Beck:
Swinburne And His French Relations.
SWINBURNE AND HIS FRENCH RELATIONS

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M. Gustave Lanson, writing in his "Histoire de la littérature Française" of that admirable, if somewhat empty metrical artist, Théodore de Banville, says: "—Esprit moyen, sans idées ni besoin de penser, Theodore de Banville jongle sereinement avec, les rythmes. C'est un charmant poète, chez qui sens, émotion, couleur, comique; tout nait de l'allure des mettres et du jeu des rimes. Chez ce fervent, le romantisme aboutit à la plus étincelante et stéreile fantaisie.— Ce délicieux acrobate finit le romantisme. Après lui, rien—" A somewhat unqualified judgment, thinks the reader, and searches about for some evidence that M. Lanson has anticipated his objection. One of those almost personal little notes by which the French critic is in the habit of balancing his judgments reveals the following: "Après tout, un poète n'est pas obligé de penser; et Banville est un vrai artiste dont la place est importante dans l'histoire de la technique du vers; c'est quelque chose." So the student of Swinburne, weary of that "glittering and sterile fancy" with which so much of his verse, not to say his prose, is informed, would be willing to imitate M. Lanson, and dismiss his subject with a few glittering generalities, were it not that a backward look over the landscape of his study reveals an expanse too charming to be easily forgotten, and peaks of interest which still shine in the sun of their author's genius and power. The attention of the
student is recalled from weariness a while to remark what vital significance may attach to the man as he lived and wrote.

Swinburne, in spite of a certain vaunted independence, was largely the product of his age; the circumstances of his life and times indicated to him certain ways of endeavor, and he followed them, even if not always consciously. Victorian England, in Tennyson, Rossetti, Morris and Swinburne, had fallen away, by a considerable descent, from that spontaneous romantic vigor of which Byron was the volcanic apostle, and had settled down to a deliberate, and in Swinburne's case, largely derivative, artistry. Even so in France, after the fiery and revolutionary outbreak of Victor Hugo, the spirit of romanticism began to fade, until, no longer fiery at all, it could only express itself in the dreamy artificial beauties of de Banville, or the "belleza mortale" of Baudelaire. Such, I believe, is the natural course of literary movements: a beginning full of native spiritual vigor which often finds for itself a form that equals the spirit; then a gradual draining away of the initial spirit until only a feeble, tho beautiful, mask remains. Swinburne was no genius who towered above his times; consequently he followed the rule of the somewhat lower genius and absorbed diverse elements of culture that came in his way.

In the light of what has just been said, that poetical and artistic movement misnamed Preraphaelite in England will be seen to be largely derivative in its inspiration, even tho its ideals were final to itself, and even tho it succeeded in main-
taining, as a whole, a characteristic spiritualism and symbolism. Of the three most prominent poets connected with this movement, each went to a different country for his inspiration: Rossetti, as was natural, to Italy, Morris to Scandinavia, and Swinburne to France. All were, of course, alike in their liking for things Gothic and mediaeval, in their worship of "huge cloudy symbols of a high romance", but each, by virtue of certain definitive interests and natural inclinations, was led away on a separate path. Of these three men Swinburne was, in many respects, the most modern and the most scholarly. This fact, along with certain natural predilections naturally brought him under the influence of that most modern and most scholarly of nations, France.

The natural predilections of Swinburne in favor of French literature probably began with his ancestry, which was partly French. From his earliest years he was trained in French and Italian by his mother and grandfather. His early abiding interest in old French romances and manuscripts is attested by Mr. Edmund Gosse, who quotes him as recalling with delight his acquaintance with them in the library of his maternal uncle, the Earl of Ashburnham. We find him reading both Corneille and Racine at fourteen, and becoming acquainted with Victor Hugo in 1852, thru a study of "Notre Dame de Paris". He won several

1See Olivero, Federico, Studi sul Romanticismo Inglese, chapter entitled: L'Ispirazione Preraffaelita in alcuni lirici inglesi moderni; p. 297.
prizes in French and Italian both at Eton and at Oxford, where he matriculated in 1856. His devotion to Greek also began early, and became, after the French, the main influence in his poetry.

With the publication of his first book, a volume containing the two tragedies, "The Queen Mother", and "Rosamond", (1860), the evidences of Swinburne's indebtedness to French sources begin to appear, and it is not difficult thereafter to trace French influences in the greater portion of his poetical output: This influence, I believe, is best followed out along the lines of his developing genius, which fell at the outset of his career under the influence of Baudelaire, Gautier, and the decadent school in France. After that his increasing admiration for Victor Hugo becomes apparent, until it culminates in an adoration, partly servile, and partly dignified, which seems to me almost unique in the history of English literature. Outside of these two main influences, certain subordinate ones, definite or problematical, will be considered in the places of their application.

In the next chapter, before proceeding to a commentary on Swinburne's specific relation to it, I propose to make a brief examination, with special reference to France, of that particular manifestation of romanticism known as the "Decadent spirit", attempting if possible to point out its nature and origins.
CHAPTER II.

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF THE NATURE OF LITERARY DECADENCE,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE 19th CENTURY

When Swinburne published "The Queen Mother" and "Rosamond" in 1860, the Pre-Raphaelite movement, with its Gothicism and tainted mediaevalism, was already under way. William Morris had published "The Defense of Guenevere" in 1858. According to Mr. Saintsbury the Pre-Raphaelites "aimed rather at giving things and thoughts mediaeval as they recreated themselves under the influence of nineteenth-century thought than at strict antiquarian revival". Their work also, he says further, had "a very strong infusion of Elizabethan 'conceit', with a singular mystical passion found before in English only in some seventeenth century writers".\(^1\)

Granting that these statements apply to Swinburne as well as to Morris and Rossetti, it is necessary to look for those influences which enabled the former to "recreate" his mediaeval material, and, if his material was at times not mediaeval, to see whether those same influences still persisted and colored his work in his early period of youth and enthusiasm.

Now the influences which are most certainly to be noted in the period of Swinburne's early activity, which extends from 1860 to about 1878, are those of the Old French Romances and of the French school ordinarily denominated by critics "the decadents".

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\(^1\) Saintsbury, Geo. - The Later Nineteenth Century, p. 25.
From the Old French Romances he derived some material and some mannerisms, with a certain shadow of the mediaeval spirit, but it was from the 19th century French decadents that he drew the real inspiring spirit of his poetry. By "19th century decadents" is meant, in general, that school known in French literature as "Les Parnassiens" which included the names, all notable, and some since grown notorious, of Baudelaire, Theodore de Banville, Leconte de Lisle, Sully Prudhomme, Villiers de L'Isle Adam, José Maria de Heredia, François Coppée, Leon Dierx, Stephane Mallarmé, Verlaine, Jean Lahor, Catulle Mendès, and others of lesser importance. Of these, some came too late to influence Swinburne specifically; others, like Leconte de Lisle, were scarcely representative of the eroticism which the young English poet found so attractive in the school. Then there was Théophile Gautier, who slightly antedated the Parnassians and fathered some of their theories; from him Swinburne drew specific inspiration. Among the Parnassians proper the influence of Baudelaire is paramount and at once discernible; after him it would be difficult to detect the impress of any one of the others, unless it be Théodore de Banville, of his interest in whom Swinburne has left one or two monuments. And after all, it was the spirit of this school of Parnassians and the ideas it stood for which influenced Swinburne, who in spite of his interest in the letter of his art, was nevertheless too genuine, and in some cases, too great a poet to be a slavish imitator. Thereupon the question arises as to just what this so-called "decadent" spirit meant to Swinburne, and
whether it readily adjusted itself to the mediaeval and early Renaissance French material of which his mind was already full.

To begin with, what is meant by "decadence" in literature? Is it a phenomenon which particularly applies to literature in France and England during the last half of the 19th century? Does "decadence" mean one thing at one period of the world's history, and another at another? A psychologist like Nordau, or an alienist like Morel would doubtless run the beast to earth, and find him the same in all ages: a sign of degeneracy in the race. It is, of course, not the province of this essay, were it possible to do so, to combat medical theories of decadence and degeneracy; yet it seems to me necessary that the student of Swinburne's relation to his time should know not only what the letter of decadence manifested, but also what the spirit of decadence meant. Critics who love to talk of the "spot of decay" have found it in various periods of literary history, without being very well aware of what the spot amounted to, altho they have usually associated it very naturally and consistently with the receding wave of some movement. But the truth is that at different times decadence in literature has meant different things to the critic and to the reading public, even tho its fundamental psychology has doubtless been much the same. For instance M. Nisard, writing of Lucan, whom he takes as typical of the Latin decadence, says that after Homer, Virgil and "les grands poètes", there remained as material for Lucan only erudition and external nature. Thus in order to make up for the lack of primitive vigor, he was reduced to the necessity of emphasizing
form. Undue emphasis on form is, I think, believed by critics to be a characteristic of decadence in literature wherever and whenever it is found. And yet who could have been more enamored of form than Ronsard and his Pleiade? Or who ever put more emphasis on form than the Augustans in England and France? Yet one would hesitate before calling these decadent, even tho "the spot of decay" might be found by diligent search in both of them, and especially in the Pleiade, with its suave Horatian melancholy of fading youth and dying roses. Is an unbridled eroticism, then, characteristic of all decadent literature? It was undoubtedly characteristic of Lucan's time, but scarcely characteristic of his poetry. The "Pharsalia" has to do rather with deeds of arms than deeds of love. Again, the Italian Renaissance rose to a high pitch of individualism and license only to fall into moral and political decay, but the literature of the time, tho often licentious is not necessarily marked either by undue formalism or eroticism. A characteristic poet of the time, in fact, was Francesco Berni, who was a humorist and satirist — and humor is never decadent. It seems then that we can not ascribe definite qualities to the literature of decadence in general: we are forced to a consideration of the age and the individual.

Now the one thing which had little or nothing to do with the Latin decadence and the decadent period of the Renaissance in Italy was the Christian religion. It is a matter of common knowledge, however, that Christianity had a great deal to do with the Renaissance as it appeared in the northern European nations. Thus the very vital elements of Oriental mysticism became an integral part of literature in Germany, France and England. This is not saying that it had not been there during the Middle Ages; but it is necessary to understand that the new humanism only the more firmly welded together Greek philosophy and Hebrew mysticism into the most impractical religion the world has ever seen. Out of this compound arose Puritanism and various other mystic cults which forced upon the world a moral code that nobody has ever been able to explain. The pressure of this code upon the northern European nations since the Reformation has been terrific, and all the more so on the sensitive minds of its literary men. These men, many of them, longing and striving for the simple and natural expression of individuality "which was Greece" indeed, and indeed her "glory", have been faced forever by the phantom of a cross on which no Christ was ever crucified, by the eternal "Thou shalt not" of the Old Testament. It has been impossible to live a simple and normal life, and the result has been that literary movement known as Romanticism, of which 19th century decadence in France and England has been the mournful but logical conclusion. Decadence, then, in the 19th century has been a matter not only of form in literature but of the body and soul of man.
It was in the midst of this terrific conflict between natural desires and a puritanical religion that Baudelaire and the Parnassians lived in France, and Swinburne and the Pre-Raphaelites in England. Now, what were the outstanding characteristics of these schools? An examination of the individuals composing them reveals one tendency common to practically all of them: a tendency to isolation from the world and to a morbid introspection. Many of them were aesthetic recluses: they made of life a lonely pilgrimage to the shrine of art, and a few of them, like Baudelaire, found her shrine a mad-house. It was the fatal error of certain great early figures in the Romantic Revolt to take themselves too seriously. Byron and Shelley were of the number. The intensity of this error was trebled among the decadents, among whom hardly a gleam of humor ever appears. This universal lack of humor points to an unbalanced mentality: to that excessive cultivation of certain qualities at the expense of others which characterizes the "higher degenerates" of the alienists. Then there was the unfailing insistence on form which characterizes the great classical schools, but with this difference, that the connotative power of words was pushed to a mystic extreme, as if the poet were straining every nerve to arrive at a spiritual meaning in the word which the word itself primarily never even suggested. Examples of this sort of thing are to be found in the literature of religious mysticism in all

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1 See Nordau, M., "Degeneration", Chapter on Mysticism.
ages, and that religious mysticism had its influence on this practice in the 19th century there can be little doubt. Scientifically, of course, such a practice is unsound. The presence of eroticism, morbid or otherwise, is, of course, to be seen everywhere, and it is to be noted that there is usually a mystic attempt to give every phase of it an unusual or strange significance. The poetry of Baudelaire, Swinburne and Rossetti is full of this sort of thing, and clearly shows how Christian mysticism had "transformed that thing which was the Cytherean".¹ That the decadents, moreover, were fully conscious of the "transformation" and resented it, is clear to every student of Swinburne and Baudelaire. In the former especially is heard the note of furious, tho impotent, revolt against Christianity, the specific instances of which will be taken up in another chapter.

Enough has now been said to indicate the peculiar nature of decadence in the 19th century. The fatal gift of the Renaissance to the northern nations of Europe was a morass of ideas leading, no man yet knows whither, but full of will-'o-the wisps of emotional conjecture which lured many a gifted man to his destruction. Only the coldest and most practical of philosophical minds escaped this morass, chiefly because such minds will usually have little to do with mysticism and emotion. And yet literary history shows that not even such a coldly calculating mind as John Stuart Mill's was unable wholly to escape the burden

¹See Swinburne's "Ave atque Vale", Stanza XV.
and pressure of the terrific emotional conflict of the 19th century. Thus by 1860 the strain on the soul of northern Europe had borne its fruit: the Dead Sea apples of degeneracy and decadence, beautiful as to exterior, but ashes and dust within.
CHAPTER III

What I have been pleased to call "the early period of youth and enthusiasm" in Swinburne's career extended from about 1860 to about 1878. These two dates are those of the publication of "The Queen Mother" and "Rosamond," and "Poems and Ballads, Second Series," respectively. It is my purpose to show that practically all of Swinburne's poetical output between these two dates was influenced either by the Early French Romances, the 19th century decadent school in France, or a combination of the spirit of both. I do not mean to convey the impression, of course, that there were no other influences; Swinburne's reading in Greek and Italian furnished him with a certain amount of material. The result of his Greek studies is of course plainly indicated in "Atlanta in Calydon," and Swinburne himself gives Boccaccio as the source of "The Two Dreams," in the first and most famous volume of "Poems and Ballads." Yet the preponderance of influence during this early period was French, and I shall attempt to outline it, specifically wherever possible, but at least generally throughout the chapter. It seems both logical and convenient to consider the volumes as they were published.

Of the two rather remarkable dramas which Swinburne published at the age of 23, "The Queen Mother" is the longest and most pretentious. The matter of it is French Renaissance
history: Charles IX, Catherine de Medici, and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. The manner is Elizabethan, evidently the result of Swinburne's interest in that period of English literature, which did not fail throughout his life. Almost every speech of any length is full of Shakespearean conceits; Swinburne comes naturally in the tradition of Marlowe and Shakespeare. Thus he easily imitated their manner, but probably never rose to the high level of their spirit; or if he did, it was outside of his tragedies. 1 Of Marlowe especially he might have been a lineal blood descendant, so closely related are the two men in nature, with their violent emotions and lack of a sense of humor. But, while the Elizabethan manner is plain on the surface of the drama, the actual French literary influences are perhaps not quite so evident.

In choosing French Renaissance material, Swinburne was probably influenced, even thus early, by Victor Hugo, all of whose dramas, except "Les Burgraves" have XVI or XVII Century settings. Thus in "The Queen Mother" Swinburne is truly representative of French romanticism, which naturally, according to M. Nordau, turned to the Renaissance for material, because the Renaissance was a period in which the aesthetic prevailed over the useful. Yet it was a reconstructed Renaissance atmosphere,

1. Swinburne's nearest approach to the "grand manner" is doubtless to be found in "Tristram of Lyonesse", which in spite of its evident defects is hardly surpassed among the 19th century English epics.
and the elements from which Swinburne reconstructed it were to be found in the Chansons de Geste, Les Romans Bretons (distinguished by Lanson from the Chansons de geste), the Provencal poets, and the great body, in fact, of early French literature down thru the Pleiade. Add to this the peculiar half-pagan, half-Christian mysticism of the 19th century and you have for all practical purposes, the atmosphere of the drama. The most impressive and really the most important character in it, Denise de Maulevrier, is "a white long woman with thick hair, gold where the sun comes." Such were the women certainly of the early French romances; women of such pearly beauty that they seem sweetmeats rather than women. Such types Swinburne drew with keen delight. But Denise does not talk like the women of the Chansons, who often reply very rudely to their lords, as doubtless they did in actual life. She does not even talk as women probably talked at Charles IX's court; she talks in riddles, in words oftentimes of a mystic connotation, or of an ethereal languor. Such devices belong chiefly to the 19th century. Then again she becomes a furnace of hectic eroticism, as in Act II, Scene I:

"Now I could kill you here between the eyes
Plant the steel's bare chill where I set my mouth,

Sift passion pure to the blind edge of pain," etc.

There is no need to quote the whole of speeches like the above. Their spirit is found everywhere in the early writings of Swinburne and in the Pre-Raphaelites generally. Carried to its extreme this spirit becomes the Satanism of Baudelaire and
Huysmans. Yet Denise is not a pagan; Swinburne could not have made her one if he had desired. She is the king's mistress, but no mistress such as Aspasia was to Pericles. The heavy burden of the cross is upon her:

"God help some!
If women so much loving were kept wise
It were a world to live in."

There is always this melancholy calling on God to succor human love, which has become a sick thing: the bright glory of it has departed. Moreover, Denise has a horror of blood truly Christian and seeks to dissuade the king from his designs on the Huguenots. Her long speeches in which she upbraids the king for his lust of blood are the speeches of a Christian woman, and full of violent emotion. They put particular emphasis on "blood", and "death", and "kisses" — in short they indicate the 19th century decadent enamored of these things, somewhat as the Gothic romancers were enamored of their machinery of horror. But with the 19th century decadents "blood", "death", "love", and "kisses" — all these things were mingled into a gloomy monad — they were in love with "l'idée de la morte." The speeches of Denise throughout the drama savor of this idea, and more particularly those in the last two acts.

The speeches of King Charles IX himself are too much like those of Denise to need comment, and those of the Queen Mother and the courtiers approach very nearly to a realistic conception of the Renaissance. But the Queen Mother's jester, Cino Galli, is a decadent fool:
"Vex me not, woman, I renounce the works of thee
I'll give the serpent no meat, not my heel
To sweeten his tooth on. I marvel how your mother
Died of her apple, seeing her own sense was
So more pernicious; the man got but lean parings,
And yet they hang too thick for him to swallow.
Well, for some three or four poor sakes of yours
I'll eat no honey."

Such a speech as this is almost pure madness:

"I would not think of kissing, and it
remembers me
Here are two scraps of Venus' nibbled meat,
Keep out of the dish, as ye respect me,
children,
Let not love broil you on a gold spit for Sundays."

One can never be sure what such matter as the above means,
any more than one can be sure of what Baudelaire's mystic
"correspondences" mean. They were written by the poet for his
own pleasure.

As far as form is concerned there is every evidence of
decadence in the colorful language of the chief characters, and the
emphasis on matters of detail. The following speech of the
Queen Mother's is a good example of Elizabethan manner turned into
decadence, altho there is no denying that it is full of poetic
power:

"Art thou, so slow of purpose, thou great God
The keenest of thy sighted ministers
Can catch no knowledge what we do? for else
Surely the wind would be as a hard fire
And the sea's yellow and distempered foam
Displease the happy heaven; wash corn with sand
To waste and mixture; mar the trees of growth;
Choke birds with salt, breach walls with tided
brine
And chase with heavy water the horned brood
Past use of limit; towers and popular streets
Should in the middle green smother and drown
And havoc die with fullness. I should be mad,
I talk as one filled through with wine;

thou, God,
Whose thunder is confusion of the hills
And with wrath sown abolishes the fields
I pray thee if thy hand would ruin us,
Make witness of it even this night that is
The last for many cradles, and the grave
Of many reverend seats; even at this turn
This edge of season, this keen joint of time ,
Finish and spare not. If no thunder came
When thou wert full of wrath to the fierce brim
Next year would spit on worship."

This is Shakespeare looking thru distempered glasses. The
greatest Elizabethan could utter melancholy speeches, and he
could make his characters mad, but he did not distort ordinary
matters to emotional concepts: he did not "wash corn with sand
to waste and mixture," nor "choke birds with salt," nor in his mind would "the sea's yellow and distempered foam" have "displeased the happy heaven." Such matter is impressionism with a strain of madness in it. And yet this speech of Catherine de Medici's is one of the best in the drama; such lines as

"Whose thunder is confusion of the hills
And with wrath sown abolishes the fields"
or

"The last for many cradles, and the grave
Of many reverend seats;"
are not only Shakespearean, but almost at Shakespeare's average level. The speech as a whole, in fact, has less of the decadent atmosphere than usual. It must be remembered, moreover, that the critic is treading on dangerous ground who seeks to find evidences of decadence everywhere in "The Queen Mother." Swinburne shows real and sane dramatic power in his portrayal of the stern old Marshal Tavannes and the equally stern tho infirm Admiral Coligny. It is only when he begins to bring in "white long women" or degenerate kings, or seeks to attribute unusual importance to natural disturbances and natural objects that he becomes characteristically decadent.

If, however, there is a considerable strain of eroticism in "The Queen Mother, "Rosamond" is practically a study in eroticism. The action, in fact, is entirely subordinated to sweet words. Even Rosamond herself says of the song which her companion sings:

- "The sick sweet in it"
Taints my mouth thru."

Considering the song, it is no wonder:

"Sweet, for God's love I bid you kiss right close
On mouth and cheek, because you see
my rose
Has died that got no kisses from the rain;
So I will sing to sweeten my sweet mouth,
So I will braid my thickest hair to smooth,
And then - I need not call you love again."

This song, according to Rosamond, was written by a trouvère; if so, it is unfortunate that the trouvère did not leave some commentary to enable the reader to understand what it means. Here is again the decadent spirit reconstructing mediaeval French verse, much to the detriment of such verse. In this case Swinburne is so enamored of sound that he allows the sense to take care of itself. Thibault de Champagne, Adam de la Halle, and the other French trouvères were much ruder and more genuine fellows than this minstrel of Swinburne's, who had "sweet lips with a bitter heart;" and they wrote songs that could be understood, as an investigation of their work will show.

In no drama of Swinburne's certainly is there such a riot of colour and such a wealth of detailed description as in "Rosamond." Here are the "roses and raptures of vice" indeed. Such insistence on form and color of course destroys much of the dramatic effectiveness, but not all of it, for Swinburne had at least one requisite of the dramatic poet, emotional vigor. Rosamond quotes King Henry as making a rhyme about her hair "coloured
after his French wise"

"As though rain filled and stained a tree of corn
Loose i' the last sheaf of many slackened sheaves
Or if (ay thus) one blew the yellow dust
That speckles a red lily off both cheeks
Held in the sun, so if in kissing her
I let the wind into her ghir, it blows
Thin gold back, shows the redder thread of it
Burnt saffron-scented;

King Henry is doubtless supposed to be imitating a trouvère, but trouvères never refined in such a manner. Nor can it be said that Ronsard or Du Bellay, altho the manner of the above quotations is closer to them, ever did so. One does, however, find such things in the prose of Gautier, and at least an approach to them in the poetry of Leconte de Lisle and de Banville; but with this difference, that the comparisons are much more obvious and natural, more objective, in short. Herein lies the difference, in general, between the English and the French decadents: the French preserved a rationality and objectivity which is inherent in their language; the English ran into all the extravagances of subjective emotion. Even Baudelaire, who, according to Gautier, was more English in spirit than he was French, manages, in the midst of his profound gloom and Satanic researches in sin, to preserve the balance of art; he is practically never unintelligible.
His closeness to the English spirit, however, enabled him to influence Swinburne more profoundly than did any other one of the French Parnassians, as we shall see later in a consideration of the "Poems and Ballads."

Rosamond herself is another "white long woman" like Denise in "The Queen Mother." She is also full of decadent languor and decadent language, morbidly erotic, and on account of her illicit love, labouring constantly under a weight of shame: conscious always of the accusing finger of Christianity. She is a descendant of Iseult or Guenevere; Gautier's Cleopatre 1 talks of love, but it is of no such love as this:

"When first I had his arms across my head
And had his mouth upon my heated hair
And his sharp kisses mixed into my blood
I hung athirst between his hands, and said
Sweet, and so sweet! for both mine eyes
were weak,
Possessed with vigorous prophecy of tears
To drench the lidpast sleeping, and
both lips
Stark as twain rims of a sweet cup drunk out.

This is a Christian woman's passion, with a mystic light playing about it and forever the "prophecy of tears" in it. For this reason it is dangerous to insist upon too specific a French influence on the drama; the general spirit and color of French decadence is to be discerned, but the mystic emotion is nearer to the Pre-Raphaelites and is more essentially English. Rosamond's

1. Gautier, Théophile: "Une Nuit de Cleopatre."
long speech at the beginning of Scene V is pure Pre-Raphaelitism. Rosamond speaks of Christ "walking between rivers in his rose garden," compares herself to Magdalen, says she will have "tall girls" to dress her, etc. The speech is full of lime blossoms, poppies, marigolds, and roses.

Two of the persons in the drama are French, Queen Eleanor and her cicisbeo, Sir Robert de Bouchard. Their speeches in Scene II attest Swinburne's interest in things French: they talk of affairs in France and mention many French names. The queen blames her bad complexion on France, and there is a French glove in one of the king's speeches. The French songs which Swinburne introduces into half a dozen or more of his tragedies, including the two just considered, will be examined in a later chapter.

There remains to be considered "Chastelard," which appeared in 1865. This drama Swinburne later expanded into his notable "Mary Stuart" trilogy. It is preceded by a quotation from Ronsard and begins with a French song, sung by Mary Beaton, one of the "five Maries." The dedication it may also be observed, is to Victor Hugo. It is to be noted that altho the scene is Scotland, the two chief characters are French, one of them, Chastelard, by birth, and Mary Stuart herself by training. There is much talk of France throughout the play. Swinburne's attempt to reconstruct the Renaissance in this drama succeeds better: Chastelard is for the most part what one would imagine a follower of Ronsard to have been. At least he makes songs which sound like
those of the Pléiade. But the mark of 19th century decadence is on the play nevertheless, for when the characters begin to discuss love they refine unnecessarily and become morbid; description becomes detailed and over-sensuous. Chastelard's long soliloquy in Act V, scene II, is a good example of that peculiar perfection of form which is seen in the best decadent poetry; yet notice the extreme detail of the following:

"The sunbeam that was narrow like a leaf
Has turned a hand, and the hand stretched
to an arm,
And the arm has reached the dust on the floor,
and made
A maze of motes with paddling fingers."

And in these lines heavy eroticism:

"Ah, in my weary dusty space of sight
Her face will float with heavy scents of hair
And fire of subtle amorous eyes, and lips
More hot than wine, full of sweet wicked
words
Babbled against mine own lips, and long hands
Spread out, and pale bright throat and
pale bright breasts
Fit to make all men mad.

And in the following lines the struggle between Christianity and paganism:

"For all Christ's work this Venus is not quelled
But reddens at the mouth with blood of men,
Sucking between small teeth the sap o' the veins

Dabbling with death her little tender lips —
A bitter beauty, poisonous-pearled mouth."

Mary Stuart is also the "white long woman" of romance made over into a "Venus of the hollow hill:" a Christian Venus. She is a lineal descendant of Denise and Rosamond. It must be said, however, that Swinburne in her case has achieved a distinct advance in dramatic representation. She is much more real than either Denise or Rosamond.

Swinburne, then, in the three dramas just considered, has been influenced by the French insofar as he has used French matter of history or attempted to reconstruct it; so much is apparent on the surface. This matter he has treated with the morbid and extravagant detail of decadent lyricism as it is found in the work of the French Parnassians. With this is interwoven a heavily scented eroticism which suggests, fundamentally, Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites, but occasionally comes near to the Satanism of Baudelaire. The oppressive shadow of Christian ethics, which is to be found at times in Baudelaire, who revolts against it, and in Leconte de Lisle, who mourns over its effect on men, becomes an ever recurring note in Swinburne, even in his early dramas. These reflections of the French decadent spirit, which thus far, on account of dramatic limitations, cannot be given their full lyric expression, become more marked in the "Poems and Ballads," which will be considered in the next chapter.
CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY FRENCH LITERATURE AND THE 19TH CENTURY DECADENTS - POEMS AND BALLADS, FIRST SERIES

With an uproar, which, according to Mr. Edmund Gosse, almost equalled that by which Byron was greeted, on the publication of the first cantos of "Child&Harold," Swinburne published, in 1866, "Poems and Ballads." His early dramas had, of course prepared the public for something sensuous, but the famous "Laus Veneris" which initiates the volume, was nevertheless a little too much for an English audience. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that the poem, along with others in the book, bore too strongly the impress of French decadence, and of decadence chiefly as it was exhibited in Charles Baudelaire, whose "Fleurs du Mal" had caused a sensation even in France. It is not to be wondered at that the English mind, which has always been chary of discussing even normal sex relations, should have revolted at an open treatment of what was, in some cases, sexual perversion. This sort of thing had appeared in France before Baudelaire in such things as Gautier's "Mademoiselle de Maupin" which Swinburne calls

"The golden book of spirit and sense,
The holy writ of beauty;"

but it was Baudelaire who gave it a lyric interpretation in his

1. In "Poems and Ballads," Second Series. Poem entitled: "Sonnet (with a copy of Mademoiselle de Maupin)."
"Fleurs du Mal!" After him it became a common theme for such writers as Catulle Mendès and J.-K. Huysmans. It is a mistake, however, to suppose as many seem to do, that Baudelaire was occupied with this theme almost to the exclusion of anything else. He was interested in it only as a phase in the search for sensation: a manifestation of the materialistic mysticism which he practiced. The truth is that he makes much less of it than Swinburne does because it holds for him an intellectual and spiritual rather than emotional interest: he saw in it the striving of the soul toward something which it ardently longed to possess. Swinburne, however, was in love with the perfume and color of forbidden vice: its "roses and raptures." He becomes mystic at times, it is true, but his is a cloudy, ill-defined mysticism which he has inherited from Christianity: a helpless call on God, or an inarticulate raving about Christ. This note of helplessness is felt in the main characters of his dramas and in most of his earlier lyrics. His men and women are resigned to their fates, but being resigned, make entirely too much of their resignation.

"Laus Veneris," the most sensuous, if not the most sensual of English lyrics, is a long poem, the idea for which Swinburne claims to have derived from Maistre Antoine Gaget's "Livre des grandes merveilles d'amour," published in 1530. In fact a quotation from this last-named work preceded the poem in Volume I of his Collected Works (1904). The theme of this quotation from Maistre Gaget is one long since familiar to moderns thru the medium of Wagner's opera Tannhauser: the knight who
by indulgence in illicit love has sworn allegiance to the "Venus of the Hollow Hill" and been damned thereupon forever by the Church. This is indeed the gist of the first two sentences in Swinburne's quotation from Maistre Gaget:

"Lors dit en plorant; Hélas trop malheureux homme et maudict pescheur, oncoques ne verrai-je clemence et miséricorde de Dieu. Ores m'en irai-je d'icy et me cacherai dedans le mont Horsel, en requeront de favour et d'amoureuse merci ma douce dame Venus, car pour son amour serai-je bien a tout jamais donne en enfer."  

This idea Swinburne has developed and refined upon in the morbid manner of Baudelaire and Rossetti so that the reader is constantly beset with details of physical coloring and passion. Yet in both the form and the spirit of the poem there is more of Rossetti than of Baudelaire, because there is more of emotion and mediaeval matter than there is of pure intellectual and aesthetic interest. The Baudelairian ideas in "Laus Veneris" are, in fact, rather intellectual and aesthetic than emotional, as for instance the idea of extracting "exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain," or the vaunted discovery of a new sin, as:

"Yea, with red sins the faces of them shine;  
But in all these there was no sin like mine;  
No, not in all the strange new sins of them  
That made the wine-press froth and foam with wine.

1. Les Fleurs du Mal - "La Voix"-  
"Que je ris dans les deuils et pleure dans les fêtes  
Et trouve un gout suave au vin le plus amer;"  
This idea is rather common in Baudelaire.
Something of the above idea is to be found in Baudelaire's perverted "L'Heauton timorumenos", the last stanza of which runs as follows:

"Je suis de mon cœur le vampire,
- Un de ces grands abandonnés
Au rire éternel damnés,
Et qui ne peuvent plus sourire."

An idea which Swinburne makes much of in "Laus Veneris" is that of "perfume" or sweet odor, as:

"- sweet smells of lip and cheek,
Like a sweet snake's breath made more poisonous
With chewing of some perfumed deadly grass
Are shed all round his passage if he pass,
And their quenched savour leaves the whole soul weak,
Sick with keen guessing whence the perfume was.

The idea is common in Baudelaire, but it is more refined and delicate:

"Lecteur, as-tu quelquefois respiré
Avec imprése et lente gourmandise
Ce grain d'encens qui remplit une église,
Ou d'un sachet le musc invetere?"

Or mystical:

"O metamorphose mystique
De tous mes sens fondus en un!
Son haleine fait la musique,
Comme sa voix fait le parfum! "

The following line from "Le Balcon" comes nearer to the heavy eroticism of Swinburne, but Baudelaire, with the restraint of a Frenchman, does not develop the line further than

"Je croyais respirer le parfum de ton sang."

If, however, Swinburne had in mind while composing "Laus Veneris," any special poem of Baudelaire's which has to do with the sense of smell, it was probably "Parfum Exotique." There is some suggestion of Swinburne's

"And tracking ever slotwise the warm smell"
in Baudelaire's

"Guide par ton odeur vers de charmants climats,"

and of

"Strange spice and flower, strange savor of crushed fruit"
in

"Des arbres singuliers et des fruits savoureux;"

The idea of revolt against Christianity which was beginning to take shape with Swinburne in "Laus Veneris," in such lines as

"All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ," or

"She is right fair; what hath she done to thee? Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine eyes and see."

is to be found in a section of "Les Fleurs du Mal." entitled "Revolte," which contains three poems. More analogy to their frank spirit of rebellion however, is to be found in the "Hymn to

Proserpina" which will be considered later.

The idea of death is perhaps the most common of Baudelaire's themes. It might be said that he was in love with death. It is also one of the commonest themes in Swinburne's early work, and there is not much doubt but that he was influenced by Baudelaire in his treatment of it. There is little, however, of the biblical conception of death in Baudelaire; death with him is not the wages of sin; he has no fear of it. Rather he welcomes it, as for instance in "La Voyage:"

"O Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps!
   l'evons l'ancre
Ce pays nous ennuie, o Mort! Appareillons!
Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l'encre
Nos coeurs qui tu connais sont remplis de rayons!"

But Swinburne is oppressed by the Old Testament, and writes:

"And lo, between the sundown and the sun,
His day's work and his night's work are undone;
And lo, between the nightfall and the light
He is not, and none knoweth of such an one."

Or

"For if mine eyes fail and my soul takes breath
I look between the iron sides of death
Into sad hell where all sweet love hath end
All but the pain that never finisheth."

There is enough, heaven knows, of praying for death in Swinburne, but it is the prayer wrung forth by anguish and misery which repeats itself in long and impotent wailings. The following
from Baudelaire's "Preface" is something akin to the Swinburnian spirit, but it is calm in comparison:

"Et, quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos poumons
Descend, fleuve invisible, avec des sourdes plaintes."

Only occasionally does he cry out against death, as in "L'Ennemi":

"Ô douleur! Ô douleur! Le Temps mange la vie
Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous mange le coeur
Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie!"

The notion of Beauty being at once the cause of joy and grief is to be found in both Swinburne and Baudelaire, but Swinburne as usual makes more of it. In "Laus Veneris" alone there are a dozen stanzas having to do with this theme, such as:

"Their blood runs round the roots of time
like rain:
She casts them forth and gathers them again;
With nerve and bone she weaves and multiplies
Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain."

In his "Hymne à La Beauté" Baudelaire writes:

"Tu marches sur des morts, Beauté,
dont tu te moques,
De tes bijoux l'Horreur n'est pas
le moins charmant,
Et le Meurtre, parmi tes plus chères breloques
Sur ton ventre orgueilleux danse a-moureusement."
Swinburne seldom sees beauty except in its physical perfection, but Baudelaire sees, or seems to see, the beauty of the spirit. Compare the beautiful "Venus" of the "Laus Veneris" with the woman of whom Baudelaire speaks in the following lines:

"Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse Juive
Comme au long d'un cadavre un cadavre étendu - "

Finding her disagreeable to look at, he says:

"Je me représentai sa majesté native
Son regard de vigueur et de graces arme
Ses cheveux qui lui font un casque parfumé
Et dont le souvenir pour l'amour me ravive."

The only parallel to this attitude in Swinburne is, as far as I know, to be found in "The Leper," which will be discussed later.

The inability to resist physical passion, which is the theme of "Laus Veneris," is to be found in Baudelaire, and probably influenced Swinburne, but whereas the latter grows intoxicated with the beauty of his grief:

"Ah yet would God this flesh of mine might be
Where air might wash and long leaves cover me
Where tides of grass break into foam of flowers
Or where the wind's feet shine along the sea,"

Baudelaire with a bitter and contemptuous laugh cries:

"Imbécile - de son empire
Si nos efforts te délivraient
Tes baisers ressusciteraient
Le cadavre de ton vampire!"

The last two quotations perhaps best exemplify the resemblances and differences between the two men. Interested in the same ideas, they were essentially different in nature. Baudelaire, in his art at least, was substantially French, and wrote lyrics of admirable restraint, passionate at times, but never frenzied. Swinburne, essentially English in temperament, cared little for anything except the unrestrained expression of passion. Baudelaire, inheriting from the Pleiade and the classics, was not interested in mediaevalism: there is scarcely a mediaeval reference in his poetry. Swinburne, inheriting from Spenser and Keats, was saturated with the spirit of the middle ages. The "Laus Veneris," then, as I said above, altho it bears some signs of the impress of Baudelaire, is yet essentially nearer in spirit to Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites, because its spirit is essentially mediaeval. And now, before I leave this poem, I am moved, altho it is not necessarily within the scope of this work, to offer a few words of criticism on the poem itself.

The matter of the poem has probably prevented many critics from appreciating properly the sheer perfection of its art. It is distinctly superior in vigor of inspiration and beauty of imagery to most of Swinburne's later work. Such stanzas as the following are as perfect as some of Keats' best mediaeval pictures:
"Outside it must be winter among men; 
For at the gold bars of the gates again
I heard all night and all the hours of it
The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.

Knights gather, riding sharp for cold; I know
The ways and woods are strangled with the snow;
And with short song the maidens spin and sit
Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like, arow."

Such a line as

"And sleep beholds me from afar awake"
contains a fine Byronic effect of distance somewhat comparable to

"- thou art the friend
To whom the shadows of far years extend:" ¹

Shelley lives again in such lines as:

"Alas, but surely where the hills grow deep,
Or where the wild ways of the sea are steep,
Or in strange places somewhere there is death,
And on death's face the scattered hair of sleep."

In such a stanza as the following Tennyson is fairly matched on his own ground:

"I smell the breathing battle sharp with blows
With shriek of shafts and snapping short of bows;
The fair pure sword smites out in subtle ways
Sounds and long lights are shed between the rows -"

¹. Byron: Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Canto III, stanza CXV.
As a whole the poem is an enduring monument of the rapture born of love, youth, and beauty set over against a background of Hebraic dogma and decalogue. It represents, as no other lyric of its length does, the endless struggle between these two forces.

Passing from the "Laus Veneris" to the other important lyrics in "Poems and Ballads," one comes upon "The Triumph of Time," a dramatic monologue in the manner of Browning, touched with the melancholy spirit of Baudelaire. In the second stanza Swinburne has the lines:

"Though joy be done with and grief be vain
Time shall not sever us wholly in twain."

This resembles somewhat, but is pale beside Baudelaire in "Le Portrait":

"Noir assassin de la Vie et de l'Art;
Tu ne tueras jamais dans ma memoire
Celle qui fut mon plaisir et ma gloire!"

In the twentieth stanza Swinburne voices more nearly Baudelaire's estimate of death:

"At the door of life, by the gate of breath
There are worse things waiting for men than death."

A Baudelairian note of Satanism is found in these lines:

"Where the dead red leaves of the years lie rotten,
The cold old crimes and the deeds thrown by,
The misconceived and the misbegotten,
I would find a sin to do ere I die -"

The poem as a whole is a long lament in love with the beauty of
love irrevocably lost. As such it is less sincere than the same theme would have been in the hands of Baudelaire, and more artificial. The extension of such a theme into forty or more long stanzas would have been unthinkable to him. One of the chief and abiding differences between the French poet and his English disciple was that the former felt keenly what he was writing about, while the latter only imagined he did.

Turning from "The Triumph of Time" one comes upon a rather insignificant example of Swinburne's use of half-legendary, half-historical French matter. The poem is called "Les Noyades," and is a short lyric narrative which begins:

"In the wild fifth year of the change of things -" whenever that was. The poem has the atmosphere of the early French romances:

"And a lady noble by name and face
Faultless, a maiden, wonderful, white."

"In Anactoria," which is a poetical study in sexual perversion, specifically, in Lesbianism, Swinburne has taken a Greek subject and colored it with the sensuousness and sensuality of Gautier. One is reminded of the latter's "La Morte Amoureuse," in which the courtesan Clarimonde is represented as sucking the blood from a wound in her lover's hand. "Je ne mourrai pas! je ne mourrai pas!" she says. "Ma vie est dans la tienne et tout ce qui est moi vient de toi. Quelques gouttes de ton riche et noble sang, plus precieux et plus efficace que tous les elixirs du monde, m'ont rendu l'existence." Swinburne may very well have been thinking of this when he wrote:
"That I could drink thy veins as wine
and eat
Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet
Thy body were abolished and consumed,
And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!"

This sickly and perverted sensualism is to be found in Baudelaire, but transmuted to a delicacy almost spiritual, as for instance in "Le Beau Navire:"

"Boucliers provoquants, armes de pointes roses
Armoire a doux secrets, pleine de bonnes choses
De vins, de parfum, de liqueurs
Qui feraient delirer les cerveaux et les coeurs!"

The idea of revolt against the Supreme Being, called God in this poem by anachronism, again appears:

"Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,
Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath
And mix his immortality with death."

In "Abel et Cain" Baudelaire has

"Race de Cain, au ciel monte
Et sur la terre jette Dieu!"

In "Les Litanies de Satan" Satan is addressed as

"Toi qui sais en quels coins des terres
envieuses
Le Dieu jaloux cacha les pierres
precieuses,"

and again as

"Pere adoptif de ceux qu'en sa noire colere
Du paradis terrestre a chasse Dieu le Pere."

Swinburne in the same strain represents Sappho as saying:

"Is not his incense bitterness, his meat
Murder?"

The poem as a whole is a long litany of love discontented because life is not perfect. This is the very essence of the Baudelaire-
ian spirit. The sensuality of the thing, however, is much nearer to Gautier than to Baudelaire, and in its most perverted parts could scarcely be matched except in the novels of Huysmans, Catulle Mendes and the later French Satanists. The poetical language of Swinburne, of course, relieves a situation which would become too crass in straightforward French prose.

The "Hymn to Proserpine" is perhaps the best example of Swinburne's pagan revolt against Christianity; at any rate it is the best known. The entire poem is in the humor of Baudelaire's "Revolte," but is much more effective than any of the three poems composing it. Where Baudelaire, in "The Reniement de Saint Pierre" has:

"Les sanglots des martyrs et des suppliciés,
Sont une symphonie envivante sans doute-"

Swinburne in the "Hymn to Proserpine" has:

"O lips that the live blood faints in, the
leavings of racks and rods!
O ghostly glories of saints, dead limbs
of gibbetcd gods!

Certain similarities in this poem indicate that Swinburne had
"Le Reniement de Saint Pierre" in mind.
"Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? but
these thou shalt not take," etc.

This points directly at Baudelaire's
"Puisque, malgre le sang que leur volupté
coute
Les cieux ne s'en sont point encor rassasies!"

Swinburne's favorite idea of Christ and Venus at war is to be
found in this poem:

"Tho before thee the throned Cytherean
be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean,
thy dead shall go down to thee dead."

Somewhat different from this in its quiet but bitter satire is the
last stanza of Baudelaire's "Un Voyage a Cythere":

"Dans ton île, ô Venus! je n'ai trouvé debout
Qu'un gibet symbolique, où pendait mon image --
- Ah! Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le
courage
De contempler mon coeur et mon corps sans dégout!

The whole poem is an example of the deep emotional English temper-
ament influenced by Greek, Hebrew and French sources. It is a
tribute to Swinburne's lyrical genius, that in spite of these
influences the effect is immediate and spontaneous.

The idea of a universe hostile to man is to be found in most of Swinburne's early poems, as it is to be found almost everywhere in Baudelaire. A few examples will suffice. In "Lamentation" Swinburne writes:

"Nor less of grief than ours
The gods wrought long ago
To bruise men one by one;
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 -"

In "A Litany" God is represented as replying to a prayer:

"Ye whom your lords loved well,
Putting silver and gold on you,
The inevitable hell
Shall surely take hold on you;
Your gold shall be for a token
Your staff for a rod;
With the breaking of bands ye are broken,
Saith the Lord God."

And in "Ilicet":

"One girds himself to serve another
Whose father was the dust, whose mother
The little dead red worm therein;"
null
They find no fruit of things they cherish;
The goodness of a man shall perish,
It shall be one thing with his sin.

Or in "Satia Te Sanguine":

"In the heart is the prey for gods,
Who crucify hearts, not hands.

Baudelaire's "L'Irremediable" perhaps best gives expression to
this idea so prevalent in his work. After picturing various
miseries which are the daily bread of life he concludes:

"Emblemes nets, tableau parfait
D'une fortune irremédiable
Qui donne à penser que le Diable
Fait toujours bien tout ce qu'il fait!"

I have previously mentioned the tendency of Baudelaire
to find beauty even in loathsome subjects. "Une Charogne," as
its title suggests, is an example of this. The poem begins with
two romantically beautiful lines:

"Rappelez-vous l'objet que nous vimes,
mon ame

Ce beau matin d'ete si doux?"

and then proceeds to the most disgusting details and putrid
similes. The artistic conscience revolts at the matter of the
poem, perfect in form tho it is, and is not appeased by the
spiritualizing close:

"Alors o ma beaute!, dites a la vermine
Qui vous mangera de baisers
Que j'ai garde la forme et l'essence divine
De mes amours décomposés!

Swinburne's nearest approach to this attitude is to be found in "The Leper," a lyric based, according to the author's own testimony, on the "Grandes Chroniques de France." The atmosphere of the poem is distinctly mediaeval, or Pre-Raphaelite, perhaps. But the main idea, that of finding beauty in leprosy, is certainly Baudelairian. The only poem of Baudelaire's, however, which resembles it in subject-matter, is the one already referred to beginning:

"Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse
Juive,

Certain lines of this poem may have suggested certain lines of Swinburne's ideas in "The Leper," as, for instance:

"Je me pris à songer près de ce corps vendu
A la triste beauté dont mon désir se prive."

"Je me représentai sa majeste native
Son regard de vigueur et de grâces armé

Swinburne has:

"I vex my head with thinking this
Yes, though God always hated me,
And hates me now that I can kiss
Her eyes, plait up her hair to see
How she then wore it on the brows
Yet I am glad to have her dead
Here in this wretched wattled house
Where I can kiss her eyes and head."
Swinburne's confessed source, the "Grandes Chroniques de France," reads:

Mesme dist-on que ce meschant homme et maldict
clerc se remémourant, de la grande beauté, passée et
guastée de ceste femme se delectoyt maintes fois a la
baiser sur sa bouche orde et lepreuse et l'accoller
doulcement de ses mains amoureuses."

The quotations, it will be noticed, also indicate the presence in
"The Leper" of the prevalent note of hatred between man and God.
The poem, in fact, ends with the barren question "Will not God
do right?"

Villon was evidently responsible for two poems in "Poems
and Ballads, First Series." Swinburne prefaces "Felise" with the
famous line from the famous "Ballade of Dead Ladies":

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

- and proceeds to wonder about the matter thru some seventy
stanzas. In this poem also we find recurring the feeling of a
universe hostile to man. A dozen or more stanzas are taken up
in considering it. The poem however is an admirable example of
that beauty of irrevocability which is so often spoken of in con-
nection with Tennyson's famous lyric, "Tears, Idle Tears." "A
Ballade of Burdens" employs the ballade-form of Villon to carry
modern and Victorian pessimism. The refrain of each stanza:

"This is the end of every man's desire"

may possibly have been suggested by his own translation of Villon's
"Ballad Written for a Bridegroom," the refrain of which is—

"This is the end for which we twain are met."
To a poet of Swinburne's receptivity the mere beginning phrase would have been enough. The "Envoy" to "A Ballad of Burdens," moreover, suggests Villon certainly, and not inaptly again the "Ballad Written for a Bridegroom." Swinburne's lines run:

"Princes, and ye whom pleasure quickeneth

Heed well well this rhyme before your pleasures tire:"

Villon says (Swinburne's translation):

Princess, give ear to this my summary;

Such "envoys" are of course to be found attached to almost all of Villon's ballads.

Of the remaining poems in the first volume of "Poems and Ballads," the majority merely repeat ideas already considered in this chapter. "Dolores," like "Laus Veneris," is another long lament for the departed ideal of Greek love and Greek beauty, which also contains two or three stanzas of revolt against Christianity. "Hesperia" is a lyrical rapture in the elegiac distich of Ovid which pretends to have recognized at last the dangers of the "Venusberg," so to speak, and takes flight to regions of a calmer love. Such lines as the following suggest Baudelaire:

"But thy bosom is warm for my face,
and profound as a manifold flower
Thy silence as music, thy voice as an odor
that fades in a flame."

Or:

"She laughs with a savor of blood in her face, and a savor of guile."
Much of the poem is given up to the Baudelairian idea before considered, of Death residing in love and beauty. Poems based on early French subjects, or taken from early French sources, are: "In the Orchard," a beautiful lyric with a Provencal burden:

"Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon;"

"April," from the French of the Vidâme de Chartres; and possibly "St. Dorothy," a brief narrative poem in rhymed couplets, based on the same legend which Massinger uses in his play "The Virgin Martyr." The fact that Swinburne changes the name of "Theophilus" to "Theophile" and that he represents St. Dorothy as saying:

"Beau sire, Dieu vous aide," points to a French source. "Love at Sea," Swinburne confesses, is imitated from Theophile Gautier. The latter's "Barcarolle" is undoubtedly the source:

"Dites, la jeune belle
Où voulez-vous aller?
La voile ouvre son aile
La brise va souffler!

Swinburne modifies this to:

"We are in love's land today:
Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
Or sail or row?"

Gautier's last stanza:

"Menez-moi, dit la belle
A la rive fidele
Où l'on aime toujours.
- Cette rive, ma chere
On ne la connait guère
Au pays des amours."

And Swinburne:

"Land me, she says, where love
Shows but one shaft, one dove,
One heart, one hand.
- A shore like that, my dear,
Lies where no man will steer,
'No maiden land."

From these quotations it can be seen that Swinburne's imitation is an imitation indeed. Two other poems, "The Sundew," and "August" also remind one of Gautier in their use of detailed natural imagery, simply expressed:

"The warm smell of the fruit was good
To feed on, and the split green wood
With all its bearded lips and stains - "

"The Sundew" may easily have been suggested by Gautier's "Le Marais," which begins

"C'est un marais, dont l'eau dormante
Croupit, couverte d'une mante
Par les nénuphars et les joncs:" 2

Swinburne's poem begins:

"A little marsh-plant, yellow green,
And pricked at lip with tender red."

Both poems make mention of marsh-birds, and the metre of both is the same. It may be remarked that such verse is not in the natural manner of Swinburne. It is too simple and unimpassioned.

The remaining poems which show traces of French influence are unimportant. They are: "A Cameo," a Baudelairian sonnet; "Song before Death," which Swinburne annotates "from the French, 1795;" "Hermaphroditus," evidently inspired by a painting seen at the Louvre, since it is signed "Au Musée du Louvre, Mars, 1863;" "May Janet," translation of a Breton ballad; "To Victor Hugo," Swinburne's first lyric eulogy of the god whom he came to adore; and "A Song in Time of Order" and "A Song in Time of Revolution," both written in the manner of Hugo. I shall reserve any discussion of these Hugonic lyrics for a later chapter, in which the relation of Swinburne to Victor Hugo will be taken up.

Perhaps no consideration of the first volume of "Poems and Ballads" is complete without some reference to the famous "Garden of Proserpine," considered by many critics to be the most perfect of all Swinburne's lyrics. It might be said that this faultless lyric summarizes practically all the influences which affected Swinburne in his early period. The subject itself is Greek, and the interpretation of it is in terms of French decadent thought; it is a lyrical interpretation of "l'idée de la mort" as perfect as anything of Baudelaire himself, and has the added virtue of vigorous Anglo-Saxon music. Such a stanza as this suggests the simple natural imagery of Gautier:

"No growth of moor or coppice
No heather-flower or vine
But bloomless buds of poppies
Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine."

These lines contain a Pre-Raphaelite picture:

"Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands;"

These lines are Hebraic:

"Tho one were strong as seven
He too with death shall dwell —"

The sum of influences is perhaps made up when one notes that the stanza-form itself is Provençal. Despite all these influences which are finely merged and distributed, the poem is a typical Swinburnian creation, and such a lyric as only a lyrical genius could have written, however diversely influenced.
CHAPTER V

THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY FRENCH LITERATURE AND THE 19TH CENTURY DECADENTS: POEMS AND BALLADS, SECOND SERIES - ATLANTA IN CALYDON - ERECTHEUS.

I have now to consider "Poems and Ballads, Second Series." This volume was published in 1878, twelve years after "Poems and Ballads, First Series." During these twelve years Swinburne had been gradually coming out from under the influence of the French decadent school and coming more and more under that of Victor Hugo. The details and progress of this change I shall undertake to explain in another chapter. It is only necessary to say that I shall not concern myself with the specific influence of Victor Hugo on certain poems in "Poems and Ballads, Second Series: I shall only be concerned with those poems, still in considerable number, which clearly indicate the influence of early French literature or that of the nineteenth century decadent school.

"The Last Oracle," with which the volume begins, is a lyric dealing with Swinburne's favorite theme: revolt against Christianity. It is largely an echo of "The Hymn to Proserpine," which has already been discussed, and bears no evidence of any influence which goes beyond the spirit of Baudelaire's "Revolte." "In the Bay" which follows, is a fine and elevated lyric, and suggests, if any influence, that of Hugo. In the famous "Forsaken Garden," however, we come upon the familiar "idée de la mort," treated this time with a lyrical descriptive power well-nigh marvellous. But this difference must be noted: instead of the morbid and subjective interpretation of Baudelaire we have an
objective treatment: the "forsaken garden" is the thing, and only Death as he is represented in it is of interest to the poet. There is a wholesome dearth of lamentation and sighs of resignation. The poem, underneath all its music, is as sternly Anglo-Saxon as a promontory in Beowulf. The nearest approach to the pessimism of Baudelaire is to be found in a line which reechoes the theme of "The Garden of Proserpine:"

"From the graves they have made they shall rise up never -"

In the last two lines Swinburne transcends the imagination of Baudelaire:

"As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead."

This conception, woven in with an exquisite felicity of rhyme and metre has always appealed to me as a stroke of unusual genius.

Of the two poems which follow "The Forsaken Garden," entitled "Relics," and "At a Month's End," neither shows any specific French influence. "Relics", a lyric in the manner and mood of the earlier "Féline," but certainly not, as Mr. Edward Thomas seems to think, of the earlier "Faustine",\(^1\) might be very well compared, as far as its tone is concerned, with many things of Gautier, de Banville, or Leconte de Lisle, but there is certainly no immediate evidence that any one of these poets influenced Swinburne in the writing of it. Certainly, however, some hand has

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touched to restraint the lyre which uttered the voluptuous strains of "Laus Veneris" or the bold music of "Faustine." The tone of "Relics," it seems to me, is almost identical with that of such a poem as Leconte de Lisle's charming "Les Roses d'Ispahan." I shall choose for comparison what I consider the best stanza in each poem. The third stanza of "Relics" runs:

"Dead memory that revives on doubtful ways,
Half hearkening what the buried season says
Out of the world of the unapparent dead
Where the lost Aprils are, and the lost Mays."

The fourth stanza of "Les Roses d'Ispahan:

"O Leilah! depuis que de leur vol léger
Tous les baisers ont fui de ta lèvre si douce
Il n'est plus de parfum dans le pale oranger,
Ni de celeste arome aux roses dans leur mousse."

"At a Month's End" is a beautiful lyric in the manner of Browning, but Browning modified by Tennyson and the French. In one stanza we have:

"Best leave or take the perfect creature,
Take all she is or leave complete;"

The last couplet of another runs:

"Our hearts were full of windy weather,
Clouds and blown stars and broken light."

Again, there is something of the atmosphere of Baudelaire's "Confession" in the poem. Both lyrics are "confessions" of human

incompatibility, as:

"Que rien ici-bas n'est certain
Et que toujours, avec quelque soin qu'il
se fonde
Se trahit l'égoisme humain;"

or

"Que batir sur les coeurs est une chose sotte; "

The monologist of "At a Month's End" says:

"And one with me I could not dream you;
And one with you I could not be."

He also speaks of

"Charms that allay not any longing
Spells that appease not any grief
Time brings us all by handfuls,
wronging
All hurts with nothing of relief."

Baudelaire writes also:

"Que c'est un dur métier que d'être belle
femme
Et que c'est le travail banal
De la danseuse folle et froide qui se pâme
Dans un sourire machinal;"

Baudelaire, it will be seen, is as usual closer to the earth and
more concrete. This quality often gives him a decided advantage
over Swinburne, but not necessarily so in this case. It will
perhaps be instructive to note here, also, a fundamental differ-
ence between the two poets which Swinburne's poem happens to represent
Swinburne has the old Hebraic idea that he who touches pitch shall be defiled, and after addressing his "queen of panthers" thru many stanzas, takes leave of her thus:

"So to my soul in surer fashion
Your savage stamp and savour hangs;
The print and perfume of old passion,
The wild-beast mark of panther's fangs."

To Baudelaire, at least as far as his personal experiences are concerned, the above is a dead and faded issue, the dream of a sentimentalist. And yet Baudelaire was essentially the better Christian of the two for the attitude, for, even tho he feels that love is inextricably interwoven with sorrow and death in this life, he seldom has a complaint to make of any personal disgrace visited upon him by his association with women - or men, for that matter. I may say, in fact, that I do not remember anything of the kind in his poetry. There is some objective consideration of the idea in the "Danse Macabre" - the effect of hereditary Christian practice is of course seen in this - and to a limited extent in a few other poems, but in general he leans to the side of seeing positive virtue in what are ordinarily considered impure objects and situations. Critics, I am inclined to think, have failed to understand this attitude, and have dismissed it as a morbid affectation. This, I am certain, is a grave mistake. Baudelaire, like Blake, was an intensely sincere poet, as anyone who understands his poetry knows. He was a peculiar combination of Greek art and Christian charity, and only as such can he be understood. It is true that "these elements so
mixed in him" were often at war, as they were in almost every other poet of the 19th century, but occasionally they combined and were at peace, producing such lyrics as "A Une Malabaraise," "A Une Mendiane Rousse," and the beautiful "Hymne," which begins thus:

"A la très-chère, à la très-belle
Qui remplit mon cœur de clarté,
A l'ange, a l'idole immortelle,
Salut en immortalité!"

Baudelaire; if he was not, like Christ, suffering for humanity, yet felt keenly that he was suffering with it. In his "Préface" to "Les Fleurs du Mal," which is a commentary on the immemorial woes of earth, he finally says that world-weariness is the monster which has finally overtaken life, and addresses his reader:

"C'est L'Ennui! — L'œil chargé d'un pleur involontaire,
Il rêve d'êchafauds en fumant son houka
Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,
— Hypocrite lecteur, — mon semblable, —
mon frère!"

Swinburne, in his earlier period, at least, was little interested in things humanitarian, and never as much interested in them as he thought he was. Baudelaire, on the other hand, was close to suffering and to life, hence the convincing sincerity of his work as compared to Swinburne's. And who knows, finally, but that such apparent madmen as Baudelaire and Blake may have looked farther into Eternity than many who have seen the "dome of many-colored
glass" in its traditional colours? They may have found a translucent pane, which, going about our reasonable tasks, we daily miss.

I now come to what is perhaps Swinburne's greatest single poem, and one of the great English elegies, worthy to rank with "Thyrsis" and "In Memoriam", certainly, if not with the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" or "Lycidas" or "Adonais." "Ave atque Vale" was written to commemorate the death of Charles Baudelaire, or rather to commemorate a false report of his death, inasmuch as Baudelaire did not die until about six months after the poem was written. This, however, does not in any way detract from the genuineness and artistic perfection of the elegy. It is preceded by the following appropriate quotation from Baudelaire himself, taken from a poem without a title, but numbered CXXIV in "Les Fleurs du Mal:

"Nous devrions pourtant lui porter
quelques fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes
douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émeurdeur des
vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs
marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien
ingrats.

Taking his cue from the title of Baudelaire's volume, "Les Fleurs du Mal," Swinburne begins the elegy:
"Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?"

and then, with more specific reference asks:

"Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer -?"

This idea of Baudelaire's morbid predilections Swinburne emphasizes throughout the elegy as in the first two lines of the second stanza:

"For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;"

and in the third stanza:

"Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

"The hidden harvest of luxurious time
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech -"

Stanza six begins

"Now all strange hours and all strange
loves are over, "

and in stanza seven Baudelaire is addressed as

"O gardener of strange flowers, what bud,
what bloom
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the
gloom?"

In stanza ten he calls Baudelaire's poems

"These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal -"
Perhaps, however, the best characterization of Baudelaire's work is in stanza seventeen, where Swinburne speaks of life as

"- the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day thru thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants gray,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep, and thoughts that started -"

In addition to this general characterization there are certain references in the poem more or less specific. The lines at the beginning of stanza four, for instance, refer to Baudelaire's longing for death, as an escape from life and bitter love, which he has expressed beautifully in such poems as "La Mort des Pauvres," "La Fin de la Journée," and "Le Voyage." The lines are:

"O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!"

The idea in these lines simply reechoes the last six lines of "La Fin de la Journée":

"Mon esprit, comme mes vertèbres,
Invoque ardemment le repos;
Le cœur plein de songes funèbres,
Je vais me coucher sur le dos
Et me rouler dans vos rideaux
O rafraîchissantes ténèbres."

In stanza six there is a direct reference to Baudelaire's "La Géante" in what is perhaps one of the most famous passages ever penned by Swinburne. I have even seen the following lines quoted as typifying the "grandiose delusions" of the "general paralytic" of the alienists: ¹

"Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savour and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?"

It will perhaps be instructive to quote the whole of Baudelaire's "La Géante," for purposes of comparison:

"Du temps que la Nature en sa verve puissante
Concevait chaque jour des enfants monstrueux,
J'eusse aimé vivre auprès d'une jeune géante
Comme aux pieds d'une reine un chat voluptueux
J'eusse aimé voir son corps fleurir avec son âme
Et grandir librement dans ses terribles jeux;
Deviner si son cœur coure une sombre flamme
Aux humides brouillards qui nagent dans ses yeux;

Parcourir à loisir ses magnifiques formes;

¹ Ellis, Havelock, Man and Woman: a study of Secondary Sexual Characteristics. I was not able, unfortunately, to locate a copy of this book, and so cannot cite a page reference.
Romper sur le versant de ses genoux énormes,
Et parfois en été, quand les soleils
malsains
Lasse, la font s'étendre à travers la
campagne,
Dormir nonchalamment à l'ombre de ses seins,
Comme un hameau paisible au pied d'une montagne."
The correspondence is too evident to necessitate comment.

Swinburne found the atmosphere of his great elegy a
fitting one for the expression of two favorite ideas, noted
several time heretofore: the failure, or at least the melancholy
practice of Christianity; and the change of the Greek Venus into
the "strange woman" of Christianity. "In "Ave atque Vale,"
however, castigation of the Deity is subdued to

"For sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might -"
The changed Venus also mourns for Baudelaire:

"And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,
And stains with tears her changing bosom
chill;
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since -"

Swinburne here gives best expression to the idea used by Baudelaire.
in "Un Voyage a Cythère," before noted: the idea that Christianity has made of the simple and child-like Grecian love between the sexes a monster breeding crime, destruction and death; and it must be admitted that a calm and unbiased modern judgment is not infrequently inclined to agree.

In the sixteenth, as well as in the eighteenth, and concluding stanza, Swinburne gives expression to that fatalism, that despairing materialistic cry which not only Baudelaire, but all poets, in all languages, everywhere, reechoed in the nineteenth century:

"There is no help for these things, none to mend,
And none to mar; not all our songs,
O friend,
Will make death clear, or make life durable."

This idea in the concluding stanza is expressed in Miltonic lines that are among the finest in the poem:

"Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb."

In a somewhat extended comment on this elegy, Mr. Edward Thomas says: "No man, I suppose, can be 'all ear' to a poem; he must stray a little now and then to think apart from the tune. If it were possible never thus to stray in reading or hearing, 'Ave atque Vale' would be a perfect poem."

of his commentary, he says: "Perhaps no single sentence in the poem is unintelligible to the mind any more than it is ungrammatical. But the combination is one which the mind cannot judge, tho it may approve, seeing the effect, and say that it is beyond her expectation or understanding." ¹ That "Ave atque Vale" would be a "perfect poem", even if one were "all ear," is perhaps to be doubted. Besides, no one knows what a "perfect poem" is. Poetry is of that universal and esoteric character which has not perfection for an attribute: perfection is a shadowy attribute of the human mind. Mr. Thomas is therefore justified in saying that the mind cannot understand Swinburne's greatest poem, if he means by "mind" the rational faculty divorced from that "luminous fringe" which M. Bergson declares is superior to intellect, but he is not justified if he means by "mind" that manifold faculty which understands poetry. Swinburne's swift ideation (Max Nordau calls it "shadowy") does lead him slightly away from his theme, in the second stanza, perhaps; and yet is it imaginatively unreasonable to say of Baudelaire:

"Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories -
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song -"

Is it unreasonable, poetically considered, to impute a dull ignorance to the waves? And besides, who would question the

¹. Algernon Charles Swinburne, a Critical Study, p. 176.
meaning of the wonderful line which closes the above quotation? The digression, let us say, may be censurable, but certainly not the manipulation of its subject matter. This subject matter, too, it might be observed, is a little elegy in itself, and so thoroughly in tune with the major motif. As to the phrase, "effaced unprofitable eyes," why question it at all? It seems to me that its effect as a whole is undeniable, and that there is no profit in applying the canons of prose to what is essentially poetry.

Mr. Thomas, it must be admitted, is finally led to the almost inevitable conclusion "that there is more of death and the grave and a living man venturing among them than in any other poem except:

"Full fathom five thy father lies. -"

and in some of the ballads." Mr. Thomas might even have gone farther. He might have said that Swinburne's elegy as a whole is the most elaborate and most successful representation of that spirit which is Oblivion to be found in the English language. To Swinburne, in the composition of "Ave atque Vale" was assigned the task of being at once concrete and abstract, of being at once earthy and ethereal. This faculty Baudelaire himself possessed in a high degree, and it is particularly fitting that Swinburne's monument to him should bear the impress of his influence. No mere rational combination of words and phrases can serve to produce this double effect: a poetical inspiration like that of Shakespeare in his most romantic moments, or like that of Blake in his most magical lyrics, is necessary. And yet one wonders whether even these ever so completely pictured by their suggestive method
what Swinburne so perfectly represents by a combination of suggestion and concrete artistry:

"Alas, but tho my flying song flies after
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wpt by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs - "

Here sound combines with sight and suggestion, and makes death live. The urns of Sir Thomas Browne lie side by side, but they do not speak; the bones of Ferdinand's father lie "full fathom five" and his bones are made into coral, but he only suffers a supernatural "sea-change": he is not even close to life; Lycidas "laves his oozy locks with nectar pure" in much the same way, and listens to the unexpressive nuptial song," but he too is far from life in the regions of faery. So we might multiply examples thru "Adonais", "Thyrsis", "In Memoriam", and the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," but it is only in "Ave atque Vale" that the very grave takes on life, and the ghost of Baudelaire breathes almost into the face of the torn and suffering century its cold and voiceless farewell. Thus Swinburne's is the great elegy of a period of doubt and despair, written in memory of a man who typified in his life and work that doubt and despair,
and by a man who among all Englishmen best understood and re-presented his spirit.

Compared with "Ave atque Vale," the "Memorial Verses on the Death of Théophile Gautier" is a rather poor performance. It is important chiefly as a monument of Swinburne's interest in Gautier, and contains specific references to three of the latter's prose tales. "La Morte Amoureuse" is characterized as

"The love that caught strange light from
death's own eyes
And filled death's lips with fiery
words and sighs -"

Of "Une Nuit de Cléopâtre" he writes:

"And that great night of love more strange
than this
When she that made the whole world's bale
and bliss
Made king of the whole world's desire a slave,
And killed him in mid-kingdom with a kiss;"

Of "Madmoiselle de Maupin" he writes rather extrovertedly:

"Veiled loves that shifted shapes and shafts,
and gave
Laughing strange gifts to hands that durst not
 crave,
Flowers double-blossomed, fruits of scent and hue
Sweet as the bride-bed, stranger than the grave -"

One stanza only approaches the level and spirit of "Ave atque Vale".
"The lovely laughter, the clear tears, 
The call
Of love to love on ways where shadows fall
Through doors of dim division and disguise
And music made of doubts unmusical;"

As a whole the poem is sterile and perfunctory. Immediately following this poem is a "Sonnet, with a Copy of Mademoiselle de Maupin," probably an afterthought. Swinburne characteristically and rather foolishly calls Gautier's attractively salacious masterpiece

"-the golden book of spirit and sense
The holy writ of beauty;"

The sonnet is in no sense distinguished.

There remains to be considered, in the second volume of "Poems and Ballads," nothing of importance except a ballad on Villon, and Swinburne's translations from that old music-master. Two sonnets to Victor Hugo were better left unnoticed. To those who may be interested in Swinburne's French ancestry it may be instructive to point out the third division of "Four Songs of Four Seasons," entitled "Summer in Auvergne." In the fifth stanza of this he speaks of

"-the old fierce ruin there
Of the old wild princes' lair
Whose blood in mine hath share-"

This tickled his romantic fancy mightily, no doubt.

Swinburne's translations of Villon were the result of a deep and abiding interest in that picturesque ballad-maker of
medieval France. This interest is attested by a ballad both imitating and commemorating Villon, entitled "A Ballad of Francois Villon, Prince of all Ballad-Makers." The ballad is perhaps more famous for its cacophonous final stanza-line:

"Villon, our sad, bad glad mad brother's name"

than for anything else. In the "Envoi," however, Swinburne seems to catch some of the great French singer's virility:

"Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;
Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled
thy shame.

But from thy feet now death has washed
the mire,

Love reads out first as head of all our quire
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name."

The translations from Villon include "Les Regrets de la Belle Héaulmiere," "Double Ballade de Bon Conseil," the famous "Ballade des Femmes de Paris," the "Ballade que Villon donna a un gentil-homme, nouvellement marié, pour l'envoyer à son épouse par luy conquise à l'espée;" the "Ballade des Seigneurs du temps jadis;" the "Ballade contre les mesdisans de la France;" the "Épistre en forme de ballade a ses amis;" the "Épitaphe en forme de ballade -;" and finally the famous "Le débat du cuer et du corps de Villon."

Of the above titles "The Complaint of the Fair Armouress" (La Belle Héaulmiere) is perhaps the best rendered, altho they are all very well done. In this translation Swinburne is not only close to the letter of Villon, but he also catches the spirit
admirably. In this he is aided by his customary use of archaic English words and idioms. A comparison of Villon's first stanza with Swinburne's translation will give a fair idea of the latter's method and success throughout the poem:

Villon

"Aduis, m'est que i'oy regreter
La belle que fut heaulmiere,
Soy ieune fille soushaicter
Et parler en telle maniere,
"Ha! vieillesse felonne et fiere
Pourquoy m'as se tost abatue?
Qui me tient? qui? que ne me fiere?
Et qu'a ce coup ie ne me tue?"

Swinburne

"Meseemeth I heard cry and groan
That sweet who was the armourer's maid;
For her young years she made sore moan,
And right upon this wise she said:
"Ah fierce old age with foul bald head,
To spoil fair things thou art over fain;
Who holdeth me? who? would God I were dead
Would God I were well dead and slain!"

With a translation like this one can get Villon's spirit and method without being forced to read his difficult old French. He cannot, however, get everything that Villon wrote, for either Swinburne or his publishers balked at the last three lines of both stanza seven and stanza nine. Shame-faced stars fill out both stanzas. I have as little patience with such translation as Villon
himself would probably have had. Villon's original runs:

"Ces gentes espadrilles menues;
Ces bras longs et ces mains traictisses;
Petit tetines, hanches charmues,
Eslevées, propres, faitiisses
A tenir amoureuses lisses;
Ces larges reins, ce sadinet
Assis sur grosses fermes cuisses,
Detens son petit iardinet?"

Swinburne translates:

"The shapely slender shoulders small,
Long arms, hands wrought in glorious wise,
Round little breasts, the hips withal
High, full of flesh, not scant of size
Fit for all amorous masteries;"

and then stops. So does H. de Vere Stacpool, another of Villon's translators, who, by the way, is no rival of Swinburne's at the task. It is not too much to assume that Swinburne himself is responsible for the expurgation, even tho his reputation might lead to the contrary assumption. He made great claims to a liberal outlook on life, but that liberal outlook was such a one as suited his literary purposes, as for instance in "Laus Veneris,

but when it came to hearty vulgarity, he could not (unless it suited his critical purposes) endorse it. In this he was thoroughly Victorian, and exhibited the impress of his mother's training, who made him promise not to read Byron until he grew up. "How far poetry," he says in one of his prose studies," may
be permitted to go in the line of sensual pleasure or sexual emotion may be debatable between the disciples of Ariosto and the disciples of Milton; but all English readers, I trust, will agree with me that coprology should be left to Frenchmen." 1

He has expressed himself elsewhere as being decidedly averse to the "esprit Gaulois," a thing of which the French sometimes even boast. Unfortunately he was not always consistent in this view; he had the Victorian habit of conveniently forgetting a great many things if he saw fit. That he looked upon Villon's pornography with distaste, however, is still further evidenced perhaps by the fact that he attempted no translation of the former's "La Ballade de Villon et de la Grosse Margot." He evidently believed that this ballad "should be left" to Villon.

Swinburne is particularly happy in his translation of Villon's ballad refrains. In the "Double Ballad of Good Counsel" he renders Villon's refrain

"Bien est eureux qui riens n'y a!"

by

Good luck has he that deals with none!"

This is not only close to the letter but also has the vigorous spirit and movement of the original. H. de Vere Stacpool's

"Happy is he not so undone!"

is ineffective in comparison. The same is true of the "Ballade of the Women of Paris." Villon has

"Il n'ast bon bec que de Paris."

Stacpool renders

"No lips speak like those of Paris."

1. A Study of Ben Jonson, p. 95.
Swinburne translates

"There's no good girl's lip out of Paris."

Even where Swinburne is less literal he has caught the spirit better. In the "Letter in form of a Ballad, to his Friends" the original runs:

"Le lesserez la, le pœuvre Villon?"

Stacpoole translates:

"Will you leave him like this, the poor Villon?"

Swinburne renders:

"Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?"

The famous "Ballade des Dames du Temps Iadis" and the scarcely less meritorious "Ballade Qui Villon Feit a la Requête de sa Mère Pour Prier Nostre-Dame," Swinburne did not attempt to render. Both of these ballads have been excellently rendered by Rossetti. Swinburne in fact speaks, in a note to one of his translations, of Rossetti's translation of the first-named ballad, declaring it to be of such superior merit that any other attempt would be folly. In this case gracious compliment undoubtedly comes close to the truth. If Rossetti, however, was so successful in translating the major "Ballad of Dead Ladies," Swinburne was no less successful, and in some respects, I think, even more so, in translating the "Ballad of Dead Lords." I have seldom seen a more successful attempt at literal poetic translation. I quote the initial stanzas:

Villon

"Cui plus? Où est le tiers Calixte
Dernier décadé de ce nom,
Qui quatre ans tint le papaliste?
Alphonse, le roy d’Aragon,
La gracieux duc de Bourbon,
Et Artus, le duc de Bretaigne,
Et Charles septième, le Bon?
Mais où est le preux Charlemagne.

Swinburne

"What more? Where is the third Calixt,
Last of that name now dead and gone,
Who held four years the Papalist?
Alphonso king of Aragon,
The gracious lord, duke of Bourbon,
And Arthur, duke of old Britaine?
And Charles the Seventh, that worthy one?
Even with the good knight Charlemain."

One concludes after examining Swinburne’s translations of Villon, that their superior quality is due partly to Swinburne’s superior mediaeval and French scholarship, and partly (mirabile dictu!) to the fact that he took few if any liberties with his original. Certainly he showed a high sense of artistic values in not endeavoring to submit Villon’s vigorous and pregnant phrases to his own expansive utterance. As Villon is undoubtedly one of the genuinely great poets of France, and undoubtedly one of the great lyric poets of all time it is, I think, to be regretted that Swinburne did not extend his labors of translation to include at least all the ballads and occasional pieces. As it
is, I do not think it too much to say that his translations from Villon are among the best English translations of foreign lyrics, and certainly far ahead of most.

Among the remaining lyrics in "Poems and Ballads, Second Series" are a short one entitled "From Victor Hugo" and three poems written in French, entitled "Nocturne," "Théophile Gautier," and "Ode (Le Tombeau de Théophile Gautier)." There is also a Latin poem in honor of Gautier entitled: "In Obitum Theophile Poetae." Of these only the "Ode" is a decided success, poetically considered. The others seem perfunctory and mechanical. The "Ode" however is quite as good as some things of Gautier himself, and certainly indicates a wonderful command of a foreign tongue. It seems to me, in fact, that the last stanza is worth quoting:

"L'âme est dans le corps comme une
jeune oiseau
Dont l'aile s'agitau bord du berceau;
La mort, déliant cette aile inquiète,
Quand nous écoutons la bouche muette
Qui nous dit adieu,
Fait de l'homme infime et sombre un poète,
Du poète un dieu."

The above stanza represents fairly well the level of the whole poem, which contains seven stanzas. One needs, I think, to hark back to Milton's Latin verse to find anything equal to it.

A brief reference to "Atlanta in Calydon" (1865), and "Erectheus" (1876), will serve to complete my examination of the
French influences on Swinburne's early work. The genuine and pervasive influence of the ideas which Swinburne derived from Baudelaire and the French Parnassians is certainly confirmed by the fact that those ideas are to be found even in his Greek dramas. One of the famous choruses in "Atlanta in Calydon," as Miss Turquet-Milnes, 1 points out, gives expression to Baudelaire's favorite idea of a universe hostile to man:

"Before the beginning of years
Thére 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."

The same theme is the burden also of the longest chorus in the drama, beginning:

"Who hath given man speech? or who hath set therein
A thorn for peril and a snare for sin?"

This chorus contains the famous passage on "the supreme evil, God."

It is too long to quote in its entirety, but a few excerpts will serve to give some idea of its bitter pessimism, as the following, for instance:

"For the gods very subtly fashion
Madness with sadness upon earth;
Not knowing in any wise compassion,

1. The Influence of Baudelaire, p. 226.
Nor holding pity of any worth;
And many things they have given and taken,
And wrought and ruined many things;
The firm land have they loosed and shaken
And sealed the sea with all her springs;
They have wearied time with heavy burdens
And vexed the lips of life with breath:
Set men to labour and given them guerdons,
Death, and great darkness after death:
Put moans into the bridal measure
And on the bridal wools a stain;
And circled pain about with pleasure
And girdled pleasure about with pain."

A little further on, in the same chorus, comes one of the most
famous passages in all of Swinburne's work: the one in which he
denounces God as the source of all evil:

"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 as 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."

It will be noted that the third line underscored above gives utterance to Swinburne's favorite protest against the Christian interpretation of love, or desire, as an evil thing.

Another chorus in "Atlanta in Calydon" gives expression to the favorite Baudelairian idea of love bringing death and destruction in its train. This chorus is the one beginning with the somewhat Hebraic line:

"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."

The following quotation expresses the fundamental pessimism of the chorus:

"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."

The chorus says that men have been fooled by the sea-born Venus:

"For they knew thee for mother of love,
And knew thee not mother of death."

The introduction of such ideas as the above into "Atlanta in
Calydon" make it almost as much a Hebrew as a Greek drama. There are dozens of lines in it, in fact, which are Biblical both in their manner and content.

"Atlanta in Calydon" was written by 1865, when Swinburne was most under the influence of 19th century French thought. Consequently Swinburne, in spite of a genuine artistic conscience on matters of this kind, could not entirely avoid the introduction of 19th century ideas. By the time of the publication of "Erectheus" (1876), however, he had begun to recover from his youthful enthusiasm, and we find few evidences of Baudelaire remaining. There is still some little mark of the earlier ideas, nevertheless, as might be expected. A long chorus in "Erectheus" thus speaks of Love:

"Oversubtle in doubts, overdaring
In deeds and devices of guile,
And strong to quench as to quicken,
O Love, have we named thee well?"

There is also a trace of the hectic Parnassian manner in two lines from another chorus:

"Woefully wed in a snow-strewn bed
With a bridegroom that kisses the bride's mouth dead;"

The comparative absence of such ideas as those just quoted of course makes for a truer Greek atmosphere.

I have now shown that the greater part of Swinburne's poetic output from 1860 to 1878 was largely influenced by early
French literature, by the 19th century decadent school in France, or by a combination of both. It will be seen that, as will no doubt seem natural, the influence of 19th century French thought was predominant and that the work of Charles Baudelaire furnished the greatest part of this influence. This, as I believe I have already noted, was no doubt due to a natural affinity between the two men, a sympathy with certain mystic and oftentimes morbid ideas of love, life and death. That the influence of Theophile Gautier on Swinburne was not more profound is, I take it, due to his greater objectivity. I have hinted at one or two resemblances to Leconte de Lisle. Of Theodore de Banville Swinburne did not write until many years after the publication of "Poems and Ballads;" consequently his references to this poet will have to be noted incidentally in another chapter. And now as one reads on in Swinburne's later volumes, faint and fainter traces of this earlier influence appear, until they are finally completely overshadowed by the great and commanding genius of Victor Hugo, whose influence I propose to discuss in the next chapter.
CHAPTER VI

THE LATER PERIOD OF HUMANITARIAN INTEREST AND
LYRIC FERVOR - THE INFLUENCE OF VICTOR HUGO

A study of the relation of Swinburne to Victor Hugo reveals on the part of the former an attitude which begins in sincere and fairly reasonable admiration and ends in a foolish and doting adulation. A knowledge of Swinburne's temperament explains this: he was thoroughly Anglo-Saxon in his likes and dislikes, and inherited from his Gallic forefathers little if any of that sense of proportion which is generally conceded as characteristic of the French people. It is consequently natural that his "grand passions" in French literature should have included such men as Villon, Hugo and Baudelaire, all of whom have, temperamentally, more affinity with the English type of mind than the great classic figures like Molière, Racine and Voltaire. Swinburne was, moreover, by nature a romanticist, and fell naturally under the influence of the romantic element in French literature. He in fact represented, according to Mr. H. A. Beers, the spirit of French romanticism in English literature. 1 It is not in the least surprising therefore, that his ardent temperament lavished its excessive artistic affection upon the chief figure in the French romantic movement, Victor Hugo.

Further than this Swinburne and Victor Hugo were natural artistic affinities. They were both essentially lyric poets, highly emotional, egoistic, and sentimental. Anyone who will

take the trouble to read M. Lanson's comments on Victor Hugo's personal and mental characteristics will not be far remote from an estimate of the same things in Swinburne. 1 "L'homme," says M. Lanson, "moralement, est assez mediocre: immensement vaniteux, toujours quêtant admiration du monde, toujours occupé de l'effet - grand artiste avec une âme très bourgeoise." Again, writing his estimate of Hugo's intelligence, he says: "Mais quelle intelligence a-t-il? Hélas! il faut avouer que ce très grand poète est incapable de définir et de raisonner." "Sobald er reflectiert, ist er ein Kind," said Goethe of Byron. Lanson, however, characteristically admits, in a note, that "L'intelligence qui definit et raisonne n'est pas l'unique forme de l'intelligence." Lanson admits further of Hugo, that altho he was not an able thinker, he had the ambition to be one: "Impuissant a penser, il a le respect, la religion de la pensée: il a l'ambition d'être un penseur." He concludes that "en réalité V. Hugo a les gaucheries et les spontanéités de l'humanité primitive: sa raison obscur, troublée de mille problèmes, qu'elle ne peut resoudre." That most of these things with certain modifications, of course, might be written of Swinburne, will be apparent to anyone who is familiar with his prose criticism: a body of critical work rhapsodical and impressionistic to the last degree, showing indeed the ambition to be a thinker, but as a general thing, a decided inability to be one. A remark of M. Brunetière on Hugo may also be applied to Swinburne with scarcely a modification: "Le premier caractère, que nous

1. Lanson, G. Histoire de la Littérature Française, pp. 1051.
The impress of Victor Hugo's influence begins to appear early in Swinburne's work even when other influences were predominant. He became acquainted with the great Frenchman's work, it appears, while at Oxford, and by the time he published "Poems and Ballads, First Series", was imitating him and writing poems in his honor. I have referred in a previous chapter to "A Song in Time of Order," "A Song in Time of Revolution," and "To Victor Hugo," all of which appeared in "Poems and Ballads, First Series."

"To Victor Hugo" is an ode in the pseudo-Pindaric style which Hugo himself affected. The other two poems indicate the humanitarian interest which Hugo was beginning to stir up in his young disciple. "Poems and Ballads, Second Series," as I have also heretofore indicated, shows a distinct increase of the Hugonic spirit. Such poems as "For the Feast of Giordano Bruno," with its effusive apostrophe and eulogistic trumpetings; "A Song in Season"; "To Victor Hugo," an inferior sonnet; "To Victor Hugo in 1877", another inferior sonnet; and such polemical lyrics as "The White Czar" and "Rizpah," — to name only part of the number — are evidences that Victor Hugo was beginning to assert an unquestionable influence.

2. The two poems mentioned appear in "Songs before Sunrise."
It is necessary to note here, in order to prevent a misunderstanding of the evolution of Hugo's influence on Swinburne, that even previous to the publication of "Poems and Ballads, Second Series" (1878) Swinburne had written "A Song of Italy" (1867), "Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic" (1870) and "Dirae," a series of political sonnets, all of which were published under the title: "Songs of Two Nations" in 1875; and even before this (1871) the volume entitled "Songs Before Sunrise" appeared. These two collections, containing many examples of lyric inflation, for which Hugo was in all probability largely responsible, are the earliest of Swinburne's publications which show the influence of Hugo predominant. After them, if we leave the tragedies, which will be considered in another chapter, out of the question, come "Songs of the Springtides" (1880), "Studies in Song" (1880), and "Poems and Ballads, Third Series" (1887). There might also be some question as to whether Swinburne was directly influenced by Hugo in the composition of the famous epic narrative "Tristram of Lyonesse" (1882), and "The Tale of Balen" (1896), based like "Tristram of Lyonesse" on Arthurian legend. It is only reasonable to suppose, however, that since the genius of either man was essentially lyric, the influence of Victor Hugo would be most clearly seen in Swinburne's lyrics, rather than in his epics or dramas. Among minor publications after 1880, "A Century of Roundels" (1883), "A Midsummer Holiday" (1884), certain pamphlets in verse ("A Word for the Navy", "The Question," etc.) "Astrophel" (1894), "A Channel Passage" (1904), — all these owe
something to the power of Victor Hugo's influence on his English
disciple. It would, in fact, not be going much out the way to
say that most of what Swinburne wrote after 1878 owed more to
Victor Hugo than to any other one source.

The reader is now doubtless ready to hear how Swinburne
followed his great French model along the paths of lyric com-
position. A convenient approach to the solution of this question
may be made by determining the sources of Victor Hugo's lyric in-
spiration and the nature of his poetical method, and then
attempting to show how Swinburne's own sources and methods were
similar.

The versatility of Victor Hugo's genius was remarkable.
He produced work of permanent importance in practically every
department of creative literature. We are scarcely concerned,
however, with anything else than his lyric poetry here; and
Hugo's poetical genius, as I have already said, was essentially
lyrical. His lyrical output itself was very large. It comprised:
"Odes et Ballades" (1836); "Les Orientales" (1829); "Les Feuilles
D'Automne" (1831); "Les Chants du Crépuscule" (1835); "Les Voix
Intérieures" (1837); "Les Rayons et les Ombres" (1840); "Les Con-
templations" (1856); "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" (1865);
"L'Année Terrible" (1871); "L'Art d'être Grandpère" (1877); "Le
Pape" (1878); "La Pitié Suprême" (1879); "Réligion et Réligions"
(1880); "L'Ane" (1880); "Les Quatres Vents de L'Esprit" (1861);
and posthumously "Toute La Lyre" (1888-1893); and "La Dernière
Gerbe" (1902). In addition to these lyrical volumes I may have
occasion to refer in this chapter to "Les Chatiments," a volume

The source of much of Hugo's lyric poetry was undoubtedly general humanitarian interest, and in particular, political interest. "Odes et Ballades," his earliest volume, gave sufficient evidence of this. It was undoubtedly also, this phase of Victor Hugo's poetical activity that first attracted Swinburne's notice, and influenced him most. In Hugo's "Odes et Ballades" we find such titles as "Le Poète dans les Révolutions," "Les Vierges de Verdun," "Les Funérailles de Louis XVI," "La Guerre D'Espagne," "La Liberté," "Buonaparte," - to name only a part of them. In Swinburne's "Songs of Two Nations" and "Songs before Sunrise" we are constantly met by such titles as "A Song of Italy," "Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic," "The Eve of Revolution," "The Halt before Rome" - to name only a few. All these lyrics with their constant apostrophizing, their effusive compliments, their endless repetition cannot fail to remind anyone familiar with Hugo's lyric style, of the great Frenchman's political "odes." It might be objected here that Swinburne had sufficient inspiration for the "Songs of Two Nations" and "The Songs before Sunrise" in the Italian struggle for liberty, and did not need the example of anyone to act as a spark to the powder of his enthusiasm. To such an objection a very definite answer can be returned. The genius of Swinburne's poetry was essentially derivative and literary: no less than three of
Swinburne's critics have borne witness to this. I have already referred to Mr. Edmund Gosse's statement to that effect in the Dictionary of National Biography. To the same purpose, Mr. J. W. Mackail, in a lecture on Swinburne before Oxford University said: "Swinburne, a born man of letters -- had (in the ordinary sense) little interest in public affairs or social movements --. Letters were to him three-fourths of life; the poets were, in a closer sense than the rest of mankind, his own flesh and blood. His early reverence for Landor, his lifelong worship of Victor Hugo, are but two of the most striking instances out of many. In this statement Mr. Mackail was simply repeating the earlier judgment of William Morris -- as he in fact acknowledges later on in his lecture. Of William Morris in this connection, Mr. Arthur Compton-Rickett says: "Swinburne's early work interested him, but he was little attracted by his later writings. 'He derives too much from Literature -- too little from Life' he said." After which comes the illuminating remark: "Pater's style bored him." - If we grant then, that Swinburne's genius was essentially derivative, it is merely a logical next step to assign a literary inspiration for his political lyrics. That inspiration is to be found in the political lyrics of Victor Hugo.

Some comparison of Victor Hugo's lyric humanitarianism with that of Swinburne may now be made. In the first place investigation soon convinces one that specific textual concordances are rare and unimportant. This is explained by the fact that the subject-matter of Swinburne's political lyrics was different from
that of Hugo's. The sources of the political lyrics in "Odes et Ballades," "Les Chants du Crepuscule," and here and there in other collections, lay mostly in events long anterior to those of which Swinburne wrote. It is largely of the manner or rather mannerism of Hugo that we may find an echo in Swinburne. Conceiving that his subject is a lofty one, Hugo fills his odes with lofty apostrophes: at times he almost deluges his unoffending subject with compliments or questions - which is as much as to say of course that his political verse is rhetorical. I should say that "oratorical" is even a better word, for Hugo, at his most inflated moments reminds me of nothing so much as a long-winded orator. In the first three strophes of "Les Vierges de Verdun" one of his best political odes, there are, for instance, fifteen rhetorical questions and four exclamations. In three strophes of Swinburne's "The Eve of Revolution" I find ten rhetorical questions and two exclamations. The predominance of the rhetorical question in both Hugo and Swinburne, as an emphatic device, is easily established by investigation. It is characteristic of the temper of such men that they should like to ask questions which they can answer themselves. In "The Hymn of Man" Swinburne has twelve rhetorical questions in the first thirty-eight lines. In "A la Colonne" Victor Hugo has fifteen rhetorical questions in about the same number of lines. The

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1. In "Odes et Ballades."
2. In "Songs before Sunrise". The three strophes referred to are numbered 17, 18, and 19.
3. In "Songs before Sunrise."
4. In "Odes et Ballades."
tion goes is "La Bande Noire"\(^1\) which has twenty-five exclamation points in the first thirty lines. I cannot find a passage in Swinburne to match this, though he by no means makes sparing use of the exclamation point. In general, however, he is much more given to the use of the rhetorical question than the exclamation — in fact, rather outdoes Hugo in this particular.

In addition to this similarity in the use of rhetorical devices and mannerisms — things which make for what I have already called "inflated lyricism"—Hugo and Swinburne are both given to poetical dogma and aphorism, especially where humanitarian interests are involved. Hugo, for instance, in "Quiberon"\(^2\) begins the ode:

\begin{quote}
"Par ses propres fureurs le maudit se devoile,
Dans le démon vainqueur on voit l'ange proscrit;
L'anathème éternel, qui poursuit son étoile
Dans ses succès même est écrit.
\end{quote}

And notice a similar spirit in this quotation from Swinburne's "Hymn of Man":

\begin{quote}
"Not each man of all men is God, but
God is the fruit of the whole;
Indivisible spirit and blood, indiscernible body from soul.
Not men's but man's is the glory of godhead the kingdom of time,
\end{quote}

1. In "Odes et Ballades."
2. Ibid.
The mountainous ages made hoary with snows for the spirit to climb.

With Hugo of course this tendency was a result of his sincere belief in the function of the poet as a teacher.\(^1\) With Swinburne it was partly an emanation from his personality, and partly a literary derivation from Hugo. Both men were unduly impressionable to sound, and there is usually more of sound in aphorism and dogma than anything else.

The "extreme and general facility of emotion" of which M. Brunetière speaks in his book on Victor Hugo, previously referred to, is of course, very evident in his political lyrics. He proceeds with the greatest rapidity from one mood to another—from exclamations of joy and surprise to groans of doubt and shouts of defiance—almost any idea will set him off like a cannon-cracker. "He absorbs", as M. Brunetière further says, "all exterior reality in his own personality." \(^2\) It is only fair to assume that Swinburne, who had a good share of this "extreme facility of emotion" himself, should have absorbed more of it from his continual study of Victor Hugo. In "A Year's Burden," \(^3\) for instance, he begins with "hopes and doubts and fears," "winds" and "clouds" and "hours", but passes immediately to "songs" and "stars", and then to "France" and "Rome," and then to the "soul republican," and so on. It is this easy faculty of jumping from one idea to another, of absorbing the stars and

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3. In "Songs before Sunrise."
the winds and other natural objects and attributes in his own personality which makes Swinburne's poetry hard to read; and the same thing can be said of Victor Hugo. There is often a unity of tone, perhaps usually, but the unity of idea is sometimes broken to bits.

Not the least notable thing about the political songs of both Hugo and Swinburne is their religious coloring. In Hugo it takes the form, according to M. Ernest Dupuy, of a mystic Catholicism: in Swinburne it seems to be pantheism, or possibly the positivism of Comte. I suspect one would come nearer the truth if he merely said that each poet used religion for his own purposes. Certainly Swinburne mixes Christianity, pantheism, positivism, and paganism in a profusion of metaphors and addresses to the powers above the earth. M. Dupuy quotes several of Hugo's titles as representative of a "mystic catholicism, among them "Vision", a sort of diminutive lyric apocalypse; "La Liberte;" "Dernier Chant"; "La Mort de Mademoiselle de Sombreuil", a hymn to virgin sanctity; and "Le Dévouement, in which the poet aspires to be a martyr. There is undoubtedly a definitive mystic catholicism in these lyrics, but it is inseparably connected in Hugo's mind with humanitarian interest. For instance in "Vision":

"Près du trone ou dort le tonnerre
Parut un spectre centenaire
Par l'ange des Francais conduit;"

In "La Liberte" he calls Liberty

1. Victor Hugo, L'Homme et le Poete, p. 94.
"Sœur auguste des rois, fille sainte de Dieu,"

and again

"O France! C'est au ciel qu'en nos jours

de colère

A fui la Liberté, mère des saints exploits;"

In "Moïse sur le Nil", which seems merely a lyric recounting the story of the prophet's origin, he is evidently thinking in the last two stanzas of France even when he sings of Israel:

"Mortels, vous dont l'orgueil méconnait

L'Eternel,

Fléchissez; un berceau va sauver Israel,

Un berceau doit sauver le monde!" ¹

Certain echoes of Hugo's religious interest are to be found, it seems to me, in such poems of Swinburne as "Super Flumina Babylonis" with its Biblical title and manner superposed on a modern political theme. Swinburne's purpose is in fact much more evident than that of Hugo in "Moïse sur le Nil," inasmuch as the title and the first few stanzas are only an excuse for introducing Italy and her wrongs. "A Watch in the Night" also has a religious atmosphere with its

"Prophet, what of the night?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Christian, what of the night?

. . . . . . . . . . . .

High priest, what of the night?"

¹. All poems quoted as representative of Hugo's use of religion are to be found in "Odes et Ballades".
and this piece of metaphysical idealism:

"Master, what of the night? —
Child, night is not at all
Anywhere, fallen or to fall,
Save in our star-stricken eyes;
Forth of our eyes it takes flight
Look we but once nor before
Nor behind us, but straight on the skies,
Night is not then any more."

In "Blessed Among Women" we have a religious idea suggesting a humanitarian theme: the Virgin Mary suggesting the mother of an Italian patriot. The opening stanza is pure lyric Christianity:

"Blessed was she that bare,
Hidden in flesh most fair,
For all men's sake the likeness of all love;
Holy that virgin's womb,
The old record saith, on whom
The glory of God alighted as a dove;
Blessed, who brought to gracious birth
The sweet-souled Savior of a man-tormented earth."

The next stanza immediately takes up the comparison and makes a humanitarian application. It is, then, not to be understood that Swinburne was a Christian poet: the pantheism of "Hertha," the positivism of the "Hymn of Man," and the castigation of Christianity in "Before a Crucifix" indicate all to clearly that he had
never satisfactorily assimilated Christian doctrine. With him religion, Christian or otherwise, was even more of a secondary matter than it was with Hugo; for the latter, as has been noted, devotes certain entire poems to the utterance of Christian virtue, while Swinburne, even in his favorable mention of religion, only uses it incidentally. Christianity for him, in a more limited sense than for Hugo, was "la source précieuse du pittoresque," which is as much as to say that his interest in religion was largely aesthetic. In this respect he was a true Pre-Raphaelite. It is necessary also to say here, in concluding my comments on the use of a religion in Hugo and Swinburne, that the latter was confirmed, in all probability, in his leaning to positivism and pantheism, by the fact that his great French master gave expression, in certain volumes, of a leaning in that direction himself.

There is little doubt but that Swinburne either consciously or unconsciously absorbed the stateliness and variety of movement which is to be found in Hugo's political lyrics, and attempted to imitate the grand sonority of their most majestic lines. The variety of movement to be found in such poems as "Sunt Lacrymae Rerum" and "A L'Arc de Triomphe," where Hugo varies from the alexandrine couplet to the iambic trimeter and various complicated stanza forms, is echoed in such poems of Swinburne as the "Ode on the Insurrection in Candia," in "Songs

2. Ibid, p. 119.
3. "Les Voix Interieures."
before Sunrise," and the "Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic," in "Songs of Two Nations." Swinburne, following Hugo, attempted to add a characteristic 19th century individualism and humanitarian interest to the faded mythological metaphors of the Pindaric ode as practiced by J.-B. Rousseau and Lebrun in France, and by Cowley and others in England. This implied a heightened emotional effect and demanded a new "orchestration," to use a term of M. Brunetière. This new "orchestration" consisted chiefly in more sudden and abrupt changes from one measure to another, and the development of more complicated stanza forms. The "Sunt Lacrymae Rerum" of Hugo, for instance, has five changes in stanza-form and a variety of metre within the first ten pages, there being one change within a strophe; and Swinburne's "Ode on the Insurrection in Candia" has five changes in stanza-form and a constant change in measure. This metrical variety is to be found of course in other poems of Hugo and Swinburne besides those inspired by political feeling, but it is most strongly marked in the latter, by virtue of their subject matter.

I believe I have now indicated the chief resemblances between the political lyrics of Swinburne and those of Victor Hugo. Swinburne's poems devoted to a celebration of Liberty in the abstract, that is, without definite political application, derive, doubtless, some of their inspiration from Hugo, but it is difficult to find any specific textual resemblances. There is a resemblance in atmosphere and tone between Hugo's "La Liberté" and Swinburne's "Mater Triumphalis," for instance, but the stanza-form and measure are different. The nearest thing to a textual
resemblance between the two poems is to be found in Hugo's
"Soeur auguste des rois, fille sainte de Dieu"
and Swinburne's
"Mother of man's time-travelling generations."
The tendency of Swinburne toward political hero-worship may have
been stimulated by Hugo. The latter's interest in the Greek
patriot Canaris, which Dupuy considers to be simply the emanation
of an artistic temperament, may be compared to Swinburne's
interest in Mazzini. Hugo addressed two poems to Canaris in
"Les Chants du Crepuscule." Swinburne's "Lines on the Monument
of Guiseppe Mazzini" is to be found in the volume entitled "A
Midsummer Holiday."
A phase of Swinburne's lyric practice which is very
meagerly represented in the first two volumes of "Poems and
Ballads", and which later developed a considerable volume of poet-
ry, is the general humanitarian interest in individual character
and achievement. Aside from the elegies on Baudelaire and Gautier
and a few insignificant tributes to Victor Hugo his earlier
volumes contained little but erotic studies of one kind or
another. In the later volumes, however, such as "Studies in
Song," "A Midsummer Holiday, and Other Poems," "Astrophel and
Other Poems," there is a tremendous increase in the number of
poems commemorating individual character and achievement. In
"A Midsummer Holiday," and "Astrophel", alone, there are at least
twenty such poems of varying length, and most of them, be it said
with regret, too uninteresting to take the reader's attention from his daily bread. Another phase of this same interest is to be found in the collection entitled "Sonnets on English Dramatic Poets", where the interest is distinctly literary and derived, instead of humanitarian, but still undertakes to develop the general idea of achievement, if not of character. The example of Victor Hugo is probably responsible for this considerable body of Swinburne's poetry. The former was much given, throughout his career, to telling his contemporaries, and others, living or dead, his judgment of them: the sententious dogmatic temperament delights in that sort of thing. It is only reasonable to suppose, therefore, that Swinburne, growing older and more serious after the revels with "Faustine", "Féline", "Dolores" and others, should have become more and more dogmatic as he imbibed Hugo's dogmatism and more inclined to a garrulous discussion of the virtues of men after having concerned himself so long with the vices of women. There is something, moreover, which appeals to temperaments like those of Swinburne and Hugo, in the imposing nature of titles, like "Song for the Centenary of Walter Savage Landor," or "Le Mort du Duc de Berry": the poet appears to himself to borrow an added dignity from the sonority of his title, and at the same time unconsciously gives himself credit for taking more than the usual interest in his fellow man. Allowing, however, for the fact that much of Swinburne's eulogy and diatribe in verse is tiresome and long-winded, exception must be made for the "Song for the Centenary of Walter Savage Landor," already mentioned, a sonnet entitled "On the Death of Richard Doyle," the French
poem celebrating the death of Theodore de Banville, entitled "Au Tombeau de Banville," and a few others. The sonnet just mentioned, which seems to have escaped the notice of critics, who were probably too weary to read it when they came to it, is in a simpler and more effective style than most of Swinburne's elegiac verse. The sestette, which is fairly representative of the whole, deserves to be quoted:

"Let waters of the Golden River steep
The rose-roots whence his grave blooms rosy red,
And murmuring of Hyblaean bees be deep
About the summer silence of its bed,
And nought less gracious than a violet peep
Between the grass grown greener round his head."

The French poem on de Banville, doubtless because of the restraint imposed by the use of a foreign language, is much simpler and better than many of his English lyrics. The line

"Melicerte, poète a la bouche de miel"

is certainly one that might attract attention, even in a native French poet's work.

I have now to consider what is perhaps to many readers the most attractive portion of Swinburne's lyric product: his child poetry. Here again evidence from the evolution of Swinburne's poetical genius points to the influence of Victor Hugo. In "Poems and Ballads, First Series", for instance, there is not a single child poem, and only two or three which indicate the in-
fluence of Hugo. In "Poems and Ballads, Second Series" there are two child poems, and the influence of Hugo in this volume, as I have indicated, is such as, at least, to be worthy of remark. But, in "Studies in Song" (1880), and "A Century of Roundels" (1883), together, there are thirty or more lyrics on juvenile themes. Since I have already indicated the influence of Hugo on "Songs before Sunrise (1880), and on poems in other collections published at this time or a little later, it seems to me merely logical to assume that Victor Hugo's notable penchant for child verse influenced Swinburne. The truth is that anyone who realizes the extent of Swinburne's Hugonic idolatry - to what extravagant lengths of rapture and delusion it went - will have little difficulty in believing in his influence on Swinburne wherever influence was possible. There is, however, specific evidence of Swinburne's indebtedness to Victor Hugo for his method in juvenile poetry.

To begin with, Swinburne makes several references, either overt or covert, to Victor Hugo's prééminence in the domain of child poetry. In "Six Years Old",\(^1\) for instance, he undoubtedly refers to Hugo in the last stanza:

"Could love make worthy music of you
And match my Master's powers,
Had even my love less heart to love you,
A better song were ours;
With all the rhymes like stars above you
And all the words like flowers.

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1. In "Studies in Song."
In this stanza Swinburne not only intimates that Hugo is his "master," but he was probably also thinking of one of Hugo's poems when he wrote the last two lines. Compare them, for example, with the following, which is a theme of many variations in Hugo's child verse:

"O mes amis! l'enfance aux riantes couleurs
Donne la poésie à nos vers, comme aux fleurs
L'aurore donne la rosée!"  

Again, in the postscript to "Twins" Swinburne writes:

"Friends, if I could take
Half a note from Blake
Or but one verse make
Of the Conqueror's mine,
Better than my best
Song above your nest
I would sing: the quest
Now seems too divine.

The "Conqueror" here could scarcely be anyone else than Victor Hugo. One wonders whether the "Conqueror" himself would have realized the extravagant bad taste of the epithet applied to him. Further, in "A Dark Month," the longest of Swinburne's poems about children, the author prefaces the poem with a quotation from Hugo:

"La maison sans enfants!"

This is the last line of one of Hugo's finest child poems, the

2. In "A Century of Roundels."
last stanza of which deserves to be quoted:

"Seigneur! préservez-moi, préservez ceux que j'aime
Frères, parents, amis, et mes ennemis même
Dans le mal triomphants,
De jamais voir, Seigneur! l'été sans fleurs vermeilles
La cage sans oiseaux, la ruche sans abeilles,
La maison sans enfants! "

This fine stanza, it may be well to point out here, not only furnished Swinburne the quotation noted above, and the idea for "A Dark Month," but also judging from its sentiment, the theme for what seems to me his finest child poem, "The Salt of the Earth." A quotation of the last two stanzas of this perfect little lyric will serve to indicate its resemblance to Hugo's poem:

"Though the utmost life of life's best hours
Found, as it cannot now find, words;
Though desert sands were sweet as flowers
And flowers could sing like birds

But children never heard them, never
They felt a child's foot leap and run,
This were a drearier star than ever
Yet locked upon the sun."

2. In "A Century of Roundels."
Most of Swinburne's juvenile poetry has something of this same worship of the child; in "Comparisons" we find practically the same note struck as in the quotation above:

"The dawn were not more cheerless
With neither light nor dew
Than we without the fearless
Clear laugh that thrills us through:
If ever child stood peerless,
Love' knows that child is you."

One of the most distinctive features of Swinburne's method in his child lyrics is his tendency to record visual impressions and derive therefrom similes and metaphors. In this phase of his work are to be found some of his most delicate and effective artistic conceptions; conceptions which conceal the superiority of their art in its simplicity. The best example of this is perhaps the often quoted "Etude Réaliste," of which I quote a few representative lines:

"A baby's hands like rosebuds furled
Whence yet no leaf expands,
Ope if you touch, though close upcurled,
A baby's hands.

Then, fast as warriors grip their brands
,When battle's bolt is hurled,
They close, clenched hard like tightening bands.

The comparison between the child and the warrior in the last
three lines is one of those seeming poetical extravagances which is immensely effective, because the reader not only unconsciously senses the strong man into which the child will grow, but is pleased with the humor of imagining the child's grip so strong. Now the significance of this visual method in the "Étude Réaliste" and other pieces, is, for my purpose, that it resembles rather markedly Victor Hugo's own method. He had, as his French critics generally admit, an abnormally developed visual perception, so that natural features seemed to stand out in relief, as if to the sculptor's eye. This faculty is nowhere more simply and effectively seen than in the second line of "Jeanne Endormie," which is, in my opinion, one of the greatest poems ever inspired by a child. It combines pathos, satire, humor, and love in almost perfect proportions, so that one feels almost like launching into a Swinburnian encomium of the author's genius. I shall confine myself, however, to quoting the first two lines, the second of which is the one I wish to cite:

"Elle dort; ses beaux yeux se rouvrivent demain;
Et mon doigt qu'elle tient dans l'ombre emplit sa main;

Here the severe and photographic simplicity is relieved only by the poetical addition of "dans l'ombre," and yet the whole is effective poetically as a piece of pathetic observation properly placed. The earlier poems of Hugo contain more examples of this visual method in juvenile poetry. A good example

1. In "L'Art d'Être Grandpere," p. 107. This is the second poem of that title in the volume.
is the lyric already cited in "Les Feuilles D'Automne" in which a stanza runs:

"Il est si beau, l'enfant avec son doux sourire
Sa douce bon foi, sa voix qui veut tout dire
Ses pleurs vite apaisés,
Laissant errer sa vue étonnée et ravie
Offrant de toutes parts sa jeune âme à la vie
Et sa bouche aux baisers!"

More affinity in tone is perhaps to be found in one of Hugo's earliest attempts at child poetry: "Le Portrait d'une Enfant," in "Odes et Ballades," of which the following is the third stanza:

"On dirait qu'elle écoute un choeur de
voix célestes,
Que, de loin, des vierges modestes
Elle entend l'appel gracieux;
"A son joyeux regard, a son naïf sourire,
On serait tenté de lui dire:
- Jeune ange, que fut ton martyr,
Et quel est ton nom dans les cieux?"

Here we have the attitude of veneration so prominent in Swinburne's child verse.

In turning from the child poetry of Swinburne and Victor Hugo to a consideration of other poetry to be found in their many volumes, one is perhaps first inclined to think of their nature poetry. Both men were nature lovers - "landscape

1. "Lorsque l'enfant apparaît - ."
lovers, lords of language" - and both wrote a considerable bulk of nature poetry. Both men loved the sea, Swinburne perhaps with the more ardent devotion, and both wrote of it with superior force and charm. It is in fact necessary to say that the bulk of Swinburne's nature poetry has to do with the sea; and there are few of his longer poems, according to my recollection, in which some reference is not made to the sea. He had a peculiar habit of ending his longer poems with the word "sea" as if he experienced a sense that all poetical frenzy was swallowed up in the thought of its waves. To him, as to Byron, the sea was almost a living thing, and he had the old Anglo-Saxon love of its vastness and eternal stability. As to the resemblance, however, between the general nature poetry of Swinburne and that of Victor Hugo - I must confess that it does not strike me as marked. There is, it is true, the same tendency to make use of the contrasts of light and shade - a thing fundamental in Victor Hugo's poetry - and a certain resemblance at times in the imaginative nature of their concrete imagery, but in general the attitude toward nature seems to me to be different. Victor Hugo's nature studies are almost certain, in the long run of a poem, to identify themselves with human activity, or aspiration - or with human misery: Swinburne's nature poems on the other hand, seem to me to be written by reason of the fact that Swinburne delighted in nature for nature's sake, not because of any assumed sympathy with man. A few examples will indicate this difference:

The natural touches, for instance, in Hugo's "Dans le Cimetière de ---" are beautiful, but very simple, and entirely

1. In "Les Rayons et les Ombres."
incidental to the presence of the poet himself in the cemetery. Two stanzas of the poem will serve very well, in fact, to indicate Hugo's general use of nature:

"Regardant sans les voir des vagues scarabées,
Des rameaux indistincts, des formes, des couleurs,
La, j'ai dans l'ombre, assis sur des pierres tombées,
Des éblouissements de rayons et de fleurs.

"Comme au creux du rocher vole l'humble colombe,
Cherchant la goutte d'eau qui tombe avant le jour,
Mon esprit altéré, dans l'ombre de la tombe,
Va boire un peu de foi d'espérance et d'amour!"

Hugo, in true romantic fashion, uses nature, somewhat as Baudelaire does, for the purpose of establishing "correspondences" and comparisons: Swinburne, deriving undoubtedly more from the Greek, is more concerned with the objective aspects of nature, as can be easily seen by anyone familiar with such poems as "Off Shore," "By the North Sea," "Evening on the Broads", and "A Channel Passage." For the most part the art of Swinburne in these poems is that of a painter turned musician, or a musician turned painter: the undertones of human joy or sorrow, tho un-
deniably there, are purely incidental to their natural setting. To the "Moi, superbe et bouffe" of Victor Hugo, this sort of thing was seldom satisfactory: nature was incidental to him and not he to nature. In such poems of Swinburne as "Thalassíus,"¹ and "On the Cliffs"¹ there is more of a human element, but it is a primitive Greek pantheism, not a romantic mysticism. It is perhaps in the nine lyrics which compose the sequence entitled "A Midsummer Holiday" that Swinburne comes nearest to Hugo in his use of nature. There is something in these poems of the same spirit which pervades Hugo's justly celebrated "Tristesse D'Olympio,"² one of the greatest of French lyrics, and certainly one of the triumphs of 19th century poetry. This spirit is seen in the tendency to take suggestions from natural surroundings and apply them to human life. Swinburne, for example, in "The Seaboard" writes:

"The waves are a joy to the seamen, the meads to the herd, 
And a joy to the heart is a goal that it may not reach."

And again, in the same:

"Friend, what have we sought, or seek we whate'er betide
Though the seaboard shift its mark from afar descried

---

¹. In "Songs of the Springtides".
². In "Les Rayons et les Ombres".
But aims whence ever anew shall arise the soul?

Love, thought, song, life, but show for a glimpse and hide

The goal that is not and ever again the goal."

In the following stanza from the "Tristesse D'Olympio" there is about the same proportion of natural background and the same questioning of fate suggested by meditation on nature, but the lyric cry in Hugo's verse reechoes in far remoter chambers of the imagination:

"N'existons nous donc plus? Avons nous eu notre heure?

Rien ne la rendra-t-il a nos cris superflus?
L'air joue avec la branche au moment ou je pleure;
Ma maison me regarde et ne me connait plus."

There are few if any lines in Swinburne which set in motion any such echoes as reply to the last line above.

One notable idea associated with nature and man which the "Midsummer Holiday" and the "Tristesse D'Olympio" both make use of, is the idea of change, which Swinburne in the "Mill Garden" calls Change alone the changeless lord of things,
alone the same:

Again, in "The Cliffside Path" he says:

"Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand."
Yet in these poems one is in general more impressed by the
general change in nature, than by its equivalent in man. Here,
in the words of Dryden, is "God's plenty" of lyric description,
sonorous and full of light and shadow, but upon which the shadow
of human melancholy is light and drifting, like a sleepy line
of dark cloud upon the horizon of a sunset. In contrast to this
the dramatic dominance of human despair fills the forests of
Victor Hugo with cries, and reechoes even from the fountain where
the nymph of his early adoration was wont to bathe:

"D'autres auront nos champs, nos sentiers,
nos retraites.
Ton bois, ma bien-aimée, est a des inconnus.
D'autres femmes viendront, baigneuses
indiscrètes,
Troubler le flot sacré qu'ont toutes tes
pieds nus."

Or again in this

"Quoi donc! c'est vainement qu'ici nous
nous aimâmes!
Rien ne nous restera de ces coteaux fleuris
Où nous fondions notre être en y melant
nos flammes!
L'impassible nature a déjà tout repris."

And finally, Swinburne never rose to any such heightened con-
ception of change and nature as this:

"Tout les passions s'éloignent avec l'âge,
L'une emportant son masque et l'autre son couteau,
Comme un essaim chantant d'histrions en voyage

Dont le groupe décroit derrière le coteau."

This variety and degree of imagination is characteristic of Shakespeare: it is found now and then in Byron and Wordsworth: but it is almost unknown in Swinburne.

Of all Victor Hugo's lyrics perhaps the "Soleils Chants" in "Les Feuilles D'Automne" comes the nearest to Swinburne's general treatment of nature. In this poem Hugo is more concerned than usual with pure natural description:

"Le soleil, à travers leurs ombres,
brille encor;

Tantôt fait, à l'égal des larges dômes d'or
Luire le toit d'une chaumière,

Ou dispute aux brouillards des vagues horizons;

Ou découpe, en tombant sur les ombres gazons,

Comme de grands lacs de lumière."

The above is a good example, a primary instance, in fact, of Victor Hugo's fundamental principle of light and shade (le rayon et l'ombre.) If he was deeply conscious of any artistic value, it was this one of the contrast between light and shade and its relation to the artistic unity of effect. Now Swinburne is of the company of Victor Hugo in his pronounced tendency to make use of light and shade, in his extreme impressionability to
their existence, but he is concerned with their contrasts not for themselves, but as they enhance the glimmering indistinctness of his abstract conceits. Victor Hugo, on the other hand was able to keep the details of a picture and their unified effect in mind at the same time. The inability of Swinburne to accomplish this is without much question responsible for the blur of color on some of his canvases: they give the effect at times of an impressionistic painting. In Swinburne one is almost always conscious of a unity of tone, but the lines of his picture are indistinct. He conceives his subject in a much more abstract fashion than does Victor Hugo. For instance, in "Off Shore", one of the collection of lyrics published under the title "Studies in Song," he represents a swimmer as viewing from far above the vegetation on the floor of the sea:

"Bright bank over bank
Making glorious the gloom
Soft rank upon rank,
Strange bloom after bloom,
They kindle the liquid low twilight, the dusk
of the dim sea's womb.

Thru the subtle and tangible
Gloom without form
Their branches infrangible
Ever of storm,
Spread softer their sprays than the shoots of
the woodland when April is warm."
The relatively abstract conception of the above, its indistinctness of line, are significant when compared with most of Victor Hugo's natural descriptions.

I have said enough to indicate that the differences between the nature poetry of Swinburne and that of Hugo are as marked as their resemblances, if not more so. One is left to infer that Swinburne was influenced, in all probability, by the minor details of choice of words, variety of stanza forms, etc. Swinburne, in truth, as Mr. Edward Thomas says, had "a harem of words, to all of which he was faithful," and Victor Hugo's French critics have more decorously said the same thing about him. The variety of metre and stanzaic form in both Hugo and Swinburne is also a matter of commonplace knowledge, but an examination will reveal that there was no direct imitation on the part of Swinburne. This is easily explained on the basis of the fundamental differences between the French and English languages. The effective realization of the power of sound on the part of both poets scarcely needs elucidation. Innumerable examples could be cited from both poets to show that they were supremely concerned with both sound and movement, and that Swinburne was often concerned with them to his great disadvantage. The important thing to remember, it seems to me, is that in his nature poetry Swinburne was a great verbal and metrical artist delighting in the dominant tones of Nature herself, and that Victor Hugo was a great verbal and metrical artist delighting in the dominant contrasts in Nature as they could be made to typify the dominant contrasts
of human existence.

I have now to consider the poetical documents and monuments of Swinburne's admiration for Victor Hugo. These are eight in number of which only two or three are of any importance. The first one in point of time is a rather long ode\(^1\) included in "Poems and Ballads, First Series." This is in general a fairly creditable piece of work, over-eulogistic perhaps, and too long, but containing certain excellent lines such as:

"Or 'wailed, as in some flooded cave
Sobs the strong broken spirit of a wave."

It gives utterance to Swinburne's belief in his indebtedness to Hugo:

"I whose young song took flight
Toward the great heat and light
On me a child from thy far splendour shed,

and evidences particularly what humanitarian throes the great Frenchman had set in motion in his young disciple's breast:

"Ah, not with lessening love
For memories born hereof,
I look to that sweet mother-land and see
The old fields and fair full streams,
And skies, but fled like dreams
The feet of freedom and the thought of thee;
And all between the skies and graves
The mirth of mockers and the shame of slaves.

\(^1\) "To Victor Hugo," p. 155.
Of two sonnets in "Poems and Ballads, Second Series", it is not necessary to take any notice. "A Midsummer Holiday," however, contains three poems of more importance. They are "On the Bicentenary of Corneille, celebrated under the Presidency of Victor Hugo;" "Victor Hugo, L'Archipel de la Manche;" and "A New Year Ode: to Victor Hugo." The first two of these poems are fourteen-line lyrics constructed on the sonnet plan, as far as rhyme goes, but in a swinging trochaic metre. The one on Corneille gives voice to Swinburne's belief that Hugo was a greater poet than Corneille himself, and the second poem celebrates Victor Hugo's lyric descriptions of the English Channel and its scenery. "A New Year Ode: to Victor Hugo" celebrates the epic greatness of Hugo's "La Légende de Siècles," as Swinburne's own annotation makes clear. He begins the ode with lofty exposition and laudation of the effect which the epic first produced on him. Thereafter, in characteristic fashion, he reconstructs celebrated passages in "La Légende des Siècles." In the third strophe he compares Hugo with Shakespeare and Milton:

"As high the chant of Paradise and Hell
Rose, when the soul of Milton gave it wings;
As wide the sweep of Shakespeare's empire fell
When life had bared for him her secret springs;
But not his various soul might range and dwell
Amid the mysteries of the founts of things;
Nor Milton's range of rule so far might swell
Across the kingdoms of forgotten kings."
There are fine lines from time to time like

"The stars that saw the starlike eyes of Ruth,"

or

"Kings whose orient station
Made pale the morn, and all her presage bleak -,"

but in general the length of the poem outlasts the reader's patience: it is not as lofty as it is long. In respect to the length of their poems, Victor Hugo and Swinburne might both be facetiously accused of what is often objected against Hugo himself: they mistake enormity for sublimity: and in solemn truth the tendency to undue prolixity is by no means psychologically unrelated to the undue inflation of poetic values.

"The Statue of Victor Hugo" in the volume entitled "A Century of Roundels, and other Poems," begins with seven stanzas of rather tiresome and distinctly overwrought eulogy and then proceeds to comment poetically on Hugo's later volumes of lyric poetry. "La Pitié Suprême (1879) is referred to as

"a song with healing on its wings
Whence the dews of mercy raining balms
unbounded
Shed their last compassion even on sceptred things."

Thereafter reference is made to "Rélignons et Réligion " (1880); "L'Ane" (1880); "Les Quatre Vents de L'Esprit" (1881); and one or two other less important works. It would have been difficult, however, to convince Swinburne that Victor Hugo could
write anything of minor importance. His worship of Hugo was much like that of the conventional mother for her child: it had an implicit disbelief in faults. Victor Hugo ruled the 19th century by divine right, and there was no appeal from his decision in any matter.

The last and most pretentious of Swinburne's poetical tributes to Victor Hugo is the "Birthday Ode for the Anniversary Festival of Victor Hugo, February 26, 1880." This is a long ode which covers eighteen submissive pages, Pindaric in form, and written in Swinburne's most characteristic manner. It also, after a remarkably brief panegyric, recounts the story of the Master's mighty works beginning with "Odes et Ballades" (1832-34), and ending with "Le Pape" (1878). This poem also Swinburne has annotated, so that once cannot mistake his references. The strophe celebrating "Les Rayons et les Ombres," perhaps the greatest of Hugo's lyric volumes, is perhaps representative also of what is best in the ode:

"But ah! the glory of shadow and mingling ray
The story of morn and even
Whose tale was writ in heaven
And had for scroll the night, for scribe the day!
For scribe the prophet of the morning, far
Exalted over twilight and her star;
For scroll beneath his Apollonian hand
The dim twin wastes of sea and glimmering land!
Hark, on the hill-wind, clear
null
For all men's hearts to hear
Sound like a stream at nightfall from
the steep
That all time's depths might answer,
deep to deep,
With trumpet measures of triumphal wail
From windy vale to vale
The crying of one for love that strayed
and sinned
Whose brain took madness of the mountain
wind.

The last eight lines of the above had direct reference to the famous poem in "Les Rayons et les Ombres" called by Hugo "Guitare" but more popularly known to his readers, perhaps, as "Gastibelza," from the name of its lyric hero, "the man with the carabine." The first stanza of the poem, which combines the elements of sound and suggestion to produce an almost incomparable magic effect, runs:

"Gastibelza, l'homme a la carabine,
Chantait ainsi:
Quelqu'un a-t-il connu dona Sabine?
Quelqu'un d'ici?
Dansez, chantez, villageois! la nuit gagne
Le mont Falu
-Le vent qui vient a travers la montagne
Me rendra fou!"
Swinburne admired this poem immensely, as many besides him have done, and very reasonably: he refers to it two or three times in his prose criticisms of Victor Hugo. It will be noticed that the last line quoted from Swinburne's ode above very clearly paraphrases the last two lines in the above quoted stanza from Hugo.

Unfortunately, too many of the strophes and antistrophes of Swinburne's ode are mere vehicles for monotonous imagery, highly overwrought, and involving the necessity of too much attention to their sound, when the reader's faculty of interpretation should be centred on the sense. The sense in fact is so involved in the harmony and counterpoint of the verse-structure as at times almost to lose its significance. One experiences at times almost a sense of physical weariness as he listens to the onrush of Swinburne's whirling cataract of verse. This is, it seems to me, a fatal defect in no small portion of his poetry, and one which no mere verbal or metrical skill can overcome; for after reading one of his most intricately melodious and splendidly gleaming stanzas one is forced to stop and ask himself what the idea really is, and its comparative weight as a poetical conception. Does it, when stripped of its trappings, or divested of its brocade, shine with its own inherent splendor, as do the simple lines of the great masters? The answer, save in a few cases, is inevitable. The idea itself is one of the superficial poetic ideas which have been in the world for ages: it has but experienced in Swinburne's hands, to use the words of a poem by Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, "a dressed-up hour." The idea, in other words, is more literary than poetical, and it is only at the ends
of its many ramifications that we find little glittering diamond points of poetry, which are the phrases of Swinburnian culture. And now, after this digression, let me quote the thirteenth and last epode of the "Birthday Ode," which sums up in a few lines Swinburne's actual veneration of his French master:

"Our Father and Master and Lord,
Who hast thy song for sword,
For staff thy spirit, and our hearts for throne
As in past years of wrong,
Take now my subject song,
To no crowned head made humble but thine own;
That on thy day of worldly birth
Gives thanks for all thou hast given past
thanks of all on earth."

To such idolatrous climax does this long ode proceed, that one who finishes reading it is past all thanks indeed.

Before attempting a summary of this chapter it is doubtless necessary to take account of any possible influence Victor Hugo may have had on Swinburne's epic style as it appears in "Tristram of Lyonesse," undoubtedly, to my mind, the most considerable, even allowing for characteristic defects, of Swinburne's poetical performances. I can only say briefly that I have been unable to find, on examination, any important influence which Hugo's epic style may have had on this poem. The differences to be noted, in fact, between a poem like "La Légende des Siècles" with its tremendous canvas and psychological method, its Hebraic sublimity, and dogmatic manner worthy of an ancient Hebrew prophet,
and a poem like "Tristram of Lyonesse," with its restricted romantic theme, are more pronounced than the similarities. Certainly the imaginations which constructed the two poems were, as Coleridge would have said, not the same. It is rather in the "fancy" of the two poets, as Coleridge also would have said, that we look for similarities. But even here little resemblance is notable in this case. The "fancy" of Hugo rather reminds one of Browning's "The Ring and the Book" than "Tristram of Lyonesse."
The constant tragic seriousness of Swinburne reminds one more inevitably of Tennyson and Milton in their most tragic conceptions, and the emphasis on romantic interest carries one back to Swinburne's own earlier period, before Victor Hugo's influence became dominant. I am acquainted with only one passage in "La Légende des Siècles" which might be compared with passages from "Tristram of Lyonesse": the wonderful description in the part called "Zim-Zizimi" of Cleopatra dead. Such lines as

"Ses dents étaient de perle et sa bouche était d'ambre;
Les rois mouraient d'amour en entrant dans sa chambre;"

and further on

"L'amour prenait pour arc sa levre aux coins moqueurs;"

These lines are in the manner of Swinburne and employ his favorite earlier matter, but they are much simpler and more restrained than the teeming descriptions of Iseult in "Tristram of Lyonesse."
It seems to me safe to conclude, in view of what I have pointed out, that the influence of Hugo on Swinburne's epic method was at least remote, if not negligible.

I have now shown that Victor Hugo's influence is to be traced in Swinburne's political lyrics, his child poetry, and his nature poetry. I have further discussed the poetical monuments of his admiration for Hugo, and the possibility of Hugo's influence on his epic method. A more detailed examination of general similarities in verbal and prosodical usages would doubtless be of value, but it would go far beyond the space I have allotted to this essay. As a result of what examination of Hugo's influence I have made in this chapter, I am forced reluctantly to admit that I cannot consider the influence a fortunate one. The chief reason for this is that Swinburne absorbed the Hugonic manner, too often inflated and dogmatic, without being able to take over any of his master's luminous imaginative qualities and salutary tendency to simplicity of images. He could understand the manner of Hugo and he could imitate it; he could also understand the imaginative greatness of Hugo, but he could not compass it.
CHAPTER VII

SWINBURNE'S TRAGEDIES - THE INFLUENCE OF RONSARD
AND THE PLEIADE - VICTOR HUGO.

The body of Swinburne's dramatic work is considerable. It consists entirely of tragedies in verse and comprises: "The Queen Mother" (1860), "Rosamond" (1860), "Chastelard" (1865), "Bothwell" (1874), "Mary Stuart" (1881), "Marino Faliero" (1885), "Locrine" (1887), "The Sisters" (1892), "Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards," (1899), and "The Duke of Gandia" (1908). Three of these tragedies, "Chastelard," "Bothwell," and "Mary Stuart," compose the famous "Mary Stuart" trilogy, one of the most ambitious dramatic performances ever attempted in English. Critics, I believe, are pretty generally agreed that this trilogy is dramatically impossible, altho they usually admit that its poetical qualities are brilliant and unusual. Of these tragedies "Bothwell" is rather notorious than noted among scholars on account of its enormous proportions: it fills easily more than five hundred pages of a good-sized octavo with ringing and sonorous blank verse. It has distinct dramatic merits, however, as have the other two members of the trilogy, which I regret that I shall not have opportunity to outline in this essay. Of the other tragedies "Marino Faliero" is based on the same historical theme which Byron had already used, and was probably written by Swinburne to show that he had a better command of dramatic material and method than the earlier poet, whom in his later years, he affected
to despise. Critics, I believe, are at odds as to whether he succeeded or not. "Locrine" is a tragedy based on old Celtic legend, and written in rhymed couplets. It contains some passages of great beauty. "The Sisters" is a complete departure from the author's ordinary matter and manner. It is, I should say, a fairly successful attempt to write the modern psychological drama in blank verse. It points to the possibility that Swinburne took some interest in the modern realistic drama and desired to experiment with its material in his own way. "Rosamund" is a tragedy based on early Italian history - the setting is "Verona, 573" - and is characterized by a chastened severity of blank verse treatment which is rather grateful to one who has grown a little weary of the overwrought conceits of the earlier dramas. "The Duke of Gandia" is a one-act play dealing with the history of the Italian house of Borgia, and is scarcely of sufficient importance to require comment.

I have already, in a previous chapter, considered the character of certain French influences on three of the earlier dramas, "The Queen Mother," "Rosamond," and "Chastelard." I pointed out that they, like his lyric poetry of the early period, reflected somewhat his interest in Baudelaire and others of the so-called "decadent" school in France. I reserved for this chapter, however, a consideration of Swinburne's indebtedness to certain other French sources for the French lyrics which are scattered thru the "Mary Stuart" trilogy, "The Queen Mother", and "Rosamond." I also reserved for this chapter any discussion which might seem plausible of the possible influence of Victor
Hugo, or of any other French dramatist in whom Swinburne had especial interest.

Taking up the dramas in chronological order, one finds in "The Queen Mother" one short French lyric which Denise, the heroine of the drama, is represented as singing, while she dresses the Queen Mother's hair. Swinburne evidently intends to imitate in this lyric the manner of Ronsard and his school, inasmuch as the time of the play is synchronous with the flourishing of the Pleiade; but the lyric, unfortunately, has a sickly preciosity, which tho it may approach the lighter manner of Ronsard or Remy Belleau, is more germane to the style of the 17th century salons and the famous "précieuses ridicules." The reader may compare Swinburne's lyric and the two following quotations from Ronsard, and Voiture, the 17th century hyperbolist, and draw his own conclusions.

Swinburne

"Disait amour, voyant rire madame
Qui me baisait dessous mes yeux un jour;
La rose est plus que fleur et moins que femme,
Disait amour.
Disait amour; m'est peine éclos en âme;
Dieu veuille, hélas! qu'elle me baise un jour
Ayez merci, car je souffre, madame
Disait amour."

Ronsard

"Les Muses lièrent un jour
De chaînes de roses Amour,
Et, pour le garder, le donnèrent
Aux Graces et a la Beauté,
Qui, voyant sa déloyauté
Sur Parnasse l'emprisonnèrent."

Voiture
"Les plus beaux yeux du monde ont jeté dans
mon âme
Le feu divin qui me rend bien heureux;
Que je vive ou meure pour eux,
"J'aime a brûler d'une si belle flamme."

Of the three above quotations that of Swinburne is decidedly the worst, as might be expected, and seems to me almost to outdo Voiture himself in preciosity. The quotation from Ronsard is light enough, but it is not mawkish, as Swinburne's certainly is. Voiture, on the other hand, while rather foolishly sentimental, is not juvenile in his sentimentality, and Swinburne is.

There is something of the above juvenility and sentimentality in the French songs in "Rosamond," also. At the beginning of Scene III Rosamond is represented as singing the following for King Henry's entertainment:

"Belle est madame, et bien douce en son dire;
Dieu lui fit don de pleurer où de rire
Plus doucement que femme qui soupire
   Et puis oubliée.

Bonne est madame, et me baise de grace;
Bien me convient baiser si belle face,
Bien me convient que si doux corps embrasse
   Et plus n'oubliée."
Here Swinburne is presumably imitating the trouvères, and if so he has caught a little something of their spirit and manner, at least. A comparison of the above quotation with the following excerpt from one of Adam de la Halle's chansons reveals certain similarities:

"Dame gentiex de cuer, noble d'atour
Gente de cors, déligtale a veir,
Resplendissons de naturel colour,
Entours, vairs ex, riane a l'entrouvrir -"

This quotation is from the chanson entitled "Merchi amours de le douche dolour." In another song entitled "Merveille est quel talent j'ai," the musical old Adam speaks of his "douche Dame" as

"Vermeille que rose en mai
Pour mirer
Clére que solaus el rai -"etc.

Swinburne was without much question familiar with this trouvère and many others, if we remember his unusual interest in old French literature. It seems to me, therefore, not improbable that he was recalling their matter, and to a certain extent their manner, in the lyric I have been discussing. It is interesting to note, however, before leaving the lyric, that Swinburne could not entirely get away from Pre-raphaelite influence even in the imitation of such a lyric genre as the above; for when he makes Rosamond sing

"Blonde est madame, ayant de tristes yeux;
Entre or et roux Dieu fit ses longs cheveux;"
he is more like Rossetti than he is like Adam de la Halle.

Another lyric sung by the heroine in Scene III of Rosamond was evidently suggested to Swinburne by the old "complaints" of the trouvères: the chansons in which they prayed to their mistresses for mercy and indulgence. Adam de la Halle, Conon de Bethune and other trouvères were much given to these *amorous* plainings. As a rule, however, they had the faculty of ending up with a happy thought, after they had chanted some time from the lowlands of despair. Swinburne would have Rosamond "sing something heavy in the word," however, as becomes tragedy. So Rosamond sings:

"Hélas, madame, ayez de moi merci,
Qui porte en coeur triste fleur de souci;
N'est plus de rose, et plus ne vois ici
Que triste fleur."

The second and last stanza is quite as mournful. Adam de la Halle seems to have had something of the same feeling when he sang:

"Hélas! je ne puis mais a riens entendre,
Car je vous ai amée et sans tréchier
Lonc tans c'onques ne m'i daignastes rendre
Nes un seul ris pour voir los témoigner -"

but he is more simple, virile and direct. Swinburne's trouvère could not help being something of a Preraphaelite.

Swinburne wrote "Chastelard," the first member of his "Mary Stuart" trilogy, about 1865, when the influence of Victor Hugo was beginning to exercise a noticeable effect. His admiration for Hugo is evidenced in his dedication of the play:

"I dedicate this play,
As a partial expression of reverence
and gratitude
To the chief of living poets;
To the first dramatist of his age;
To the greatest exile, and therefore
To the greatest man of France;

to
VICTOR HUGO"

The attitude here is unmistakable. It is not surprising then to find him imitating the great French romantic poet at the very outset of the play. Mary Beaton, one of "the four Maries," sits in an upper chamber at Holyrood and sings:

"Le navire
Est a l'eau;
Entends rire
Ce gros flot
Que fait luire
Et bruire
Le vieux sire
Aquilo

Dans l'espace
Du grand air
Le vent passe
Comme un fer;
Siffle et sonne
Tombe et tonne
Prend et donne
A la mer."

Anyone who is well acquainted with the poetry of Victor Hugo will at once recognize in the above an evident imitation of that famous lyric tour-de-force in "Les Orientales": "Les Djinns." The metre is the same as in the second "movement" of "Les Djinns," and the subject-matter, altho it lacks the almost marvellous imaginative mystery of its great model, is of the same general kind. The second movement of "Les Djinns" is contained in the second stanzas and in the fourteenth, where it is repeated. I quote the second stanza:

"Dans la plaine
Nait un bruit:
C'est l'haleine
De la nuit.
Elle brâme
Comme une âme
Qu'une flamme
Toujours suit."

Hugo attempts in this poem, by means of stanzas gradually increasing in metrical length of line, to imitate the approach and departure of a troop of Oriental "Djinns." When one says that the effect is scarcely inferior to that of music, and in some respects even more convincing, the success of the attempt is but fairly indicated. The matter of the poem combines with the perfect metrical treatment to produce an effect truly magical. One is
reminded of the music in such operas as "Il Trovatore." Swin-
burne, of course, has no such purpose as Hugo had: he merely
desires a convenient metre for Mary Beaton's song. When she con-
tinues the song after some interruption by her companions, in the
same scene:

"Toi, mon âme
Et ma foi
Sois ma dame
Et ma loi;
Sois ma mie,
Sois Marie
Sois ma vie
Toute a moi,"

we find that Chastelard, the hero of the play, has composed it
for Mary Stuart. The matter, therefore, of the concluding
stanza, which I quote above, is more like that of the trouvères
and the Pléiade. The verbal practice of Ronsard and his school
was doubtless in Swinburne's mind when he represented Chastelard,
in the fifth stanza of the song, as calling love

"Ma chandelle
Blanche et belle
Ma chapelle
De séjour."

In this lyric, then we have the combined influence of Victor Hugo
and the Pléiade, with the influence of Hugo predominating.

In Act I, Scene II of "Chastelard", the hero himself sings
a song which reminds the reader at once of Ronsard and his
colleagues:

"Après tout de jours, après tout de pleurs
Soyez secourable a mon âme en peine.
Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs;
Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,
Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait reine."

The spirit of this song is distinctly that of Ronsard, Remy Belleau, and the other amorists of the Pléiade. It reechoes the sentiment of Ronsard's "Voici le mois d'avril" - and Belleau's "Avril," in which love is represented as being born out of spring, etc. The sentiment in the third line quoted above resembles somewhat that in one of Ronsard's chansons:

"Et Amour, armé de traits
   Et d'attraits
   En nos coeurs nous fait la guerre -"

or

"Les oiseaux sont plus heureux,

   Amoureux

   Qui font l'amour sans contrainte."

The second stanza of Swinburne's lyric, which I shall not trouble to quote, simply repeats the usual Ronsardian solicitation, derived doubtless from Horace, to make the most of love while youth and beauty remain. This sentiment Ronsard immortalized for all time in the famous lyric beginning "Mignonne, allons voir si la rose" - and in the still more famous sonnet, one of the most perfect in the world's literature: "Quand vous serez bien vieille,
au soir, a la chandelle — Swinburne, of course, by no means comes up to his famous sources; yet one can but admire the facility and delicacy with which he writes French verse.

This facility and delicacy just noted appears, it seems to me, to the best advantage in a French lyric which the Queen is represented as singing in Act II, Scene I of "Chastelard."

I quote the first, third, and fifth stanzas:

I
"J'ai vu faner bien des choses
Mainte feuille aller au vent.
En songeant aux vieêlles roses,
J'ai pleuré souvent.

III.
As-tu vu jamais au monde
Venus chasser et courir?
Fille de l'onde, avec l'onde
Doit-elle mourir?

V
Qui sait ou s'en vont les roses?
Qui sait ou s'en va le vent?
En songeant a telles choses,
J'ai pleuré souvent."

It seems to me that Swinburne in this lyric can lay claim not only to delicate manipulation of the French verse-form itself, and the French language, but also in the first and fifth stanzas to a certain amount of lyrical emotion. The effective combination of the two in a foreign medium is certainly an accomplishment worthy of praise. I have been unable to find in the work of any
member of the Pléiade a parallel for this song, altho I do not need to point out the general resemblance of its matter to that of the Pléiade. The tone of a chanson of Gilles Durant is probably nearest to it:

"Mais, lachement couchées
Sous les myrtes pressés
Elles pleurent, fachées,
Leurs âges mal passés;
Se lamentant
Que, n'ayant plus de vie,
Encore cette envie
Les aille tourmentant."

Here the metrical scheme is not the same as Swinburne's and the matter is somewhat different, but the melancholy tone is about the same. The metrical scheme of Swinburne's lyric, I should say is more allied to Hugo's ordinary practice, and the rhetorical questions suggest his manner. In general I am willing to credit Swinburne with some originality and to say that he was here reconstructing, under certain unconscious influences, possibly, of Hugo or Gautier, the atmosphere of the Pléiade and French courtly poetry of the Renaissance.

In Act III, Scene I of "Chastelard," the Queen, while she is undressing, sings the following "frayed fringe of old rhyme," which is but the matter of the trouvères in the manner of Hugo:

"Alys la chatelaine
Voit venir de par Seine
In Act V, Scene II, the Queen reads to Chastelard in his cell from a little written book of Ronsard's rhymes with the following:

"With coming lilies in late April came
Her body, fashioned whiter for their shame;
And roses, touched with blood since Adon bled
From her fair colour filled their lips with red:"

"I have not been able to find the original for this, if it has one.

"Bothwell," the second member of the "Mary Stuart" trilogy, contains only one French lyric. This is the Queen's song in Act II, Scene XVII, from which I quote a stanza or two:

"Sur l'opale
Du flot pâle
Tremble un peu du jour encore:
Sur la plage
Au naufrage
Le haut vent sonne du cor.

. . . . . . . . . . . .

Le nuit passe
Et la chasse
S'est éteinte au fond des cieux;
Mais l'aurore
Pleure encore
Sur les morts qu'ont vus ses yeux.

. . . . . . . . . . . .

Apaisée"
Et baisée
Par les brises sans souci,
Brille et vibre
Au jour libre
La belle mer sans merci.

The matter of this lyric reminds one of "Les Djinns" again, and the movement of the verse is also similar to the second "movement" of that poem, except for the longer third and sixth lines. The metrical scheme also reminds one somewhat of two other famous tours-de-force of Hugo: "La Chasse du Burgrave," ¹ and "Le Pas D'Armes du Roi Jean." ¹ In his prose criticism of Hugo Swinburne has expressed more than once his admiration for these lyrics. A brief quotation from both lyrics will show, however, that Swinburne's stanza is not the exact equivalent of the stanza-form in either of these poems:

Le Pas D'Armes du Roi Jean.
Ca, qu'on selle
Ecuyer
Mon fidèle
Destrier
Mon coeur ploie
Sans la joie
Quand je broie
L'étier."

La Chasse du Burgrave.
"Daigne protéger notre chasse,

¹. In "Odes et Ballades."
It will be noted that the number of feet in one stanza of "Le Pas D'Armes du Roi Jean" is almost exactly the same as in Swinburne's stanza, so that the movement of the whole is almost identical; but the rhyme scheme is different. It will also be noticed that the longer line in "La Chasse du Burgrave" is practically the same as the longer line in Swinburne's lyric. It is therefore not an impossible conclusion that Swinburne may have attempted to combine the metrical effect of the two poems. Whatever may have been his purpose it serves very well as a death-song for Lord Darnley, who hears the Queen singing it a day or two before her revenge crushes him at Kirk of Field. The situation itself suggests the atmosphere of "Les Djinns, in fact, more than it does the lively martial tone of the other two poems I have discussed.

As regards the two English lyrics in "Bothwell" which Rizzio sings in Act I, Scenes I and V, there is nothing so far as I can see to indicate a source. It is necessary, however, before leaving the drama to mention Swinburne's dedicatory sonnet to Victor Hugo, written in French. I quote the first four lines:

"Comme un fleuve qui donne a l'océan son âme,
J'apporte a lieu sacré d'où le vers tonne et luit
Mon drame épique et plein de tumulte et de flamme"
Ou vibre un siècle éteint, où flotte un jour
qui fuit."

This sonnet is beginning, evidently, to express the worship which
was afterward to become so idolatrous.

"Mary Stuart", the last member of the "Mary Stuart"
trilogy, contains only one French song, and that is a repetition
of one which was sung by Chastelard in the drama of that name.
Mary Beaton, nursing wrath and revenge against the queen for her
cowardice in Chastelard's case, sings the song and asks the
queen to name the author. So forgetful of her passionate loves
is the queen that she attributes it to Remy Belleau, one of the
Pléiade. Mary Beaton, concealing her bitterness, affects to think
it possible that Belleau was the author. Then the queen launches
into a rather fine speech celebrating Ronsard and his school
which deserves, - at least part of it - quoting:

"Ay; how sweet
Sang all the world about those stars that sang
With Ronsard for the strong mid-star of all,
His bay-bound head all glorious with grey hairs,
Who sang my birth and bridal! When I think
Of those French years, I only seem to see
A light of swords and singing, only hear
Laughter of love, and lovely stress of lutes
And in between the passion of them borne
Sounds of swords crossing ever, as of feet
Dancing, and life and death still equally
Blithe and bright-eyed from battle."
Swinburne's trilogy, as I have pointed out in a previous chapter, reproduces the French Renaissance atmosphere quite convincingly, and the French lyrics contribute their share in the effect. "Mary Stuart", it may be well to mention, is also dedicated to Victor Hugo.

I now turn to a consideration of the only other French influence, which, it seems to me, can reasonably be supposed to have affected Swinburne's dramatic work. This influence is that of Victor Hugo's romantic tragedies: "Cromwell; "Marion De Lorme;" "Lucrezia Borgia," and others. The nature of this influence, except for certain outstanding formal features, is, I take it, largely problematical and a matter on which it is dangerous to dogmatize.

I have pointed out in a previous chapter that Swinburne may have followed Victor Hugo in his tendency to select Renaissance settings for his tragedies. At the same time, it must be confessed that his own personal interest in the story of the ill-fated Queen of Scots might easily have induced him to dramatize her history if he had never heard of Victor Hugo. Those who are acquainted with Hugo's dramas will notice at once a certain formal usage of his which Swinburne has evidently adopted: the habit of naming each act according to the central character or motive in it. The five acts of "Chastelard" are named: I Mary Beaton, II Darnley, III The Queen, IV Murray, V Chastelard. The five acts of Hugo's "Marion De Lorme" are named I La Rendez-Vous, II La Rencontre, III La Comédie, IV Le Roi, V Le Cardinal. Swinburne follows this usage throughout the "Mary Stuart" trilogy, but does not observe it elsewhere. This is natural, considering the fact that these
dramas were written when Victor Hugo's influence was fresh and powerful upon him: that is, in the period between 1865 and 1885. As to the influence further of the dramas of Hugo, in general: one is inclined to believe in it because of the unqualified admiration which Swinburne expresses, in his criticism of French literature, for Victor Hugo as a dramatist. Textual parallels and concordances, nevertheless, are difficult to find, so that one is reduced to an examination of dramatic manner, length of speeches, characterization, etc., which, tho important, themselves afford in this comparison something short of a satisfactory relation.

To begin with, Swinburne's matter is not the same as Victor Hugo's. If we consider "Chastelard," a "young" drama, and the first of the "Mary Stuart" trilogy, and compare it with "Marion De Lorme," also a "young" drama, we note that Swinburne uses a Scotch setting throughout, and that Hugo uses a French setting throughout. We also notice that Hugo is largely interested in melodramatic effects of scenery and situation, and that Swinburne is not. For instance, Didier, the hero of "Marion De Lorme" leaps thru the window into Marion's chamber, sword in hand; and at the end of the act leaps down into the street again, in order to aid the Marquis de Saverny in his fight against six men. The most melodramatic thing which Chastelard does is to hide himself by the queen's bed: an unconventionality so trite as to be dramatically almost conventional. There is a dignity, in fact, and a solemnity, about Swinburne's tragedies which has more affinity with "Athalie" of Racine or the "Mariamne" of Voltaire than with
the romantic melodramas of Hugo. Some of the long speeches in "Bothwell" and "Mary Stuart" have an almost Senecan splendor of declamatory rhetoric.

A comparison of Didier, the hero of "Marion De Lorme" with Chastelard, the hero of "Chastelard", reveals a considerable similarity. Both are types of the chivalrous courtier of the French Renaissance: either will dare anything for the love of his lady. Chastelard, however, goes to his death because of a certain mystic devotion to the cult of courtly love, with a song of joy on his lips: his action is on the whole unmotivated and dramatically unconvincing. Didier, on the other hand, curses his mistress and lays his misfortunes at her door, when he finds out her relations with other men. His actions are much more reasonably motivated and seem more natural, altho it must be noted, at the same time, that he, like Chastelard, refuses to evade death when the opportunity is presented. Both are essentially romantic characters: they act more in accordance with their emotions than with their reason. In this they are true children of their romantic fathers, who did likewise. Didier is the more melodramatic character of the two: his speeches are full of Hugonie exclamations and rhetorical questions. Chastelard's speeches, on the other hand, are full of a melancholy sweetness of resignation: he seems in love with his grief. The influence of Gautier and the decadents is without much doubt partly responsible for this. I have already made some reference to their influence on some of his speeches in a previous chapter. Both Chastelard and Didier, at any rate, were French knights "sans peur et sans
reproche," notable for their courtly dignity and romantic devotion to ideals of love: the dignity of the former the tragic and elevated pose of the poetical hero, and nearer to the Greek idea of tragedy; the latter rather the melodramatic figure of the cloak and folded arms, who with all his Spanish trappings and bravado, is more convincing because he is more human.

A comparison of Mary Stuart, the heroine of "Chastelard," with Marion De Lorme, the heroine of the tragedy I am considering, hardly suggests an influence. Mary Stuart's speeches are more dignified; she does not weep on every page; she seems more concerned with the poetry of a situation than with its passion. The ideal love of courtly codes, the passion of illicit love: these are toys for her royal pleasure. She has all of the aristocrat's contempt for convention. Marion De Lorme on the other hand, bewails her lost purity in a very bourgeois manner, and is given to dishevelling her hair in tragic moments. When Didier goes to his death she falls on the pavement senseless: when Mary Stuart goes to her own death she is as calm as the grave itself, and driving fast on the last resources of Christianity, does not remember even to regret her misdeeds, feeling, no doubt, that with her they are about to be swallowed up in Eternity. It has always seemed to me that Swinburne succeeded admirably in creating an atmosphere and tone of regal domination wherever Mary Stuart appeared on the scene, and that his success in picturing the royal woman and dominant mistress is no less admirable. We feel that Mary Stuart is a royal courtesan, but oh, how royal! Her dignity, beauty, and grace give her an advantage even over Mary Elizabethan
heroines of the same type. She is, in many respects, however, a lineal descendant of them.

The average length of speeches in "Chastelard" is much greater than in "Marion De Lorme", and the action is consequently retarded. Hugo's play is for this reason, as well as for reasons pointed out heretofore, more vivid and dramatically convincing: it is, in short dramatically more alive. Hugo was wise enough to subordinate his tendency to lyric effusiveness to dramatic requirements: Swinburne did not even try to get away from his own epic prolixity. This brief examination of the two dramas reveals, it seems to me, no very satisfactory resemblances save the important one of romantic idealism in the creation of characters. It is altogether probable, according to my way of thinking, that Swinburne picked up and utilized little more than the ordinary unconscious impressions one gains from reading. My discussion of the relation between "Chastelard" and "Marion De Lorme" can scarcely be said to offer conclusive proof of more than this. It is necessary, finally, to consider the possibility that Swinburne, considering his historical accuracy in the "Mary Stuart" trilogy, may have been especially careful not to imitate situations and characters in Hugo's dramas which were not germane to his own historical settings. An author, however derivative his art, must be given credit for some originality.

"Bothwell," Swinburne's prodigious "epic drama," may not improbably have been suggested to him by Hugo's "Cromwell." Both dramas are huge panoramas of history revolving around a gigantic central character. Each of these gigantic characters was a man
of iron who believed in the law of might and was determined to make use of it, even tho Cromwell's Puritan environment forced him to put a Christian face on the matter. "Cromwell" and "Bothwell" are alike, further, in the enormous number of characters each contains; Hugo's drama has about sixty characters of dramatic importance, and Swinburne's about fifty. These characters represent almost all walks of life, altho the important difference must be noted that Swinburne has no comic characters whatever, while Hugo, evidently following Shakespeare in this respect, lays great emphasis on certain comic situations. Swinburne, it appears, was a severe classicist when it came to a selection of characters for tragedy - his Victorian dignity, his Greek and Latin studies, and the lack of a fundamental sense of humor doubtless all influencing his dramatic practice. He was nearer to Marlowe than to Shakespeare, even tho his early blank verse dramas imitate the latter's manner, but he was nearer to the classics than either of them.

As to the nature of the characters in "Bothwell", Swinburne may very easily have utilized some of Hugo's ideas in their creation. There is certainly some resemblance between the Puritan Carr in "Cromwell" and the stern old Calvinist, John Knox, in "Bothwell." They both make long speeches containing references to Old Testament stories, and both are represented as equally fearless. Carr, however, only talks for two pages, while John Knox consumes ten, in a single speech. Hugo, further, makes Carr somewhat ridiculous, while Swinburne makes John Knox an influential tragic figure. As for other characters there is some likeness between
Lord Ormond in "Cromwell" and Douglas, the Earl of Morton, in "Bothwell." Both are stubborn royalists, and both aid in a conspiracy: they are both much given to expressing their fealty to their respective rightful sovereigns. Over against them may be set, in "Cromwell," Lord Broghill, and in "Bothwell," the Earl of Murray. These men are opportunist politicians, and are usually to be found pleading for a rational outlook on situations. There are, I believe, no other important resemblances between male characters in the two plays, save the similarity in Machiavellian practice of Cromwell and Bothwell. Aside from this, of course, the two characters are utterly different: Bothwell is a pure Machiavellian, or, coming down to modern times, Nietzschean type. Ethical righteousness has no place in his philosophy, as he expressly says in one of his speeches: he is a great sinner with the courage of his sin. He rules the Queen of Scots with an iron hand, and she, true to her type, loves him for it. Cromwell, on the other hand, altho a disciple of Machiavelli in his belief that military efficiency is the secret of the stability of princes and governors, combines with his Machiavellianism some of that milk of human kindness which made David a great king in Israel and prepared the way for Christ.

The female characters in both "Cromwell" and "Bothwell", with the single exception of Mary Stuart in Swinburne's drama are only of minor interest. Cromwell's daughter, Lady Francis, is a figure of alluring innocence, a fine type of the ingenué, in fact, but she is a purely comic figure. Swinburne could hardly have conceived a character like Dame Guggligoy, and it is doubtful
whether he would have introduced such a character if he could have conceived it. There is no female character in "Cromwell," be it said to Swinburne's credit, who is anywhere near the fine emotional level of Mary Beaton, who figures throughout the "Mary Stuart" trilogy. Personally, altho I understand well enough that she has not the melodramatic effectiveness of Marion De Lorme, or of Doña Sol, in "Hernani," and that she is dramatically much less effective than such a towering figure as Lucrezia Borgia, in Hugo's tragedy of that name - yet I conceive that she is poetically as effective as any of the three. One who follows her footsteps as they go side by side with Mary Stuart's thru paths of blood straight to the gloomy scaffold where the great Queen herself ends in blood, cannot mistake her greatness. Combining in one person faithful service to her Queen and an undying hatred of her Queen as a woman she seems to an imaginative reader almost like the incarnation of Mary Stuart's sins pursuing her to the block. Her self-sacrificing love for Chastelard, her fine passionate womanhood as she writhes under the kiss which he intends for the Queen cannot, as Swinburne presents them, give anything but the effect of fine romantic poetry. She is one of those characters who are identified, in the reader's mind, rather with the poetry of their situations and motives than with the dramatic effect of their spoken words, or their elaborate exits and entrances. Swinburne, it must be noted, after tracing her quiet beauty, her hopeless love, her hidden revenge, thru three long dramas, raises her suddenly to a pinnacle of dramatic power by giving her the last speech in the trilogy. Mary Stuart dies under the headsman's
ax, her maids watching her from a window. Mary Beaton is the only one who has the courage to watch the final blow. The reader's memory, running suddenly back over seas of sonorous blank verse to the execution of Chastelard, remembers a voice from the crowd:

"So perish all found enemies to the Queen!"

and a voice answering

"Amen!"

Mary Beaton, looking from the window on the execution of Mary Stuart, sees the headsman strike:

"Ha!

He strikes awry: she stirs not. Nay, but now
He strikes aright, and ends it."

Voice Below

"So perish all found enemies to the Queen!"

Another Voice

"Amen!"

Mary Beaton

"I heard that very cry go up
Far off long since to God, who answers here."

The dramatic effect of this climax is tremendous. I have never been able to read it without being powerfully affected. Swinburne has secured this impression by concentrating in Mary Beaton's person at this point, by the suggestion of word and situation, all the great motivating forces of the trilogy. She is their climax, and she stands on the high summit of their combined effect. Yet after all the total effect of the Mary Stuart trilogy is rather epic than dramatic: when the reader thinks of it he thinks in-
evitably of Mary Stuart and her adventures in love and intrigue: dramatic appurtenances are not uppermost in his mind. In this respect again I believe that Swinburne was near to the Greek idea of tragedy, for one thinks of Antigone and her story or of the story of the Atridae rather than of dramatically conceived situations. At any rate, altho the reading of the entire trilogy is a task, and many of the speeches exceedingly tiresome and involved, the effect of the whole is undoubtedly convincing: one feels that here is fine romantic matter of history preserved in a medium of classical tragic form which lends dignity to its matter. Swinburne thus avoids that melodramatic charlatanry which sometimes blots Hugo's otherwise fair escutcheon of tragedy.

As far as "Mary Stuart", the last member of Swinburne's trilogy is concerned, I can find only one point of resemblance between it and Hugo's "Cromwell." This is the fact that the first act of each drama is concerned with a conspiracy against royalty, or what, in Cromwell's case, amounts to the same thing. Whether Swinburne followed Hugo in this matter or not is largely, it seems to me, a matter of conjecture. History, of course, furnished the basis for the idea in both dramas: Hugo may possibly have influenced Swinburne to initiate the action of "Mary Stuart" with a conspiracy.

The possibility of relations between the minor dramas of Swinburne, such as "Locrine," "The Sisters," and "Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards," and Hugo's dramas, is a matter which might be pursued with some benefit in a more detailed consideration than this essay affords, but I am obliged to say that my somewhat
superficial acquaintance with Hugo's dramas indicates no external or formal relations. As for Swinburne's only other important drama, "Marino Faliero, a really convincing blank verse tragedy, with a fine climactic fifth act where the blank verse rises to the level of the climax, I conceive that Swinburne may have been influenced a little in its composition by Hugo's "Angelo, Tyran de Padoue." Both tragedies have Italian settings, and both have to do with Italian noblemen who have beautiful wives. Both tragedies begin moreover with the chief characters taking part in certain court festivities. In "Angelo", the first scene opens with a conversation between La Tisbe and Angelo; in "Marino Faliero" the first scene opens with a conversation between Faliero and the Duchess, his wife. There is also something in common between the tyrannical and bloodthirsty ethical codes of Angelo and Marino Faliero: one desires to kill his wife because she has been unfaithful; the other desires to kill a Venetian nobleman because he has insulted the ducal honour by uttering falsehoods about the Duchess. Bertuccio in "Marino Faliero" and Rodolfo in "Angelo" are characters who have much in common. Both are young romantic noblemen in love with married women. Bertuccio, however, has the more self-control, and out of respect to the Doge, his guardian and uncle, does not attempt the virtue of the Duchess. Swinburne's drama, in fact, has a rather high and severe ethical tone like the Electra of Euripides or "The Broken Heart" of John Ford. "Angelo" moreover is written in prose, while "Marino Faliero" is written in rather severe and chastened blank verse.
In this chapter I have attempted to show that Swinburne's dramas down thru the "Mary Stuart" trilogy were indebted to Ronsard and the Pléiade for the manner and in some cases for the matter of certain lyrics interpolated in the dramatic material. I have also considered the influence of the early Trouvères and of Victor Hugo on these same lyrics. Finally, I have pointed out certain problematical relations between the dramas of Hugo and Swinburne. My conclusion is that Swinburne's dramas, altho their indebtedness for the lyrics to the Pleiade and Victor Hugo is clear, are the product of a demonstrable epico-dramatic talent fostered by a wide acquaintance with Greek tragedy, Elizabethan drama, and Victor Hugo.
As a critic of literature I do not consider Swinburne a success. His prose criticism fills several volumes, and covers a wide variety of subject-matter, but so much of it is given up to mere rhapsodizing on favorite themes, or the violent satirizing of pet aversions, that the reader, first surprised, is next amused, and finally bored, if not disgusted. Exceptions must be made, however, in favor of such volumes as "The Age of Shakespeare" (1908), and "William Blake" (1868), which contain a great deal of keen and penetrating criticism. Even here, it must be remarked, Swinburne is not free from his extreme impressionistic method: one has the sensation that he feels hurt because so much of the world disagrees with him. The loss in critical dignity and authority arising from this attitude is, as far as I am concerned, almost fatal. I cannot be patient with a critic who is blown about by so many winds of doctrine. I am, moreover, no believer in the school of impressionistic criticism in England, even tho it includes such names as Hazlitt, Lamb, and more recently, Saintsbury. Even Hazlitt, the greatest of all of them, and a great critic in many ways, is certain to bring up against a prejudice somewhere and destroy the effect of that intuitional keenness which he had. I suppose, though, that Hazlitt should be allowed to weep over the "Nouvelle Héloïse" if I cannot help being moved at the hundredth reading of the last stanza in "Adonais". Emotion, at least, does not have to be orthodox. At the same
time I conceive that emotion occupies a subordinate place in literary criticism and that it should be left to Frenchmen like Joubert and Amiel who understand its proper relation to reason, or to Matthew Arnold, that he may become agreeably peevish over the Shelley "set."

As a critic of French literature Swinburne was at once fortunate and unfortunate. He was fortunate because he knew French literature more thoroughly than any other Englishman has ever known it. He was unfortunate because he was too much in love with it. His readers are unfortunate, as a result, because his love of French literature almost annihilated his critical judgment of it. Since the bulk of his criticism, moreover, has to do with his idol, Victor Hugo, the result is doubly unfortunate. If one had to depend on Swinburne for a criticism of Victor Hugo, one would have a distorted idea about a truly great genius. It is amusing to think of what Swinburnian thunderbolts would descend from the Hugonic heaven on the heads of Hugo's unsuspecting French critics, if Swinburne were alive today. M. Lanson would be demolished for calling Hugo "bourgeois," and M. Biré would probably be chained to a rock for presuming to reveal the unpleasant facts about the Master's life. In view, therefore, of the fact that I consider Swinburne's contribution to the criticism of French literature on the whole unimportant, I shall give only a brief review of it.

The four volumes which contain practically all of Swinburne's criticism of French literature are as follows: "Essays and Studies" (1876), "A Study of Victor Hugo" (1886),
"Miscellanies" (1886), and "Studies in Prose and Poetry" (1894). Of these, the earliest, "Essays and Studies," contains two criticisms of Victor Hugo: one on "L'Homme qui Rit," and the other on "L'Année Terrible." "A Study of Victor Hugo" is a book of one hundred and forty eight pages devoted to the general criticism of Hugo's work. "Miscellanies" is a collection of monographs and essays originally contributed to British periodicals and the Encyclopaedia Brittanica. This collection contains an article on "Tennyson and Musset," and one entitled "Auguste Vacquérie." "Studies in Prose and Poetry" is another collection like "Essays and Studies" and "Miscellanies." It includes a study of Shelley's "The Cenci," originally contributed to a Paris review; and a critical estimate of Victor Hugo's posthumous work.

The two studies of Victor Hugo in "Essays and Studies" are typical of two varieties of Swinburnian criticism: the one fairly consistent and reasonable even to the admitting of a flaw or two in a favorite piece of literature, the other losing almost all sense of proportion in a wild careering paean of joy and thanksgiving for the privilege of buying the Master's book and reading it. The essay on "L'Homme qui Rit" is a very eloquent and impassioned, but at the same time a very effective criticism of a story dealing in a somewhat mystic fashion with great elemental and spiritual forces. It begins with an impressive comparison of Victor Hugo's genius to a storm at sea, which if somewhat lurid is nevertheless, the reader feels, not out of harmony with the subject matter. Then, after explaining hugo's method of characterization very effectively, Swinburne, in the spirit of
true criticism admits a flaw in the great Frenchman's method: the mistaking of the individual for the universal. Victor Hugo, he says, does not realize that the world is very diverse in its manifestations even tho the flesh and the devil may be fundamentally the same forever. This fundamental misconception Hugo's ablest French critics have since pointed out, and Swinburne is to be congratulated as a critic for having anticipated them. Near the end of the commentary he also very rightly insists on the necessity of constructive criticism: the kind of criticism that selects the great qualities in a work for elucidation and praise rather than the defective qualities for emphasis and condemnation. If Swinburne had consistently practiced this preaching, he would have been a much better critic. He would also have been more worthy of regard as a judge of good literature if he could have avoided unnecessary repetitions and superlatives, and also if he had been aware that he often became emotionally ungrateful to the reader. Part of the effect of the essay on "L'Homme Qui Rit" is spoiled by the sentimental foolishness and rhapsodical inflation of the last sentence:

"Enough that the book is great and heroic, tender and strong; full from end to end of divine and passionate love, of holy and ardent pity for men that suffer wrong at the hands of men; full not less of lyric loveliness and lyric force; and I for one am content to be simply glad and grateful: content in that simplicity of spirit to accept it as one more benefit at the hands of the supreme singer now living among us the beautiful
and lofty life of one loving the race of men he serves;
and of them in all time to be beloved."

What is the use, I ask, of such a sentence as this? One imagines he is listening to a prophet instead of a critic: one almost sees Swinburne sitting at his desk with his Angora cat curled up on top of his head, and his luminous eyes staring after some beatific vision of the god of his idolatry. Mazzini did a bad service to English letters when he furnished his flighty young admirer with the means of increasing the already tropic heat in his cerebral centres. Angora cats should be given to children, not to poets.

The essay on Hugo's "L'Année Terrible" seems to be chiefly a vehicle for the monotonous and commonplace repetition of Swinburne's belief that Hugo is the greatest of all Frenchmen that ever lived, and the greatest poet of the 19th century. We are told this at least six times in the course of the essay, and Swinburne does not fail to remind us of it in at least one hundred other places throughout his critical work. One gets the impression that he feels under the necessity of doing this in order to keep himself convinced that it is true. At any rate, it is inordinately wearisome. The critical matter itself is not such as to enlighten one as to the important poems in the volume under discussion, and so requires no comment here. Swinburne enters into long arguments with the world at large as to Hugo's political insight and heroic patriotism, but he does not even trouble himself to name some of the poems he is discussing. Like Mr. Saintsbury, he seems to be afraid of insulting the reader's intelligence.
"A Study of Victor Hugo" is scarcely more satisfactory than the essay on "L'Année Terrible." It is entirely too short to give any adequate estimate of the character of Victor Hugo's enormous literary output. It is consequently adapted admirably to Swinburne's habit of paying glowing tribute, or, if offended by his critics, of heaping vials of wrath and scorn on their defenseless heads. It is necessary to say, however, that Swinburne illustrates his criticism in this case with a considerable number of quotations, all of which are selected with an excellent insight into poetical values. Swinburne knew good poetry when he saw it: it was only when his prejudices were aroused that he ignored patent values in order the more thoroughly to condemn. This is best illustrated by his peculiar change of heart in regard to Lord Byron, whom he eulogized and edited in the earlier years of his literary activity and most unsparingly and unfairly criticised when he grew older. One surmises that he took the cue from Landor in this later attitude, for he was an ardent admirer of Landor, and Landor, be it said, was no admirer of Byron.

A few quotations from "A Study of Victor Hugo" will indicate both its virtues and vices. After some comment on "La Chasse du Burgrave" and "Le Pas D'Armee du Roi Jean" the reader comes on this sentence:

"It will of course, I should hope, be understood once for all that when I venture to select for special mention any special poem of Hugo's I do not dream of venturing to suggest that others are not or may not be fully as worthy of homage, or that anything of this in-
comparable master's work will not requite our study or does not demand our admiration; I do but take leave to indicate in passing some of those which have been to me especially fruitful of enduring delight, and still are cherished in consequence with a peculiar gratitude."

This is pure fatuity and a waste of the reader's time, as it was no less a waste of his own when he wrote it. Of Hugo's "Cromwell" on the other hand, he speaks with some sense of critical judgment:

"The Cromwell of Hugo is as far from the faultless monster of Carlyle's creation and adoration as from the all but unredeemed villain of Royalist and Hibernian tradition: he is a great and terrible poetic figure, imbued throughout with active life and harmonized throughout by imaginative intuition: a patriot and a tyrant, a dissembler and a believer, a practical humourist and a national hero."

This is but a fair critical distinction, and at least one which outlines the character of Hugo's Cromwell very adequately. When, however, Swinburne, after commenting on and quoting from "Les Djinns," says that Hugo in this poem was "already the poet of freedom, a champion of the sacred right and the holy duty of resistance," I fear he is shooting entirely over Hugo's mark. "Les Djinns" is a lyric tour-de-force with a mysteriously emotional content, but why it is more than an Oriental study in verse, I fail to make out.

Of Hugo's lyric collection, "Les Feuilles D'Automne". Swinburne writes the following:
"The first volume of the four, if I mistake not won a more immediate and universal homage than the rest: its unsurpassed melody was so often the raiment of emotion which struck home to all hearts a sense of domestic tenderness too pure and sweet and simple for perfect expression by any less absolute and omnipotent lord of style, that it is no wonder if in many minds — many mothers' minds especially — there should at once have sprung up an all but ineradicable conviction that no subsequent verse must be allowed to equal or excel the volume which contained such flowerlike jewels of song as the nineteenth and twentieth of these unwithering and imperishable "Leaves."

This is a vicious kind of sentimentality which should be suppressed: people should not be allowed to write it. Such criticism is not intelligent even: it is scarcely on a higher level than the street-corner loafer's criticism of the President of the United States or Congress. It is a matter of distinct regret that a man with Swinburne's scholarly equipment should have allowed his sentimental fancy so to run riot as to produce such things as the above. At times Swinburne is actually afraid to make a critical estimate of Hugo's work for fear that he may seem presumptuous. For instance, in the course of his comment on Hugo's novel "Les Travailleurs de la Mer" he writes:

"It would be the very ineptitude of impertinence for any man's presumption to undertake the classification or registry of his five great romances in positive order of actual merit: but I may perhaps be permitted to say"
without fear of deserved rebuke that none is to me personally a treasure of greater price than "Les Travailleurs de la Mer."

What a cringing slavery of thought is this! In attempting to be a pattern of humility, the critic only succeeds in being ridiculous.

In his criticism of "Torquemada," one of Hugo's later dramas, Swinburne tames his flight of praise long enough to give the reader a few ideas. "The construction of this tragedy," he says, "is absolutely original and unique: free and full of change as the wildest and loosest and roughest of dramatic structures ever flung together and left to crumble or cohere at the pleasure of accident or luck, by the rudest of primeval playwrights: but perfect in harmonious unity of spirit, in symmetry or symphony of part with part, as the most finished and flawless creation of Sophocles or of Phidias." This is dangerously near to contradiction and is not as clear as it should be, but it really gives some idea as to the construction of the drama. Immediately after this some very moderate mention is made of the relations between characters in "Torquemada" and certain ones in "Marion De Lorme" and "Les deux trouvailles de Gallus." This sentence describing the entrance of the persecuted Jews in the third act of "Torquemada" is vivid:

"The Jews enter; men, women, and children all covered with ashes and clothed in rags, barefoot, with ropes around their necks, some mutilated and made infirm by torture, dragging themselves on crutches or on stumps;
others, whose eyes have been put out, are led by children. It is to be regretted that Swinburne did not more often make use of a concrete style like this. It would have acted as a salutary check on his wild flights into the realm of abstraction and fantasy.

When Swinburne exercised the proper restraint, he could write effective, and often beautiful, poetical prose. At the close of his comment on "Torquemada" he has this fine paragraph:

"The last 'act would indeed be too cruel for endurance if it were not too beautiful for blame. But not the Inquisition itself was more inevitably inexorable than is the spiritual law, the unalterable and immitigable instinct, of tragic poetry at its highest. Dante could not redeem Francesca, Shakespeare could not rescue Cordelia. To none of us, we must think, can the children of a great poet's divine imagination seem dearer or more deserving of mercy than they seemed to their creator: but when poetry demands their immolation, they must die, that they may live forever."

Enough has now been said of the "Study of Victor Hugo" to indicate that, although it has some fine passages of impassioned prose, it contributes very little to the literature of the subject. After reading it one simply knows that Swinburne had read all of Victor Hugo, and that he worshiped the man and his work. Such matter is fit for poetry, but not for criticism.

The essay entitled "Tennyson and Musset" in "Miscellanies"

is, at least most of it, worth reading. It is perhaps a little severe with Musset, and gives too much credit to the author of "Maud" for having written "Rizpah." It is something, however, that Swinburne could see the faults in a famous French poet, even if his natural dislike for the Byronic type may have been largely responsible for his ability to do so. He makes excellent use of his well-developed artistic intuition when he compares Musset and Byron. Musset, he says, complains and snivels like a woman when he is in misery, so that "contempt no sooner thaws into compassion than compassion freezes back into contempt." Of Byron, on the other hand, he says:

"With all his condemnable errors and all his damnable defects, Byron is of course as much above such an estimate as the parasites and plagiarists of his own day or of ours are below it; towering as far beyond contempt as they grovel beneath compassion."

Further on in the essay he takes issue with Taine for preferring Musset to Tennyson as "the exponent of the spirit and need of the age." Musset, he insists, was nothing but an exponent of himself, and responsible for many evil things in France, both political and social. Swinburne has the historical Anglo-Saxon habit of getting off his aesthetic Pegasus of criticism and bestriding an ethical dragon of condemnation and vituperation. One finds in fact that entirely too large a portion of this critique is taken up with consideration of French ethical standards and other matters, which if they have a place in literary criticism, should be subordinated to the main literary interest.
When he turns to a consideration of Musset's good points, Swinburne is for the most part a very fair critic, and proceeds with some moderation. Would that he had used such moderation in the case of Victor Hugo and others! He admits the perfection of some short lyrics by Musset and says that Tennyson has nothing more exquisite. He praises Musset's famous "Rolla," altho he believes that mature manhood can scarcely believe as youth does in the sincerity of its inspiration. When incidentally, however, he compares Browning and Leconte de Lisle, I fear he is mistaken in seeing "manifold and manifest points of spiritual community between them." "Spiritual community" is a very vague and uncertain thing. I should also consider the following judgment very doubtful:

"Much as he (Leconte de Lisle) knows, he knows much less, no doubt, than Mr. Browning; but unquestionably he can sing much better at his best. On the other hand, though the poet of Hypatia has all requisite command of anguish and manly pathos no less than of spiritual dignity, he has not a touch of the piercing and overpowering tenderness which glorifies the poet of Pompilia."

I consider it very doubtful whether Leconte de Lisle, with all the perfection of his art, sings, at his best, better than Browning, and I recall certain of his poems which are marked with at least a considerable depth of tenderness. The stanza from his "Les Roses d'Ispahan" which I quoted in the fourth chapter of this essay is itself a fair example. It seemed very hard for Swinburne to understand that sweeping judgments were dangerous.
The latter part of the essay on Tennyson and Musset is taken up chiefly with the English laureate's claims for consideration. Swinburne's final judgment on the respective claims of the French and the English poet may be summed up in the following sentence about midway of the essay:

"On all graver and loftier ways of work the palm of power as well as of beauty has been won from the idler if not feebler grasp of the fitfuller and fainter-hearted poet by the more virile as well as the more careful hand of Lord Tennyson."

This judgment, it seems to me, is not far from the truth. The essay as a whole is more valuable from a critical point of view than many other things of Swinburne: it gives evidence of a degree of restraint which is very welcome to the weary reader of so much that is high light and cannonade.

The two essays on Auguste Vacquerie in "Miscellanies" are relatively unimportant. Swinburne praises the Frenchman's perfectly consistent matter and trenchant style, as far as his prose is concerned, and compares his "Les Funérailles de l'Honneur" with Ford's "The Broken Heart." The "subordination of external to internal effect" in the close of both plays, he says, is worthy of the greatest admiration. Much of the longer essay of the two is given up to a discussion of the idea that poets are usually men without practical instincts. One is not entirely clear as to whether Swinburne is attempting to be satirical or not: his involved and fulsome style sometimes interferes even with his favorite distractions.
There remains to be considered the essay in French on Shelley's "The Cenci," entitled "Les Cenci," and a rather long commentary entitled "The Posthumous Works of Victor Hugo." 1 As for the first-named essay, interest chiefly attaches to the fact that it was written in French and contributed to a French periodical: aside from the fact that it shows a remarkable command of French as a medium of expression it is rather commonplace, serving as usual as a means for giving vent to pet theories as to the relative importance of Byron and Shelley, or of Coleridge and Wordsworth. Of "The Posthumous Works of Victor Hugo" it seems almost enough to say that the critique is much like Swinburne's other criticisms of Hugo. It begins with a bias and ends with one, and, for most critical purposes is composed of one. Swinburne does illustrate in this case, however, with plentiful quotations, and usually gives the names of works under discussion. I should say that one might get a fairly good idea of Victor Hugo's posthumous works from reading it, if he did not become weary, as I did, of the ceaseless round of panegyric and praise. The quotations alone, however, even if one disregards Swinburne's comments, are a fair introduction to the subject. It would be impossible, within the limits of this essay, to consider in detail all of Swinburne's comments on a huge volume of matter like this: therefore I must ask the reader to review the critique for himself.

In this brief and cursory discussion of Swinburne's criticism of French literature, I have only attempted to point out the general nature of his method and attitude, which the reader will find holds good for practically all his critical work. I

1. In "Studies in Prose and Poetry."
conceive that a more extended examination of the subject would hardly be worth while: when one has read a few pieces of Swinburnian criticism he has read all of it. There may be, as Professors Beers and Mackail have both been kind enough to say, a keen critical insight and sureness of artistic judgment under the flash and flame of Swinburne's oratorical rhetoric, and I may even admit that occasionally this is true in my own experience; but so far is this critical judgment, on the other hand, obscured, in some cases, by seas of turgid emotional prose and arbitrary phrasing that one is almost totally at a loss to detect the ore of its validity underneath. Good critical practice cannot be one with digressive prolixity and extreme emotional impressionability: the republic of letters is interested in literary values, not in individual crotchets and susceptibilities.
CHAPTER IX
CONCLUSION

This essay has been an attempt to explain one phase of the literary relationships of an English poet who stands out in the history of English literature as one of its greatest scholars—at least as far as the amount of literary information is concerned. Swinburne's equals in scholarship among English poets have been such men as Ben Jonson and Milton, and it is to be doubted even then whether their linguistic attainments equalled his own. Certainly no literary figure in English of equal prominence with Swinburne has ever had such an extensive knowledge of French literature from its origins to the present day. The French language, moreover, seemed to be almost as familiar a medium of expression to him as his own tongue. It will be understood, therefore, that this essay presumes much in undertaking to criticise the literary and linguistic relations of a man whose knowledge of literature and language was far above what its author can claim. I have, however, attempted to point out the salient features of Swinburne's relation to French literature in some such fashion as follows:

I said in an introductory chapter that Swinburne was trained in French and Italian from infancy. I pointed out how his linguistic training continued throughout his training at Eton and Oxford. I called the reader's notice to the fact that he early came under the influence of old French literature and the 19th
In chapter II, I made a brief examination of the nature of literary decadence in the 19th century. I attempted to show that, while its characteristics were similar in many respects to those of other decadent periods in the world's literature, it was particularly identified with the tremendous conflict between revealed religion and general humanitarian or humanistic interests. My theory was that this conflict had developed, among certain sensitive and nervous individuals, a mixed, and in many cases a diseased psychology, which gave rise to the many peculiarities, superficialities, and weaknesses common to decadent literature and art. I tried to indicate that revealed religion, substantial and ennobling as many of its ideas might have been if they could have been divorced from the turmoil of the age, – I tried to indicate that revealed religion, seen through the medium of so many conflicting interests, filled the minds of many 19th century poets and artists with but a sickly and distorted shadow of itself. It was simply used as a basis for a sort of fleshly metaphysics, best represented in literature by Gautier and Baudelaire in France, and Rossetti and Swinburne in England.

In chapter III, I attempted to indicate the influence of old French literature and the 19th century decadents on Swinburne's early dramas: I also pointed out Swinburne's use of French matter of history, calling some attention to his romantic reconstruction of it.

I devoted the next chapter to a detailed consideration of Swinburne's relations to Baudelaire, Gautier, and other French
decadents, as these relations were represented in Swinburne's most characteristic lyric volume, "Poems and Ballads, First Series." I showed how Swinburne had colored with the ideas of decadence the mediaeval and old French material derived from his early studies. In the course of the chapter I called attention to certain textual parallels and problematical relationships.

In chapter V, I considered "Poems and Ballads, Second Series," "Atlanta in Calydon," and "Erectheus." I indicated the beginning of Victor Hugo's influence, but devoted the chapter chiefly, as in the one just previous, to a consideration of old French and 19th Century decadent influences. I called attention to Swinburne's interest in François Villon, and especially to his translation of Villon's ballades.

The next chapter I devoted to an examination of Swinburne's relation to Victor Hugo. I found that Hugo's influence began to dominate Swinburne about 1875 and continued during the rest of his life. I decided that Hugo had furnished Swinburne with the manner and method of his "later period of humanitarian interest and lyric fervor;" and I attempted to draw parallels between the political poetry and the child poetry of the two men. I called attention to fundamental differences in their use of nature, and discussed Swinburne's poetical monuments of his interest in Hugo. I considered the possible influence of Hugo's "La Légende des Siècles" on Swinburne's "Tristram of Lyonesse."

In chapter VII, I attempted to show Swinburne's indebtedness to the early Trouvères, Ronsard and the Pléiade, and Victor Hugo for the lyrics interpolated in his tragedies. I called
attention in the latter part of the chapter to the possible influences of Hugo's dramas on Swinburne's dramatic method and material. This latter influence, I decided, was far from being capable of documentary demonstration.

The eighth and concluding chapter was given up to a consideration of Swinburne's criticism of French literature. I paid some attention to Swinburne's general method in literary criticism and showed how he pushed this method to a fatal extreme, especially in his criticism of Victor Hugo. Most of his criticism of French literature, I pointed out, was spoiled by his extreme emotional impressionability. He was a poor critic of anything, as a general rule, which he either ardently liked or disliked. I concluded that Swinburne's great critical mistake lay in his seeming belief that the literary world was interested in individual judgments rather than in literary values.

Perhaps the most mournful thing about a study such as I have made is the undeniable confirmation of the fact that a man may be a great man of letters without being either a first-rate poet or a great critic. Great metrical artist tho he was, Swinburne's lack of a first-hand acquaintance with the world, his emotional eccentricities, his too deep immersion in the printed page of literature - furnished but a contracted medium of experience for his inspiration. The subtle values of art and humanity escaped him. Great linguist tho he was, and great scholar tho he came to be, he could seldom apply his learning without some foolish excursion into the bypaths of emotion or fancy. Yet his influence has been great: such a wizard of melody and measure
could not but have a great influence; and in spite of all the deductions I have made, I am, I should hope, not the last to realize that his tremendous metrical skill, combined with a poetical matter of wide scope, has given him a permanent place in the history of English literature.
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