Félicien Cossu" and "Ernest Clouet." The latter was actually set up in type. Hutton wrote (December 16, 1862), "The subject seems to me to deserve no more criticism than a Holywell Street publication, nor could I speak of it in the Spectator without more real disgust than your article inspires." Cited by Lang, Letters, I, 72.

12. See Chapter I, n. 41.

13. Whether it was written before or after Swinburne read Justine is uncertain. Lang, on evidence which he admits to be conjectural, believes it to have been written after. See New Writings by Swinburne (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1964), p. 224.

14. New Writings by Swinburne, p. 98

15. Ibid., p. 99

16. Ibid., p. 100.

17. Ibid., p. 99.

18. Ibid., pp. 101-102.

19. Ibid., p. 101.

20. Swinburne: A Nineteenth Century Hellene (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1931), p. 132.

21. La Jeunesse de Swinburne (Paris. Université de Strassborg, Les Belles Lettrees, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), II, 397.

22. The Tragedies of Algernon Charles Swinburne (London: Chatto and Windus, 1905), II, 43.

23. Letters, II, 79.

24. "Swinburne's Greek Plays and God, 'The Supreme Evil,'" MLN, LXXVI (November, 1961), 616.

25. Oeuvres, VIII, 30.

26. Miscellanies (London: Chatto and Windus, 1895), p. 68.

27. Ibid.

28. Swinburne's Hyperion and Other Poems (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927), p. 55.

29. Oeuvres, IX, 96.

30. Ibid.

31. Note to Atalanta in Calydon, in The Pre-Raphaelites and their Circle, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 522.

32. Letter to Lady Trevelyan (March 15, 1865), commenting on Carlyle's fourth volume of the History of Friederick II which Swinburne had read in Fiesole at the time of his visit to Landor. Letters, I, 116.

33. Trans. W. R. Rutland, in Morse Peckham's edition of Swinburne. Poems and Ballads. Atalanta in Calydon. (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), p. 199.

34. Oeuvres, IX, 174.

35. In Peckham (ed.), Swinburne, p. 204.

36. Beyond the Tragic Vision (New York: George Braziller, 1962), pp. 321-322.

37. In addition to misconstruing Swinburne as a theist, Rutland dismisses, on rather narrow grounds, de Sade's influence on Atalanta: ". . . if all that Swinburne wrote were as absolutely free from the taint of Sadism as is Atalanta, his fame would be a fairer one. There is not the slightest trace of pathological abnormality in the play." Swinburne: A Nineteenth Century Hellene, pp. 136-137. C. M. Bowra claims that tragedy in the play results from the violation of law: "The law is not so much the moral law as embodied use and wont, established habit and respected rules, the harmonious frame in which man can best live." The Romantic Imagination (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 232. The Principal error in this view is the implication that Swinburne regarded this law as being in the best interest of human harmony when in fact he believed it denied the potential for heroic action. Douglas Bush cynically dismisses the play on the grounds that "It is Swinburne's combinations of words, and his inability to use one where a hundred will serve, which are the supreme evil." Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1937), p. 342.

38. Swinburne: A Nineteenth Century Hellene, p. 133.

39. Swinburne and Landor (London: Macmillan, 1918), p. 134.

Chapter III

POEMS AND BALLADS (1866): THE AESTHETICS OF CRUELTY

Edmund Gosse, who always took great delight in embellishing the eccentricities of Swinburne, provides an amusing perspective on the poet's position in 1866:

> Propriety had prevailed; and, once more to change our image, British poetry had become a beautifully guarded park, in which, over smoothly shaven lawns, where gentle herds of fallow-deer were grazing, thrushes sang very discreetly from the boughs of ancestral trees, and where there was not a single object to be seen or heard which could offer the very smallest discomfort to the feelings of the most refined mid-Victorian gentlewoman. Into this quiet park, to the infinite alarm of the fallow-deer, a young Bacchus was now preparing to burst, in the company of a troop of Maenads, and to the accompaniment of cymbals and clattering of kettle-drums.[1]

Swinburne had been cultivating his own fleurs du mal for some years and, with the publication of Poems and Ballads, First Series, 1866, they were to blossom in the sweet English air overnight. The garden of English sensibilities in which they took root, however, would never again be the same.

Looking back on that time himself, the mellowed Swinburne records the following in his 1904 "Dedicatory Epistle" to Theodore Watts-Dunton:

> There are photographs from life in the book; and there are sketches from imagination. Some which keen sighted criticism has dismissed with a smile as ideal or imaginary were as real and actual as

> well could be: others which have been taken for obvious transcripts from memory were utterly fantastic or dramatic.[2]

Deciding which are poems from life or from imagination remains, especially for biographers, a teasing problem. However, to a great degree the importance of such distinctions fade in Swinburne's case when we consider that experience, real or imaginary, was always transformed through a visceral or cerebral alembic into an aesthetic expression--hence, the difficulty of biographic interpretations of his poetry.

In the formidable body of criticism which has emerged from Swinburne studies over the years, there have been conspicuously few attempts to produce a comprehensive treatment of Poems and Ballads, which is perhaps Swinburne's most notable single work. Particular poems from this work--"Laus Veneris," "The Triumph of Time," "Anactoria," "Dolores"--have undergone detailed scrutiny by Swinburne scholars. However, because of the complexities and/or obscurities of the work as a whole, there has been a tendency to shy away from treating it in terms of its unifying themes. The lack of any apparent focal point in Poems and Ballads (the title itself suggests a random collection of verses), the multiplicity of exercises in form which seem to render much of it derivative, and problems in the chronology of the poems (the earliest and latest of which cover a time spread from 1857 to 1865), are the principal factors which have discouraged attempts to view the work as a

methodical construction. Gosse notes:

> We are not able even to conjecture what actuated the poet in the existing arrangement, or rather lack of arrangement, of the poems. He seems to have shuffled them together, like cards in a hat, with an intentional confusion of subject, date, and style.[3]

The suggestion that Swinburne assembled his poems through some kind of impish perversity in order to confuse future scholars, is a speculation unworthy even of Gosse. The furor surrounding the publication of Poems and Ballads (and its hasty withdrawal by Moxon) has been too often documented to warrant recapitulating here. However, it is worth noting that in response to suggestions that Swinburne re-edit the book in order to pave the way for a smoother reception of it, he wrote to Bulwer-Lytton:

> As to the suppression of separate passages or poems, it could not be done without injuring the whole structure of the book, where every part has been as carefully considered and arranged as I could manage, and under the circumstances, it seems to me that I have no choice but to break off my connection with the publisher.[4]

In fact, rather than suppress so much as a line, he put the book into the hands of John Camden Hotten,[5] one of the most enterprising if scandalous publishers of nineteenth-century pornography. Unfortunately, there is no extant statement by Swinburne which clarifies what he had in mind by "the whole structure of the book." All we know of his intentions can be gleaned from his letters, the "Dedicatory Epistle" which he wrote for the Chatto and Windus edition of 1904, "Notes

on Poems and Reviews," and the concluding poem in the work, "Dedication," which he wrote for Edward Burne-Jones in 1865.

In the "Dedicatory Epistle" Swinburne casually describes the poems as a collection of "miscellaneous verse" that is "generally heterogeneous,"[6] a position which would appear to be at variance with his response to Bulwer-Lytton thirty-six years earlier, but for the fact that in his "Notes on Poems and Reviews" he had similarly described the book as "dramatic, many-faced, multifarious . . ."[7] How then do we reconcile the statement that he could not suppress passages or alter the arrangement of poems without "injuring the whole structure" with his confession as to the eclectic nature of the poems?

It is reasonable to conclude, on the basis of Swinburne's own ambiguity about the poems, and their diverse characteristics (i.e., chronology, form and theme), that his staunch resistance to any alteration of the poems stems not so much from the unalterable nature of their structure or arrangement as from a matter of principle. When Swinburne published his Poems and Ballads it was clear to him that he had completed his novitiate's requirements in the service of poetry, and the acceptance of the book, whether in storm or sunshine, was undoubtedly necessary to his sense of ordination. The Queen-Mother and Rosamond were privately printed in 1860. These works were too derivative and did little to advance his reputation as a poet. Almost five years passed before he engaged in another serious publishing venture. Atalanta in

Calydon, while it made the British literary Brahmins take notice, was again privately financed, and though it bore the marks of poetic genius, it was still too widely regarded as an imitation of Greek tragedy. Similar observations could be made about Chastelard. With Poems and Ballads, however, the poet had grown a full set of teeth and was determined to sink them into the first hand that attempted to alter its form or impede its publication. His uncompromising stand in respect to the fears voiced by his friends, and the timidity of Moxon, was in no small degree owing to his determination to assert his confidence and maturity as a poet.

Of equal, perhaps greater, importance in Swinburne's determination to leave the poems untouched, was his realization that many of his poems were the products of a radically new aesthetic, derived primarily from his grapplings with de Sade, and reflecting a universe without theological hope. For Swinburne, de Sade was courageous and correct in asserting that the universe is without a source of absolute moral authority, that man is hopelessly mortal, and that apart from his subjective experience of life, man's existence is ultimately meaningless. Swinburne, therefore, had a new poetry to unleash upon the English-speaking world, and by his uncompromising refusal to prune anything from Poems and Ballads, was determined from the start to take an unflinching stand in the face of the anticipated public response. In his youthful confidence, he undoubtedly regarded as timidity the cau-

tious urgings of his friends, and, as Lafourcade observes, was likely convinced that they "failed to anticipate the all-transmuting power of his genius which could turn vice into virtue and virtue into vice."[8]

De Sade was the only writer familiar to Swinburne whose perception of life was based on so complete a moral inversion; nor was there any other writer who had so directly challenged the moral-aesthetic assumptions of western civilization. De Sade opened to Swinburne a new and vital area of exploration for which he was equipped by virtue of his own proclivities for painful pleasure, and his early and never ending commitment to the moral and political liberty of the individual.

Traditional attempts to parallel Swinburne to Baudelaire are not without merit, but Baudelaire's treatment of evil, unlike de Sade's or Swinburne's, is thoroughly medieval in that it almost always reveals to us that beauty is only evil in disguise, invariably reverting to its true form before the eyes of the beholder. Later in life, Swinburne even states that, "I never really had much in common with Baudelaire, though I retain all my early admiration for his genius at its best."[9] In Swinburne, as in de Sade, the recognition of evil is the road to pleasure, not to redemption.

Swinburne strongly resented any interpretations of his work which saw it as derivative or imitative. It was the unique vision of Poems and Ballads that he insisted upon, and he makes the point emphatic in a letter to W. M. Rossetti in

response to the public reaction:

> It is really very odd that people (friendly or unfriendly) will not let one be an artist, but must needs make one out a parson or a pimp. I suppose it is part of the fetid and fecund spawn of 'the Galilean serpent.' In the eyes of 'that cursed, crawling, Christian crew' one must be either St. Francis of Assisi or the Marquis de Sade.[10]

Swinburne was concerned, however, that de Sade's influence upon Poems and Ballads should not be needlessly touted, as is clear again in his remarks to W. M. Rossetti regarding the latter's proposed defense of Swinburne's book:

> . . . if it were published here [instead of in the United States], would it be advisable to refer en pleines letters to the Most Holy Saint Gilles de Rays, or to the Blessed Donatien-Alphonse-Francois, Marquis de Sade? It is sweet to me that my name should be mixed with theirs. How sweet I need not say, nor how deeply I enjoyed the allusion when I first heard it; but I doubt if it would be politic.[11]

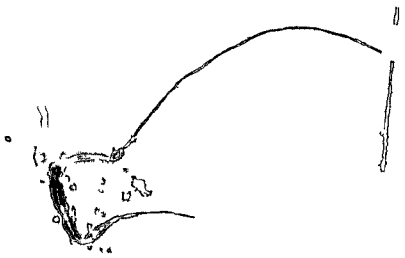
A factor which causes endless difficulties in interpreting de Sade is that we can never be sure as to what extent his characters speak for their author. The tendency, however, has been to accept their ratiocinations and blasphemies as more or less the genuine expressions of the outraged and embittered prisoner of Charenton. Similarly, readers of Swinburne's monologues have generally attributed the sentiments expressed in them to the poet himself, in spite of the fact that, unlike de Sade, Swinburne often warned against this. In "Notes on Poems and Reviews" he specifically states that "no utterance of enjoyment or despair, belief or unbelief, can properly be assumed as the assertion of its author's per-

sonal feeling or faith."[12] Even earlier than this he makes the same point in a letter to W. M. Rossetti:

> As to the antitheism of 'Félise' I know of course that you know that the verses represent a mood of mind and phase of thought not unfamiliar to me; but I must nevertheless maintain that no reader (as a reader) has a right (whatever he may conjecture) to assert that this is my faith and that the faith expressed in such things as the 'Litany' or 'Carol' or 'Dorothy' is not. Of course it is a more serious expression of feeling; and of course this is evident; but it is not less formally dramatic than the others; and this is the point on which it seems to me necessary to insist and fair to enlarge.[13]

De Sade's impact on Poems and Ballads is felt most strongly in those verses characterized by a theology of evil. It is remarkable that Swinburne remained so steadfast in his antitheism. As late as 1904 he makes it perfectly clear in the "Dedicatory Epistle" to Watts-Dunton that he was never able to share in the religious idealism expressed by two of his principal heroes: "You know that I never pretended to see eye to eye with my illustrious friends and masters, Victor Hugo and Giuseppe Mazzini, in regard to the positive and passionate confidence of their sublime and purified theology."[14] The cruelties by which man is victimized in Poems and Ballads stem from his misconception of natural processes; that is, the disappointment of his expectation that the universe exists to serve his ends gives rise to the equally fallacious notion that it has sinister designs against him.

Granted that de Sade's defense of crime and apotheosis of evil was intended to curdle the moral sensibilities of his



contemporaries, his approach nevertheless suffers from overkill. Swinburne's application of the Sadean perspective on nature and human experience was inspired by neither bitterness nor revenge, but by a desire to explore its profound implications regarding man's sensual experience of life and his idealistic expectations. His diverse enthusiasms for both pagan and Christian subjects,[15] for de Sade and Hugo, Gilles de Rais and Shelley, are never in conflict; likewise, in his personal relationships he befriended and defended such disparate figures as Simeon Solomon and Mazzini; and in the "Dedicatory Epistle," speaking of Christina Rossetti and Richard Burton, he states:

> Two noble human creatures more utterly unlike each other it would be unspeakably impossible to conceive; but it was as simply natural for one who honoured them both to do honest homage, before and after they had left us, to the saintly and secluded poetess as to the adventurous and unsaintly hero.[16]

Swinburne was truly a man for all men. Neither prudish nor supercilious, he is something of an anomaly in an age which enshrined moral respectability. The godly and the satanic for Swinburne were inextricably united in the phenomenon called man, who fell not because ~~he disobeyed~~, but because he took sides in a Manichean war which pitted his spiritual being against his physical nature.

Many of the works in Poems and Ballads are set, like Atalanta, against a Sadean background where pleasure or pain emerge as cosmic imperatives. Swinburne depicts man as cursed

with a desire for pleasure--cultivating insatiable hopes which only end in pain and despair. If, like Tannhäuser in "Laus Veneris", he attempts to seek heavenly salvation by an abnegation of worldly desires, he is still thwarted and his efforts go unrewarded. Therefore, in a world dominated by a belief in a benevolent deity offering redemption man can only become disillusioned, and is forced to return to his search for pleasure. Tannhauser, denied forgiveness by the Pope, returns to Venus at the Horsel:

> For I come home right heavy, with small cheer,
> And lo my love, mine own soul's heart, more dear
> Than mine own soul, more beautiful than God . . .

The individual works comprising Poems and Ballads are connected to a thematic core having to do with the problem of Love in a world where Time, a constant reminder of approaching Death, inflames Love's Desire. Desire leads Love to insatiable expectations of Pleasure which, intensified to the point of violence, turns to Pain. The desire to eternalize Pleasure, however, is thwarted by surfeit and leads to ennui, despair, and the desire for death at the hands of the lover as the ultimate consummation of pleasure.

Desire thus emerges as the dominant source of suffering in the psychological struggles which characterize the various personae of Poems and Ballads (more than two-thirds of which are monologues). It is the source of suffering because it leads to the expectation that not only pleasure, but life as well, will be eternal. The hope for eternal life, however, is

always overshadowed by the realization that God is either non-existent, or that he is indifferent to human suffering and has no intention of clasping man to his eternal bosom. Swinburne's central focus in these poems is almost always upon the tendency of man to eternalize, in one way or another, the significance of his desires.

It is worth noting that of the sixty-two poems in Poems and Ballads, forty-four contain female figures who are central to the poems and who comprise the greatest single collection of fatal types in all of Swinburne's work. Of the years from 1857 to 1965, 1862 is the year during which the greatest number of poems--approximately sixteen--were written. The majority of poems (thirty-six) were composed between 1862 and 1865. Nineteen poems originated before 1862, and six are of undetermined date. Those poems written between 1862 and 1865, the years during which Swinburne was most preoccupied with de Sade, show a marked emphasis on the theme of pleasure and pain, especially those poems written around 1862.

Swinburne's enthusiasm for irreverent and erotic depiction in Poems and Ballads burst like a floodtide upon the unprepared public. What went unnoticed in the ensuing panic was the fact that the book was not intended as an example of the nature of things to come from the poet's pen, but, as is clearly announced in "Dedication," the last poem in the collection, was being offered as an anthology of the dreams and passions of youth. The dedicatory poem, apart from being one

of the finer pieces in the volume, is essential reading for an understanding of the author's intentions:

> The sea gives her shells to the shingle,
> The earth gives her streams to the sea;
> They are many, but my gift is single,
> My verses, the firstfruits of me.

The importance of these poems is indicated by the metaphor drawn from nature, where shells and streams pour forth in endless profusion, to dissolve and mix with other elements in the cyclical process of creation and destruction. Nature's gifts (shells and streams) have ready recipients, but the poet's gifts (their uniqueness further underscored by the coinage "firstfruits"), must struggle to be received and preserved, for they are artifacts, concretions of the abstracting and synthesizing powers of the imagination. As becomes clear later in the poem, the only place where these verses may find "shelters" and "hearing" is in the artificial world of art, represented by Burne-Jones' "palace of painting."

In "Dedication" Swinburne takes a position which signifies a personal resolution of the Sadean-inspired quandary concerning the teleology of human existence. De Sade's characters, by design or otherwise, are motivated by a servile imitation of nature. Though such attitudes in part reflect de Sade's desire to mock the philosophic and aesthetic sensibilities of his times, he never manages to go beyond them and to present a cogent, existentialist alternative to man's insignificance in the face of nature. Swinburne often imitates

art, but never nature, a fact which is reflected in his frequent use of traditional forms and in his enthusiasm for parody. To some extent, this factor probably explains the failure of his work to appeal to a broad audience. External reality is of secondary importance to him. Like de Sade, his concern with nature focuses primarily on how it affects the senses. Near the beginning of Juliette, Madame Delbène, defining reason to her star pupil, observes that

> C'est cette faculté qui m'est donnée par nature de me determiner pour tel object et de fuir tel autre, en proportion de la dose de plaisrr ou de peine reçue de ces objets: calcul absolument soumis à mes sens, puisque c'est d'eux seuls que je reçois les impressions comparatives qui constituent ou les douleurs que je veux fuir, ou le plaisir que je dois chercher.[18]

Unlike de Sade, however, Swinburne's principal focus is on the symbiotic relation between pleasure and pain, not on the strategy of accumulating the one and avoiding the other.

This totalling up of pleasurable as opposed to painful experiences of the external world is a dominant theme in de Sade. Philosophically, Swinburne thought him a "modern Socrates"[19] for having so relentlessly questioned the human condition. As an artist, however, he fell short, mistaking "bulk and number for greatness."[20] The analysis of pleasure and pain in Poems and Ballads has, therefore, a subtlety of which de Sade was totally incapable. De Sade's language is quantitative and notably lacking in metaphorical content. We would search long and diligently through his works to

find a description of a tree, a sea, a sky or a mountain. Such details are not relevant to his description of nature since they appeal to our romantic imagination and tend to soften the impact of nature as an indifferent or cruel life force.

Swinburne presents the relation between pleasure and pain as a paradox. Pleasure is often dependent upon pain; indeed, indistinguishable from it. Consequently, his language is highly metaphorical, and although he exploits natural imagery it is never for its own sake (i.e., to depict the beauty of nature). Natural imagery in his work serves as a metaphorical correlative necessary to the aesthetic ordering of human experience. For instance, in "Dedication" he speaks of the "daughters of dreams and of stories"--Faustine, Fragoletta, Dolores, Félise, Yolande and Juliette--all of whom appear in Poems and Ballads, in analogies which are drawn from nature:

> They are past as a slumber that passes,
> As the dew of a dawn of old time;
> More frail than the shadows on glasses,
> More fleet than a wave or a rhyme.
> As the waves after ebb drawing seaward,
> When their hollows are full of the night,
> So the birds that flew singing to me-ward,
> Recede out of sight.

Earlier, he likens his poems to leaves which are shaken by the night, driven before the dawn, and shed by Time. They are of varying hues, "pallid," "sombre" and "ruddy." They become like "Dead Fruits of the fugitive years" and "songs

of dead seasons." Halfway through the poem he turns them into birds, in whose wings "the sea-wind yet quivers," asking where there may be room

> For the song-birds of sorrow, that muffle
> Their music as clouds do their fire:
> For the storm-birds of passion, that ruffle
> Wild wings in a wind of desire.

The poem has nothing to do with leaves or birds, however, but only with the nature and condition of his poetry up to 1865. In spite of the frequent use of nature imagery in this and other poems in Poems and Ballads, the poet is not interested in nature for its own sake but only to the extent that he can apply imagery drawn from nature to illuminate the state of the speaker's mind in a particular poem.

Of the sixty-two poems in this book, only seven have titles suggesting the natural world: "Before Dawn," "The Garden of Prosperpine," "Hesperia," "April," "The Sundew," "August," and "The Sea-swallows," and four of these titles refer more specifically to time. Swinburne, therefore, was very unlike his Romantic predecessors who looked to nature as a source of poetic inspiration. In Poems and Ballads, nature serves as a constant reminder that life and the hopes man fosters are destined to perish. Age, "full of losses / Make empty the years full of youth," he tells us in "Dedication." Friendship, "The faith between friends," however, is able to resist change, and it is in this spirit that he dedicates his poems to Burne-Jones, that they may survive as monuments

"For the love of old loves and lost times." Throughout "Dedication" we are reminded that Poems and Ballads, "This revel of rhymes," marks the end of a stage in the poet's development, and the placing of this poem last on the arrangement serves to emphasize this point.

The problems of love, death, pleasure and pain are made desperately immediate by man's awareness of time which, as Swinburne often reminds us, brings an end to all things. It is understandable that Swinburne was fascinated by the ballad tradition which so frequently and simply presented man as being tragically ensnared by the conflict between his expectations of life and life's realities, for herein lies the source of the pleasure/pain syndrome. C. K. Hyder aptly remarks: "He admired the ballads for the same reasons that he admired Greek and Elizabethan drama: in them he found the elemental forces of human nature--the pains of love and travail, the horror of incest, the violence of murder."[21] In his demand for a virile literature that is "large, liberal, sincere,"[22] he obviously attempted, in the form of subject matter of Poems and Ballads, to displace "the rods and rattles of childhood"[23] --that is, the use of art to reinforce a moral system based upon punishment and reward.

In addition to pleasure and pain and its satellite themes played out against a theologically evil universe, another factor which unifies Poems and Ballads is, as mentioned earlier, that forty-four of the poems are dominated by one or more female

figures.[24] We should therefore take particular notice of Swinburne's reference in "Dedication" to the "daughters of dreams" who dominate his poems, and who "are past as a slumber that passes." His farewell to Juliette, among others, serves as an announcement that the days of his Sadean affinities are drawing to an end. His works subsequent to Poems and Ballads represent a major shift in his aesthetic concerns.[25]

Swinburne's femmes fatales are not intended to be realistic representations of a type of woman (as, for example, female figures are in Baudelaire), but to symbolize the sexual forces which dominate human behaviour. Swinburne was abnormally deficient in his experience of women, so that with few exceptions, his poetry is rarely concerned with women as subjects for their own sake.[26] De Sade's Juliette, as one of the daughters of dreams and stories, provided the poet with a model for the deadly cravings which inspire the creation of female figures in such poems as "Laus Veneris," "Anactoria," "Faustine," "Rococo" and "Dolores."

At the centre of Poems and Ballads is the sonnet "A Cameo," a poem which has received scant critical attention. While the subject of the poem may appear to derive from straight-forward medieval allegories about the vicissitudes of life, the treatment is typically Swinburnean in its reference to ". . . strange loves that suck the breasts of Hate / Till lips and teeth bite in their sharp indenture." Composed sometime during 1862,[27] the poem combines, in cameo, the principal themes

of Poems and Ballads. An image of Desire is depicted, flanked on one side by young men, and on the other by old. In his service are Pleasure and Pain which are meted out, respectively, to the young and old. Clinging to Desire's wrist is "insatiable Satiety" which adds a grotesque element to its image when we consider that the old men in their continuing attachment to Desire stand as mirrors to the young. Following Desire, "like beasts with flap of wings and fins" are "The senses and the sorrows and the sins." The essence of the human condition, is to be enthralled to tyrannous Desire, from which the only hope of escape is the end of life:

> Death stood aloof behind a gaping grate,
> Upon whose lock was written Peradventure.

The cruel irony of existence is heightened by the suggestion that those for whom death might open its gate would be fortunate.

This yearning for death as an escape from Desire is nowhere more apparent than in "Laus Veneris," where the pathos of Tannhauser's situation is compounded by the fact that even his wish for death must be channelled through Desire:

> Ah God, that love were as a flower or flame,
> That life were as the naming of a name,
> That death were not more pitiful than desire,
> That these things were not one thing and the same.
> [ll. 65-68]

Love, desire and death, are the inseparable components of life. Tannhauser is caught between Venus and Christ and, until the conclusion of the poem, his body belongs to the one and his

soul to the other. Swinburne is quite explicit in declaring his intentions:

> To me it seemed that the tragedy began with the knight's return to Venus--began at the point where hitherto it had seemed to leave off. The immortal agony of a man lost after all repentance--cast down from fearful hope into fearless despair--believing in Christ and bound to Venus--desirous of penitential pain, and damned to joyless pleasure. . . . The tragic touch of the story is this: that the knight who has renounced Christ believes in him; the lover who has embraced Venus disbelieves in her.[28]

The condition in which Tannhauser (who is a knight of Christ) finds himself, represents for Swinburne a Manichean nightmare, the result of a deep and irreconcilable division between the Hellenic and Christian worlds. Tannhäuser's perception of his existence grows out of his own dualism. His desire for "penitential pain" indicates his acceptance of Christ as the moral master of the world. Julian Baird is, therefore, correct in observing that "Tannhäuser accepts the moral laws imposed by his religious beliefs, and views his sojourn in Venusberg as simultaneously his sin and the punishment meted out to him for that sin. Thus, like de Sade, he is for Swinburne in actuality a part of the order against which he seems to rebel."[29] Desire, therefore, can only result in the attainment of pleasure at the price of pain: in choosing Venus, Tannhäuser damns his immortal soul, and in choosing Christ, denies his body. Tannhäuser realizes that before the coming of Christ, Venus "was the world's delight" (I. 9), and he goes on to observe:

> Lo, she was thus when her clear limbs enticed
> All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ,
> Stained with blood fallen from the feet of God,
> The feet and hands whereat our souls were priced.
> [ll. 13-16]

In "Notes on Poems and Reviews," Swinburne is emphatic in noting that the woman in this poem is "the mediaeval Venus" as distinct from the Hellenic goddess who delighted her followers. Her pleasures are now racked with pain because she is a "fallen goddess, grown diabolic among ages that would not accept her as divine" [emphasis mine]. Thus the former queen of love has become "the queen of evil,"[30] dethroned by the followers of Christ who have replaced her with the Galilean's mother, "pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow," and "weeping, a slave among slaves," as she is described in the "Hymn to Prosperpine" (ll. 81, 85). The medieval Venus, however, cannot be destroyed, but continues to exist within the Horsel; symbolically, that is, beneath the surface. Even Christ might be tempted by her:

> She is right fair; what hath she done to thee?
> May, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine eyes and see;
> Had now thy mother such a lip--like this?
> Thou knowest how sweet a thing it is to me.
> [ll. 21-24]

The unassuageable desires experienced by Tannhäuser stem from his composite view of Venus, Christ and Love. That they are confused in his own mind is clear from the beginning of the poem. The opening image of Venus shows her in repose next to Tannhäuser who is unsure if she is "Asleep or waking." At this point the only suggestion of cruelty that emerges is

associated with the knight who, like a vampire, focuses on her neck:

> But though my lips shut sucking on the place,
> There is no vein at work upon her face;
> Her eyelids are so peacable, no doubt
> Deep sleep has warmed her blood through
> all it ways.
>
> [ll. 5-8]

Standing over her is Love, significantly a male rather than female personification, "Crowned with gilt thorns and clothed with flesh like fire" (l. 35). The love which is crowned in thorns and whose flesh is fire, who stands apart from Venus, is a projection of dualism in the knight's spirit: his belief that love in the spirit is Christ and love in the flesh is sin and hell fire.

Dividing the human world is a conflict between moral and aesthetic values, tragically exemplified, for Swinburne, in Tannhäuser. It is a world tortured by a theology based on sin and punishment, in which the cruelty perceived and experienced by man is largely of his own creation. It contains recognizable elements of a Sadean world, but Swinburne surpasses, as he intended, the Sadean theme of brute cruelty by creating an aesthetic of pleasure and pain which depicts a strange beauty in the conflict between man's will to dominate and his will to submit. The perspective on the human condition is presented from the very beginning of Poems and Ballads in the two companion poems which head up the selection and establish its tone. In "A Ballad of Life" the figure of

Lucrezia Borgia represents Beauty before its subjection to an ascetic theology. Beauty transforms Fear, Shame, and Lust, to Pity, Sorrow and Love (ll. 48-50). Playing upon her lute, she sings "a song in a strange tongue" (l. 52); whereat the speaker (a medieval poet-knight) perceives that

> My Lady is perfect, and transfigureth
> All sin and sorrow and death,
> Making them fair . . . .
> [ll. 62-64]

In "A Ballad of Death," the following poem, a likeness of Lucrezia, now dead, appears before the speaker, who announces:

> Ah! in the days when God did good to me,
> Each part about her was a righteous thing;
> Her mouth an almsgiving,
> The glory of her garments charity.
> The beauty of her bosom a good deed,
> In the good old days when God kept sight of us;
> Love lay upon her eyes,
> And on that hair whereof the world takes heed;
> And all her body was more virtuous
> Than souls of women fashioned otherwise.
> [ll. 91-100]

The new theology has reshaped the old God and has consequently killed Beauty by dividing the body from the soul. The imposition of moral law suppressing the natural desires of man, creates, as Baird observes:

> a new Nature marked by cruelty and suffering: it is this new, corrupted, and erroneous Nature which reigns in "A Ballad of Death" and against which Man must rebel. "God," as perceived by those who live under the laws of the new Nature, is a false deity, but is, because accepted as a valid concept, responsible for the cruelties inherent in the new Nature. This brings us to the point where Swinburne amalgamates his ideas about Sade and Blake in his essay on the latter.[31]

It stands to reason, then, that Tannhäuser's relation to

Venus, is as jaded as is his relation to Christ, for although he chooses her over his Lord, he nevertheless carries with him the conviction of sin which results in his seeing her as the eternal destroyer of men:

> She casts them forth and gathers them again;
> With nerve and bone she weaves and multiplies
> Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain.
> [ll. 118-120]

The somewhat ambiguous suggestion is that the pleasure is hers, the pain man's; in fact, however, since she is essentially the personification of his own conflicting nature, the pleasure/pain experience is the result of his renouncing Christ while continuing to believe in him, and embracing Venus while disbelieving in her, as Swinburne states. The image of Venus as a weaver of pleasure and pain harkens back to Tannhauser's earlier description of Love "labouring at a loom" and weaving "with the hair of many a ruined head" (ll. 40, 44). Tannhauser consistently describes Love in images of punishment, adumbrating his own expectations of eternal hell-fire. From the beginning, the air in the Horsel is hot (l. 25). Love is like "foam blown up the salt burnt sands" (l. 36), with "fire-shod feet" (l. 20) and "a sweet snake's breath" (l. 204). Love rises "From the sea's panting mouth of dry desire" (l. 39), as if nature itself were in a perpetual state of inconclusive orgasm. Even the night "falls like fire" upon Tannhauser, whose "blood and body so / Shake as the flame shakes" (ll. 49-51).

The oxymoron employed here, which is characteristic of the rhetoric of Swinburne's poems, is intended to convey a sense of the tragic inability of the post-Hellenic world to come to terms with itself. His language dramatically expresses the divided psyche of modern western man, torn asunder in an attempt to see the world clearly, with one eye trained on heaven and the other on hell. The result is that he is blind to what stands between; namely, the world he physically occupies. An understanding of the function of this aspect of Swinburne's poetic rhetoric rounds out Morse Peckham's profound observation that "The peculiar character of Swinburne's poetry . . . is the contrast between the beauty of the aesthetic surface and the material world of experience which is the subject matter."[32] The fact is that we are expected to be disturbed by "the disparity between the extreme beauty of the surface and the highly disturbing contents of the poems."[33] This feature of Swinburne's style parallels that of de Sade's, in which the philosophic surface seems to be out of harmony with the pornographic treatment of the subject matter. The most characteristic feature of de Sade's style is his alternation of philosophic and pornographic modes of expression. His attempt to array evil in the garments of reason, like Swinburne's attempt to portray pain as pleasure, has as its objective the exposure of a metaphysical system (i.e., Christian dualism) which he sees as fundamentally opposed to life.

Unlike de Sade, however, Swinburne does not attempt to justify the ways of evil to man or to merely expose the fallacies of an untenable theology. Instead, in "Laus Veneris" he accepts a world wherein belief is separated from and opposed to desire, and focuses on the interplay of the psychological forces created by belief and desire. Pleasure results from the fulfillment of desire, and pain from the ironic awareness that indulgence in pleasure necessarily involves the negation of belief.

In spite of his continuing faith in Christ, and the anticipated pains of hell in the next life, Tannhäuser chooses the pleasures of Venus, since to have done otherwise would only have left himself prey to unassuaged desire. Pain is inescapable: heaven is deaf to his hope for salvation in this life, and would be barren of delight in the next.

> Ah love, there is no better life than this;
> To have known love, how bitter a thing it is,
> And afterward be cast out of God's sight;
> Yea, these that know not, shall they have such bliss
> High up in barren heaven before his face
> As we twain in the heavy-hearted place,
> Remembering love and all the dead delight,
> And all that time was sweet with for a space?
> [ll. 357-364]

In resigning himself to Venus, Tannhäuser accepts his condition as "satiated with things insatiable" (l. 46), the state of inescapable cruelty which characterizes man's lot (witness "A Cameo").

Imbued with a sense of justice and order, yet stricken by often conflicting desires beyond fulfillment, man's persist-

ent belief that a benevolent deity pervades the universe is, for Swinburne, the high mark of human folly. Man struggles to survive in a world where life is sorely vulnerable to unpredictable and arbitrary forces. It is a struggle in which man, no matter how painstakingly he endures, must in the end submit to all-consuming death. Nature's processes continuously violate man's sense of justice. To regard them in any way as the expression of divine will simply exposes the deity as a villain rather than a benefactor. It was astonishing to Swinburne that mankind thus compounds the difficulties of the natural condition in which it finds itself by the creation of, what to him, was an intolerant and punishing God. Swinburne's view of the absurdities of theological belief, though evident in "Laus Veneris," is more directly expressed in a group of three consecutive poems in Poems and Ballads: "A Litany," "A Lamentation" and "Anima Anceps."

"A Litany" is dominated by a God who seems to be an extension of the supremely evil God in Atalanta.[34] He asserts his authority over the multitude of men who respond to each of his cruel proclamations with servile deference:

> I will scatter all them that have sinned,
> There shall none by taken;
> As a sower that scattereth seed,
> So will I scatter them;
> As one breaketh and shattereth a reed,
> I will break and shatter them.
> [11. 19-24]

The rage he expresses in his apparent linking of sinners with lovers, is significant:

From all thy lovers that love thee
I God will sunder thee;
I will make darkness above thee;
And thick darkness under thee;
Before me goeth a light,
Behind me a sword.
[ll. 33-38]

Since man is born satiated with insatiability, he is, even without the existence of a punitive God, already imprisoned in a condition that is fundamentally cruel. Therefore, theistic beliefs only compound the cruelty of man's lot by their ascetic demands and threats of punishment. Man's answer, in the concluding lines of "A Litany," depicts a humanity broken by the rods of God, and completely divested of the rebellious spirit which, for Swinburne, is the source of human dignity:

Yet shalt thou bind them up that were broken,
O Lord our God.

The humiliating submission to God's cruel authority, and to His threats of destruction against sinners, is here made particularly acute by man's continued faith in God's benevolence.

In "A Lamentation," the warrior-speaker, under no illusions about the ruinous effects of time and the finality of death, laments, like the speaker of The Seafarer, over the lost days of his heroic past. Even though the universe is permeated by the "evil will" of gods (I, 17-18) for whom "Man's fate is a blood-red fruit" (I, 24) of which they have their fill, the warrior, unlike the men in "A Litany," makes no effort to appease the gods. Although they "wrought long ago / To bruise men one by one" (III, 2-3), the speaker

recognizes that creation and destruction are inherent in the natural order:

> But with the incessant hours
> Fresh grief and greener woe
> Spring, as the sudden sun
> Year after year makes flowers;
> And these die down and grow,
> And the next year lacks none.
> [III, 4-9]

Fate (i.e., chance) reigns supreme, and subjects even the gods to its laws:

> And holier eyes have wept,
> Than ours, when on her dead
> Gods have seen Thetis weep.
> [III, 13-15]

Destiny is therefore as unpredictable to the gods as it is to man, and it is an expression of the warrior's noble humanity which allows him to be compassionate even with the gods who abuse him.

The speaker of "A Lamentation" represents, probably more than any other persona in Poems and Ballads, Swinburne's own attitude in the confrontation between life and death:

> While he lives let a man be glad,
> For none hath joy of his death.
> [I, 45-46]

The warrior combines both tenderness and stoical fortitude. His lament is not for any injustice in the human condition, but for "The old heroes in time fled" (III, 11). He accepts as given the unalterable elements of chance and indifference which characterize the universe, and speaks with the voice of sanity in the midst of an existence which is unfathomable.

The end of life is a universal enigma:

> For all things born one gate
> Opens, no gate of gold;
> Opens; and no man sees
> Beyond the gods and fate.
> [III, 24-27]

"Anima Animeps" continues on the theme of death, and questions why man divides his soul between this world and the next:

> For this we know not--
> That fresh springs flow not
> And fresh griefs grow not
> When men are dead,

The poem asserts that there is no evidence of an afterlife, and asks of those who believed that there is, why they sorrow if they believe that the dead awaken:

> Why with strong crying
> And years of sighing,
> Living and dying,
> Fast ye and pray?

Death is an inescapable reaper. We can neither outlive nor outbuild his leveling arm. Our greatest accumulations of goods or pleasures provide no barrier against him. As if spurning the Sadean mathematics of gains and losses, the poem tells us that

> A little laughter
> Is much more worth
> Than thus to measure
> The hour, the treasure,
> The pain, the pleasure,
> The death, the birth;
> Grief, when days alter,
> Like joy shall falter;
> Song-book and psalter,
> Mourning and mirth.

The pains of this life may be great, but it is the only life man has. The more he frets over death, and expends precious

earthly time speculating on a chimerical afterlife, the more absurd his position becomes. The concluding sentiment of "A Lamentation" is therefore resonant in the conclusion to "Anima Anceps":

> Live like the swallow;
> Seek not to follow
> Where earth is hollow
> Under the earth.

In addition to the pains of pleasure which result from man's conviction that he can only satisfy his natural desires in the face of divine censure, as is the case in "Laus Veneris," Swinburne also examines in Poems and Ballads the phenomenon of pain which results from a surfeit of pleasure. The recent tendency, made popular by Mario Praz, to regard numerous poems in Poems and Ballads as the expression of Swinburne's algolagnia,[35] is an unfortunate one. The sensual cruelty which pervades "Anactoria,"[36] for instance, is typical of Swinburne's rendering of the pleasure/pain paradox in its primarily psychological aspect (i.e., as distinct from theological associations). There is little evidence of delight in the experience of receiving pain in this poem; rather, it is Sappho's desire to inflict pain and thereby derive pleasure that is represented. Her insatiable desire for Anactoria is, from the start, painful but also bitter to her; it is what drives her to crave a sadistic domination of the woman she loves:

> I would my love could kill thee; I am satiated
> With seeing thee live, and fain would have thee dead.

I would earth had thy body as fruit to eat
And no mouth but some serpent's found thee sweet.
I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,
Intense device and superflux of pain;
Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake.
Life at thy lips, and leave it there to ache;
Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,
Intolerable interludes and infinite ill;
Relapse and reluctation of the breath,
Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death.
[ll. 23-24]

Swinburne, with his own display of the pyrotechnics of pleasure and pain, here follows up on his earlier complaint that de Sade built his cruelties on "bulk" and "number." It is only in lines three to four of this passage that a concrete image appears. The surrounding rhetoric is heavily onomatopoeic, and is used by Swinburne in such a way as to literally wring sense out of sound, as in "Intense device and superflux of pain" or "Intolerable interludes and infinite ill." It is by exploiting the aesthetics of sadism that his depictions of love are among the most cruelly expressed in the English language. Sappho is for Swinburne an aestheticized Juliette.

Analogies to vampirism and cannibalism become dominant as Anactoria's beauty drives Sappho to frenzy. Desire begets desire for yet further possession, until the lover will be satiated by nothing less than consuming the object of her love:

Ah that my mouth for Muses' milk were fed
On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled!
That with my tongue I felt them, and could taste
The faint flakes from thy bosom to the waist!
That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat
Thy breasts as honey! that from face to feet
Thy body were abolished and consumed,

> And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed.
> [11. 107-114]

Sappho's desire to torment the woman she loves is further depicted as an expression of the cruelties characteristic of the natural world, which are underscored by the use of such images as the "flamelike foam of the sea's closing lips," "comets desolating the air," and the "sound of shaken hills" (11. 162, 164, 166). Human suffering as well as natural disasters, serve to feed "the mute melancholy lust of heaven" (l. 170). There is of course, a strong and direct influence from de Sade in the criminality associated with this vision of cosmic cruelty:

> Is not his [God's] incense bitterness, his meat
> Murder? his hidden face and iron feet
> Hath not man known, and felt them on their way
> Threaten and trample all things and every day?
> Hath he not sent us hunger? who hath cursed
> Spirit and flesh with longing?
> [11. 171-176]

The sadistic theology which complements Sappho's cruel longings in "Anactoria" serves mainly to amplify her state of mind. The bitterly inspired cruelty of her love for the younger woman is magnified to an increasingly cosmic level, first by likening herself to nature, then to the God of this world whose divinely implanted cruelties she would surpass by committing deicide. Her rage against this God of destruction is inspired by her envy of his supreme indifference. Sappho, enchained by mortal passions, would pierce his "cold lips" with "human breath / And mix his immortality with death" (11.

183-184), thereby inflicting on him, ironically, the greatest of all possible cruelties: making him human. Lafourcade accurately describes the Sadean connection in "Anactoria" when he says: "Eclairé par les doctrines du Marquis de Sade, et jusqu'à un certain point poussé par un conviction personelle, Swinburne découvre dans la nature cette même loi de souffrance universelle et de mort qui lui était apparue dans le mécanisme des passions."[37] De Sade the materialist, however, ultimately depicts the universe in a dualistic battle between matter and energy, whereas Swinburne is primarily concerned with the interplay between physical and psychic forces: "The mystery of the cruelty of things" (l. 56) which Sappho describes as impenetrable.

Sappho's cruelty expresses the nature of man, not gods. As Swinburne explains: "In this poem I have simply expressed . . . that violence of affection between one and another which hardens into rage and deepens into despair."[38] Once satiated by Anactoria, Sappho's passion for her does not subside but is further enflamed by the need to completely possess her which, in the end, she can only do by consuming her. The impossibility of her doing so, leads to the rage that deepens into despair and causes her to project her own cruel desires onto the universe:

> As to the angry appeal against the supreme mystery of oppressive heaven, which I have ventured to put into her mouth at that point only where pleasure culminates in pain, affection in anger, and desire

> in despair--as to the "blasphemies" against God or gods . . . they are to be taken as the first outcome or outburst of foiled and fruitless passion recoiling on itself.[39]

If wilful evil exists in the universe, it derives its origin from man, whose idea of God (Swinburne would agree with de Sade) is unworthy of him. As it is tersely put in the following quatrain:

> Which is most worthy the rod
> That justice wields when she can;
> Man, the creator of God,
> Or God the creator of man?[40]

"Dolores" (1865), more than any of the poems in Poems and Ballads, employs a sustained Sadean point of view; in fact, the speaker is not only clearly familiar with de Sade, but could easily have been modeled on one of his followers. "Foiled in love, and weary of loving, but not yet in sight of rest," the speaker seeks "refuge in those 'violent delights' which have 'violent ends,' in fierce and frank sensualities which at least profess to be no more than they are."[41] In the rendering of pain, pleasure and crime, the poem obviously does not speak for Swinburne, but represents, instead of the dispassionate and mechanical rationalizations of de Sade, an attempt to inject a sense of evil, the aesthetic force of which awakens in the reader a genuine sense of dread. In other words, Swinburne here tries to outdo the master advocate of evil, whose renderings of pain, pleasure and crime, Swinburne found so sterile, if not ludicrous. It is the inextricable relation of vice to virtue, pleasure to pain, that Swinburne attempts

to capture. The mere inversion of the values or feelings associated with them is what he complains about in de Sade: ". . . by the simple process of reversing anyone may write as good a Justine as yours" (see letter to Milnes, August 18, 1862).

"Dolores" is a kind of hymn or ode to Our Lady of Pain (the anti-Madonna). The blasphemous content is, from the start, made evident by the invention of Dolores, a "mystical rose of the mire" (l. 21), a priestess of cosmic lust, a canonized Juliette:

> There are sins it may be to discover,
> There are deeds it may be to delight.
> What new work wilt thou find for thy lover,
> What new passions for daytime or night?
> What spells that they know not a word of
> Whose lives are as leaves overblown?
> What tortures undreamt of, unheard of,
> Unwritten, unknown?
>
> [ll. 82-89]

She is the "Juliette" of "Rococo" who sends through "the heart of pleasure / The purpler blood of pain" (ll. 55-56). Unlike the cold, virginal goddess of the Christians who "slays, and her hands are not bloody" (l. 357), whose reign shall pass, Dolores is "noble and nude and antique" (l. 54). The offspring of Libitina and Priapus, she embodies not only the Roman and Greek world, but unites death and fertility (i.e., destruction and creation). It is therefore from the gods of nature that she derives her divine wisdom concerning the ecstacy of pain.

It is because she is the vessel of infinite pleasure

that the speaker, a debauchee satiated with "sorrow and joy," desires to enter her service. He would willingly partake with her in the Sadean delights of the Black Mass:

> I have passed from the outermost portal
> To the shrine where a sin is a prayer;
> What care though the service be mortal?
> O our Lady of Torture, what care?
> All thine the last vine that I pour is,
> The last in the chalice we drain,
> O fierce and luxurious Dolores,
> Our Lady of Pain. [ll. 129-136]

In what seems to be a somewhat humorous play upon de Sade's Justine and Juliette, the speaker alludes to Dolores' power to invert the moral order of the world: men who kiss her exchange

> The lilies and langours of virtue
> For the raptures and roses of vice.
> [ll. 67-68]

Referring to these lines as "the worst couplet in the world's literature,"[42] G. K. Chesterton introduces perhaps a welcome note of critical levity, but also overlooks the possibility that Swinburne himself may have been chortling in his sleeve: Tennyson's recurring use of lilies and roses springs automatically to mind. Besides, it may be the face of Swinburne that we see peering through the persona of the speaker in the following, somewhat inconsistent, reference to Dolores as "splendid and sterile." Her sterility, for Swinburne, is reflected in the promise that she will nullify Love:

> Love listens, and paler than ashes,
> Through his curls as the crown on them slips,
> Lifts languid we eyelids and lashes,

And laughs with insatiable lips.
Thou shalt hush him with heavy caresses,
With music that scares the profane;
Thou shalt darken his eyes with thy tresses,
Our Lady of Pain.

Thou shalt blind his bright eyes though he wrestle,
Thou shalt chain his light limbs though he strive;
In his lips all thy serpents shall nestle,
In his hands all thy cruelties thrive.
In the daytime thy voice shall go through him,
In his dreams he shall feel thee and ache;
Thou shalt kindle by night and subdue him
Asleep and awake.

[ll. 193-208]

The speaker in "Faustine" (1862) describes this archetypal woman of cosmic lust as a barren "love-machine," who engenders only "growths of sexless root," the "flower of kisses without fruit / Of love . . ." (ll. 129 ff.). The implication of these lines is that Swinburne was unable to restrain his contempt of Dolores as an engine of lust.

In any case, the speaker in "Dolores" continues to maintain a Sadean position. His desire to be included among her followers recalls Juliette's army of devotees in libertinage:

Ah thy people, thy children, thy chosen,
Marked cross from the womb and perverse!
They have found out the secret to cozen
The gods that constrain us and curse;
They alone, they are wise, and none other;
Give me place, even me, in their train,
O my sister, my spouse, and my mother,
Our Lady of Pain.

[ll. 145-152]

The "secret" which her children have unlocked refers to de Sade's demystification of the Deistic view of nature. They have cozened the gods by joining in nature's evil intentions, thereby removing themselves as virtuous victims to cosmic vice.

One of Swinburne's chief symbols for the cruelty inherent in the human condition is the Hermaphrodite which, though uniting the sexes, is spiritually divided within by its own "ambiguous blood" ("Fragoletta," l. 7). In addition to the Hermaphrodite's significance in mythology, of uniting the "sexes in one body of perfect beauty,"[43] Swinburne is cognizant of the homosexual's paradoxical inclination to become a member of the opposite sex in order to join with one of its own. His "Hermaphroditus" and "Fragoletta" (both written in 1863 and paired together in Poems and Ballads) were undoubtedly influenced by Théophile Gautier's Mademoiselle de Maupin (1835) and Henri de Latouche's Fragoletta (1829), both of which contain homosexuals who disguise their sexual identity. It is both the tortured desires contained within the androgynous figure, and also the inability of united sexuality to reproduce, that Swinburne focuses upon in his "Hermaphroditus."

Ian Fletcher's comment that Swinburne tries, by creating "a dialogue between the poems themselves," to "transcend the dualism of spiric and matter and return to hermaphroditic unity,"[44] is somewhat confusing, although his monograph on Swinburne is generally perceptive and lucid. Swinburne clearly states in his "Hermaphroditus" that when Love created this creature of supreme beauty he refused to enter it:

> Love made himself of flesh that perisheth,
> A pleasure-house for all the loves his kin;
> But on the one side sat a man like death,
> And on the other a woman sat like sin.

So with veiled eyes and sobs between his breath
Love turned himself and would not enter in.
[ll. 23-38]

The joining of the sexes is earlier described as a "waste wedlock" (l. 19). The speaker asks:

To what strange end hath some strange god made fair
The double blossom of two fruitless flowers?
[ll. 37-38]

The sexes, in their divided nature, long to be united, but even in the Hermaphrodite, desire contradicts itself and cannot be assuaged:

A strong desire begot on great despair,
A great despair cast out by strong desire.
[ll. 13-14]

As Swinburne notes: "The sad and subtle moral of this myth, which I have desired to indicate in verse, is that perfection once attained on all sides is a thing thenceforward barren of use or fruit; whereas the divided beauty of separate woman and man--a thing inferior and imperfect--can serve all turns of life."[45]

De Sade's work reads like an encyclopedia of the cruel devisings of Man and Nature. His characters repeatedly question why individual man should not be as Id-driven as nature in a universe devoid of any absolute standard of virtue and justice. They pose as dispassionate observers of nature, developing scientific perspective to its grimmest extremes. The painstaking accumulation of evidence to the effect that crime is endemic to nature, while absurdly one-sided, often eclipses their otherwise ironic stance, so that

we become increasingly unsure of how seriously de Sade himself stands in relation to the overall cosmic views of his characters. In a system such as that described by his novels, the only course for man is to ally hrmself with nature--to imitate her--in order to prolong and fulfill his biological destiny. De Sade, in using his characters to expose the cruel workings of nature to their finite dimensions, remains unable, or unwilling, to synthesize values which are positive and universal to man. Indeed, he leads us toward the recognition of the Kurtzian horror that there may not be any.

Swinburne often portrays these natural cruelties as forces in his poetry, but does not entwine them with the bitter polemics found in de Sade's work. Instead, he pursues the aesthetic experience of pain and cruelty, not, as is too generally supposed, out of masochistic motives (though admittedly masochistic motives do enter it), but mainly in order to explore the will to dominate and the will to submit, as they are inextricably bound together in human nature. It is rare to find Swinburne using his own voice, except when jesting (as in his early letters to Milnes), to make a virtue of pain. The ecstasies of pain which are frequently the subject of his verse, apart from being common to the human experience, represent, more specifically, a surfeit of passion. Morse Peckham is correct when he describes these poems as an "exposure of the true nature of eroticism" and "no mere expression of tendencies in Swinburne's own personality."[46] Swinburne knew better than

most the agonies of bondage to conflicting desires. The vitality of his creative talents, and his good fortune in possessing a mind that was not, like his physiological nature, enslaved to self-punishment, were the factors principally responsible in preventing him from lapsing into melancholia and nihilism. His ability to externalize his masochistic inclinations with good-natured humour, while at the same time exploring through his poetry the psychological ramifications of the pleasure/pain syndrome in the broader context of its relation to the natue of moral values, permitted him to develop a positive application of his own aberrant tendencies. These tendencies, Swinburne came to realize, were far more characteristic of the human condition than his Victorian contemporaries wished openly to admit.

His interest in de Sade, significantly, does not focus on the myriad scenes of sexual pandemonium which are rampant throughout that author's works. It was de Sade's perspective on the cruelties natural to the human condition, along with the moral and aesthetic implications of that condition, which Swinburne was determined to shape into new matter for art. It is interesting to note in this connection that from all of de-Sade's work, Swinburne chose to translate only a love lyric which he included in Poems and Ballads as "Song before Death."[47] It is a rather conventional love song of a dying lady who has been deserted by her lover. It contains nothing recognizably Sadean, although its position in Poems and Ballads is note-

worthy in that it is preceded by "A Cameo" with its grotesque images of a Sadean universe, and is followed by "Rococco" with its references to the cruel Juliette. The lady in "Song before Death," who remains faithful to her lover, is thus positioned in direct contrast to her cruel counterpart. Of equal importance is that the one work of de Sade's which Swinburne does translate is chosen on the basis of its aesthetic merits. The poem's title contains the date 1795, the publication date of de Sade's Aline et Valcour, in which the poem first appeared. Swinburne does not explain the significance of the date nor give any explanation as to the source of his poem, but lets it stand as a private tribute to de Sade.

With the exception of his letters, Swinburne is always careful, in works which bear his name, to avoid explicit references to de Sade. The extent to which de Sade figures in his work is therefore more considerable than appears to be the case on the surface. When, after the publication of Poems and Ballads he turns his attention to Songs before Sunrise, de Sade becomes even less visible, yet, as will be seen in the following and concluding chapter, the connection is still significant.

Notes

1. The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne (London: William Heinemann, 1927), p. 126.

2. Swinburne's Poems (London: Chatto and Windus, 1904), I, vii. Subsequent references to Poems and Ballads, First Series (1866) are to this edition.

3. The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne, p. 133.

4. The Swinburne Letters, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), I, 172-173 (August 13, 1866). Hereafter cited as Letters.

5. Andrew Chatto (1840-1913) bought out the Hotten firm in 1873 and turned it into a reputable publishing house, retaining Swinburne among its gallery of now-famous writers. Lang suggests that Swinburn's correspondence with Chatto provides sufficient material for "an aspect of Swinburne that we could scarcely unearth elsewhere. They cover a period of thirty years. That Swinburne could have remained so icy and so distant for so long staggers the imagination, but Chatto's patience, though it must have been a tired mare, continued to plod. It was a descendent of Hotspur, an Ashburnham, a Swinburne of Swinburne Castle, a Jacobite gentleman condescending to a menial, giving notice that if the publisher did not change his printer (for example) the poet would change his publisher." Letters, I, xxxix.

6. Swinburne's Poems, I, vi.

7. Reprinted in Swinburne Replies, ed. Clyde Kenneth Hyder (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1966), p. 18.

8. Georges Lafourcade, Swinburne: A Literary Biography (New York: Russell and Russell, 1932), p. 133.

9. Letters, VI, 153 (To William Sharp, October 6, 1901).

10. Ibid., I. 193

11. Ibid., 194.

12. Swinburne Replies, p. 18

13. Letters, I, 193. References are to "A Litany" and "A Christmas Carol" in Poems and Ballads (1866).

14. Swinburne's Poems, I, viii.

15. "One of these days," Swinburne wrote to W. M. Rossetti, "I must write a paper on Athens and Jerusalem as the two rival fountains of light and darkness, liberty and servitude, for the human race . . ." Letters, III, 56. (August 21, 1875).

16. Swinburne's Poems, I, xxiv-xxv.

17. Madame Delbène tells Juliette to follow nature: "Ah! suis ses inspirations, mon ange . . . voilà que ne tromperont jamais." In a lengthy dissertation on crime and nature, Noirceuil observes that ". . . nos usages, nos religions, nos coutumes, peuvent facilement, et doivent même necessairement nous tromper, et la voix de la nature ne nous trompera certainement jamais." Oeuvres Completes du Marquis de Sade, ed. Gilbert Lély (Paris: Au Cercle de Libre Precieux, 1966), VIII, 31, 168.

18. Ibid., p. 42.

19. Letters, IV, 272 (to W. M. Rossetti, June 24, 1882).

20. Ibid., I, 54 (to Milnes, August 18, 1862).

21. "Swinburne and the Popular Ballad," PMLA, XLIX (1934), 309.

22. "Notes on Poems and Reviews," Swinburne Replies, p. 30.

23. Ibid.

24. One might argue for an even greater number. For instance, "Hermaphroditus" and "Fragoletta," not included in my calculation, present figures who are andogynous in nature.

25. The shift is immediately evident in the titles: "A Song of Italy" (1867), "Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic" (1870), and "Songs Before Sunrise" (1871).

26. Poems such as "The Triumph of Time," "A Leave-Taking," "Félise," and perhaps others, are drawn from personal experience, probably in relation to Mary Gordon, but they are all more-or-less the expressions of injured feelings on the part of the rejected lover.

27. Georges Lafourcade, La Jeunesse de Swinburne 1837-1867 (Paris: Société des Editions, Les Belles Lettres, 1928), II, 456.

28. "Notes on Poems and Reviews," Swinburne Replies, p. 26.

29. "Swinburne, Sade, and Blake: The Pleasure-Pain Paradox," VP, IX (Spring-Summer, 1971), 64.

30. "Notes on Poems and Reviews," Swinburne Replies, pp. 26-27.

31. "Swinburne, Sade, and Blake: The Pleasure-Pain Paradox," p. 53.

32. Beyond the Tragic Vision (New York: George Braziller, 1962), p. 312.

33. Ibid., p. 314.

34. "A Litany" and "A Lamentation" were written during 1863-1864. "Anima Anceps" has not been dated, but like its two companion poems, the subject and style suggest it was also written at the time he was composing Atalanta in Calydon.

35. Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 215-226.

36. "Anactoria" was composed by Swinburne in 1863 but revised and extended in 1865.

37. La Jeunesse de Swinburne, II, 431.

38. "Notes on Poems and Reviews," Swinburne Replies, p. 20.

39. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

40. Letters, I, xvi.

41. "Notes on Poems and Reviews," Swinburne Replies, p. 22.

42. The Victorian Age in Literature, rev. ed. (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1914), p. 186.

43. Algernon Charles Swinburne, "Notes on Poems and Reviews," Swinburne Replies, p. 28.

44. Swinburne (London: Longman Group, 1973), p. 21.

45. "Notes on Poems and Reviews," Swinburne Replies, p. 28.

46. Beyond the Tragic Vision, p. 316.

47. The lyric, contained in de Sade's Aline et Valcour (Oeuvres Complètes, V, 410), is titled, "Air: Romance de Nina," and is as follows:

MÈRE adorée, en un moment
La mort t'enlève a ma tendresse!
Toi qui survis, Ô mon amant!
Reviens consoler ta maitresse.
Ah! qu'il revienne (bis), hélas! hélas!
Mais le bien-aimé ne vient pas.

COMME la rose au doux printemps
S'entrouvre au souffle du zéphyre,
Mon âme à ces tendres accents
S'ouvrirait de même au délire.
En vain, j'écoute: hélas! hélas!
Le bien-aimé ne parle pas!

VOUS qui viendrez verser des pleurs
Sur ce cercueil où je repose,
En gémissant sur mes douleurs,
Dites à l'amant qui les cause
Qu'il fut sans cesse, hélas! hélas!
Le bien-aimé jusqu'au trépas.

Chapter IV

SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE: THE POLITICAL AESTHETIC

Five years elapsed between the publication of Poems and Ballads in 1866 and Swinburne's next major poetic work, Songs before Sunrise in 1871. It is apparent in the latter volume that a distinct shift in subject-matter and perspective has taken place. Swinburne has left behind him the cruel daughters of dreams--Faustine, Dolores, Félise and Juliette--who entwine man in ecstasies of pain. "Our Lady of Liberty," as John Rosenberg puts it, "displaces our Lady of Pain."[1] In Poems and Ballads the focus is primarily upon the internal experience of conflicting human desires, but in Songs before Sunrise the poet looks to the external world where man is engaged in a struggle to assert his collective independence from temporal and clerical authoritarianism. The connections between the two volumes, however, are probably greater than the differences which separate them. Songs before Sunrise represents not so much a new stage in Swinburne's development, but the final distillation of viewpoints which surfaced at least as early as 1857 when as an Oxford student he wrote his "Ode to Mazzini," to whom fourteen years later he would dedicate Songs before Sunrise. Swinburne's republicanism intrudes at the very centre of Poems and Ballads in the rather anomalous four poems titled, "In Memory of Walter Savage Landor,"

"A Song in Time of Order," "A Song in Time of Revolution" and "To Victor Hugo."[2]

"A Song in Time of Order" was first published in The Spectator (April 26, 1862) but without the following stanza which was suppressed by Hutton, who was then Editor:

> When the devil's riddle is mastered
> And the galley-bench creaks with a Pope,
> We shall see Buonaparte the bastard
> Kick heels with his throat in a rope.
> [ll. 37-40]

The homicidal feelings toward royal and religious potentates expressed here prefigure the attitude which is to dominate Songs before Sunrise. More characteristic of the imagery to be used in those poems, however, is the description in "A Song in Time of Revolution," also printed first in The Spectator (June 28, 1862), in which the language of destruction appears in the form of natural forces:

> The poor and the halt and the blind are keen and
> mighty and fleet:
> Like the noise of the blowing of wind is the
> sound of the noise of their feet.
>
> The wind has the sound of a laugh in the clamour
> of days and of deeds:
> The priests are scattered like chaff, and the rulers
> broken like reeds.
> [ll. 5-8]

Connecting Poems and Ballads and Songs before Sunrise is Swinburne's lifelong concern with the problem of freedom. By 1866 he had thoroughly examined, and reconciled himself to, the paradox of moral liberty and sensual enslavement, and in the process had asserted once and for all, the artist's right to use his medium to explore whatever subject-matter excited

his imaginative powers. He had struck a fatal blow to the subjugation of art by public morality. By 1871, he turns his artistic attention from the finite and internal phenomena of the human condition, defies political restraints, and asserts that it is the obligation of men everywhere to overthrow oppressive religious and political power which claims to derive its authority from divine right. "There is no God, O son, / If thou be none" (ll. 107-108), he says in "On the Downs."[3] Man, in his collective desires and needs, "Man in the Highest!" as he states in the "Hymn of Man" (l. 200), is the final arbiter of all moral, spiritual and political issues.

After the publication of Poems and Ballads, what remained of the year 1866 was taken up by Swinburne's counter assaults against his critics in the Saturday Review and the Athenaeum, mainly through his "Notes on Poems and Reviews" and his collaboration with William Michael Rossetti in that author's Swinburne: Poems and Ballads (London: John Camden Hotten, 1866). With these concerns behind, 1867 lay before him like a fallow field in spring, and he immediately set to sowing a new crop. From this point on, Swinburne's voice was to gain increasing attention and respectability in the journals of the day. His old foe of the Saturday Review, John Morley, was now Editor of The Fortnightly Review and, somewhat more sympathetic to the prodigious talents of the fire-brand bard, opened its pages to him. Edmund Gosse notes that this was an eventful happening for Swinburne, and makes the following assess-

ment of the poet's contributions to that review:

> It is not too much to say that in them he invented a new class of writing, new at least in England, since there had been in France since 1850 a romantic criticism of high importance. . . . For the first time in English literature, an attempt was here made to produce a concrete and almost plastic conception of the work of an author, not minutely analysed or coldly condensed, but presented as if by an inspired neophyte, proclaiming a religion in an ecstasy. Such, in 1867, were the "William Morris" and the "Matthew Arnold" of Swinburne, and the sensation they caused was reverberant. By all young aesthetic ians of that and the next few years, the advent of the Fortnightly Review with a critical article by Swinburne in it was looked forward to as a great event.[4]

Further contributions by Swinburne included his "Ode on the Insurrection in Candia" (March, 1867) and a number of other poems which were to be later included in Songs before Sunrise.[5] It was here that "Ave Atque Vale," his superb elegy on Baudelaire, first appeared (January, 1868), and also critical prose pieces such as his "Notes on Designs of the Old Masters at Florence" (July, 1868), "Notes on the Text of Shelley" (May, 1869), his reviews of Hugo's L'Homme Qui Rit (July, 1869), Dante Rossetti's Poems (May, 1870), and his monograph on John Ford (July, 1871).

It was also in 1867 that he met the ideological fountainhead of Italian republicanism, Giuseppe Mazzini, and flattered him with a reading of his Song of Italy,[6] "Inscribed with all Devotion and Reverence to Joseph Mazzini":

> From all thine hills and from thy supreme dome,
> Praise him, O risen Rome.
> Let all thy children cities at thy knee
> Lift up their voices with thee,

Saying 'for thy love's sake and our perished grief
We laud thee, O our chief.'

[ll. 681-686]

The praise is characteristically effusive and melodramatic. Swinburne's "reverence" for his mentors (witness de Sade, Landor, Hugo) is often distracting. That contemprary critics at times found him frighteningly fanatical is not surprising (note, for instance, in the above his suggestion that Mazzini should be praised from St. Peter's). It is only in retrospect that we are able to rest satisfied that Swinburne's heroic iconography was not evangelical or contradictory, but figurative and put forth with much irony, an important point to bear in mind when considering the recurring instances in Songs before Sunrise of moralistic imagery which has the appearance of Manicheism in reverse. Swinburne appears to say that man is good, God is evil, an assertion which is not only frequent but which is accompanied by a corresponding use of light and dark imagery.

In addition to the unequivocal moral tone of Songs before Sunrise, and the nearly exclusive concern with the cause of Italian republicanism, there are other noteworthy factors which distinguish that work from Poems and Ballads. The conspicuous silence of the pleasure/pain chord must have been effected through a concerted effort to avoid compromising Mazzini and his cause by laying the book open to charges of cloying eroticism. Swinburne's sado-masochistic theme does not disappear with the advent of Songs before Sunrise but

continues, in a more subdued tone, mainly in the later tragedies--particularly Bothwell and Mary Stuart. He also worked, at intervals, on his flagellation epic, The Flogging-Block, from 1862 to 1881; as late as 1888 made substantial contributions to The Whippingham Papers; and it has been reasonably established that two of his poems appeared in 1879 and 1880 in The Pearl, the underground journal of Victorian erotica.[8] Indeed, some of the verses in Songs before Sunrise were apparently composed by Swinburne, sitting on a bench in Regents Park, while on his way to flogging appointments at the "mysterious house" in St. John's Wood.[9] The "sanitized" nature of Songs before Sunrise is therefore more of an exception than an ongoing feature of Swinburne's poetry. At most, what we can say of the body of his work subsequent to Poems and Ballads is that erotic conflict, though recurrent, is no longer central to his poetic concerns.

Another outstanding factor in Swinburne's republican volume is that, unlike Poems and Ballads, there is in the focus of the poems an absence of dramatic monologue. The republican cause has no need of moral or psychological ambivalence. Here the poet addresses himself to the world in his own voice, as in fact he himself states: "For my other books are books; but that one [Songs before Sunrise] is myself."[10]

The extent of Swinburne's political activities never went beyond his desk. Gosse records that when the poet published his "An Appeal" against the execution of the Manchester

Fenians in 1867 (the poem is included in Songs before Sunrise), it scandalized the reviewers, but inspired the Reform League to urge Swinburne to enter Parliament. After consulting with Mazzini, "The Italian patriot at once instructed him to refuse the invitation; telling him that he had other service to perform."[11] Swinburne was delighted to find that Mazzini, especially, gave moral endorsement to his continuing to work for the cause exclusively from within the perimeters of his vocation. Mazzini's advice may have been a significant diplomatic tour de force. It would not have been beyond Swinburne to inflict upon the House of Commons a recitation of A Song of Italy in full. It is, however, with a clear understanding of his role in mind that Swinburne announces to Mazzini, in the "Dedication" of Songs before Sunrise,

> I bring you the sword of a song,
> The sword of my spirit's desire . . .
> [ll. 19-20]

Liberty is the poet's ruling passion in these poems, and in "The Oblation" she is depicted as his mistress in terms which are uncharacteristic of Songs before Sunrise, but recall a frequent posture found in Poems and Ballads. Of Liberty, he says he would be "Trodden by chance of your feet" and that "mine is the heart at your feet." He would "Touch you and taste of you sweet." But it is made clear in the opening lines that it is only in his poetic devotion to her service that he can function:

Ask nothing more of me sweet;
All I can give you I give.

The political direction of Swinburne's verse is a natural extension of his rebellious nature. His sympathy for republicanism is to a large extent a reaction against the same elements which led to his early championing of the art pour l'art aesthetic and his glorification of de Sade. The moral and intellectual atrophy of the Christian world in the nineteenth century, with its materialistic notions of virtue and progress, had the effect of debasing art to the point where it came to play the role of moral handmaiden to the narrow interests of Church and to a middle-class sense of respectability based upon economic success. Swinburne's view of his world as morally bankrupt is attributable to his perception of an evident double standard which expressed, for him, the absurd extremes of a morality divorced from nature and consequently dualistic. Man could not be expected to obey the moral dictates of religion, on the one hand, and the biological drives of his natural being, on the other, without becoming either schizophrenic or hypocritical. Similarly, on the political level, man was under no obligation to suffer the tyranny of rulers who claimed to derive their authority from a phantasmagoric deity rather than the will of Man. There is much truth to Thomas Connolly's view that "Swinburne's critical philosophy began and ended with admiration of political poetry. The art-for-art's sake period was only a temporary departure from his fundamental theory."[12] More

precisely, it should be stated that Swinburne's art-for-art's sake attitude was not so much a departure, as a clearing of the moral barriers along the road to Parnassus. Swinburne supported art-for-art's sake only to the extent that it helped him counter the view that art should serve morality. To W. M. Rossetti, who seems to have been the principal recipient of Swinburne's views on things-in-general, he writes on October 9, 1866, after the publication of Poems and Ballads, about his newest poem, A Song of Italy:

> If I do finish this poem at all to my satisfaction, there will be a bit of enthusiasm in verse for once --rather. After all, in spite of jokes and perversities--malgré ce cher Marquis et ces foutus journaux--it is nice to have something to love and to believe in as I do in Italy. It was only Gabriel and his followers in art (l'art pour l'art) who for a time frightened me from speaking out; for ever since I was fifteen I have been equally and unalterably mad--tête montée, as my mother says--about this article of faith; you may ask any tutor or schoolfellow. I know the result will be a poem more declamatory than imaginative; but I'd rather be an Italian stump-orator than an English prophet. . . . [13]

His views on morality, art and politics, became impassioned as the result of a single mote in his eye: theism.

In Poems and Ballads he had defied moral convention for the sake of art, and although his attacks upon God there, as in Atalanta, were violent, it is in Songs before Sunrise that he launches the major frontal assault in his campaign to de throne the Supreme Being.

Sadean influences are, for a number of reasons, less apparent in these poems. Swinburne had already exhausted what he had to say about the nature of evil. His belief in the

dignity of man, which he now wanted to assert, was incompatible with de Sade's position. He was now also older and less excited about the significance of de Sade. Besides, the divine Marquis represented ultimately a dead end in that he was unable to provide an alternative to universal self-mutilation. Albert Camus somewhat bitterly observes that, "His desperate demand for freedom led Sade into the kingdom of servitude; his inordinate thirst for a form of life he could never attain was assuaged in the successive frenzies of a dream of universal destruction. In this way, at least, Sade is our contemporary."[14]

What is retained from de Sade in Songs before Sunrise, however, is the iconoclastic inversion of conventional moral perspective--not, albeit, in strictly Sadean terms. As in de Sade, God remains the epitome of evil, but Swinburne apotheosizes libertarianism in place of libertinism. The device of inversion had the power to shock the age from its complacency. It was the use of this device, which Swinburne recognized as the modus operandi in de Sade, and which he later describes in great detail as pervasive in Blake, that led him to conclude that in their approaches to man's relation to nature, the "mystical evangelist" (Blake) and the "material humourist" (de Sade) join hands. Blake, more poignantly than de Sade, had perceived that moral law based upon the assumption of a divine being, was self-defeating, tyrannical, and demeaning to man. Swinburne elucidates the point in William Blake:

"Man can only possess abstract qualities--'allegoric virtues' --by reason of that side of his nature which he has not in common with God: God, not partaking of the 'generative nature,' cannot partake of qualities which exist only by right of that nature."[15] The God of this world (i.e., the God of man's creation) is sexless and divided from man, but having given man a sexual nature, God (the "divine demon") uses it to imprison and torment him.[16]

It is against the imposition of this theistic system that man must revolt. Swinburne goes on to say:

> The belief in 'holy insurrection' must be almost as old as the oldest religions or philosophies afloat or articulate. In the most various creeds this feature of faith stands out sharply with a sort of tangible human appeal. Earlier heretics than the author of Jerusalem have taken this to be the radical significance of Christianity; a divine revolt against divine law; an evidence that man must become as God only by resistance to God--'the God of this world' . . .[17]

This radical aspect of Christianity, though recognized by Swinburne, does not tempt him toward redressing Christianity's failures by refining its essentials from its Manichean encrustations, as Shelley eventually does in merging the figures of Christ and Prometheus:

> A power from the unknown God,
> A Promethean conqueror came . . . .[18]

Swinburne never redeems Christ, who remains always for him the serpent of Galilee. Allegorical interpretations of the human experience inspired by Christianity were, for Swinburne, puerile at best. By inverting the moral metaphysics

of Christianity, de Sade and Blake dramatically depicted a God ensnared by his own creation and bent on undermining man's creative potential by displays of his own infinite powers of destruction. Describing the device of inversion in Blake, Swinburne notes:

> . . . the prophet has laid down this rule: 'Moral virtues do not exist; they are allegories and dissimulations.' For 'moral allegory' we are therefore not to look here [referring to "Vision of the Last Judgement"]; we are in the house of pure vision, outside of which allegory halts blindly across the shifting sand of moral qualities, her right hand leaning on the staff of virtue, her left hand propped on the crutch of vice.[19]

Swinburne worked at random on his William Blake from 1863 to its publication in 1868, a period which overlaps the composition of many poems which appeared in both Poems and Ballads (1866) and Songs before Sunrise (1871).[20] There is in William Blake considerable evidence of Swinburne's interests in the relations between good and evil, and the relation of art to morality and politics. Swinburne is never the pure aesthete. Even in William Blake, where he leans strongly toward defending art for art's sake, it is still a qualified leaning:

> . . . if art can be destroyed it by all means ought to be. If, for example, the art of verse is not indispensable and indestructible, the sooner it is put out of the way the better. If anything can be done instead better worth doing than painting or poetry, let that preferable thing be done with all the might and haste that may be attainable. And if to live well be really better than to write or paint well, and a noble action more valuable than the greatest poem or most perfect picture, let us have done at once with the meaner things that stand in the way of

> the higher. For we cannot on any terms have everything; and assuredly no chief artist or poet has ever been fit to hold rank among the world's supreme benefactors in the way of doctrine, philanthropy, reform, guidance, or example: what is called the artistic faculty not being by any means the same thing as a general capacity for doing good work. . . .[21]

Art and good works are not antithetical but functionally distinct. By trying to serve both equally we serve neither well. Swinburne goes on to observe:

> Men of immense capacity and energy who do seem to think or assert it possible to serve both masters--a Dante, a Shelley, a Hugo--poets whose work is mixed with and coloured by personal action or suffering for some cause moral or political--these even are no real exceptions. It is not as artists that they do or seem to do this. The work done may be, and in such high cases often must be, of supreme value to art, but not the moral implied. Strip the sentiments and re-clothe them in bad verse, what residue will be left of the slightest importance to art? Invert them, retaining the manner or form (supposing this feasible, which it might be), and art has lost nothing. Save the shape, and art will take care of the soul for you. . . .[22]

So disparate are art and good works that even in the extreme example, by inverting the sentiments (i.e., by substituting evil for good), the art is not affected if the form is sound.

Two statements in particular need to be brought into focus here, lest Swinburne appear muddled on this issue--which he is not. His remarks that, it might be feasible to invert the sentiments, and that art will take care of the soul, are clarified if we consider them in the following light.

In Swinburne's aesthetics, and assuredly in his poetic practices, the moral nature of content is relative to man's

perception of values. Moral order, that is, does not exist independent of man. Further, the moral nature of sentiments which may be expressed within a work of art is itself subject to the unique characteristics of a given work and the nature of our perception of that work. For instance, if we regard the "Hymn to Proserpine" as "the death-song of spiritual decadence," as Swinburne describes it,[23] we are forced to regard the poem in its dramatic context rather than as a statement which can be "assumed as the assertion of its author's personal feeling or faith."[24] Therefore, the inversion of moral sentiment may simply reflect a dramatic situation, as is often the case in Poems and Ballads; or as frequently happens in Songs before Sunrise, it may even represent a direct assertion of the author's perception of truth, that the God of this world and his guardians are evil.

Swinburne makes it clear in a footnote that his reference to the soul is to that of art, not man. The terms "bad art" and "good art" he dismisses as malapropisms, noting that "It is assumed to begin with, that the artist has something to say or do that is worth doing or saying in an artistic form."[25] There is implied here, in the notion of "worth," an attribute of art that is in some sense moral, if by that term we refer to something which partakes of the quality of goodness. Swinburne is not inconsistent when he says, as late as 1884 in his essay "Wordsworth and Byron," that "a school of poetry divorced from any moral idea is a school divorced from life."[26] In

William Blake his position was "Art for art's sake first of all [emphasis mine], and afterwards we may suppose all the rest shall be added to her (or if not, she need hardly be overmuch concerned) . . ."[27] Swinburne's codicil to this position might suggest that he is not altogether clear in the relation which he sees between form and substance in art. More to the point is that his position, if it suffers from any flaw at all, forfeits simplicity to overstatement. Swinburne tries to distinguish moral ideas in art (which are acceptable to his position), from art as the product of moral rather than aesthetic intent. It is not the business of art to inculcate morals in man, but to attune his critical senses to such a degree as to provide him with the means of perceiving aesthetic values:

> The contingent result of having good art about you and living in a time of noble writing or painting may no doubt be this: that the spirit and mind of men then living will receive on some points a certain exaltation and insight caught from the influence of such forms and colours of verse or painting; will become for one thing incapable of tolerating bad work, and capable therefore of reasonably relishing the best; which of course implies and draws with it many other advantages of a sort you may call moral or spiritual.[28]

Moral values, for Swinburne, may derive from aesthetic values, but not vice versa.

We cannot say, however, that in Songs before Sunrise, Swinburne holds to his belief in "art for art's sake first of all," as he himself appears to have realized in his willingness to serve as an "Italian stump-orator." The fact that he forever after regarded Songs before Sunrise as his greatest work

suggests he believed that aesthetic considerations remained foremost in the general composition of the poems.

The "Prelude" to Songs before Sunrise, written in 1870, stands as an interesting sequel to the "Dedication" of Poems and Ballads. In the latter poem, Swinburne refers to his verses as "The songs of dead seasons" (l. 41). The additional reference there to "the fugitive years," combined with his later remark to W. M. Possetti that it is "nice to have something to love and to believe in," recalls Wordsworth looking back on his youth as a time when he was

> . . . more like a man
> Flying from something that he dreads, than one
> Who sought the thing he loved.
> ["Tintern Abbey," ll. 70-72]

The "Prelude," like Wordsworth's autobiographic magnum opus of the same title, describes the change which Time has made on the mind of the poet. In Swinburne's use of nature imagery, here and elsewhere, however, there is never any suggestion that nature is faithful to her worshippers or provides them with moral guidance. Nature, apart from providing Swinburne with a source of metaphoric language, is used by him to remind us of our sensual being, and of our vulnerability in the face of nature's indifference.

In the opening stanza of "Prelude" Swinburne describes how Time gently awakened him from youthful dreams:

> And with the white the gold-haired head
> Mixed running locks, and in Time's ears
> Youth's dreams hung singing, and Time's truth
> Was half not harsh in the ears of Youth.
> [ll. 7-10]

It has been asserted, in a rather speculative argument, that although Swinburne does not name Landor, the figure of Time in the poem is a metaphorical reference to him.[29] If so, the reference is an appropriate one, since of all Swinburne's heroes, Landor's combination of Hellenism and staunch republicanism, retained until his death at eighty-nine, were for many years emulated by the younger poet.

Like "Dedication," the "Prelude" is one of Swinburne's finer lyrics, properly described by Gosse as an example of "reasoned imagination."[30] In his characteristic love of paradox, there is here a subtly rendered juxtaposition of Time as a figure of consoling experience, and Youth who is lauded for his rebellious spirit. The supporting imagery consists of a low-keyed, symbolic use of the colours of the Italian flag--green, white and red: "Between the green bud and the red / Youth sat by Time . . ." (ll. 1-2). Time's hair is white. Again, Landor aptly figures here, since Swinburne had visited the aged poet at Florence in 1864. The use of these colours is recurrent throughout Songs before Sunrise, yet they are sufficiently disguised by a diversity of symbolic associations so as to soften what might otherwise appear as overt nationalism. In the "Prelude" they suggest a variation of Swinburne's earlier treatment of pleasure and pain:

> Between the bud and the blown flower
> Youth talked with joy and grief an hour,
> With footless joy and wingless grief
> And twin-born faith and disbelief
> Who share the seasons to devour . . .
> [ll. 11-15]

The first two lines of this second stanza parallel the opening lines of the poem and associate the experiences of joy and grief with the colours green and red. The cruel conditions which underlie the mortal world of man, and which are made so resonant in Poems and Ballads, are not forgotten here and elsewhere in Songs before Sunrise, although they are less explicitly detailed. Man is still seen as caught in a fatal web of desires: joy leads to grief, and faith to disbelief, in a seasonal exchange through which man is divided and destroyed by a devouring universe.

Unlike anything we find in Poems and Ballads, however, Youth armed with knowledge, patience, strength and thought (ll. 25-30) rises to shed itself of "Fear and desire" (l. 22):

> For what has he whose will sees clear
> To do with doubt and faith and fear
> Swift hopes and slow despondencies?
> [ll. 31-32]

His clear-sighted will, acquired by ridding himself of dualistic and illusory notions about the nature of things, is able to overcome self-defeating doubt, faith and fear. His destiny must be self-engendered but realistic. He must rid himself of eternal expectations based on the assumption that there is a theistic centre on which man must model himself and to which he is answerable. The sun-analogy in the following lines demonstrates the power of Swinburne's lyric simplicity, as evidenced in the essentially monosyllabic vocabulary with which he melds sense and sound:

His soul is even with the sun
Whose spirit and whose eye are one,
  Who seeks not stars by day, nor light
  And heat of the day by night.
Him can no god cast down, whom none
  Can lift in hope beyond the height
Of fate and nature and things done
  By the calm rule of might and right
That bids men be and bear and do,
And die beneath blind skies or blue.
[ll. 41-50]

Tannhauser, by allowing himself to be caught between Venus and Christ, had become ensnared by expectations which were not in accord with the realities of the natural world. Endurance, and the readiness to part with expectations of reward or fears of punishment in this world and especially the next, are the qualities which provide strength and hope for mankind:

He hath given himself and hath not sold
To God for heaven or man for gold,
  Or grief for comfort that it gives,
  Or joy for grief's restoratives.
He hath given himself to time, whose fold
  Shuts in the mortal flock that lives
On its plain pasture's heat and cold
  And the equal year's alternatives.
Earth, heaven and time, death, life, and he,
Endure while they shall be to be.
[ll. 71-80]

Pleasure and passion pass (ll. 121-123), and there is no God but "man's soul" (l. 141). Man's life must not be buffeted between "the waves of day and night," or left adrift between "port or shipwreck" (ll. 143-144). He must not abet the natural cruelties of his position in the scheme of things by being "Helmless in middle turn of tide" (l. 160). There is his soul, the source of "the indomitable light" by which he may steer into the darkness "without fear" (ll. 148-150). This

"light" forms the basis of a multitude of images in Songs before Sunrise, but it is not an expression of some vague pantheism, too often ascribed to Swinburne by most commentators on these poems; rather, as Robert Peters observes in his definitive study of Swinburne's theory of criticism, light usually symbolizes "imaginative power."[31]

Peters' observation on Swinburne's references to the sea is especially enlightening, and indirectly provides a relevant perspective from which the concluding image of the "Prelude" becomes acutely meaningful. Swinburne's reference to a wave as a "gathering form" in his discussion of Blake's Songs of Experience,[32] according to Peters,

> . . . suggests the precise nature of dynamic or gathering form as Swinburne understood it. Particularly intriguing is the concept, realized metaphorically, that a gathering form sheds a collective brilliance upon itself as it proceeds; like the wave curling over, it reveals its accumulating beauty all the while it vibrates toward its total shimmering consummation in the human mind.[33]

The sea thus presents a revelation of infinite beauty and power. In Swinburne's own account of his reckless flirtations with the sea, and in his endless references to it in his poetry (see particularly Tristram of Lyonesse), there is often expressed the feeling that the sea is the source of life and giver of joy. As with life, we gladly immerse ourselves in it, but if unable to remain afloat, instant death awaits us. The sea in this aspect symbolizes a fundamental test of the will to survive. In the concluding two stanzas to the

"Prelude," the poet, realizing the restrictions placed upon us by time, refers to himself as the son of "those dead days" when he struggled between figurative waves of "harsh or sweet" and summer or snow. There remains yet,

> 'A little time that we may fill
> Or with such good works or such ill
> As loose the bonds or make them strong
> Wherein all manhood suffers wrong.
> [ll. 181-184]

He would be among those "who rest not" but gaze ahead "At the sun's hour of morning song," toward "The sacred spaces of the sea." Swinburne sees himself as a revitalized spirit. Having shed the wearisome ambivalences of the past, he draws new strength from the promise of a new sun, and to the dormant but irrepressible power of the future, signified by the sea, he offers his songs to the sunrise of republican man.

This view of the future stems from the poet's realization that in choosing to shape his destiny, rather than be passively tossed about between the elemental forces of life (references to fire, water and air, permeate the poem), he has arrived at manhood. Endurance in the face of a realistic acceptance of mortality, a readiness to join in the collective struggle to survive and grow, and a trust in time, are the factors which combine for the future liberation of man from theistic and political tyranny. In the coming of age of the poet there is the implication that mankind must also undergo the same growch process. Indeed, mankind's coming of age is a recurring theme in Songs before Sunrise, particularly in

"Hertha." Time, one of the most dominant concerns in all of Swinburne's work, is in the "Prelude" a symbol of the reconciliation of joy and grief, on both the personal level (i.e., for Swinburne) and, in its association with the Italian colours, on the political level.

Swinburne's use of these colours provides strong symbolic imagery in other poems as well, especially in "Hertha," "Song of the Standard," and "On the Downs." Hertha, the earth-spirit or soul of life, announces to Man:

> I am in thee to save thee,
> As my soul in thee sayeth
> Save thou as I gave thee,
> Thy life-blood and breath,
> Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.
> [ll. 76-80]

Here again, as in the "Prelude," the colours represent the nature of the human condition. In spite of the fact that man is gifted with labour and thought, he must also partake of the red fruit of death. Hertha is not a deity in any other than a metaphoric sense. An hermaphroditic spirit, it symbolizes the unity of all life. It does not delude man, but reminds him of the inescapable presence of death, and offers him no expectations for his individual well-being beyond this life. The green gift of labour and the white gift of thought call to mind that the image of Freedom in the "Prelude" carries a staff "wrought of strength" and a cloak "woven of thought" (ll. 29-30). Individual man is destined to die, but he is equipped with the strength of his body and the power of

his mind to be free of fear and suffering while he lives.

"The Song of the Standard" is an overly political poem in which Freedom (the voice of Italy) cries out to the world for a sign (l. 36) but is unable to arouse England or France. Here the colours of the standard are rather straight-forward in what they signify and do not add a great deal, functionally, to the poem. Red denotes love and the pierced hearts of patriots; white associates faith with the mountains of Italy; and green represents spring and hope. Swinburne might have been wiser to have cancelled this poem in order to enhance the impact of "On the Downs" which follows it. In this poem, the poet's soul searches through sea, sky and land ". . . for news / Of comfort . . ." (ll. 19-20), but the earth is barren. Life everywhere is stilled and the earth appears before him "As a queen taken and stripped and bound: (l. 31). Human oppressors torment mankind and go "Unsmitten by the rod / Of any God" (ll. 53-54). His soul pursues some sign that a just and benevolent God presides over suffering mankind. Eventually he hears the earth's cry that "There is no God, O son, / If thou be none" (ll. 107-108), which awakens him, as if "out of a dream" (l. 111). Turning away from his theistic fantasies he then experiences a vision of

> One forceful nature uncreate
> That feeds itself with death and fate,
> Evil, and good, and change and time,
> That within all men lies at wait
> Till the hour shall bid them climb
> And live sublime.
>
> [ll. 127-132]

This striking image of Sadéan nature is modified by Swinburne's ability to see that, like all else in nature, man must rise from low to high, but that in order to make his presence meaningful he must be prepared for his destiny by being rid of unfruitful illusions of God. Man, in the collective sense, is answerable only to himself. Time again becomes the ally of human interests:

> For all things come by fate to flower
> At their unconquerable hour,
> And time brings truth, and truth makes free,
> And freedom fills time's veins with power,
> As, brooding on that sea,
> My thought filled me.
> [ll. 133-138]

In "The Triumph of Time" (1863), time is the element which, for Swinburne, must be defeated. There, as elsewhere in Poems and Ballads, time principally serves as a reminder of approaching death, and can only be deprived of its triumph over man by love:

> Let come what will, there is one thing worth,
> To have had fair love in the life upon earth.
> [ll. 133-134]

The speaker can never love another as he loves the woman who here deserts him. (In Swinburne's case, this turned out to be true.) Since human love is therefore no longer possible for him, he vows to give himself up to the sea in a death-in-love vision of freedom:

> I will go back to the great sweet mother,
> Mother and lover of men, the sea.
> I will go down to her, I and none other,
> Close with her, kiss her and mix her with me;

Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast:
Oh fair white mother in days long past
Born without sister, born without brother,
Set free my soul as thy soul is free.
[ll. 257-264]

Swinburne's references to time and to the sea at this period had not yet taken on the sort of stoical element that we find in Songs before Sunrise. In "The Triumph of Time," time goads the poet into an awareness of his mortality which, in turn, has the effect of making his approach to love frenzied; consequently, the pursuit of pleasure there and elsewhere in Poems and Ballads is most always represented as ultimately painful. The sea, whose "large embraces are keen like pain" (l. 268), at least has the virtue of fatally crushing man with its love, instead of endlessly tormenting him, as Venus does Tannhauser.

In "On the Downs," the role of time has been obviously broadened, and the sea has become more than a surrogate fatal lover. The poet's voice at the end of the "Prelude" is echoed in the final stanzas of "On the Downs." An additional image appears here, however, that is common to many of the poems in Songs before Sunrise. Light is depicted as slaying darkness, repeating a kind of Manichean motif that occurs with surprising frequency in these poems and which will be further dealt with later. What is perhaps most impressive in this poem, however, is the use which Swinburne makes of the Italian tricolour. Nowhere is Italy explicitly mentioned, yet Mazzini's republican cause, as well as the universal cause of freedom, emerges

out of his image of "nature uncreate":

> And the sun smote the clouds and slew,
> And from the sun the sea's breath blew,
> And white waves laughed and turned and fled
> The long green heaving sea-filled through,
> And on them over head
> The sky burnt red.
>
> [ll. 139-144]

The crammed spondees provide a sense of power and motion in the fleeing waves the likes of which only a master technician such as Swinburne can produce. The rhythm and sense of surface motion suggests not only the turbulence of the sea, but as well the undulations of a flag, to which, in fact, Swinburne directly alludes:

> Like a furled flag that wind sets free,
> On the swift summer-coloured sea
> Shook out the red lines of the light,
> The live sun's standard, blown to lee
> Across the live sea's white
> And green delight.
>
> [ll. 145-150]

With this introduction of the sun, the vision of Italy's liberation grows out of the images of water, air, earth and fire, the basic elements which are referred to throughout the poem. This idea of time as working toward the dawn of man's freedom, as noted earlier, is a new twist for Swinburne. Likewise, the sea which was always viewed favourably by him, takes on an added significance in the association of its unfathomable power with the latent energy within mankind. The sea has now become less the mother/lover and more the visionary's symbol of human strength.

Clearly, in instances such as the above, Swinburne is at

his artistic best in the treatment of a political theme. The fact is, however, that the political element becomes so subordinate to aesthetic considerations as to be barely recognizable if we are not attuned to the symbolic images which are at work in the poem. It is therefore only within the context of other poems which iterate similar thematic images, and the title Songs before Sunrise, that the concluding reference in "On the Downs" can be fully understood, as the poet perceives in the "windless wastes of skies / Time's deep dawn rise" (ll. 155-156).

Sadean elements are less apparent in Songs before Sunrise because they are diffused amidst Swinburne's positivistic theme of man's superiority to nature. When we consider that in his lifelong correspondence with W. M. Rossetti he rarely passes up an opportunity to refer to de Sade,[34] we should indeed be surprised to find that he drops all allusions to him, especially as early as the late 'sixties, during which time Songs before Sunrise was composed. Swinburne had earlier explored the inescapable cruelties of the pleasure/pain factor underlying the human condition. He saw this condition as exacerbated by a perverse theism that created in man a sense of moral anguish by attributing evil to pleasure and good to pain. He had found in de Sade a wellspring of common interests, but particularly a total and unequivocal rejection of theism, the openess, intensity and uniqueness of which, resulted in Swinburne's immediate acceptance of him as an unsung hero. De

Sade, the apostle of blasphemy, became for Swinburne the chief iconoclast, and the young poet willingly enlisted himself as a combatant in an assault against the Godhead which would persist as a major preoccupation until the publication of Songs before Sunrise in 1871. In "Hertha" he had, "At the tottering throne of that dignitary . . . discharged the most formidable piece of artillery yet cast or launched in his direction." He had turned the "All-mother" (Hertha) into "a good republican."[35]

In Songs before Sunrise it is the Sadean mechanism of profane inversion, by which the moral values of instituted belief are overturned, that Swinburne applies to his bolstering of Italian republicanism. Italy is the seat of Rome and Rome the seat of St. Peter. De Sade had taken Juliette there in order to commit the supreme sacrilege of enlisting the Pope in a desecration of the Host upon the altar of St. Peter.[36] Swinburne likewise assails the Vatican as the seat of evil in "The Halt before Rome," where he refers to Pius IX whose blessings "Disanoint" (l. 175). It is

> With an oil of unclean consecration,
> With an effusion of blood and tears,

that the Pope binds together his crumbling reign (ll. 176-182).

The Sadean republic may not be, like Swinburne's, founded upon the principle of brotherly love, but it does take as its basis the view that man is subject to no laws but those of his own devising, as enunciated, ironically, by Pius VI in Juliette:

> Les rapports de l'homme à la nature, ou de la nature à l'homme, sonc donc nuls; la nature ne peut enchaîner l'homme par aucune loi; l'homme ne dé-

> pend en rien de la nature; ils ne doivent rien l'un à l'autre et ne peuvent ni s'offenser, ni se servir; l'un a produit malgré soi: de ce moment, aucun rapport réel; l'autre est produit malgré lui, et, conséquenement, nul rapport. Une fois lancé, l'homme ne tient plus à la nature; une fois que la nature a lancé, elle ne peut plus rien sur l'homme; toutes ses lois sont particulières. Par le premier élancement, l'homme reçoit des lois directes dont il ne peut plus s'écarter; ces lois sont celles de sa conservation personnelle . . . de sa mulıplication, lois qui tiennent à lui . . . qui dépendent de lui, mais qui ne sont nullement nécessaires à la nature; car il ne tient plus à la nature, il en est séparé.[37]

The only laws for man are those which insure his self-preservation and reproduction. It is precisely on man's relation to the natural world that Swinburne bases his anti-theistic republic. Nature has made man free, but has no more interest in his well being than in his suffering. There is no authority external to him before which he must humble himself. Man must follow neither chimerical gods nor nature; the laws of the first are without foundation, and those of the latter are blind to man's existence. The worst offenders, for de Sade, were the Deists and Jacobins who tried to base authority, temporal and secular, upon nature. In a footnote to Juliette, de Sade complains that

> Il est inouï que les Jacobins de la Révolution française aient voulu culbuter les autels d'un Dieu qui parlait absolument leur langage. Ce qu'il y a de plus extraordinaire encore, c'est que ceux qui détestent et veulent détruire les Jacobins, le fassent au nom d'un Dieu qui parle comme les Jacobins. Si ce n'est point là le nec plus ultra des extravagances humaines, je demande instamment qu'on me dise où il est.[38]

Thus the Jacobins as well as the clerics and aristocrats who

attempt to impose their laws (arrived at by attributing to nature morals and reason), are equally enemies to the Sadean republic. Swinburne has little praise for the leaders of the French Revolution of 1789. In fact, in one of his mock-harangues he attacks aristocrats and Jacobins as persecutors of the martyred de Sade:

> And did it not take centuries of the noblest descent to produce you [de Sade] in earthly likeness, a Messiah of the West, perfect, without flaw, wonderful, terrible, with no alloy of human weakness? And were you not passed, O our master and chiefest among the prophets, from the Herod Louis to the Pilate Buonaparte, from the Golgotha of Vincennes to the Calvary of Charenton? Caiaphas-Talleyrand, Iscariot-Barras, Couthon the scribe and Robespierre the Pharisee, were these men on thy side?[39]

Elsewhere Robespierre is described as "le bourgois manqué" and Marat as "that 'dim grim' figure. . . ."[40] For Swinburne, these were a mixture of ivory tower republicans, opportunists, and base hatchet-men. De Sade was the terrible prophet, whose view of human nature Swinburne had the insight to recognize as eventually and inevitably challenging the very roots of civilized values. Despite his jokes about de Sade, he is totally serious in regarding him as a prophet, for better or worse. It is to be either de Sade the Messiah, if we are able to come sanely to terms with his view of egoistic man, or de Sade the demon if we accept his philosophy without maintaining a humanistic sense of values.

The most cursory glance at the Swinburne Letters reveals that de Sade was frequently on the poet's mind during the

period in which he was writing Songs before Sunrise. In one letter of particular interest in this connection, he delights in passing through a series of associations which take him from Wordsworth's Excursion to de Sade, and finally to his current poem, "The Eve of Revolution." For the sake of continuity, it is necessary to quote at length:

> I looked up in the Excursion . . . the fish passage. . . . The description of the fish follows on that of their captors--'two blooming Boys'--and in the Summary or Argument prefixed to the book the Poet has this heading--'Emotion of the Wanderer at sight of Entrance of Boys' (whether 'warm' or 'strong' emotion I forget). At once it flashed upon my 'inner eye which is the bliss of solitude' that 'the gray-haired Wanderer' was a portrait from the life--a Spectre, an Emanation, a type, a shadow, an Eidolon of an illustrious contemporary writer then still in the flesh (and very much in it) and in bonds. Read by this light, how is the Excursion transfigured and illuminated! The endless prosing on subjects of abstract morality becomes a fine instance of character drawing evident and admirable when set by the side of the interminable disquisitions of the great original--and the colloquial turns of phrase which rarely relieve the vast paragraphs --'But we, my Friends! 'You, Reverend Sir.' 'Observe these Boys'. (cf. Justine--'Vois, vois ces gaîs')--how do they recall the like reliefs in the massive work of the Marquis! 'Allons, bougresse'--'Avoue, chère fille, que ton foutu Dieu'--etc., etc. And if Wordsworch has not succeeded in reproducing the racy simplicity, the vivid and forcible charms of style which distinguish his great fellow-craftsman--who could hope to do so? I trust you will transmit to Gabriel this great literary discovery which I intend to make the basis of a fundamental study on Wordsworth and de Sade considered in their reciprocal relations. . . . It is also a pleasing instance of W.'s consistent enmity to the first Bonaparte, persecutor of his venerable fellow author. . . . I have all but finished the centre poem and mainspring of my volume--'The Eve of Revolution.'[41]

Swinburne's reading of Wordsworth in 1870 is, as we have seen, also reflected in the "Prelude" to Songs before Sunrise. This combining of de Sade and Wordsworth, by anyone other than Swinburne, would be totally unexpected. In spite of the obviously jocular vein of his remarks, however, the pairing of the two in Swinburne's mind is not so astonishing when we consider that both Wordsworth and de Sade had used nature to represent, although to opposite ends, the essence of man.

It is worth drawing attention to the fact that Swinburne considered "The Eve of Revolution" to be the "mainspring" to Songs before Sunrise. It is an intricately structured poem and painstakingly written in Alexandrines of ten syllabic feet instead of the usual metric feet of the English variety. Contending elements of darkness and light struggle for domination of the earth, and are represented, respectively, by the trumpets of the four winds which whirl "dead leaves of sleep" throughout the world, and the poet's trumpet by which the "height of night is shaken" and the world awakens (ll. 8, 34). The trumpet of light rouses conscience, forethought, desire and will (l. 143). The poem is divided into sections in which the poet's trumpet, as a counterblast to the four winds, breaks the night eastward, northward, westward and southward. The spirit of freedom emerges and, through "swift revolution" (l. 411), promises to aid man in driving off God and "reconquering heaven" (l. 427).

Swinburne's regard for this poem as a mainspring is in-

dicated by the fact that it is the first poem in the collection after the "Prelude." Furthermore, it contains the principal themes and images which comprise the work as a whole. Man exists within a universe that is fundamentally indifferent to his survival. The darkness of his future is compounded by the darkness of his own creation, as evidenced in his subservience to royal and religious authority. The image of earth that emerges, as the poet's trumpet scatters the night eastward toward the light that is Athens (l. 87), reflects the idea that man is born of earth only to be cast off to his own devices:

> O many-childed mother great and grey,
> O multitudinous bosom, and breasts that bare
> Our father's generations, whereat lay
> The weanling peoples and the tribes that were,
> Whose new-born mouths long dead
> Those ninefold nipples fed,
> Dim face with deathless eyes and withered hair,
> Fortress of obscure lands,
> Whose multiplying hands
> Wove the world's web with divers races fair
> And cast it waif-wise on the stream. . . .
> [ll. 53-63]

It was by Greek democracy that the first light of man illumined the world. That light has since been inextinguishable:

> Nay, light is here, and shall be light,
> Though all the face of the hour be overborne
> with night.
> [ll. 111-112]

Parallels of this nature, with their Manichean overtones, suggested by the relentless struggle between the forces of darkness and light, recur throughout Songs before Sunrise. Such images are used by Swinburne for ironic effect in that he in-

verts the Manichean structure of good and evil by portraying man, not as embodying evil in his physical nature, but as the source of light in the universe; it is, conversely, God who becomes the agent of darkness and evil. Swinburne says, addressing Italy:

> It is not heaven that lights
> Thee with such days and nights,
> But thou that heaven is lit from in such wise.
> [ll. 461-463]

Elsewhere he calls on

> Light, light and light! to break and melt in sunder
> All clouds and chains that in one bondage bind
> Eyes, hands, and spirits, forced by fear and wonder. . . .
> [ll. 145-463]

The light is not divine in origin, but human, and is associated with seeing and thinking. The forces of religion and royalty can be defeated by man's willingness to freely think for himself:

> Priest is the staff of King,
> And chains and clouds one thing,
> And fettered flesh with devastated mind.
> Open thy soul to see,
> Slave, and thy feet are free;
> Thy bonds and thy beliefs are one in kind.
> [ll. 152-157]

It is this conviction that man can stand alone, without the twofold crutch of God and King, which underlies Swinburne's recurring theme in Songs before Sunrise that mankind has come of age. In many instances he expresses rancor at England and France, the traditional champions of liberty in the modern world, for not coming to the aid of Italy's freedom fighters.

The land of Milton, Shelley, and especially Landor, pains him in its failure to lead the way in establishing a Republic of Europe. England has missed the opportunity for achieving its greatest glory:

> Now when time looks to see
> New names and old and thee
> Build up our one Republic state by state
> England with France, and France with Spain,
> And Spain with sovereign Italy strike hands and reign.
> [ll. 268-272]

There is considerable reason to scoff at Swinburne as a closet revolutionary. It is difficult to imagine him as a barricade activist, or even as a serious scholar of political theory. His enthusiasm for republicanism is founded, in large measure, upon instinctive hostility to moral authoritarianism, as embodied in crown and cross, and upon personal discomfort at the plight of the oppressed poor of the world. The kind of revolution which he has in mind is not the product of a scientific study of socio-political conditions, but mainly of his faith in man's ability to utilize his potential for creative independence. This concept of independence is integrally connected to the need for man to live within a universe which he recognizes as offering no reward or meaning beyond what his own creative (as opposed to unthinking) imagination is able to provide. The essence of Swinburne's "political" values are perhaps best illustrated in a remark which he makes to W. M. Rossetti in 1869: "I wish to be understood as professing myself not merely a freethinker but a democrat, not merely a democrat but a freethinker. . . . I feel it my mission as an

evangelist and apostle (whenever necessary) to atheize the republicans and republicanize the atheists of my acquaintance."[42] He refers to himself as evangelist and apostle in the same sense that he would use such terms in connection with de Sade: as mock-heroic irony. But it is imperative to realize, in arriving at any substantial understanding of Swinburne's political or aesthetic theories (to use those terms broadly), that de Sade's position, in spite of his apparent shortcomings, represented to him the point from which political as well as aesthetic values must begin. Aesthetic, like political values, cannot be predicated upon any concept of divinity that does not have man as its primary source. Regardless of the position that figures such as Hugo and Mazzini held in his estimation, neither totally satisfied him in the conditions which he sets out in his above comment. De Sade's republicanism may have been of dubious merit, but he was, at least, an atheist. There can be, for Swinburne, neither artistic nor political freedom for man so long as the values which underpin him have the remotest connection with theism. Thus it can be reasonably said of Swinburne that it was the aesthetics of both Hugo's and Mazzini's views of man that appealed to him, and that his concept of revolution was not so much of a political revolution as it was of a revolution in human values: man had to overturn his concept of God.

Nowhere in Songs before Sunrise, least of all in "The Eve of Revolution," is there any indication that Swinburne

knew any more about political realities than what he read in newspaper accounts of what was taking place in the various countries of Europe. By 1870, the year in which "The Eve of Revolution" was written, Italy had achieved virtually full unification and independence. Garibaldi had successfully annexed the south, the Austrians were driven from Venice, and the French were out of Rome. That Italy was not yet a republic was owing to the fact that Italian sentiment was still strongly monarchist, and would remain so until after World War II. In the same year, what could not be achieved by Garibaldi's march on Rome, was done by plebiscite. Rome voted overwhelmingly for union with Italy, with only fifteen hundred negative votes (including those of the Vatican).[43] Swinburne, as if unaware of the Monarchy's strength, ignores also the division between Mazzini as republican and Garibaldi as constitutional monarchist. Furthermore, the total effect of Songs before Sunrise tends to give the impression that Italy was suffocating for want of assistance at a time when, in reality, it was moving quickly toward the fruition of its nationalist dreams. What the tone of these poems reflect, to a large degree, is the desperate attitude of Mazzini and other Italian exiles who had been collecting in London over the previous two decades, and with whom Swinburne had been in contact. In addition, the poems clearly serve as a vehicle for Swinburne's personal vision of revolution and liberty, which is concerned more with human nature than with the nature of politics. This

is not intended as a criticism of Swinburne, but rather to emphasize that he remains primarily a poet in his approach to the political problems of Italy. Nevertheless, at times, Swinburne goes to such extremes in the glorification of Italy and Mazzini as to border upon the absurd. For instance, "Super Flumina Babylonis," which first appeared in the Fortnightly Review (October, 1869), compares the awakening of Italy to the resurrection of Christ, with Mazzini as the Angel of Resurrection. The analogy is perhaps made somewhat less jarring if we bear in mind that to Swinburne, Mazzini was to Italy what Thomas Paine was to America--an awakening voice:

> By the waters of Babylon we stood up and sang,
> Considering thee,
> That a blast of deliverance in the darkness rang,
> To set thee free.
>
> And with trumpets and thunderings and with morning song,
> Came up the light;
> And thy spirit uplifted thee to forget thy wrong
> As day doth night.
>
> [ll. 5-12]

The "blast of deliverance" refers to Mazzini's 1831 manifesto to "Young Italy," which was aimed at arousing the country from its lethargic attitude to Austrian domination. A later reference to Mazzini as the attendant angel by the grave contains a rare instance in which Swinburne makes an unqualified allusion to God in a positive sense:

> And the voice was angelical, to whose words God gave
> Strength like his own.
>
> [ll. 74-75]

This concession to the "Supreme Evil" is perhaps best explained

as made in deference to Mazzini's own religious views, which Swinburne tolerated without accepting, as we saw in his remark in the "Dedicatory Epistle." In the overview, however, rather than recognizing the glory of Christ, what Swinburne appears to be engaged in is an attempt to exploit existing beliefs about Jesus by placing Italy's significance on an equal footing with that of the son of God as He is generally understood.

Through his inversions of traditional Christian imagery, Swinburne's antitheism becomes increasingly intense in Songs before Sunrise. This is particularly evident in the grouping together of one series of poems consisting of "Blessed among Women," "The Litany of Nations," "Hertha," "Before a Crucifix," "Tenebrae," "Hymn of Man" and "The Pilgrims."

In "Blessed among Women," a eulogy to Signora Cairoli who had lost four sons in the cause of Italian liberty, each "soldier-saviour" son makes up a composite of a "fourfold Christ" (ll. 11-12). She is therefore four times more blessed than Mary. Swinburne's dislike of the Virgin Mother is implicit in the poem. In "Before a Crucifix" it is more overt (cf. also "Hymn to Proserpine"). Here she is portrayed as the ultimate femme fatale. Christ becomes the symbol of fruitless love, born to be given over to painful, purposeless death:

> So when our souls look back to thee
> They sicken, seeing against thy side,
> Too foul to speak of or to see,

The leprous likeness of a bride,
Whose kissing lips through his lips grown
Leave their God rotten to the bone.
[11. 175-180]

If Christ is not ressurected as a republican, he should remain eternally dead. His sacrifice has not served man so much as it has the usurping powers of priests and kings:

Thy faith is fire upon their lips,
Thy kingdom golden in their hands;
They scourge us with thy words for whips. . . .
[11. 49-51]

Christ's thorns have been turned to kingly crowns, his nakedness to royal ermine, and his slashed wounds have been meted out to the peoples of the world (11. 55-60). It is the people of the world who are now crucified in his name (l. 69), and Christ who should bow his head before man:

Nay, if indeed thou be not dead,
Before thy terrene shrine be shaken,
Look down, turn usward, bow thine head;
O thou that was of God forsaken. . . .
[11. 43-46]

In a vision of the nineteenth century rushing toward its death, Christ is indicted for wrongs done to man, who has worshipped His effigy throughout the ages:

The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls
Now deathward since thy death and birth.
Hast thou fed full men's starved-out souls?
Hast thou brought freedom upon earth?
Or are there less oppressions done
In this wild world under the sun?
[11. 37-42]

The only way this "son of man" (l. 109) can redeem himself before his brethren is not only to disown the kings and priests who rule in his name, but also to disassociate him-

self entirely from God:

> Nay, if their God and thou be one,
> If thou and this thing be the same
> Thou shouldst not look upon the sun;
> The sun grows haggard at thy name.
> Come down, be done with, cease, give o'r;
> Hide thyself, strive not, be no more.
> [ll. 193-198]

God as the mortal enemy of man, the symbol of oppression, is continued in the theme of "Tenebrae," in which the dead arise, pale from unassuaged desires, and cry out for the sacred day when peace, justice, and freedom will provide them with the sign that they have waited for but have not received from God:

> "We have waited so long," they say,
> "For a sound of the God, for a breath,
> For a ripple of the refluence of the day,
> For the fresh bright wind of the fray,
> For the light of the sunrise of death."
> [ll. 36-40]

The dead, forlorn in their expectations of heaven ("the sunrise of death"), pray now that their sons will attain peace and freedom on earth. It is the soul of man which must be adored "without altar or prayer" (l. 85). It is the "spirit of man, most holy" (l. 101), not the spirit of God, which must be set loose in the world. In the "sacred and perfect year" (l. 106) of the new world to come, darkness and chains will be broken: "Liberty there is the light" (l. 130). In titling the poem "Tenebrae," Swinburne is being ironic in his continuing inversion of the sacredness of things. "Tenebrae" is the name given to the ceremony conducted during Holy Week, in which the candles lighted at the beginning of the service

are extinguished one by one in memory of the darkness at the time of the Crucifixion. In Swinburne's poem, however, it is the approaching light of Liberty, driving off the shadow of Christ, about which the poet sings.

The image of Liberty is often apotheosized by Swinburne. One of the more interesting appearances it makes is in "The Pilgrims," where a procession of Liberty's followers stop to answer the questions of onlookers. The pilgrims, in their replies to the bystanders, give every indication of being religious ascetics in the service of the Virgin:

> --Is she a queen, having great gifts to give?
> --Yea, these; that whoso hath seen her shall not live
> Except he serve her sorrowing, with strange pain,
> Travail and bloodshedding and bitter tears;
> And when she bids die he shall surely die.
> And he shall leave all things under the sky
> And go forth naked under sun and rain
> And work and wait and watch out all his years.
> [ll. 9-16]

The questioners represent a primarily nihilistic point of view and thus provide Swinburne with an opportunity to answer modern sceptics. In fact, their attitude recalls that of de Sade's libertines, who constantly argue that since God does not exist, there is no source of moral authority in the world, but only the individualistic ethic of self-gratification. "Ye shall die before your thrones be won," they argue (l. 33), and further mock the pilgrims for passing up the pleasures of life while knowing that they are to become no more than dust in the grave. Swinburne not only has the pilgrims reject this Carpe Diem position, but tries to counter Sadean nihilism

by having the pilgrims express a moral commitment to their cause, based upon the good which their devotion will provide to future generations. "The changed world and the liberal sun," they say, "Shall move and shine without us" (ll. 34-35). The concluding stanza is of particular interest. The unregenerate bystanders contemptuously dismiss the pilgrims of Liberty, who in turn are given the last words in the poem:

> --Pass on then and pass by us and let us be,
> For what light think ye after life to see?
> And if the world fare better will ye know?
> And if man triumph who shall seek you and say?
> --Enough of light is this for one life's span,
> That all men born are mortal, but not man:
> And we men bring death lives by night to sow,
> That man may reap and eat and live by day.

Swinburne's position on the dilemma of mortality versus immortality in the human concern about destiny has the twofold virtue of avoiding the vagueness of Wordsworthian pantheism, and the aesthetic cliché that immortality is achieved through art. It is the condition of man in his daily world, not his organic osmosis by nature after death, or the survival of his artifacts from one age to another, or even his transcendence to the airy All, that is the central focus of "The Pilgrims." "That all men born are mortal, but not man," is one of the most concise statements of the human condition ever devised. In it is contained perhaps the best explanation possible of how the individual, faced with inevitable and final death, may discover sufficient meaning in life so as to avoid re-

clining into total hedonism or despair. Although it counters the Sadean justification of crime with a principle of altruism that would not be acceptable to the arguments of Juliette's followers, it serves to indicate the point on which Swinburne radically departs from de Sade. Swinburne shares with him a violent distrust of faith in God's benevolence. Swinburne's faith in man, however, even if it were to be ultimately disappointed, would at least, for him, have been placed in something tangible. Man's worth lies primarily in his incessant pursuit of freedom, the source of his uniqueness in the universe. Swinburne is so resolute on this point that in the concluding stanza to the "Epiloque" to Songs before Sunrise he takes the position that if man is not to be free, then it would be better for him to perish altogether:

> Yea, if no morning must behold
> Man, other than were they now cold,
> And other deeds than past deeds done,
> Nor any near nor far-off sun
> Salute him risen and sunlike-souled,
> Free, boundless, fearless, perfect, one,
> Let man's world die like worlds of old,
> And here in heaven's sight only be
> The sole sun on the worldless sea.

T. Earle Welby generalizes too broadly in his assessment of Swinburne's religious position: "The religion of Swinburne, and if we discard the conventional meaning of the term, he is in Songs before Sunrise a profoundly religious poet, acknowledges no creative or moral energy external to the universe."[44] More precisely, the existence of any such

energy external to man is nowhere evident in Songs before Sunrise. One must be cautious in dealing with Swinburne's use of religious imagery here, since it appears to be inspired more by its potential for irony than by religious feelings within the poet. In a letter to W. M. Rossetti, written while he was immersed in the composition of Songs before Sunrise, he clarifies his antitheism by distinguishing it from atheism:

> As to atheism I do not 'affirm' it in one sense any more than you do. I think that theism is simply an assumption superimposed upon a mystery, but how far (if at all) grounded it is impossible to say. What I do think is that to uphold it as indispensable to full and noble development of life is a pernicious immorality. In the absolute mystery as far as it confronts us there is at least no incoherence, no shock of moral inconsistency, as there is in theism. (I fear you will think I am again borrowing arguments from that well of wisdom undefiled which springs in the perennial pages of "Justine"--'S'il existe, ton Dieu, chère fille, quel b----- de Dieu!' etc. passim.) But, seriatim, I do not see that pure theism makes the riddle a whit more legible. . . . Of those among my friends who accept the name of atheist as applicable to themselves I know none who asserts himself positively assured that there can be no creative intelligence, no original spirit acting from without upon the birth and growth and death of things; but they would say, if so, what then? and is it well, if we could ever do so honestly, to swallow a crude hypothesis to no practical end, when the actual mass of the natural facts of being is surely big enough to exercise our spirits? I for one cannot understand how a man can so believe in God personal and moral as to be convinced of him, unless he believes in some revelation Christian or other: i.e., unless his reason abdicates in favour of his passion.[45]

There is no indication here of any religious stirrings within Swinburne of the kind which require a faith in forces ex-

ternal to man. It is also noteworthy that on the question of theism Swinburne still identifies his position with that of de Sade.

The two best-known poems in Songs before Sunrise, "Hertha" and "Hymn of Man," are the principal works in which man's divinity and God's baseness are juxtaposed. More than anything else written by Swinburne, these poems express a view of freedom, the enthusiasm of which was rivaled only by Walt Whitman in America.

Swinburne refers to "Hertha" as "another mystic atheistic democratic anthropologic poem,"[46] and, as noted earlier, he regarded it as a fatal blow to the root of theism. Some years later he writes to E. C. Stedman: "Of all I have done 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. I think there really is a good deal compressed and concentrated into that poem."[47]

"Hertha" logically follows "The Litany of Nations." In the latter, the earth-spirit is addressed by the Chorus of nations, whereas in "Hertha" it is the earth-spirit who speaks back to man. The earth in both poems serves as a symbol of unity. "Thou the body and soul, the father-God and mother" who has "bid man be free," says the Chorus (ll. 25, 40). These twin themes of unity and freedom are the thrust of each poem. In "The Litany" the countries of western Europe each pray to Earth for deliverance from oppression.

References to God the Creator are conspicuously lacking in what Swinburne obviously attempted to be an ironic affront. In "Hertha" and "Hymn of Man," however, he increases the force of his antitheistic attacks.

In the opening stanza of "Hertha" it is announced that

> 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.

Hertha has created man who in turn has created "The shadow called God" (l. 92). Inversions of the Manichean imagery of light and darkness dominate the poem. Man has mistakenly placed God in heaven in order to shed light, but by doing so he only fell under greater darkness. He is now told that "the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless soul is in sight" (l. 95). Religions and crowns are represented as the source of human evils:

> A creed is a rod,
> And a crown is of night;
> But this thing is God,
> To be man with thy might,
> To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit,
> and live out thy life as the light.
> [ll. 70-74]

Man's gods "are worms bred in the bark" (l. 105) and will die. God now "trembles in heaven" (l. 180):

> For his twilight is come on him,
> His anguish is here;
> And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
> Grown grey from his fear;
> And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last
> of his infinite year.
> [ll. 106-110]

Blakean influences are apparent in the poem, particularly in the depiction of man as an Orc-like figure, fashioned underground, impassioned with fire and bound with iron (ll. 41-45). With Blake, too, Swinburne can say of God, "Thought makes him and breaks him" (l. 75), thereby voicing an unwavering faith in man's superiority to the limitations by which he encircled himself in his creation of God. It is within man's capacity to free himself through thought, and establish the "beloved Republic."

It is difficult to defend the naiveté of Swinburne's political sense, for political insights are few and shallow in Songs before Sunrise. His vision of the republican future is an idealized expression of human potential, and suggests that the greatest impediments to the republic of brotherhood are the forces of monarchy and church, as if, once released from their oppressive authority, man will blossom forth with democratic loving kindness. There is no anticipation at all of either the economic or psychological factors which come into play in the struggle for economic and social change. The difficulties against which the modern world must contend, as scrutinized by such figures as Marx and Freud, are nowhere anticipated by Swinburne. At best, it may be argued that there is in his approach to the political side of the human condition some merit in the belief that man's adherence to theistic dogma indicates a dependence upon external forms of authority that man would be better off without, were he thereby to become more resourceful, in the development of his

creative capacities. That Swinburne himself makes an aesthetic of freedom seems to suggest this. Cecil Lang's opinion of Swinburne's political consciousness in later years (after 1875), though harsh, is probably true: "The most cosmopolitan of English poets was transformed into the most parochial and chauvinistic of British jingoes. The republican-turned-'English Republican' became English first and last, and remained republican only by a semantic sophistry that would be as much at home in 1984 as in Through the Looking-Glass."[48]

The idea that man has burdened and limited himself by his creation of an oppressive God is, as we have seen, often returned to in Songs before Sunrise. It is in the "Hymn of Man," however, that the poet becomes most vocal on this point. Again inverting the conventional relation between God and man, he here announces the total demise of God and the ascendance of man. In writing the poem, Swinburne had seized the opportunity of taking a timely shot at Rome by composing it upon the occasion of the Ecumenical Council held there in 1870. He describes the poem as "a modern-companion-in-arms-and-metre to my 'Hymn to Proserpine.'"[49] The one is aimed at Rome in the age of its Christian decadence, the other at Rome in the age of its pagan decadence.

The Edinburgh Review referred to "Before a Crucifix" and "Hymn of Man" as ". . . thoroughly fanatical in their wild, blasphemous, and intolerant atheism."[50] In the same

article, the writer, in defining Swinburne's "creed," is unduly hostile, but nevertheless correctly recognizes the aestheticism inherent in Swinburne's politics. He refers to Swinburne's "deification of humanity," and goes on to remark: "The practical recognition of this doctrine is called by Mr. Swinburne liberty, freedom, and he expresses his admiration of it, after his fashion, in a dazzling coruscation of verbal and metrical effects."[51] The imputation of insincerity, however, is wide of the mark, since the Church as the embodiment of God was always, for Swinburne, the symbolic target of his antitheism.

The poem begins with a description of the earth's creation "In the grey beginning of years, in the twilight of things that began." The speaker asks if she (the earth) knew then that she would give birth to the meaningless phenomena of events to come, such as "The rhythmic anguish of growth, and the motion of mutable things" (l. 13), or the "Passions and pains without number, and life that runs and is lame" (l. 15), or to man who blindly scurries about in search of an escape from her darkness:

> From slumber again to slumber, the same race set
> for the same,
> Where the runners outwear each other, but running
> with lampless hands
> No man takes light from his brother till blind at
> the goal he stands.
>
> [ll. 16-18]

In his search for the origin and reason for his existence, man looks erringly to external sources, driving himself to

madness in the folly of his pursuit:

> Before the growth was the grower, and the seed ere
> the plant was sown;
> But what was the seed of the sower? and the grain
> of him, whence was it grown?
> Foot after foot ye go back and travail and make
> yourselves mad;
> Blind feet that feel for the track where highway
> is none to be had.
>
> [ll. 37-40]

The anthropomorphic God which man hoped would light his way, instead, as in "Hertha," blinds him to the only possible source (i.e., himself) from which he may derive a sense of being:

> Therefore the God that ye make you is grievous,
> and gives not aid,
> Because it is but for your sake that the God of
> your making is made.
> Thou and I and he are not gods made men for a
> span,
> But God, if a God there be, is the substance
> of men which is man.
>
> [ll. 41-44]

If Swinburne is less ambivalent in his antitheism than in his atheism, as occasionally appears to be the case, it mainly results from his willingness to plead ignorance in matters about which it is impossible to know the full truth, particularly those of a metaphysical nature. The "if a God there be" is, therefore, an indication of open mindedness on the question, and is consistent with his remarks, already quoted, to W. M. Rossetti. It is clear that whatever the case for God may be, to Swinburne there can be no God who is either separate from or superior to man. According to his position in the "Hymn of Man," God's existence is dependent upon man and not the reverse:

> We men, the multiform features of man,
> whatsoever we be,
> Recreate him of whom we are creatures, and
> all we only are he.
> Not each man of all men is God, but God is the
> fruit of the whole;
> Indivisible spirit and blood, indiscernible body
> from soul.
>
> [ll. 47-49]

If man collectively is God, it follows, for Swinburne, that the political state in which man lives must be made into a republic, since all other forms of government are of necessity inferior. Taking it a step further, the republic is the inevitable result of each man recognizing in his brother an equal member of a collective divinity. The God of this world, whom man thinks he is able to detect as the Creator of the natural world, remains anathema to Swinburne, for this world is indifferent to man:

> Things are cruel and blind; their strength detains
> and deforms:
> And the wearying wings of the mind still beat up
> the stream of their storms.
>
> [ll. 65-66]

The God of this world thus wears "a raiment of pain" since, theoretically, he would give man life only to be snuffed out by the blind forces of nature. He is the God of cruelty who provided man with desires but forbade him to fulfill them: "Thou madest man in the garden; temptedest man, and he fell" (l. 95).

In metaphorically rendering the republican cause in Italy as a reconquering of heaven, as he does in "The Eve of Revolution," Swinburne makes the struggle for liberation into

a holy war. Likewise, in the "Hymn of Man," heaven must be reconquered from the God who now darkens it (l. 99). Man, made the slave of God, now awakens to unmake Him:

> Thou art judged, O judge, and the sentence has
> gone forth against thee, O God.
> Thy slave that slept is awake; thy slave but slept
> for a span;
> Yea, man thy slave shall unmake thee, who made thee
> lord over man.
> [ll. 118-120]

The sentence is death. There is no hope for God even though many still cling to their belief in Him: "O fools, he was God, and is dead" (l. 176). What remains is to strip the world of His symbols of authority:

> His red king's raiment is ripped from him naked,
> his staff broken down;
> And the signs of his empire are stripped from him
> shuddering; and where is his crown?
> [ll. 85-86]

There is no mercy to be shown to this God, all traces of whose existence are to be destroyed. The violence of Swinburne's feelings toward God are nowhere more pronounced than in the "Hymn of Man," as he himself was aware. He writes to Dante Gabriel Rossetti: "I have done a good deal of work on the Fall of God compared to which my previous blasphemies are effusions in the style of Watts, Morris, or Keble--the three Christian singers of England."[52] In a final gesture of contempt, the end of the poem subsides into a lyrical mood as God dies before us:

> Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten; thy
> death is upon thee, O Lord.
> And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds
> through the wind of her wings--

> Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things.
>
> [ll. 198-200]

Swinburne's inverting technique throughout Songs before Sunrise results from a deep sense that reality had been turned inside-out by the theistic concepts which have dominated the Christian world. By associating God with evil, and rebellion with freedom, he gave to his work the appearance of overturning moral and aesthetic values when, in fact, he was attempting to restore to art an aesthetic foundation solidly structured upon a clear understanding of man's relation to the natural world, which he believed was falling out of perspective during the nineteenth century. The political theme which he set out to develop in Songs before Sunrise, as early as 1867,[53] was bound to focus primarily upon his own views of man as answerable to no laws, moral or political, which claimed to derive their origin or authority from any theological source. Man is, by nature, born free, with obligations neither to heaven, nor even to earth, apart from those which affect his survival and growth: this view he shares with de Sade. Since man is created freely, making freedom meaningful becomes dependent upon his self-sufficiency, which in turn cannot be acquired without his knowing the truth, as far as it is possible to know it, about his place in the scheme of things: in this he is more positive than de Sade. This point of view is made explicit by Swinburne when he says of the "Hymn of Man" that in it he expects ". . . to sing the human triumph over 'things'--the opposing forces of

life and nature--and over the God of his own creation, till he attains truth, self-sufficience, and freedom."[54]

Perhaps the finest treatment of the relation between nature, man and God undertaken by Swinburne, is his "Genesis" in Songs before Sunrise. In this Swinburnean revision of the Biblical story of the Creation, there is no explicit political theme. It is a remarkably dispassionate account of the origins of life and death, good and evil: "The divine contraries of life . . ." (l. 32). "Genesis" is aptly described by Lang as "one of the least sentimental [poems] ever written by any poet,"[55] as is evident in the concluding stanza:

> And each man and each year that lives on earth
> Turns hither or thither, and hence or thence
> is fed;
> And as a man before was from his birth,
> So shall a man be after among the dead.

There are no intimations of immortality here: man's life is little more than a flash in eternity. Swinburne accepts as given and irreconcilable that all things in nature have their contraries. Good and evil are therefore as inextricably connected as death and life.

In what seems to be a lyrical echoing of de Sade's view of the misfortunes of virtue and the prosperities of vice, Swinburne refers in "Genesis" to the natural but ironic cruelties of existence which man must learn to endure:

> For in each man and each year that is born
> Are sown the twin seeds of the strong powers;
> The white seed of the fruitful helpful morn,
> The black seed of the barren hurtful hours.

> And he that of the black seed eateth fruit,
> To him the savour as honey shall be sweet;
> And he in whom the white seed hath struck root,
> He shall have sorrow and trouble and tears
> for meat.
> [ll. 45-52]

It was with this view of the natural cruelty of things in mind that Swinburne felt righteous in his denunciations of a God who served to compound man's suffering by inflicting upon him a sense of guilt for things not of his doing. It is likewise this God that Swinburne sees as the vindicator of kings and popes who maintain their tyrannical rule over man and thereby prevent him from realizing the potential of his collective self, of which, as stated in the "Hymn of Man," "God is the fruit of the whole."

To deny the complaint that such an approach to human problems is untenable in the face of political realities, would be folly. One cannot help concluding, however, that Swinburne's position is not in fact political but philosophic and aesthetic. The confusion over precisely what he was attempting to do in these poems has led to polarized opinions on their merit. T. Earle Welby, for instance, concludes that Swinburne was ". . . never more strictly an artist than when in 1867-69 he was working on the chief poems in this book."[56] G. K. Chesterton, on the other hand, is sardonic in his tolerance of it:

> But it is not fair . . . to judge Swinburne by Songs before Sunrise. They were songs before a sunrise that has never turned up. Their dogmatic assertions have for a long time past stared starkly

> at us as nonsense. As, for instance, the phrase "Glory to Man in the Highest, for man is the master of things"; after which there is evidently nothing to be said, except that it is not true.[57]

Although Swinburne ostensibly set out to put together a book of political poems as a contribution to Mazzini's cause, the principal thrust of Songs before Sunrise gets directed at his favourite shibboleth: God.

Notes

1. "Introduction" to Swinburne: Selected Poetry and Prose (New York: Random House, 1968), p. xxi.

2. "A Song in Time of Order" and "A Song in Time of Revolution" were among the poems which Swinburne intended to omit from the proposed but never printed 1876 edition of Poems and Ballads, probably in an effort to make the subject matter of the collection more homogenous.

3. All references to Songs before Sunrise are to Swinburne's Poems, II (London: Chatto and Windus, 1904).

4. The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne (New York: Russel and Russell, 1968), p. 156. A reissue of vol. XIX of the Bonchurch Edition of The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, ed. Edmund Gosse and T. J. Wise, 20 vols. (London, 1927). Hereafter cited as The Life.

5. For a detailed listing of Swinburne's periodical contributions, see Thomas J. Wise, A Bibliography of the Writings in Prose and Verse of Algernon Charles Swinburne (London: Richard Clay, 1920), II, pp. 201-329.

6. The Life, p. 154. Hotten printed three thousand copies of the poem which was followed by disappointing sales and hostile reviews. See Clyde Kenneth Hyder, Swinburne's Literary Career and Fame (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 149.

7. In Swinburne's Poems, II, 269.

8. Jill Forbes, "Two Flagellation Poems by Swinburne, Notes and Queries, 22 (October, 1975), 443. The items are "Charlie Collingwood's Flogging" and "Frank Fane--A Ballad" in The Pearl, nos. 3 (1879) and 11 (1880) respectively. See Grove Press edition (New York, 1968), pp. 86-92, 368-373.

9. Recounted by Gosse in his Confidential Paper on Swinburne. Reprinted in The Swinburne Letters, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959-1962), VI, 245-248 (hereafter cited as Letters).

10. Letters, III, 35 (to Paul Hamilton Hayne (June 22, 1875).

11. The Life, p. 162. The event is described by Swinburne in the Letters, I, 306-307; III, 13.

12. Swinburne's Theory of Poetry (New York: State University of New York, 1964), p. 3.

13. Letters, I, 195-196.

14. The Rebel, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), pp. 36-37.

15. The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne (New York; Russell and Russell, 1968), VI, 199 (hereafter cited as Complete Works).

16. Ibid., p. 200.

17. Ibid., pp. 201-202.

18. See "Worlds on Worlds are Rolling Ever."

19. Complete Works, VI, 193.

20. Precise dating of all the poems in Songs before Sunrise is yet to be established. However, of those written up to and including 1868, are the following: "A Watch in the Night," "Mentana: First Anniversary," "Hertha," "Siena" (1868); "The Halt before Rome," "Blessed among Women," "Ode on the Insurrection in Candia," "An Appeal" (1867).

21. Complete Works, XVI, 133-134.

22. Ibid., 134.

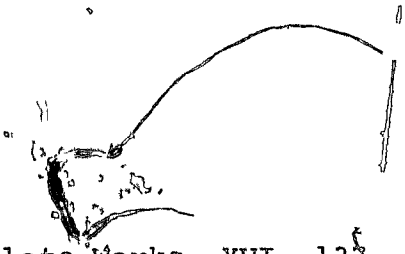
23. "Dedicatory Epistle," Swinburne's Poems, I (London: Chatto and Windus, 1904), xvi.

24. "Notes on Poems and Reviews," in Swinburne Replies (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1966), p. 18.

25. Complete Works, XVI, 134.

26. Ibid., XIV, 169.

27. Ibid., XVI, 137-138.



28. Complete Works, XVI, 137.

29. W. Brooks Drayton Henderson, Swinburne and Landor (London: Macmillan, 1918), p. 62.

30. The Life, p. 174.

31. The Crowns of Apollo (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), p. 118.

32. Complete Works, XVI, 179.

33. The Crowns of Apollo, p. 138.

34. In the index to the Swinburne Letters, de Sade fully occupies half of a page (VI, 399).

35. Letters, II, 79-80.

36. Oeuvres Complètes du Marquis de Sade, ed. Gilbert Lély (Paris: Au Cercle du Libre Précieux, 1966), IX, 205-208.

37. Ibid., 171.

38. Ibid., IX, 153.

39. Letters, I, 75-76 (to Monckton-Milnes, February, 1863). Louis XVI had imprisoned de Sade in Vincennes and Napoleon later sent him to Charenton.

40. Ibid., II, 228 (to W. M. Rossetti, March 5, 1874).

41. Ibid., pp. 94-95 (to W. M. Rossetti, February 14, 1870).

42. Ibid., p. 37.

43. A. J. Whyte, The Evolution of Modern Italy, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), p. 178.

44. A Study of Swinburne (London: ~~Faber~~ and Gwyer, 1926), p. 95.

45. Letters, II, 43-44 (October 26, 1869).

46. Ibid., p. 45 (to W. M. Rossetti, October 26, 1869).

47. Ibid., III, 15 (February 20, 1875).

48. "Introduction," Letters, I, xxviii.

49. Letters, II, 87 (to George Powell, February 5, 1870).

50. Unsigned review of Songs before Sunrise in the Edinburgh Review, CXXXIV (July, 1871), 98.

51. Ibid., p. 96.

52. Letters, II, 89 (February 12, 1870).

53. On October 6, 1867, in a letter to W. M. Rossetti, Swinburne speaks of "Halt before Rome," and announces plans to "some time accomplish a book of political and national poems as complete and coherent in its way as the Chatiments or Drum Taps." Letters, I, 268.

54. Ibid., II, 37.

55. Cecil Y. Lang (ed.), The Pre-Raphaelites and their Circle (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), p. 518.

56. A Study of Swinburne, p. 99.

57. The Victorian Age in Literature, rev. ed. (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1914), pp. 182-183.

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