The Female Archetypes in Swinburne's Early Work, 1857-1871.

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THE FEMALE ARCHETYPES IN SWINBURNE'S EARLY WORK, 1857-1871

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THE FEMALE ARCHETYPES IN
SWINBURNE'S EARLY WORK,
1857-1871

A Dissertation

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in
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by
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ABSTRACT

From "Queen Yseult," 1857, to "Hertha" of Songs before Sunrise, 1871, three archetypes—the femme fatale, the Terrible Mother, and the androgyne—dominate Swinburne's poems, dramas, and novels. These archetypes project the dominant artistic conflict of the Victorian period, the controversy over the function of art and the role of the artist, for they symbolize the psychological and cultural conflict between the doctrine of art for art's sake and its antithesis, art for morality's sake. The femme fatale becomes a symbol of art and beauty, the goal of the artist-androgyne's aesthetic quest. Her masochistic lover strives to possess beauty in the form of the fatal woman, just as the artist pursues it in his art. Beyond conventional moral judgments, the femme fatale is autonomous because of her beauty and, frequently, her disdain for Philistine mores. Like the vampire, she drains the vitality of her lovers; thus, the man's erotic and aesthetic quest often becomes simultaneously a pursuit of death. Moreover, the Terrible Mother, like Lady Midhurst in A Year's Letters, frequently joins the femme fatale and her lover, the artist-androgyne, in a dramatic
triangle. The Terrible Mother represents the restrictive laws of society and conventional morality, forces which deform the artist and warp his creation. She struggles with the *femme fatale* to control the androgyne, who eventually dies psychically or physically.

This study traces the evolution of these figures in Swinburne's early works and uses his criticism, particularly his essay *William Blake*, as the foundation of his aesthetic doctrine. Swinburne develops the triadic relationship among these three recurring archetypes most fully in *Atalanta in Calydon*, where Meleager rejects duty, Althaea, for beauty, Atalanta, and thereby chooses death. In *Poems and Ballads* as the *femme fatale* becomes more destructive, the Terrible Mother softens, becoming a desire for oblivion and symbolized as the sea or as Proserpine.

In *Songs before Sunrise* Swinburne has a theme, Liberty, and a vision—the Humanity of Positivism—wherein beauty and duty coalesce. Therefore, he constellates a new archetype, the Great Mother, who dominates the volume and reaches her most successful embodiment in "Hertha."
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

However one approaches Swinburne's works, understanding his female figures becomes inescapable, for Swinburne's greatest characters are women. Even a casual reading of Swinburne reveals that from "Queen Yseult" (1857) through Songs before Sunrise (1871) women dominate the works. They vary from mythological to historical to biographical characters; at times a natural phenomenon (notably the sea), personified in feminine terms, appears. Or, as in the sonnets entitled "Hermaphroditus," the female principle may be inextricably mingled with the male so that an androgynous figure results. Moreover, I believe that his females embody his aesthetic theories and that they afford a symbolic objectification of the dominant artistic conflict of the Victorian period, the controversy over the function of art and the role of the artist.

That is, Swinburne's female figures represent a projection of both an internal, personal conflict and an external, cultural one between the doctrine of art for art's sake and its antithesis, art for morality's sake, called by some "the heresy of the didactic." In the introduction to The
Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry, E. D. H. Johnson states the problem succinctly: "This was a conflict, demonstrable within the work of the writers themselves, between the public conscience of the man of letters who comes forward as the accredited literary spokesman of his work, and the private conscience of the artist who conceives that his highest allegiance must be to his own aesthetic sensibilities." Although Johnson refers specifically to Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold, Swinburne too confronted the dilemma and felt in his own life the pressure of the Horatian dictum that poetry should be not only "dulce" but also "utile." Lionel Stevenson, in his chapter on Swinburne in The Pre-Raphaelite Poets, says that the classical scholar Jowett "scolded the young man for wasting time in the unprofitable craft of poetry." Nevertheless, under the influence of Gautier, Baudelaire, and D. G. Rossetti, Swinburne took a firm stand in his criticism for the autonomy of art and the right of the artist to pursue his vision. His early poetry, novels, and plays also reflect his aesthetic theories, embodied largely through a triad of female archetypes: the femme fatale, the Terrible Mother, and the androgyne.

I

With few exceptions Swinburne's females represent a
radical departure from the women in the art of his contemporaries. Clyde de L. Ryals, in "The 'Fatal Woman' Symbol in Tennyson," remarks that these ladies "are significant in a study of Tennyson because of the frequency with which they occur and because of the change which they underwent after the publication of the poet's first volume." Surely the same can be said of Swinburne's *femmes fatales*; they not only overshadow Tennyson's in sheer number and cruelty but also remain compelling symbols. Swinburne's intimate circle of friends was fascinated too with artistic representations of women. In *Victorian Artists* Quentin Bell observes that the Pre-Raphaelites were "haunted by a female figure--by a feminine principle one may almost say--which dominates Rossetti's work." Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi, examining a recurring archetype of the artist's in "The Image of the Anima in the Work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti," maintains that the same image "haunts Swinburne's imagination." But it is David Sonstroem who has produced the fullest study of Rossetti's women. In the "Preface" to *Rossetti and the Fair Lady*, Sonstroem notes: "The beautiful lady is Rossetti's principal motif, ruling all others. Some ninety-five percent of his poems and ninety-eight percent of his paintings and drawings treat of love or feminine beauty--altogether, almost six hundred original works." After categorizing them as heavenly Madonnas, *femmes fatales*, sinful women (often
prostitutes), or victimized ladies, he then seeks a biographical-critical explanation for their presence.

In the case of Rossetti, Sonstroem's biographical bias has a legitimate underpinning, for Rossetti pursued his "stunners" in the flesh as well as in the image. However, such is not the case with Swinburne, for Swinburne's personal relationships with women were practically nonexistent. There were some exceptions: a highly ambiguous relationship with his cousin Mary Gordon; a love for his mother; an affection for Lady Pauline Trevelyen, the friend of Ruskin and admirer of the Pre-Raphaelites; a fondness for Lizzie Siddal; and an inconclusive affair promoted by Rossetti with the notorious Adah Mencken. A brief exploration of the typical Victorian depictions of women will reveal that at least three of Rossetti's females—the Madonna, the prostitute, and the victim—were much closer to society's general expectations of women than were Swinburne's ladies: the *femme fatale*, the Terrible Mother, and the androgyne. Today even Swinburne's women would seem tame, for the Terrible Mother and the *femme fatale* are practically psychological clichés, and the androgynous figures abound, particularly in the world of rock music. But in the late nineteenth century they seemed monstrous, bizarre, and unnatural.

Before I discuss the three figures individually and examine their triadic interrelationships in the works, it is
necessary to provide an adequate backdrop for them. That is, only in contrast to traditional Victorian stereotypes and literary depictions can the profoundly shocking, imaginative, and innovative nature of Swinburne's feminine figures be assessed; and only after reviewing Swinburne's position in the controversy over art for art's sake and establishing his aesthetic theories can one demonstrate that they are indeed embodied in his women characters.

In an age characterized by polar thinking on many issues, it is not surprising that sexual roles too should be sharply differentiated. Maintaining that we are "heirs of the Victorian age," Carolyn Heilbrun defines the terms "masculine" and "feminine" according to these inherited views:

"masculine" equals forced, competent, competitive, controlling, vigorous, unsentimental, and occasionally violent; "feminine" equals tender, genteel, intuitive rather than rational, passive, unaggressive, readily given to submission. The "masculine" individual is popularly seen as a maker, the "feminine" as a nourisher. Qualities which the Victorians considered admirable in men they thought perverted in women. . . .

The Victorians themselves, aware of this dichotomy, either pronounced and accepted this view or, rarely, denounced it. John Ruskin was among the former; John Stuart Mill, among the latter. In The Subjection of Women Mill observed that women, in contrast to men, were taught to believe "that their
ideal of character is the very opposite of that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others." He lamented that "All the moralities tell women that it is their duty and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature to live for others; to make complete abnegations of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections." Mill realized—he was nearly alone in the knowledge—that women were conditioned by societal mores to believe that deference, self-effacement, and dependency were indeed their nature. Certainly contemporary publications reinforced and fostered the same beliefs. In The Troublesome Helpmate Katherine Rogers uses excerpts from Saturday Review to demonstrate that the popular journal carried on an overtly hostile attack against every feminist movement that appeared. On February 14, 1857, an article declared: "'No woman ought to be encouraged in the belief that she has separate interests or separate duties. God and nature have merged her existence in that of her husband.'" On September 12, 1857, another article stated: "'All the nobler avenues of intellectual distinction' are closed to women 'not by the tyranny of man, but by Nature's stern decree,' since they are 'fatally deficient in the power of close consecutive thought; and hence are incapable of following an argument.'" Unquestionably, the opinions expressed in the journal conformed to conventional Victorian thought.
John Ruskin, in "Of Queens' Gardens"--a lecture Walter Houghton described as "the most important single document I know for the characteristic idealization of love, woman, and the home in Victorian thought"—clearly assigns the activities of men and women to different realms:

Now their separate characters are briefly these. The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle,—and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is Praise; she enters into no contest... she is protected from all danger and temptation. The man, in his rough work in the open world, must encounter all peril and trial;--to him, therefore, must be the failure, the offence, the inevitable error: often he must be wounded... and always hardened. But he guards the woman from all this...  

Obviously, women were expected to marry and procreate, to nourish and support their families while passively submerging their egos in their husbands'. There were guidebooks to tell them how to succeed in fulfilling these duties.

The two most popular authors of these propaganda tracts, Mrs. John Sandford and Sarah Stickney Ellis, fostered feminine stereotypes in a number of etiquette books
aimed at the rising middle class. Sandford published *Woman in Her Social and Domestic Character* (1831) and *Female Improvement* (1836); a few years later, Ellis, the more prolific of the two, set forth her strictures in *The Women of England* (1839), *The Daughters of England* (1842), *The Wives of England* (1843), and *The Mothers of England* (1843). Typical of her prescriptions is her advice that the unhappily married woman should "remember that her 'highest duty is so often to suffer and be still.'" Moreover, Wendall Stacy Johnson observes that the titles alone are informative, for they "reflect another familiar idea, often repeated in the nineteenth century: that women should wield power and have impact on the world, not directly through the vote or social action, but indirectly through their ennobling influence on men." 

This "ennobling influence" closely resembles Ruskin's idea of the "guiding function of the woman"—to create a home; this home, however, possesses a spiritual dimension, becoming for the husband a safe harbor from adversity and competition, a place for him to receive inspiration, renewal, and peace. Ruskin both envisions and describes it as a temple:

it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the
anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently-minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed by either husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be a home. . . . But so far as it is a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth . . . it vindicates the name and fulfills the praise, of Home. 17

Needless to say, the creator of, as well as the goddess in, this temple was the wife, who had to be, according to Ruskin's exaltation, "enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise—wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation. . . ." 18 Although Mill had recognized that this insistence on the weakness and submission of women was a method of subjugating them and that their elevation to a spiritual pedestal was an insidious method of repression, Ruskin lauded the ideal. His religious language reflected the sacramental vision of love which Houghton has linked to the Victorian crisis of belief: "Finally the cult of love and idealization of woman is related, in another way, to the problem of doubt—doubt of traditional Christianity, and the resulting will to believe. When the religious emotions of worship were denied a divine object, they could readily turn to a human one. . . ." 19 A logical outgrowth of this veneration resulted in the accentuation of filial love; young boys considered their mothers and women like them (sisters, brides) more angelic than human. Houghton points out that
this belief was "an image wonderfully calculated not only to
dissociate love from sex, but to turn love into worship, and
worship of purity." 20

The ethic of purity, not to mention prudery, that
accompanied the idea of the "good" woman had an analogue:
if there were angels in the home, polar thinking required
that there be devils in the street; the Magdalen counter-
balanced the madonna. 21 The social historian Peter Q.
Cominos notes this division in Victorian society: "Women
were classified into polar extremes. They were either aids
to continence or incontinence; they facilitated or they exa-
cerbated male sexual control." 22 In agreement with this
view, Johnson observes that "the 'madonna-harlot syndrome'
is intensely Victorian--its best exemplars are Rossetti and
Tennyson." 23 Indeed, Jenny exemplifies Rossetti's rather
sympathetic treatment of the harlot. But in *Idylls of the
King* Tennyson dramatizes a cataclysm--the destruction of a
civilization, the degradation of a society, the dissolution
of an ideal--horrors that spread like concentric circles from
the adultery of Guinevere and Lancelot, from the desecration
of the home/temple by the goddess herself. Rather than
blaming Arthur for his incestuous union with his half-sister,
Tennyson pinpoints the source of contamination of the infec-
ted kingdom in Guinevere's illicit lust. However, the queen-
harlot has a counterweight in meek Elaine, the "lily maid"
who exemplifies the self-sacrificing ideal, the embodiment of pure love whom Lancelot must reject because of his guilty, adulterous passion for Guinivere.

In fact, the use of contrasting women characters typifies many nineteenth-century works, the most obvious pair being exploitive, selfish, lively Becky Sharpe and pallid, devoted, but deadly Amelia Sedley. An American Victorian, Hawthorne, like Thackeray, also used contrasting feminine types, particularly in his later novels. Descendants of Hester Prynne, Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance* and Miriam in *The Marble Faun*—both strong-minded, independent, forceful women—become morally degraded and outcast from society. By novel's end one is a suicide and the other alienated and alone, a moral leper. The innocent, virginal, light-haired counterparts of these dark, dangerous women, Priscilla and Hilda, naturally redeem their adoring men and are rewarded with matrimony and their husbands' devotion. Indeed, even when dominant women are treated humorously, like Mrs. Proudie and Mrs. Joe, laughter merely veils an underlying hostility toward them, whereas Biddy and Eleanor remind the reader that deference and feminine submission to a strong male lead to happiness.

This implicit condemnation of assertive females and approval for their self-sacrificing sisters in Victorian literature express, in Katherine Rogers' words, a "covert
misogyny" which demands of women self-renunciation.\textsuperscript{24} She observes that "women of nineteenth-century literature: Lord Byron's Haidee and Medora, apparently mindless naturals who expect nothing from their lords and languish whenever they are not present, and Charles Dickens' Little Dorrit and Esther summerson, who never venture even to think of wishes of their own, are obvious examples. The typical heroine of the Victorian novel is a softened version of Grisilde--rewarded for exploitation by being venerated as a saint."\textsuperscript{25}

Indeed, praise approaching sanctification abounds for these women: Arnold depicts the faithful wife and devoted mother Iseult of Brittany as "this snowdrop by the sea," "the patient flower," "The sweetest Christian soul alive" in contrast to the sensuous, exotic adulteress, Iseult of Ireland.\textsuperscript{26} In The Marble Faun Hilda actually lives in a tower housing an eternal flame to the Virgin; she tends this shrine with her companion doves, as she says, to "pay honor to the idea of divine Womanhood."\textsuperscript{27}

Sisters of these saccharine divinities appeared frequently in painting as well. In her discussion of Victorian art Helene E. Roberts says, "It was the sweet, passive, obedient wife, busy within her domestic setting, showing her concern and appreciation for her masculine protector, apprehensive for his comfort and safety, ever watchful of his reputation, that brought a throb of emotion to the manly
breast of Millais and his Victorian contemporaries, and brought a new kind of painting to the walls of the Royal Academy. But the most successful popularizer of this new Victorian heroine, a poet of whom Ruskin said, "You cannot read him too often or too carefully," was Coventry Patmore, who literally enshrined woman as "the angel in the house." Expressing the sentiments of his time, Patmore asserted that women, childlike and dependent, were meant to be controlled by their men. The man, offering reverential affection, sheltered and adored his domestic angel.

Needless to say, the majority of Swinburne's feminine characters shocked readers accustomed to Patmore: one can scarcely picture Catherine de Medici, Lucretia Borgia, or Faustine knitting at the fireside. Instead, poisonous, perverse hybrids, Swinburne's women bloom like vivid birds of paradise among the pale Victorian lilies "Of Queens' Gardens" that Ruskin so admired. Swinburne's lifelong concerns were to serve art and to love liberty, and both are expressed in his female characters. Biographers and critics have noted that his life and work often revealed rebellion against convention and oppression as well as submission to powerful personalities such as Rossetti, Mazzini, and Watts-Dunton. (Admittedly, this idea is a handy simplification for structuring discussion, but it does have a certain validity.) And a portion of his hatred for repression and restraint--a
passion he believed he shared with Blake and Mill—appears in his depiction of women. The evil fruit of subjugation ripens, for instance, in characters like Lady Midhurst and Althaea. Denied a non-domestic outlet for their force and energy, they and others like them channel their formidable powers into dominating, controlling, and manipulating their families. Unhealthy relationships, domestic conflicts, and family tragedies inevitably result. Obviously, the ideal wife, the dutiful, subservient domestic angel, does not reside in Swinburne's art any more than she did in his personal life. Instead, he defies convention and inverts the natural order—creating mothers who destroy, not protect, their children; women who enslave, not ennoble, their lovers; and young men who look, act, and speak more "femininely" than the strong-willed women they encounter. It is hardly surprising, then, that Swinburne's creations were appalling to a public accustomed to the pap of Patmore and the admonitions of Mrs. Ellis; for Swinburne freed his women characters from the mundane stereotypes of his day in order to utilize them to embody his artistic concerns.

II

Swinburne, then, saw the potential for women to serve as expressions of symbolic reality, as symbols for his
belief in the autonomy of art. The aesthetic search involves a quest for form, outline, definition. As Frank Kermode has noted in *Romantic Image*, the beauty of a woman offers a unique pattern or representation of this order: "Proportion, movement, meaning, are not intellectual properties, but belong to that reality of the imagination which is a symbolic reality. The beauty of a woman, and particularly of a woman in movement, is the emblem of the work of art or Image." In fact, a startlingly ironic reversal of the quasi-religious woman worship espoused by Patmore and Ruskin and explained by Houghton occurs in Swinburne. Replacing the domestic angels as objects of worship, his *femmes fatales* become symbols of beauty uncontaminated by questions of conventional morality, divinities in the religion of art for art's sake.

Since Swinburne's three repeated, important figures—the *femme fatale*, the Terrible Mother, and the androgynestem from his aestheticism, especially from the influence of Gautier and Rossetti, we must explore Swinburne's debt to these artists and then examine his early aesthetic pronouncements before demonstrating precisely how this recurring trio reflects his continuing interest in the Victorian controversy over the role of the artist--public conscience or private quester for beauty.

Theophile Gautier, according to Swinburne's French
biographer, Georges Lafourcade, exerted a powerful influence on the English poet's aestheticism: "Mais il trouva chez Gautier un amour à la fois sensuel et abstrait du Beau, un culte intransigeant et presque morbide de la Forme qui ne contribua pas peu à élargir et à approfondir cette base première de son esthétisme." 31 In particular, three of Gautier's works—La Morte amoureuse, "Une Nuit de Cléopâtre," and Mademoiselle de Maupin—impressed Swinburne. The latter he called "the most perfect and exquisite book of modern times," 32 and in a sonnet he proclaimed, "This is the golden book of spirit and sense,/ The holy writ of beauty" (ll. 1-2). 33

Gautier's novel opens with a preface containing ideas and sentiments Swinburne would echo in his essay William Blake. To satirize the point of view and overzealous expression of the moralistic critics, Gautier poses as one of their number:

"there must be in every work an idea—a religious and moral idea, which—a view, lofty and profound, answering to the needs of humanity; for it is deplorable that young writers should sacrifice the most holy things to success, and employ an otherwise estimable talent in lewd pictures which would make a captain of dragoons blush. (The virginity of the captain of dragoons is the finest discovery, next to that of America, which has been made for a time.) . . . The virtuous journalist has immense erudition of filthy novels. It would be curious to know why." 34
Next, Gautier attacks utilitarian critics, those who condemn literature because it does not serve the needs of society by advocating and facilitating material progress: "No, fools, no, goitrous cretins that you are, a book does not make gelatine soup; a novel is not a pair of seamless boots; a sonnet, a syringe with a continuous jet; or a drama, a railway—all things which are essentially civilising and adapted humanity on its path of progress" (p. xxii). Instead, he maintains, "Nothing that is beautiful is indispensable to life" (p. xxv), and then he adds: "There is nothing truly beautiful but that which can never be of any use whatsoever; everything useful is ugly, for it is the expression of some need, and men's needs are ignoble and disgusting like his own poor and infirm nature. The most useful place in a house is the water closet" (p. xxv). Art, to Gautier, is not a means to an end—morality or progress; rather, it is an end in itself—the creation of the beautiful, untouched by pragmatic concerns. The artist, therefore, is free to create and seek his own ideals, emancipated from the expectations of his critics. In Critic's Alchemy Ruth Temple says, "no other aspect of Gautier's work was so important for his followers, both French and English, as his insistence on the artist's privilege to acknowledge no other god but art." The aesthetic themes that Gautier makes explicit in his "Preface" become implicit in the fiction. Moreover, the
characters he uses—especially the women—influenced Swinburne throughout his own early writing.

In his study of the dark side of Romanticism, The Romantic Agony, Mario Praz observes, "The magical, metaphysical [sic] meaning which Keats found in the song of the nightingale (Ode to a Nightingale)[sic] was applied by the aesthetes, from Gautier downward, to female beauty." In Mademoiselle de Maupin the protagonist D'Albert reveals in his letters that his primary pursuit is the impossible quest for perfect form in a woman:

Only one thing have I ever asked of women—beauty . . . I worship beauty of form above all things; beauty is to me visible divinity, palpable happiness, heaven come down upon earth . . . I ask for nothing but beauty, it is true; but I must have it so perfect that I shall probably never find it.

(p. 84)

However, because D'Albert's ideal derives from his attraction to classical statuary, his vision of beauty approximates the hermaphrodite, which he calls "one of the most eagerly cherished chimeras of idolatrous antiquity":

The torso is a compound of the most charming monstrosities: on the bosom, which is plump and quite pubescent, swells with strange grace the breast of a young maiden; beneath the sides, which are well covered and quite feminine in their softness, you may divine the muscles and the ribs, as in the sides of a young lad; the belly is
rather flat for a woman, and rather round for a man, and in the whole habit of the body there is something cloudy and undecided which it is impossible to describe, and which possesses quite a peculiar attraction.

(p. 144)

To be sure, at this point in the novel D'Albert is attempting to rationalize his attraction for Theodore (actually Mlle. de Maupin disguised as a young man), but Gautier's interest in the hermaphrodite as an image of union, the perfect whole, on the one hand, and of bisexual ambiguity, on the other, is clear: Rosette, D'Albert's lover, also falls in love with Theodore. Although D'Albert enjoys one night of passion with Mlle. de Maupin, his quest to possess ideal beauty ultimately fails when she departs, leaving behind a letter explaining she can only retain her illusion of perfection if she is unattainable:

You desired me, you loved me, I was your ideal . . . Had I valued you less, I should have remained . . . Your love would soon have died of weariness . . . Your unsated desire will again spread its wings to fly to me; I shall ever be to you something desirable to which your fancy will love to return. . . .

(pp. 292-93)

Though Mlle. de Maupin does not approach the true femme fatale in either selfishness or cruelty, her withdrawal from emotional involvement and her androgynous nature, as well as
D'Albert's impossible pursuit of her, reappear, reshaped and focused, in Swinburne.

In fact, Faustine and her poisonous sisters resemble more closely another of Gautier's creations: Cleopatra in "Une Nuit de Cléopâtre." Praz believes that this work, published in 1845, provides the prototype for the cruel mistresses of late nineteenth-century literature:

The young man is beautiful, wild, and chaste, and falls in love with Cleopatra because she is unattainable; Cleopatra is suffering from ennui; she is a "reine siderale" of irresistible charm, and the knowledge of her body is an end in itself, beyond which life has nothing to offer; Cleopatra, like the praying mantis, kills the male whom she loves. These are elements which are destined to become permanent characteristics of the type of Fatal Women of whom we are speaking.

(p. 205)

The youth in the story, Meiamoun, is obsessed with passion for the queen: "The arrow had remained in the wound. . . . The radiant and splendid image of Cleopatra . . . illumined his nightly dreams and his waking thoughts" (p. 311); and in exchange for his one night with her, Meiamoun knowingly sacrifices his life. Thus, his pursuit of "the most womanly and most queenly of all women; an admirable type of beauty" becomes, simultaneously, a denial of life and a quest for death (p. 301). The necessary companion, then, for Gautier's
femme fatale becomes a man who worships the woman who wounds him, the combination that appealed to Swinburne's masochism.

A third work by Gautier, The Beautiful Vampire, influenced Swinburne's handling of a familiar Victorian theme—the conflict between the demands of nature and the constraints of morality—though the English poet was to restructure and present it in an original fashion. In this story the theological student Romuald is struck by the beauty of Clarimonde at the moment of his ordination when he is renouncing the world of the flesh:

Oh! how beautiful she was! The greatest painters, searching for ideal beauty in heaven and bringing down to earth the divine portrait of the madonna, do not approach this fabulous reality. . . . I know not whether the flame that illuminated them [her eyes] came from heaven or hell. . . .

After arriving at his rural appointment, Romuald joins Clarimonde nightly in his dreams. Gautier then depicts the priest's conflict between his love of beauty and his devotion to duty. Clarimonde, the succubus who drains the vitality of her lover, is associated with the unconscious, night, passion, dreams; Romuald's mentor, the Abbe, is associated with the conscious mind, with religion, reality, and reason. Eventually, Romuald, recognizing that the internal division is destroying him, says, "I was prepared
to kill one of these two men who were in me" (p. 104).
Because his aesthetic self must die if his religious self
is to flourish, the Abbe kills Clarimonde with Romuald's
anguished approval. Like Gautier, Swinburne retains a life-
destroying femme fatale as a symbol for beauty, but he
reworks the triangle in his art by substituting morality or
familial duty for a religious code and the Terrible Mother
for the Abbe.

Not only Gautier but also Swinburne's friends in-
fluenced his use of women characters. Each of Swinburne's
biographers has described his relationship with Rossetti,
usually regarding it as a harbinger of Swinburne's eventual
submission to the influence of Watts-Dunton. Certainly, the
younger poet, who met the Pre-Raphaelites (Rossetti, Morris,
Burne-Jones) at Oxford where they had gathered to paint the
Union ceiling in the fall of 1857, was enthralled and fas-
cinated by them, particularly by the powerful, dominating
personality of Rossetti. Nearly two years later, in a letter
to Lady Pauline Trevelyan, William Bell Scott discussed their
continuing influence on Swinburne: "I enjoyed him here very
much, and heard all his poetry. But at present there seem
only two people in the world to him, Topsy [Morris] and Ros-
setti, and only those books or things they admire or appre-
ciate will he entertain. The only exception to this is
unhappily French literature." 38 By this time Swinburne was
letting his hair fall in red curls to his shoulders, a fashion admired by his mentors, and he was sprinkling his letters with slang drawn from their lexicon; for example, he began to use their word for a beautiful woman—"stunner."
Naturally his youthful enthusiasm and emulation spilled over into his work as well. J. D. Hunt remarks in The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination that "Swinburne's conception of women was undoubtedly influenced too by the example of Rossetti."39

In fact, the sharply etched details Swinburne uses to describe his women characters—masses of hair, deep expressive eyes, chiseled lips, and physical positioning—reveal that he absorbed the visual art of his new friends as well as their verbal efforts. But it is in his choice of subject, woman as the ideal of beauty, that Swinburne most closely follows Rossetti, even as he did Gautier.

Of Rossetti's use of the femme fatale Praz says:

In Rossetti there is to be found a conspicuous preference for the sad and the cruel; the Middle Ages, to him, are a legend of blood; beside his Beata Beatrice stand magical, evil creatures. His Sister Helen (in the ballad of the same name) is a cruel, fatal woman, destroying the man whose destiny lies in her power.

(p. 218)

It is not surprising, then, that Swinburne admired "Sister Helen" as the finest ballad in modern English, nor that he wrote Rosamund during this period. Praz also points out
that "the 'Rosamundi,' not Rosa Munda, concubine of Henry II of England, inspired both Rossetti and Burne-Jones to paint pictures, and Swinburne, in his youth, to write a play" (p. 218). When he finished the drama, Swinburne anxiously read it to Rossetti and was delighted with his approval. However, it is important to note that Swinburne's men, unlike Keith of Ewern in "Sister Helen," are unable to sever ties with the cruel woman. But Sonstroem's classification of Rossetti's women reveals that the poet-painter was attracted to feminine types and, hence, male postures, which Swinburne ignored. The ideal of woman as beauty they shared, an idea most clearly expressed by Rossetti in "Hand and Soul."

Beginning with an analysis of Chiaro's dream image as anima, Barbara Gelpi asserts that throughout his life Rossetti depicted his own anima in painting and poetry, a preoccupation which she believes can end in fascination with the destructive ideal:

In other words, if the anima—or, for a woman, the animus—does indeed act as a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious worlds, then she is beneficent, but if she becomes an end in herself, the imaginative symbol of all that the conscious self desires, then she is dangerous.

Since Swinburne made no attempt to realize union with his ideals in the flesh, as Rossetti all too frequently did, Swinburne's artistic and psychosexual obsession with the
femme fatale becomes understandable. Indeed, it becomes a logical extension of his masochism, of his reading of his friendships, of his rebellion against Philistine mores, and of his aesthetics.

While the cruel mistress becomes a symbol of aestheticism for Swinburne's imaginative works, in his criticism his defense of the beautiful is more direct, indeed, often stridently blatant. René Wellek believes that in England, "Only Swinburne propounded a definite creed of 'art for art's sake,'" and he cites William Blake as the chief statement of Swinburne's theories. While the poet was still at Oxford, the warden of Radley College, William Sewall, alarmed by his poetry, lectured Swinburne about his poetic ideals. In a letter Sewall complains that the poet rejected his advice: "'He [Swinburne] spoke of poetry, of the duty and pleasure of creating beauty. And I said yes—creating beauty which you know is truth and which you hope will bless mankind. But he seemed to have no idea except of blowing soap bubbles.'" This criticism would later be leveled against Swinburne on numerous occasions by critics whom he associated with Puritanical bias. In a letter to W. M. Rossetti in 1866 Swinburne complained: "It is really very odd that people (friendly or unfriendly) will not let one be an artist, but must needs make one out a parson or pimp. I suppose it is part of the fetid and fecund spawn of 'the
Galilean serpent." It is hardly surprising that the central passages of William Blake contrast the Puritan prejudices of the Philistines with his and, by implication, Blake's aestheticism.

Before writing his important study of Blake, in 1862 Swinburne published "Charles Baudelaire," an essay elaborating his aesthetic theories. Echoing Gautier, he mocks the expectations of the French critics and public:

French poetry of the present date, taken at its highest, is not less effectually hampered by tradition and the taste of the greater number of readers than our own is. . . . The critical students there, as well as here, judging by the books they praise and the advice they proffer, seem to have pretty well forgotten that a poet's business is presumably to write good verses, and by no means to redeem the age and remould society . . . but the mass of readers seem actually to think that a poem is the better for containing a moral lesson or assisting in a tangible and material good work.

Thus, he praises the "courage and sense" of Baudelaire for acting "on the conviction that the art of poetry has absolutely nothing to do with didactic matter at all" (p. 417). Implicit in Swinburne's remarks is his theory (soon to be reinforced by a study of de Sade) that the artist, in order to preserve aesthetic integrity, must frequently rebel against any code, religious or societal, that would fetter or warp his autonomy as creator. In the brief but incisive
review of *Les Fleurs du Mal* that follows his opening remarks, Swinburne makes another point, one often overlooked:

> there is not one poem of the *Fleurs du Mal* which has not a distinct and vivid background of morality to it. Only, this moral side of the book is not thrust forward in the foolish and repulsive manner of a half-taught artist . . . It is not his [Baudelaire's] or any artist's business to warn against evil; but certainly he does not exhort to it, knowing full well that the one fault is as great as the other.  

(p. 423)

The artist, then, owes allegiance solely to his own vision, for didacticism in any form, directed toward any purpose, makes a poet "no real artist, but a huckster and vendor of miscellaneous wares" (p. 423). The suggestion is that no artist worthy of the name propagandizes for any cause at the price of slighting beauty. Any theme may be commanded by a poet as long as he remains dedicated to beauty and his own perception of truth. This aesthetic idea was an undercurrent in Swinburne's criticism of the early 1860's, but it was overshadowed by his flamboyant, sometimes shrill protestations against the Philistines. However, by the late 1860's it assumed greater importance for him when he began the poems that became *Songs before Sunrise*.  

Indeed, in *William Blake* Swinburne's aesthetic theory is submerged under a torrent of verbiage directed against the public who, he alleges in "Baudelaire," would "swallow
a sonnet like a moral prescription" (p. 423). Swinburne wrote William Blake after returning from a trip to France with Whistler. Lafourcade explains, "When he came back from his stay in Paris in the spring of 1863 he was under the influence of the theories which were current at that time in the literary and artistic circles of the French capitol." Consequently, Gautier, Baudelaire, and Poe (Swinburne absorbed Poe's theories from Baudelaire) stand in the background of William Blake—the most vigorous, emotionally-charged defense of aestheticism written in Victorian England. Although the essay exceeds two hundred pages, the crucial statements appear in the chapter entitled "Lyrical Poems." And, not surprisingly, his theories resemble Gautier's Preface to Mademoiselle de Maupin; however, the haughty, mocking scorn of the French writer has intensified into a tone of strident passion. Throughout this section Swinburne structures his thought and language, as he will his characters, on lines of opposition; specifically, he contrasts the Philistia-Puritan axis to the forces of art and beauty. In his mind the bourgeois conventions of society and the moralistic strictures of religion, if heeded, coalesce to paralyze the artist and deform his creations.

But, to let Swinburne speak for himself, early in the chapter he states flatly: "For Puritanism is in this one thing absolutely right about art; they cannot live and
work together, or the one under the other. Continuing his contrast, later in the same paragraph he attacks the idea that art can be the handmaid of religion and simultaneously delivers a blow at two other sacred cows of the Victorians, "duty" and "fact"—one can almost see the Prud-hommes and Gradgrinds recoil: "Handmaid of religion, exponent of duty, servant of fact, pioneer of morality, she cannot in any way become; she would be none of these things though you were to bray her in a mortar" (p. 90). Shortly thereafter occurs the passage which earned Swinburne his title of spokesman for aestheticism:

Art for art's sake first of all, and afterwards we may suppose all the rest shall be added to her (or if not she need hardly be overmuch concerned); but from the man who falls to artistic work with a moral purpose, shall be taken away even that which he has—whatever of capacity for doing well in either way he may have at starting.

(p. 91)

Swinburne follows this pronouncement by quoting Baudelaire, unaware that the French poet had taken his phrase from Poe: "A living critic calls this 'the heresy of instruction' (l'hérésie de l'enseignement): one might call it . . . the great moral heresy. Nothing can be imagined more futile; nothing so ruinous" (p. 92). This idea is amplified in an interesting passage, wherein the conventional use of the
feminine pronoun to refer to art, in this case art trying to serve morality, reminds the reader of Mrs. Ellis' ideal, servile wife and mother, a role Swinburne's art could never fulfill:

> Once let art humble herself, plead excuses, try at any compromise with the Puritan principle of doing good, and she is worse than dead. Once let her turn apologetic, and promise or imply that she really will now be "loyal to fact" and useful to men in general (say, by furthering their moral work or improving their moral nature), she is no longer of any human use or value.

(p. 92)

Unquestionably, art could not become a domestic angel appropriate to fluttering about Patmore's house; instead, she must possess the independence, the inability of the *femme fatale* to be shackled and dominated. Or, as Swinburne says, attributing to unrestrained art the strength of Samson: "Philistia had far better (always providing it to be possible) crush art at once, hand or burn it out of the way, than think of plucking out its eyes and setting it to grind moral corn in the philistine mills; which it is certain to do not at all well" (p. 93). The results of that servitude would be not only disastrous for art but also crippling for the artist himself, aesthetic concepts which Swinburne introduced in the passage calling for art for art's sake and expanded later with a powerful allusion:
Let no artist or poet listen to the blank bark of these porter dogs of the Puritan kingdom even when they fawn and flirt with tongue or tail. Cave canem. That Cerberus of the portals of Philistia will swallow your honey-cake to no purpose; if he does not turn and rend you, his slaver as he licks your hand will leave it impotent and palsied for all good work.

(p. 93)

According to Swinburne, the artist cannot serve two masters. The attempt will fail, and the results will be catastrophic: on one hand, the product will be on the level of commercial pap—similar to, in Swinburne's opinion, Idylls of the King (or, as he called it, "Morte d'Albert")—and on the other hand, the artist will have sacrificed his autonomy and integrity.

III

The triadic structure which I intend to examine in the creative works is implied in William Blake. In his criticism Swinburne opposes Philistia-Puritanism to art, the Terrible Mother to the femme fatale, and examines the plight of the artist, who is frequently depicted fictively as the androgyne, torn between conscience and sense, duty and beauty—both poles containing their concomitant dangers. However, before tracing their appearances in his works, I shall discuss each of the three archetypes in turn, and
briefly delineate the stresses inherent in the triangle they form.

Psychological commentaries on the *femme fatale* treat her as the projection of a man's anima. In defining the anima, one of his principal archetypes, C. G. Jung says,

> In the Middle Ages, long before the physiologists demonstrated that by reason of our glandular structure there are male and female elements in all of us, it was said that "every man carries a woman within himself." It is this female in every male that I have called the "anima." 47

Jung also explains that the archetype of the anima does not remain hidden; instead, it is usually projected from the unconscious of the male:

> What is not I, not masculine, is most probably feminine, and because the not-I is felt as not belonging to me and therefore as outside me, the anima-image is usually projected upon women. 48

When this projection issues from the unconscious of artists, the anima appears in their art. 49 However, she can be either beneficent or malign. In delineating the anima Jung asserts that "the anima is bipolar and can therefore appear positive one moment and negative the next; now young, now old; now mother, now maiden; now a good fairy, now a witch; now a saint, now a whore." 50 The "negative" figure—variously depicted in imaginative works as succubus, witch, bitch, 1a
belle dame sans merci—constitutes the femme fatale. A cruel, dominating woman who can usually be possessed sexually but never emotionally, she holds her lover in thrall, inflicting psychic lacerations more painful than any physical wounds. She drains the spirit, energy, sometimes literally the life-blood (like Gautier's Cleopatra) of her victims, while remaining essentially unmoved or untouched herself. To those men who are seduced, enchanted, enthralled by her, she seems beyond the reach of conventional moral judgments, set apart by her beauty, autonomy, and, frequently, her own disdain for Philistia. However, her existence is not as independent as it appears. She depends upon the man who has projected his anima on her; only by draining his vitality can she sustain her own being. Thus, the man's erotic quest often simultaneously becomes a death wish, or at least a search, in the case of some of Swinburne's speakers, for oblivion and escape from the external world to a timeless realm of stasis and art. The lover strives to possess the beauty and form of the woman, even as the artist pursues those qualities in his art. Dominating the imagination of her lover/artist, the femme fatale, unattainable like ideal beauty, becomes an appropriate image for the goal of the aesthetic quest.

This escapist fascination with the siren was so exacerbated by the Philistine culture of the nineteenth
century that it can be seen as a precursor of the decadence of the 1890's. Indeed, Mario Praz and his disciple Clyde de L. Ryals explain the frequency of the archetype partially as a result of the artist's increasing sense of alienation from his culture and his subsequent internalization of values.

In tracing what he calls "the parabola of the sexes during the nineteenth century," Mario Praz says, "The male, who at first tends toward sadism, inclines, at the end of the century, towards masochism" (p. 216). Both Praz and Clyde de L. Ryals view Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" as the prototype for the fatal women of later poets. Ryals maintains that "Romanticism ... was essentially a masculine state of mind," but "Decadence, on the other hand, marked the virescence of a more feminine sensibility, characterized by a withdrawal from masculine reality." He continues:

> It is not surprising, therefore, that the romantic hero, symbol of masculinity, was replaced by the decadent heroine, the Belle Dame Sans Merci. Instead of the male dominating the female, as Byron's protagonists had ruthlessly done, the situation was reversed to the point where the female, the beautiful but sterile Eternal Woman, pre-dominated over the male.

Praz even describes the precise formula used by Swinburne himself:

> man, in his work, aspires to be "the powerless victim of the furious rage of a beautiful
woman; his attitude is passive, his love a martyrdom, his pleasure pain. As for the woman, whether she be Fredegond or Lucrezia Borgia, Rosamond or Mary Stuart, she is always the same type of unrestrained, imperious, cruel beauty.

(p. 217)

According to Heilbrun's catalogue of what constitutes masculinity and femininity in the nineteenth century, Swinburne has inverted the "natural" order; small wonder that Buchanan and others were shocked.

The psychic motivations of this type of woman have been examined by psychologists. In her study The Psychology of Women, Helen Deutsch theorizes that "most erotic feminine types can be derived from the interplay between narcissism and masochism." The femme fatale is an aggressive, narcissistic woman who "catches masculine hearts only to play a cruel sadistic game with them." Deutsch says, "Circe and Lorelei only wear the mask of femininity—just like their modern counterpart, the 'vamp.'" Jung also describes the woman who "loves romantic and sensational episodes for their own sake" and then moves on to destroy another man; he adds, "I need hardly point out that for men with a passive Eros this type offers an excellent hook for anima projections."

It is apparent, then, that the femme fatale is an archetype peculiarly appropriate to Swinburne. She touches nerves in the man and the artist: biographers have claimed
that she is inspired by his ill-fated love for his cousin Mary Gordon or that she springs from his well-documented masochism and obsession with flagellation. Finding the femme fatale in the works of those he especially admired—Rossetti, Keats, Gautier—Swinburne was better suited than they to work and rework the figure until she became his central character, an image of freedom and beauty uncontaminated by morality, an objectification of his aesthetic theory of art for art's sake. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that she is frequently opposed in his writing by another woman—one embodying restriction and judgment—the Terrible Mother.

Any discussion of the Terrible Mother must partially recapitulate Erich Neumann's study, The Great Mother, wherein he analyzes all aspects of the feminine archetype. Early in the book he explains:

A configured form of the Great Mother has emerged from the primordial archetype. Now an order is discernible in the elements. She has three forms: the good, the terrible, and the good-bad mother. The good feminine (and masculine) elements configure the Good Mother, who, like the Terrible Mother containing the negative elements, can also emerge independently from the unity of the Great Mother. The third form is that of the Great Mother who is good-bad and makes possible a union of positive and negative elements.57

The most familiar representation of the Great Mother is the vessel, the container, the round, the womb that nourishes;
it "tends to hold fast everything that springs from it and to surround it like an eternal substance. Everything born of it belongs to it and remains subject to it" (p. 24).

However, when the Terrible Mother appears, the basic feminine functions—the giving of life, nourishment, warmth, and protection—become warped and twisted so that she is associated with holding fast, fixating, ensnaring (p. 65). Dangerous and deadly, she can suffocate her progeny, who, no longer desiring the containment of childhood, experience her attitude as restricting and hostile. In fact, Neumann's schema of the inner dynamics of the archetype reveals that the physical effects of an encounter with the Terrible Mother are often death and dissolution; the psychic effects, spiritual death and extinction (p. 69). Not surprisingly, Swinburne, as a young man always in rebellion against those systems of social, political, and literary convention which warp the individual and fetter his creativity, found the archetype suitable for expressing his frustration with the repressive mores of Victoriana. Although she sometimes appears directly as a character (Catherine de Medici, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Althaea, et al.), sometimes he presents her indirectly through the symbols Neumann associates with her: the mountain, cave, night, chasm, abyss, the sea in its destructive aspect, and, especially, the underworld (pp. 44-45, 157). The Great Mother, encompassing positive and
negative forces, frequently finds expression in the sea too and particularly in the Tree of Life (p. 52), a transforming image Swinburne could not achieve until "Bertha." Neumann also explains that "the devouring Feminine ... can appear in male form; for example, as a mother's brother, who represents the authority and punishment of matriarchal society" (p. 178). In Atalanta in Calydon Swinburne reinforces the Terrible Mother figure of Althaea by using her brothers in this way, but a more familiar character from this mold is Keats's Apollonius. The dynamics of his involvement with Lycurus and Lamia obviously serve as a paradigm for Swinburne's manipulation of the young man-femme fatale-Terrible Mother triangle to reflect the problems that the artist, drawn to aestheticism, faces in a smug, earnest society.

Without citing specifics, Neumann remarks in a note on this grouping himself: "The Romantics, for example, were wholly dominated by this constellation in which the mother archetype of the collective unconscious overpowers the anima and by its fascination leads to the uroboric incest of the death urge or to madness" (p. 34). A more attractive fate emerges for the young man/hero who can associate the Terrible Mother with a tendency toward the transformative character, i.e., toward the anima; her appearance may introduce a positive development in which the ego is driven toward masculinization and the fight with the dragon, i.e., positive development and transformation. For this constellation
the myth of Perseus is typical: Perseus must kill the Terrible Mother before he can win Andromeda.

(p. 38)

Perhaps the most celebrated twentieth-century version of the rejection of the mother figure and submission to the anima occurs in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. In order to become "the Artist," Stephen rejects not only his own mother but also symbolic mothers—the old sow, country, and church—for the transforming symbol of aesthetic form, the young bird-girl. Unfortunately, in Swinburne's young men, like Meleager in Atalanta in Calydon, this psychic progress is truncated because not only the mother but also the anima projection—a femme fatale—is destructive.

That these young men are usually androgynous should not be surprising according to Neumann:

When the matriarchal Feminine is predominant, we often find, side by side with the child symbolism of that which is born from it, a hermaphroditic symbolism preserving an undifferentiated uroboric character. . . . It is typical of the matriarchal sphere that the son is dominated by the Great Mother who holds him fast even in his masculine movement and activity.

(p. 48)

Although Swinburne employs this archetypal configuration repeatedly, no one could suggest that he did so in a
systematic manner; however, that he was aware of the figure and interested in its implications is evident in his criticism as well as in his poems, plays, and novels.

In William Blake Swinburne discerns the hermaphroditic emblem in both the "Gates of Paradise" and Jerusalem, saying of the form, "'a dark hermaphrodite'... who from of old was neither female nor male, but perfect man without division of flesh, until the setting of sex against sex by the malignity of animal creation" (pp. 21-22). Notes on Poems and Reviews, written in defense of Poems and Ballads, specifically justifies his poem "Hermaphroditus" and quotes Shelley's description of a hermaphrodite in The Witch of Atlas. Swinburne's interest in the statue at the Louvre, the inspiration for his poem, may have been sparked by Mademoiselle de Maupin. Indeed, D'Albert's fascination with the disguised Theodore, which we have seen earlier, helps to form the basis for one of Swinburne's uses of the androgynous. D'Albert, confused but honest about his feelings, writes a friend:

The son of Hermes and Aphrodite is, in fact, one of the sweetest creations of Pagan genius. Nothing in the world can be imagined more ravishing than these two bodies, harmoniously blended together and both perfect, these two beauties so equal and so different, forming but one superior to both, because they are reciprocally tempered and improved. To an exclusive worshipper of form, can there be a more delightful uncertainty than that into
which you are thrown by the sight of the
back, the ambiguous loins, and the strong
delicate legs, which you are doubtful
whether to attribute to Mercury ready to
take his flight or to Diana coming forth
from the bath? . . . Theodore would cer-
tainly be an excellent model for this
kind of beauty. . . .

(pp. 143-44)

This passage exemplifies the positive associations of the
androgyne: synthesis, wholeness, the concept of the two
harmoniously yoked in the one, a polarity brought back into
a unity through art, through an artist's creation. This
concept resembles Coleridge's concept of "the reconcilia-
tion of opposite and discordant qualities," a function of
the creative Secondary Imagination. Indeed, throughout
Swinburne's early work the figure becomes, if not a major
figure, at least an undercurrent, a motif that moves toward
the ideal of a primordial unity that would dissolve the
contraries between subject and object, male and female,
spirit and matter, art and morality. This aspect of the
archetype reaches its ideal form in Hertha. However, the
figure reveals a countercurrent in some of its embodiments:
morally as well as sexually ambiguous, estranged from
society by its otherness, unable to achieve satisfaction,
the concept at times reflects not only the achievement but
also the alienation or destruction of the artist himself.
According to A. J. L. Busst's study, "The Image of the
Androgyne in the Nineteenth Century," these positive and negative androgynies are not unusual, for he observes that the two images or conceptions of the androgyne which dominated the nineteenth century . . . were not only different, but even diametrically opposed. While the one image is clearly optimistic and healthy, the other is pessimistic, unhealthy, and decadent. Each of these two contradictory images occurs in the work of a great number of authors and artists during the century.58

Swinburne's works contain both images; his androgynous figures point back in "Hertha" toward the harmonious ideal of Auguste Comte and forward to the image of the Decadence in the works which precede Songs before Sunrise.

Within this broad outline of the archetype exist several themes that frequently cluster about it: bisexuality, hermaphroditism, homosexuality, female sadism, male masochism, and brother-sister incest. The first trio of this sextet is practically self-evident: bisexual, possessing both male and female organs, thus able to mate with both sexes; hermaphrodite, possessing both, therefore needing no partner; homosexual, being either an effeminate male or a masculine female. In addition, the androgyne implies not only sterility (purity and barrenness) through its hermaphroditism but also, paradoxically, creativity, since it could theoretically reproduce alone. Again, the androgyne appears as a metaphor for the artist. The sadistic female
and the masochistic male—central to Swinburne's work—Busst explains in his essay:

There is obviously nothing androgynous about a male sadist or a female masochist; but a sadistic woman, in as far as she dominates her male victim, may be considered virile, since she exhibits strength, a male characteristic; and her ability to indulge in her vice depends to a large extent on the male's abdication of his own virility, his masochistic willingness to be ruled—even tormented—by a female showing a weakness of character generally associated with effeminacy. His refusal to assert himself often indicates awareness of the vanity of all action, which must accompany loss of convictions in a world without values, where good is often indistinguishable from evil. It is, therefore, not surprising that male masochism and its necessary counterpart, female sadism, should be associated so frequently with the attitude of despair and disillusionment reflected in the pessimistic symbol of the androgyne.

(p. 56)

Indeed, most of Swinburne's androgynous young men, masochistically attracted to femmes fatales, fall readily into this tradition; and, at times, Swinburne hints at incestuous feeling between brother (androgyne) and sister, particularly in Lesbia Brandon. Marie Delcourt, in her study Hermaphrodite, notes that "we have seen more than once the affinity between androgyney and incest between brother and sister." Jung agrees when he comments, "This endogamous mating is simply a variant of the Uroboros, which because it is by nature hermaphroditic, completes the circle in itself."
Thus, the seemingly unthinkable impulse can become an attempt at redemption through an effort to reintegrate the self, or for the artist/androgyne to merge with ideal beauty, the femme fatale. Busst, furthermore, reminds us that the androgyne fits appropriately into aestheticism: "That the image of the hermaphrodite should symbolize the confusion of good and evil is, of course, to a certain extent a reflection of the artistic climate: if art has no other end than itself, and if, artistically, good and evil are meaningless words, then the hermaphrodite, as a product of pure art, must be beyond and above good and evil" (p. 54).

Just as the femmes fatales pose a challenge to Swinburne's audience, so do his androgynes: they, like art and artists, must be accepted on aesthetic grounds, not morally judged, lest the reader fall into the condemnatory mode of the Terrible Mother or the spokesman for Philistine society.

In an age when writers who took their artistry seriously—Tennyson, Browning, Arnold—were torn, however briefly, between reinforcing moral earnestness or pursuing their own visions, between sense or conscience, Swinburne's firm aesthetic position was naturally shocking, particularly when it was coupled with his poetry. His sexually ambivalent characters were threatening to an age that so rigidly distinguished male and female, and the combination of aesthetic doctrine with these deviant (to the Victorians)
archetypes led, of course, to outrage and antipathy on the part of some critics.

In this study I intend to examine the chronological development of these figures from their earliest appearances through their climactic synthesis in *Songs before Sunrise*. In addition, I will discuss them, when appropriate, in juxtaposition, as imaginative externalizations of the central artistic controversy of the nineteenth century: aestheticism versus morality. I will explore the triadic structural pattern that recurs in the longer works in varying forms, receiving its fullest treatment in *Atalanta in Calydon*. This triangle includes a male lover (frequently an androgyne) whose infatuation for a *femme fatale* is opposed by a Terrible Mother. The internal struggle of the young man/artist is revealed when he must submit to one of the two women, one representing the restrictive laws of society and conventional morality, the other commanding his passion and embodying his aesthetic ideal. This pattern determines the dramatic conflict of *Atalanta*, where Meleager's preference for Atalanta clearly becomes a rebellion against Althaea's domestic, familial strictures. In rejecting his mother and choosing Atalanta, Meleager chooses not only her beauty but also his own death. The young man's suffering, his enslavement to the cruel mistress, appears in the early works such as "Queen Yseult," the proposed but uncompleted *Triameron*. 
as well as in Rosamond, The Queen Mother, and Chastelard. The same theme continues through the novels, saturates the verse of Poems and Ballads, and at the same time appears powerfully in the fate of Meleager. The pursuit of the ideal, closely associated with the erotic urge, ultimately brings alienation from society and leads to death, ideas which Swinburne inherited from the French Symbolists and from his English Romantic precursors, particularly Shelley's Alastor and Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." An optimistic resolution, I will show, is possible only in Songs before Sunrise. The synthesis of male-female and the victory of the Great Mother, a positive female archetype, can occur in that volume because Swinburne had a theme, Liberty (specifically Italian), and a vision (the Humanity of Comte's Positivism), in which beauty and duty could finally coalesce, if only briefly and aesthetically.
NOTES


7. Swinburne met Lady Pauline in 1853, and their friendship, which can be traced in his letters, continued until her death in 1866. Well read in English and French literature, she also admired the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites and encouraged Swinburne's literary efforts. Lizzie Siddal was a model of D. G. Rossetti, who married her in 1860. She and Swinburne were close friends until her death on February 10, 1862, from a laudanum overdose. The description of Amy Cheyne in A Year's Letters bears a striking resemblance to Lizzie. In 1867 Adah Mencken, an actress/poet from New Orleans, appeared in London in her "Naked Mazeppa" act, where, tied to a horse, she galloped about the stage in flesh-colored tights. D. G. Rossetti introduced Swinburne to her; the result was a photograph of the two which went on sale in London and a long-distance friendship which lasted for several years.


10. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p. 211.


18. Ibid.


20. Ibid., p. 355.


28 "Marriage, Redundancy, or Sin: The Painter's View of Women in the First Twenty-five Years of Victoria's Reign," in Suffer and Be Still, p. 50.

29 Ruskin, "Gardens," p. 192n.


33 The Complete Works, III. Poetical Works, III, p. 60.

34 Mademoiselle de Maupin and One of Cleopatra's Nights (New York: Random House, n.d.), p. ix. All further references to this work appear in the text.


43 "To William Michael Rossetti," October 9, [1866], Letter 149, Letters, I, 193.


45 Georges Lafourcade, Swinburne (London: Bell, 1932), p. 112.


49 Ibid. See pp. 28-31 and p. 71 for Jung's discussion of literary depictions of the anima.

50 Ibid., p. 199.

51 "Toward a Definition of 'Decadent' as Applied to British Literature of the Nineteenth Century," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, No. 17 (Sept. 1958), 87.

52 Ibid., 88.


54 Ibid., p. 295.

55 Ibid., p. 294.

56 Jung, Archetypes, p. 89.

57 The Great Mother, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955), p. 21. Unless otherwise documented, all further references in the discussion of the Terrible Mother are to this work and appear in the text.
58 "The Image of the Androgyne in the Nineteenth Century," in Romantic Mythologies, ed. Ian Fletcher (London: Routledge, 1987), p. 10. All further references to this work occur in the text.


CHAPTER IX

THE EARLIEST APPEARANCES OF THE ARCHETYPES

In January 1856 Swinburne entered Balliol College, Oxford, where he studied until 1859. He left Oxford without a degree. However, during his undergraduate years he had met D. G. Rossetti, William Morris, and Edward Burne-Jones, had done substantial reading, had written a number of poems, and had begun to write dramas. The serious works he produced from 1856 to 1861 are now infrequently read and rarely written about; they include his undergraduate sonnets, "The Masque of Queen Bersabe," "Queen Yseult," Rosamond, The Queen Mother, the works of the incomplete Triameron ("Dead Love," "The Portrait," "The Marriage of Monna Lisa," "The Chronicle of Queen Fredegond," The Chronicle of Tebaldeo Tebaldei), and Chastelard. All of these are derivative and indebted to heavy influences from one or more of his favorite types of reading during these years: Pre-Raphaelite poetry, Elizabethan drama, French and Italian literature, and the chronicles of medieval historians.

The variety of genres he practiced—lyrics, narrative poems, masques, dramas, short tales, longer chronicles—allowed him range to develop his distinctive prose and
poetic styles; but his freedom to invent plot and delineate character was curtailed by history. That is, he chose to retell legends or historical events rather than to invent his own. Nevertheless, he selected stories from the past which allowed him to depict the *femme fatale* and, less frequently, the Terrible Mother. The strong knights and kings in the earliest works do not easily lend themselves to becoming androgynous young men, nor are the *femmes fatales* and Terrible Mothers always completely consistent with their archetypes. However, in this writing, one does see Swinburne working closer and closer toward his typical *femme fatale* in the characters of Yseult, Rosamond, Fredegond, Lucretia, and Mary Stuart; and he experiments with restrictive, controlling Terrible Mother figures in Mark, Eleanor, Catherine, and John Knox. In addition, he explores bewitched, powerful men in Tristram, Henry, and Chilperic, then introduces into his serious work the youthful artist-androgyne in Tabaldeo and Chastelard. (The figure had already appeared in his private papers, "The Flogging Block," and in some humorous short sketches that he wrote.) A chronological examination of these writings reveals, moreover, his early and persistent concern with the sovereignty and autonomy of beauty as depicted in the *femme fatale*. His primary aesthetic theory is implicitly present: the pleasure that beauty produces in its beholder justifies its
existence; any judgment brought to bear upon beauty by conventional mores and orthodox morality is not only inappropriate but also invalid. In fact, this theme operates throughout his early efforts, largely manifested in the interaction of his three recurring archetypes: the femme fatale, the Terrible Mother, and the androgyne.

Like most young poets learning their craft, Swinburne practiced writing sonnets. Titled "Undergraduate Sonnets," the group of seven poems was written while he was still at Oxford, heavily under the influence of his intense admiration for the drama and poetry of the Elizabethan period. Shakespearean in form and subject, the poems are not particularly memorable, though they show a hint of his imitative talent and presage the Elizabethan diction and syntax of The Queen Mother. The speaker in these seven sonnets, however, is of interest not only as a continuation of the Petrarchan lover but also as a precursor of the victimized male in Swinburne's later works. In each of the poems, the speaker assumes the posture of the wronged lover of a cruel (although not bloodthirsty) mistress; however, because of her beauty, he is compelled to forgive her or to defend her to his friends. In II he states in the concluding couplet, "I can but swear thy seeming sanctity,/ Thy feigning truth, pure love thy cruelty." To her detractors in IV he admits, "Nor fair nor true nor lov'd nor clear ye prove her,/ And
I believe your warrant; but I love her" (p. 93). Then in the second quatrains of the fifth sonnet the speaker addresses the lady directly:

I hate thy falsehood that is part of thee,
I love the beauty that doth overpaint it;
I love the brightness there, and will not see
For its rich sweetness what a curse doth taint it. (p. 94)

The words could easily be spoken in later poems by his male figures. Thus, while the sonnets themselves are of no great merit, it is interesting to note that the young Swinburne was intrigued by relationships where cruelty and infidelity, aligned with beauty, inspire passion and devotion that disregard the opinions and moral judgments of others.

The dim outline, not only of the victimized male, later to be transformed into the androgyne, but also of the femme fatale, can be traced in Swinburne's Oxford verse. "The Masque of Queen Bersabe," which Georges Lafourcade describes as "une imitation plus stricte et plus homogene quant à la forme," is modeled on miracle plays; it recounts Nathan's prophecy to David about the son he and Bathsheba were to produce and owes a heavy debt to George Peele's The Love of King David and the Faire Bethsabe. Nathan, in order to reinforce his warning to the couple summons "All that were fair and foul ye be" (p. 354). Each of the twenty-two queens steps forward to recount her beauty,
passion, and tragedy; among the most familiar names are Herodias, Pasiphae, Sappho, Messalina, and Cleopatra. Cleopatra's words are typical of the queens' speeches: "My lips held fast the mouth o' the world/ To spoil the strength and speech thereof" (p. 355). The speech of Atarah, too, reflects the power these women exerted over men and displays Swinburne's fascination with their eroticism, revealed here in his imagery (used throughout the catalogue) of the erotic—spices, odors, and lush fabrics:

I am the queen Sidonian.
My face made faint the face of man,
    And strength was bound beneath my brow.
Spikenard was hidden in my ships,
Honey and wheat and myrrh in strips,
    White wools that shine as colour does.
Soft linen dyed upon the fold,
Split spice and cores of scented gold,
    Cedar and broken calamus.

(p. 356)

Lafourcade sees in this early imitation the character of the ladies to come: "Sensualité et lyrisme se mêlent également dans cette brillante série d'évocations d'où se dégage, parmi la multiplicité des noms, le type impéreux, sanguinaire et fatal de l'héroïne swinburnienne." Moreover, in the king's last speech David attempts to justify and explain his lust. Despite the archaic diction and repetitive rimes, Swinburne achieves an insight into the response of a man overpowered by his initial reaction to a beautiful woman. The
description David recounts has a posed quality with details of hair and posture which recall Pre-Raphaelite paintings.

David remembers his first sight of Bersabe:

Yea, God wot I can well see yet
Both her breast and her sides all wet
And her long hair withouten let
Spread sideways like a drawing net ...
So goodly a sight as there she was,
Lying looking on her glass
By wan water in green grass,
Yet never saw man ...
This bitter sin from that sweet sight
Between us twain began.

Even here, Swinburne demonstrates his interest in adulterous relationships—ones that exist in spite of society's codes and are justified only by the passion and beauty that inspire them. Nathan, representative of God's law, has appeared to deliver God's judgment: the unborn son of David and Bathsheba will die in retribution for the arranged death of Uriah. God, speaking through Nathan, retaliates and enforces his moral standard on the lovers. In this brief drama-pastiche, Swinburne hints at the femme fatale-androgyne-Terrible Mother triad in the characters of Bersabe-David-Nathan. However, the strong king or knight, the dominant male, had to undergo transformations before he appeared as androgynous.

Two more famous adulterous couples absorbed Swinburne's attention in the late 1850's: Tristram and Yseult,
Henry and Rosamond. Both works, "Queen Yseult" and Rosamond, reflect his growing interest in Medievalism and his new position in the Pre-Raphaelite circle. After he had met William Morris, Swinburne composed six cantos of the unfinished "Queen Yseult" between early November and December 16, 1857. Lafourcade explains, "une de ses premières—et la plus importante—compositions de cette époque, Queen Yseult, n'est, quant à la forme, qu'un écho prolonge de la voix monotone de W. Morris." Lionel Stevenson, too, points out that after hearing Morris read from his own work Swinburne "adopted the same trochaic tercets and stark narrative manner for a long Arthurian poem which he immediately began to write, entitled 'Queen Yseult.'"

In this early poem, the first canto of which was published in December 1857 in the short-lived Undergraduate Papers (a periodical of the Old Mortality Society), Swinburne examines a famous triangle which is, as yet, a few steps removed from the triad under discussion in this study. Nevertheless, the seeds are present in the character and descriptions of Yseult, particularly, and, to a lesser extent, in the figures of Tristram and Mark.

The problem with Tristram in Swinburne's characterization is inherent in him as he appears in Arthurian romance: he must be a chivalrous knight, a man of action thought by his uncle Mark to be courageous and strong enough
to conduct Yseult safely from Ireland to Cornwall. In addition, Swinburne repeats the incident of Tristram's avenging his father Roland's quarrel with Moronde and his erecting a memorial to his mother. Thus, the poet limits his own freedom in establishing Tristram's nature by adhering in the main to his primary source, Thomas the Rhymer; but his own imagination reveals its predilection for the passive male in a few significant details. When Tristram meets Yseult, he is overwhelmed by her beauty, by her thick, blonde, Pre-Raphaelite tresses--indicative of her sexuality. Entering Tristram's consciousness, Swinburne relates the man's feelings: "Ah, dear saints, how well it were,/ Thought he, to die knightly there/ For that lady's golden hair" (canto 2, p. 24). This hint that Tristram would enjoy subjugation at the hands of the queen is underscored a few lines later: "And he thought it well and meet,/ Lain before that lady sweet,/ To be trodden by her feet" (2, p. 25). In addition, Tristram cries twice--revealing his emotions and sensitivity. When he first heard her speak, "Great hot tears grew thro' his eyes" (2, p. 25), and he has a presentiment of the pain to follow. Later, on his wedding night to Lady Yseult, he does not attempt to make love to his bride; instead, facing Cornwall, he grieves for the other Yseult:

And he bowed his body fair
Down athwart the window there.
Weeping for the golden hair.
It was wonderful to see
That he wept so bitterly
With his face to the blown sea.

(5, p. 53)

In fact, this picture is the reader’s last glimpse of Tristram in this poem (Swinburne depicted him again in Tristram of Lyonesse, 1882) before the setting changes to Cornwall and the poem ends. But the most interesting scene in the work occurs earlier—when Tristram and Yseult arrange a tryst at Mark’s castle. In order to avoid leaving tell-tale footprints in the snow-blanketed courtyard, Yseult carries him to her room. As Swinburne narrates the incident,

... she raised him tenderly,
Bore him lightly as might be,
That was wonderful to see.

So they passed by trail and track,
Slowly, in the night all black,
And she bore him on her back. . . .

Pausing, round her body sweet
Rolled the ripe hair to her feet;
Forth she bare him as was meet. . . .

Till she stood on the strewn floor
Right within the chamber door,
With the weight of love she bore.

(3, pp. 36-37)

Lionel Stevenson calls the detail "strange" and observes, "The inertia of the lover and the physical prowess of the lady are a disturbing departure from the conventions of
courtly love." They are, to be sure, but the masculine passivity and feminine aggression are also harbingers of the powerful women and victimized men Swinburne would soon create.

Like Rosamond and Denise, Yseult is a stepping stone toward the *femmes fatales* of Swinburne's later work, because all three, while displaying the disregard for conventional morality, the beauty, and charm of the type, allow their emotions to be engaged by King Henry, Charles IX, and Tristram, respectively. Before Tristram leaves for Ireland, Mark describes his bride:

For strange things are said in place
Of the wonder of her face
And her tender woman's grace...

(1, p. 21)

All her limbs are fair and strong,
And her face is straight and long,
And her talk is as a song.

And faint lines of colour stripe
(As spilt wine that one should wipe)
All her golden hair corn-ripe;

Drawn like red gold ears that stand
In the yellow summer land;
Arrow-straight her perfect hand,

And her eyes like river lakes
Where a gloomy glory shakes
Which the happy sunset makes.

(1, pp. 21-22)

In fact, "golden hair" appears in the poem more frequently than any other phrase. As Lafourcade says, "La beauté blonde
d'Yseult surtout fascine l'imagination de l'auteur, et le grand apothéose de sa chevelure d'or illumine tout le poème.8 The descriptive imagery and colors which Swinburne clusters about her in this passage—corn, sunset, lakes, wine, red, gold—suggest the intoxicating lust, the heat, the sensuality, and vitality of the queen and the passion she shares with her lover. The words contrast sharply with the epithet Swinburne attaches to Mark: "lean and cold."

In transporting Tristram to her bedroom, Yseult not only reveals her physical strength, but also shows her mental toughness and defiance of authority. Needless to say, she ignores her marriage vows to continue her affair with Tristram, but she also speaks out scornfully and boldly mocks a knight who accuses her of infidelity to Mark until "the men for very shame/ Spake her quit of ill defame" (3, p. 39). Years later, believing Tristram dead, she voices neither guilt nor regret, but rather her pride in her beauty and fond memories of her lover:

For I shall not blush to know
(And she rose up, speaking so)
That men speak of this my woe. . . .

Since indeed no shame it were
(Said she, shaking back her hair)
That one loved him thrice as fair.

(6, pp. 59-60)

This arrogance, added to her vigor, confidence, and total disregard for Mark's feelings, makes her a direct ancestor
of the Swinburnian fatal woman.

Despite the miserable treatment from his wife and nephew, Mark, though a shadowy figure throughout, receives a totally unsympathetic handling. Swinburne hints at Mark's pain and bitterness:

And his face grew long and lean
And his lips more pale, I ween
Hiding harsh words of the queen.

And in bitter speech he said,
When much wine had filled his head,
A bad prayer that she were dead.

(6, p. 64)

Nevertheless, the poet reiterates "lean and cold" so often that Mark, like the Terrible Mother figure to come, is associated with legality, authority, and restriction. Colorless, passionless, and aging, he is emblematic of the legal marriage, approved by church and society, which contrasts sharply with the illicit union of Yseult and Tristram, sanctified by passion, beauty, youth, and vibrating with color.

In Rosamond (1860), another triangle—Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry II, and Rosamond—dominates. The choice of subject matter shows Swinburne turning from Arthurian legend to history, the age of Henry II of England and Charles IX of France. However, his topics still do not allow him full imaginative latitude in developing characters since he is restrained by historical fact to some
extent. In the spring of 1857, before meeting Rossetti and Morris, Swinburne attended a picnic with the other members of Old Mortality at the ruins of Godstow Nunnery, where Rosamond lived. His friendship with the Pre-Raphaelites, formed a few months later, probably intensified his interest in Henry II's mistress because she inspired both Rossetti and Burne-Jones to paint her. Rossetti's portrait, Fair Rosamond, is dated 1861. Calling her "Rosa mundi," the artists deemed her symbolic, according to Stevenson, of "the unchanging embodiment of female allure."^9

With the character of Rosamond, Swinburne moves closer to the femme fatale, though she lacks the cruelty of his later creations, victimized as she is by Eleanor. Nevertheless, according to Lafourcade, "elle personnifiait la beauté triomphante et toute-puissante sur le coeur des hommes, opposée au christianisme. . . ."^10 He adds, "En fait, Rosamond contient en germe les principales idées esthétiques de Swinburne."^11 The core of the aesthetic principle she represents— that her beauty justifies deviation from accepted morality— appears in the opening act of the drama, in her dialogue with Constance.

After being reassured of her beauty by the serving-lady, Rosamond repeats Henry's praise of her as additional evidence:

Why once the king spake of my hair like this,
'As though rain filled and stained a tress 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 hair, it blows
Thin gold back, shows the redder thread of it,
Burnt saffron-scented.'

It is obvious from the beginning that Rosamond defines herself in terms of her physical attractiveness to men. Moreover, as the conversation continues, Rosamond, perceiving that Constance disapproves of her adultery with the king, refutes the latter's tone of moral superiority by defending her actions on the basis of her beauty:

I chosen in God's eyes
To fill the lean account of undermen,
The lank and hunger-bitten ugliness
Of half his people . . .
I whose curled hair was as a strong staked net
To take the hunters and the hunt . . .
I that am yet, ah yet,
And shall be till the worm hath share in me,
Fairer than love or the clean truth of God,
More sweet than sober customs of kind use
That shackle pain and stablish temperance . . .
God thinks not of me as contemptible,
And that you think me even a smaller thing
Than your own goodness and slight name of good,
Your special, thin particular repute;
I would some mean could be but clear to me
Not to contemn you.

(I, p. 208)

Believing that her beauty sanctifies her relationship with Henry, Rosamond displays pride in her attributes and, in the net/gin imagery of her speech, an awareness of her
ability to entrap men; indeed, she scorns the notion that God would judge her, his beautiful creation. In his comments on this speech, Lafourcade concludes, "Ce n'est pas sa propre personne que défend Rosamond, c'est la théorie de la Beauté, la doctrine même de l'Art pour l'Art." 13

Later in Act I Swinburne includes a speech which illustrates that Rosamond is also aware of her role as the eternal fatal woman. Echoing Gautier's Clarimonde, Rosamond asserts:

Yes, I am found the woman in all tales,  
The face caught always in the story's face;  
I Helen, holding Paris by the lips  
Smote Hector through the head; I Cressida  
So kissed men's mouths that they went sick or mad,  
Stung right at brain with me; I Guinevere...  
(I, p. 212)

The words recall the queens who appear to David in "The Masque of Queen Bersabe," although here the specifics cited stress more heavily the pain inflicted on the men involved. But it is easy to see the poet consciously working to establish what Jung would call an archetype—a recurring figure or motif from the collective unconscious which reappears in myth or legend. Then, haughtily maintaining that she has no fear of Eleanor, Rosamond again scorns custom, legality, and morality when she rejects the role of wife:

Wife, wife—I get no music out of wife;  
I see no reason between me and wife
But what breath mars with making; yea, poor fool,
She gets the harsh bran of my corn to eat.
(I, pp. 212-13)

Thus, Rosamond ignores Constance's well-founded warning that "Men call the queen an adder underfoot," and she underestimates the force and vengeance of Eleanor (I, p. 213). It is also interesting to note that in a revision of the drama Swinburne eliminated a line spoken by Rosamond to Henry: "'Our son is well, you hear good news of him?'" The omission of that line makes certain that there are no references to Rosamond's fertility (she bore Henry two sons) in the play. Lafourcade says: "Rosamond est stérile dans sa magnifique beauté." This sterility, implying both infertility and purity, is frequently associated with the fatal woman; that is, the femme fatale, as a symbol of art, is purified from concern for morality or social mores.

Although Henry does not display any overtly androgynous characteristics, he is fairly passive; and, like the androgyne in the later works, he is torn between two women: Rosamond, a femme fatale, and Eleanor his wife, very close to a Terrible Mother figure. Indeed, the first time Henry appears, Eleanor berates him, reminding the king, "you were my pensioner;/ There's not a taste of England in your breath/ But I did pay for" (II, p. 227). Cowed by her attack on his own initiative and achievements, he makes little response;
then, when she exits, he admits her dominance in a mono-
logue: "I am her fool; no word to get her dumb?/ I am like
the tales of Cornish Mark long since,/ To be so baffled"
(II, p. 228).

Rosamond's description of the queen in the next act
underscores the idea that he feels grasped and enclosed by
Eleanor, characteristic of one who is held by a Terrible
Mother. In addition, the dreary, negative colors contrast
greatly to the lush reds and golds associated with Rosa-
mond: "A Frenchwoman, black-haired and with grey lips/ And
fingers like a hawk's cut claw that nips/ One's wrist to
carry" (III, p. 230). In the same dialogue Rosamond shuts
his eyes, requesting that he relate "what sight get first
between the lids" (III, p. 231). The pictorial memory re-
calls Keats's sensual description of Lamia. The passage
provides a vivid example of the beauty he sees in her and
of the passion which she, unlike the queen, inspires:

We lay against the edges of slant leaves
Facing the grass, our bodies touching them,
Cooled from the sun, and drank cold wine; you had
A straight gown flaked with gold i' the under-
sleeves;
And in your throat I caught the quick faint red
Drunk down, that ran and stained it out of white,
A long warm thread not coloured like a vein
But wine-coloured; this was a joy to see.
(III, p. 231)

Although no physical sado-masochism is suggested in their
relationship, the language Henry uses to describe Rosamond's
beauty includes explicit imagery of disease, injury, suffering, and victimization:

God help! your hair burns me to see like gold
Burnt to pure heat; your colour seen turns in me
To pain and plague upon the temple-vein
That aches as if the sun's heat snapt the blood
In hot mid measure; I could cry on you
Like a maid weeping-wise, you are so fair
It hurts me in the head, makes the life sick. . . .

(III, pp. 232-33)

The speech is a classic statement of the infection/infatuation motif associated with the *femme fatale*. Also, he states that he "could cry," a feminization suggested though not carried out. However, Swinburne has very briefly inserted into the drama Arthur, a young page, who deflects Swinburne's masochistic, androgynous impulses from Henry. Arthur's youth and innocence serve as foils and humorous relief from Henry's darker passion. Indeed, Arthur, a member of Eleanor's household, is beaten at Eleanor's behest because he has seen and admired Rosamond with her "wonderful red quiet mouth" (IV, p. 237). Henry, historically a strong figure like Tristram, here cannot control events; Eleanor murders Rosamond, and Henry, devastated by her death, nonetheless acquiesces again to Eleanor's control, with no hint that he will exact retribution for her action. Rosamond lies dead at the end, and the royal couple exits together.

Eleanor triumphs. Unable to diminish Henry's passion for the *femme fatale*, she destroys the object of the love
instead. Although she is, of course, his wife, not his mother, she does represent a Terrible Mother figure, whose control over Henry, not her marriage itself, is threatened by Rosamond. Therefore, to retain her dominance she resorts to machinations, manipulation of others, and finally to murder.

Her fear that the younger woman will rule after her own death and her envy of Rosamond's youthful charms also motivate the queen, for she seeks constant reassurance from her devoted confidant, Robert de Bouchard. Eleanor requires that Bouchard pay homage to her fading beauty and that he guide her to Woodstock to carry out her plan. In her first scene the pain of rejection is evident; Eleanor speaks to Bouchard: "Sweet stature hath she [Rosamond] and fair eyes, men say;/ I am but black, with hair that keep the braid,/
And my face hurt and bitten of the sun" (II, p. 216). She insists to Bouchard that she intends Rosamond no ill, but the suppressed rage of the controlling personality who feels power slipping away emerges: "Hell's heat burn through that whorish mouth of hers!" (II, p. 217).

However, to Henry she does not attack Rosamond. Rather, in their longest dialogue she tries to arouse him to shame and guilt over his infidelity. When he mentions lovers she took before their marriage, she turns the thrust back upon him: "I bond-broken?/ You lay your taint my way;
blush now a little,/ Pay but some blood" (II, pp. 226-27).
Then she reminds him of the duty and obligation he owes her for his political and economic power:

I thrust your bags out with round cheeks of gold
That were my people's; thickened with men the sides
Of your sick, lean, and barren enterprise;
Made capable the hunger of your state
With subsidies of my own fruitfulness;
Enriched the ragged ruin of your plans
With purple patched into the serge and thread
Of your low state; you were my pensioner;
There's not a taste of England in your breath
But I did pay for.

(II, p. 227)

Even the language here is implicitly maternal: her "fruitfulness" nurtured his ambition with the money and manpower of her Aquitaine legacy. Her overt demand that he pay his debt with emotional support frightens Henry, who senses that she is desperate because he is dependent on her no longer. In fact, her last speech in the scene, smacking of martyrdom, sends him scurrying to Woodstock:

When I am dead, my lord,
I pray you praise me for my sufferance;
You see I chide not; nay, I say no word;
I will put seals like iron on my mouth
Lest it revolt at me, or any shame
Push some worse phrase in than "God keep you, sir."

(II, p. 228)

The "seals" do not last long. Soon she entices Bouchard to be her accomplice, displaying her bitterness about Rosamond
to him. Since she cannot defeat time and be assured that Rosamond will never have her power, she will attempt to destroy youth, beauty, and vitality; she will not allow Rosamond to replace her as queen. The emphasis in her remarks suggests that she begrudges Rosamond queenly power much more than Henry's bed: "Nathless I will not have her eyes and hair/ Crown-circled, and her breasts embraced with gold,/ When the grave catches me" (IV, p. 239). Seeking justification for the poisoning plan she outlines to Bouchard, Eleanor insists (as Rosamond does) that God approves of her action since conjugal fidelity is on her side: "'If she be foul to God/ And her sweet breath ill savour in his lip,/ Then shall her blood-spilling be sacrifice/ And cleanse us in the blow" (IV, p. 243). The murder scene makes evident that Eleanor is motivated more by her loss of control over Henry and her fear of Rosamond's becoming queen than by sexual jealousy. Hurling vituperative epithets throughout the scene, Eleanor becomes most angry when Rosamond defends herself: "this sin/ Was not begot of wilfulness in me/ To be your pain and a shame burning you" (V, p. 249). Eleanor would prefer to have met a superior schemer/manipulator rather than face the truth—that Henry has escaped her control and made a free choice for beauty: "Look, you shall die for that,/ Because you sinned not out of hate to me/ That have and hate you" (V, p. 249). Thus,
Eleanor destroys the threat to her sovereignty, to her age, and to her domination over Henry. When appeals to morality, shame, guilt, and economic/political debts fail, she resorts to violence. In this work, the death-like black hair prevails over the red-gold, bursting with youth and passion; the Terrible Mother wins by murdering Rosamond. Thus, Eleanor successfully eliminates twin threats to her power—the beauty and freedom of the *femme fatale*.

However, the victory only operates at the level of character conflict and dramatic action. The texture of the play, its language and lush, sensual imagery, concede triumph to Rosamond. For it is the passages cited earlier, the ones which describe her beauty, her fatal allure, and the aesthetic, sexual response of Henry to her, that contain the finest poetry in the work. So, even though custom and legal union destroy the illicit relationship, aesthetically, the *femme fatale* and the emotive language she engenders prevail.

In the same volume with *Rosamond*, *The Queen Mother*, a study of Catherine de Medici, continues Swinburne's examination of the power of the Terrible Mother. Ian Fletcher observes: "In either case, a strong matriarch, Queens Catherine and Eleanor, destroy other women." The other woman in this case, Denise, has been employed by Catherine to enlist Charles IX's support for the slaughter of the Huguenots who had gathered in Paris for the wedding festivities
of Catherine's daughter, Marguerite of Valois, and the Bourbon Huguenot, Henry of Navarre. Once again, by selecting a historical event as the subject for his five-act drama, Swinburne limits his freedom to develop character and action. The outcome—the infamous St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of August 23-24, 1572—as well as Charles's continued reign until 1574 and Catherine's position as queen mother until 1589 are facts he cannot manipulate. However, he provides virtually no background for the reader; interestingly, he does not mention Catherine's earlier attempts to quiet strife between Catholic and Huguenot. Actually she had followed a policy of moderation and limited religious toleration by permitting the Colloquy of Poissy (1561), consenting to the January Edict (1562), and granting the peace of Saint-Germain (1570). All of these efforts were opposed vigorously by the Guises (Mary Stuart's maternal family), who represented extreme Catholicism. By repressing Catherine's milder stance in earlier years, Swinburne can stress her bloodlust and scheming more easily.

In fact, he devoted a great deal of study to the court of Catherine because Mary Stuart grew up with the Guises and at the court. Critics who have viewed Denise, Charles's mistress and Catherine's pawn, as a dewy-eyed innocent would be quickly disabused of that perception were they to read Swinburne's essay, "Note on the Character of
Mary Queen of Scots." Therein, he describes the setting of The Queen Mother:

But of the convent in which Mary Stuart had passed her novitiate the Lady Superior was Queen Catherine de' Medici. The virgins who shared the vigils of her maidenhood or brightened the celebration of her nuptials were such as composed the Queen-Mother's famous "flying squadron" of high-born harlots, professionally employed in the task of making the worship of Venus Pandemos subserve the purpose of Catholic faith or polity, and occasionally, as on the Feast of St. Bartholomew, exhilarated by such diversions as the jocose examination of naked and newly-murdered corpses. . . . The cloistral precinct which sheltered her girlhood . . . was the circuit of a court whose pursuits and recreations were divided between the alcoves of Sodom and the playground of Aceldama . . . its virtues were homicide and adultery.17

Needless to say, Catherine served as the ringmaster of this circus, dominating and dictating to her children and members of her court. History had provided Swinburne with a Terrible Mother made to order for his developing interest in the figure, one, furthermore, whom he could link to religious zeal and intolerance--stances he despised. Even Antonia Fraser observes that Catherine is "a woman who has gone down to history as a mother before all else," and adds that Catherine was excessively concerned with controlling her children's lives, perhaps because it took her eleven years to become pregnant.18
Swinburne clearly focuses on her in the drama. Denise is not truly a *femme fatale*, nor is Charles an androgyn. However, Denise musters enough sexual attraction and charm to become his mistress; Charles is unquestionably manipulated by the two women; and, finally, after Denise and Catherine part ways, he remains under the sway of his mother, demonstrating signs of her own cruelty. The poet works an obtuse triangle here, for there is not equality among the threesome, two of them having little chance to defy the power and position of Catherine, who directs events throughout. Indeed, Denise and, later, Yolande, whom Catherine employs to murder the fool and incriminate Denise, emerge as tentacles of the Queen Mother, reaching out to aid her in carrying out her plan—to convince Charles that the massacre of the Huguenots must occur.

In the first scene Swinburne adroitly handles the exposition of the play, using the masked ball held in honor of Marguerite and Henry as a graceful way of introducing characters and conflicts. The principal actors stroll through, reveal their positions in the political-religious strife, and Cino, the fool, voices the underlying intrigue as he reiterates (between the dialogues of others) the story of how woman despoiled Eden by tricking man. His words offer a running commentary on Denise's conversation with Charles. She is beginning to feel uneasy at doing
Catherine's bidding and suggests so to the king:

The queen, suspicious
And tempered full of seasonable fears,
Does partly work me into this; truth is it,
There's no such holy secret but she knows
As deep therein as any; all changes, hopes,
Wherewith the seed-time of this year goes heavy,
She holds and governs. . . .

(I, i, pp. 11-12)

Catherine, the ruler and governor of country, court, and family, clearly dictates the action of the drama; other characters either acquiesce to her demands—Charles, the Catholic nobles, Yolande—or cross her and die—Cino, Denise, the Huguenots.

In order to examine her as the suffocating, archetypal Terrible Mother, it is best to observe her conscious manipulation of Charles, Denise, and Yolande; for the other characters, even the king, are too weak to provide a triangle with strong tensions and conflicts. As Lionel Stevenson remarks, "The dominance of the two positive women [Catherine and Denise] over the vacillating king is consistent with Swinburne's usual tendency to show men as helpless victims of feminine control." His assertion here is correct, for most readers will have no doubt from the opening scene as to which woman exerts true power over Charles and the court, over family and country.

Catherine's intrigue is clear to the audience from the outset since she freely confides in her co-conspirators,
the Marshal of Tavannes and the Duke of Guise, particularly in the latter, who anxiously desires to avenge the assassination of his father, killed by the Huguenots. Tavannes is the first to see the flaw in her plan when he suspects that Denise is too kind and stupid to succeed: "Such perfumed heads can hear no weight inside/ I think, with all that waste of gold to bear/ Plaited each way; their roots do choke the brain" (I, iii, p. 29). One should note that these lines stand nearly alone in referring to Denise's blonde hair; previously, Swinburne had given continual reminders of the luxuriant tresses of Yseult and Rosamond. He obviously rejects adorning her with the femmes fatales' full range of physical, psychological, and aesthetic qualities, though in one or two instances her desire for freedom recalls their personal autonomy. Lafourcade agrees: "Denise n'est pas une pure héroïne swinburnienne; elle est encore trop tendre; il lui manque la dureté de Lucrece ou Mary Stuart." Catherine, however, would never have selected a woman with the formidable characteristics of the Swinburnian heroine to be her puppet; for the queen freely admits that Denise is a tool, using imagery of ensnaring. Catherine, of course, has set the trap with Denise for bait, as she explains to Tavannes: "yet if she springe him once,/ Click, quoth the gin; and there we trap him. See,/ This medicine I make out for him is sweet . . ." (III, iii,
The language of enmeshing, of capturing in a trap, net, or web, appears throughout the play, reinforcing the engulfing Terrible Mother figure who must dominate her adult children. Indeed, when Denise grasps the full savagery of Catherine's plot, her newly awakened conscience prompts her to try to sway Charles from complicity. During their dialogue in Act III, scene i, she too uses the imagery of the trap:

That I did pluck you over to her side
I would repent. . . .

(p. 89)

The queen-mother throws nets about, spins well,
Contrives some thread to strike the whole web through,
To catch you like a plague . . .
But this is worse—to catch France in her trap,
People and all, body and soul. . . .

(p. 94)

The woman with thin reddish blood-like lips,
The queen-mother that would use blood for paint,
Can you not see her joint the trap for you,
Not see the knife between her fingers, sir,
Where the glove opens?

(p. 96)

Even when Catherine is off stage, her presence remains in the consciousness and conversation of others.

This rebellion by Denise forces Catherine to take two actions that reveal the queen mother's capacity both for more covert manipulation and for direct confrontation. On the one hand, she successfully, with the aid of Yolande,
arranges to eliminate Denise's meddling by poisoning Cino and framing Denise for the murder. She also makes certain that Charles will not "repent" or renege on the plan to murder the Huguenots.

Catherine's two-pronged attack to correct any damage wrought by Denise begins with her calculated selection of Yolande to assist: "For I have seen her [Yolande] tread upon sick flies/ Where the other swerved and would not do them hurt . . . thereto she is hard,/ Cunning and bold . . . I do not think/ That she shall wry her mouth on tasting blood" (III, i, p. 99). Her judgment proves acute; Yolande is honored to become her henchman. Denise, imprisoned for the poisoning, later pleads with Yolande for release. Though the begging tone is not consistent with the assurance and pride of femmes fatales, her words on freedom are in the spirit of the fatal woman's desire for unrestricted behavior and action, unhindered by the nets and restricting webs of the Terrible Mother:

There's nothing in the world
So worth as freedom; pluck this freedom out,
You leave the rag and residue of man
Like a bird's back displaced. That man that hath not
The freedom of his name, and cannot make
Such use as time and place would please him with,
But has the clog of service at his heel
Forbidding the sound gait; this is no man
But a man's dog; the pattern of a slave
Is model for a beast.  

(V, ii, p. 165)
Catherine's power is too strong, however, for Denise ever
to be free. Briefly escaping from her cell, she is ironi­
cally and accidentally slain by an errant shot of Charles's
during the Huguenot slaughter.

The queen-mother's other chore, to convince Charles
to order the massacre, also succeeds. The dialogue wherein
she persuades him deserves close attention, for it clearly
reveals her character and Charles's as well as her psycho­
logical insight into his nature and Swinburne's into the
psychology of power and cruelty. Catherine, understandably,
is emotionally charged for the encounter; nothing infuri­
ates the queen-mother more than a heretofore malleable pawn
moving about the board alone and trying to incite free will
in her son: "I have stung myself;/ This girl I set on him
has thrown us out" (II, i, p. 57). Immediately, she begins
to manipulate Charles. First, she uses the tone of a mar­
tyred mother to make him feel ungrateful and guilty; after
he becomes emotionally receptive, she delivers the mortal
blow by striking at his weakness--his cruelty. She begins
with self-denigration and pathos:

Be not offended with me;
For God doth know, sweet son, that in my life
I have used many days in loving you.

... for women at best count
Are the mere spoil of a male reason, lie
In his loosest thoughts outside. We are the
chaff,
The gross, unwinnowed husks of your fanned wheat;
I say that you do well to turn me off.

That I do love you, God shall do me right. . .
(p. 59)

Meeting slight resistance, she quickly moves to shame him into obeisance: "I had rather be a thing of labouring days/
Than a so childed mother" (p. 61).

Guise, in the background during most of this conversation, aids Catherine by reminding Charles that the Huguenots killed his father; when he mentions blood, he sets Catherine up for her last thrust. Catherine, as she confides to Guise, knows well her son's sadistic bloodlust, and she whets his thirst. Indeed, it provides her with the coup de grace that insures her victory. To Guise she explains:

All's clear again; he smells about the blood
That shall incense his madness to high strain . . .
I must push him yet,
Make his sense warm. . . .
(p. 65)

I know through by heart
Each turn in the crannies of the boy's spoilt mind
And corner used in it. Years gone by, my lord,
Before the tender husk of time grew hard
He would make pastime to tear birds to death
And pinch by nips in some sick breast. . . .
(p. 69)

Then, she reminds him that his duty to country and Catholocism requires a blood-letting of Huguenots. Capitulating, Charles implies she has given birth to him again—as a king with a mission of malice:
And you made mother twice,
Not by gross generation of the womb
But issue of more princely consequence;
Set this day gold upon your writ of life,
The last of childbearing for you... (p. 66)

Surely Denise is right earlier when she exclaims to Charles:
"I fear you much,/ For I can smell the mother in your
speech" (II, i, p. 50). Guise applauds Catherine's wiles:
"This screw of yours has wrenched him round our way" (II, i, p. 69), and Charles wavers no more; rather, he takes an active role when the killing commences.

Catherine's manipulation, then, is masterful. She controls all, either destroying those who thwart her--Denise, Cino, and the Huguenots--or swaying them to her will--Charles and Yolande. The pure, archetypal Terrible Mother will brook no opposition to her desires; as Catherine frankly says to Charles, "You must be whole with me or break; I'll have/ No patched alliance; lank allegiances,/ Starved out of use" (II, i, p. 61). The healthy, nurturing maternal instinct has become twisted and distorted into an overwhelming urge to submerge the adult child within a womb of psychological control. Any measures, emotional blackmail or physical restraint, become justifiable to achieve the end--keeping the child attached to an indissoluble psychic umbilical cord.

In The Queen Mother Catherine lacks a worthy
antagonist. Denise lacks the strength, the cruelty, even the stunning, erotic beauty of the true femme fatale. Hence, Charles is not sufficiently mesmerized and enthralled by her as David, Tristram, and Henry are by their lovers. Nor is Charles a fully developed character; he displays a sadistic streak himself, to be sure, but Lafourcade points out that Swinburne was too closely held to his historical sources (Brantôme and De Thou)\(^2\) to present Charles as the typically weak androgyne. Nevertheless, we will see that the archetype of the Terrible Mother, emblematic of restriction and limitation, is transformed into a symbol for Philistine prohibitions when his concerns moved further from historical themes to more purely imaginative, aesthetic concerns.

At this point in his development, he was creating a trio of figures to be used again in opposition. But these early efforts focus on only one of the three, sometimes two, with the third a shadowy figure at best. In fact, the other three remaining important works of this period focus sharply on femmes fatales—Fredegond, Lucretia Borgia, and Mary Stuart—with Terrible Mothers either absent or hazy; moreover, in Tebaldeo Tebaldei and Chastelard as aesthetic concerns come to the fore in Swinburne's writings, the besotted lover moves closer to the figure of the artist-androgyne.

Shortly after the publication of The Queen Mother
and Rosamond, Swinburne traveled to Italy, where he began a project, never to be completed, inspired by Boccaccio. On January 19, 1861, he wrote to Lady Trevelyan: "I am trying to write prose, which is very hard, but I want to make a few stories each about three or six pages long. Likewise a big one about my blessedest pet which her initials is [sic] Lucrezia Estense Borgia." A couple of weeks later in a letter to William Bell Scott he indicated that "three prose stories of a medieval kind" were complete, as well as seven chapters of a "chronicle of the life of Queen Fredegond" and "three-fourths of Chastelard in the rough." The three stories--"Dead Love," "The Portrait," and "The Marriage of Monna Lisa"--according to Lafourcade, were intended to be part of Swinburne's Triameron, modeled on Boccaccio; "The Chronicle of Queen Fredegond" was also to be included. However, he tired of the project, becoming more interested in expanding the history of Fredegond, exploring the character of Lucretia Borgia, and beginning his study of Mary Stuart. His rendering of these three women reveals that the Swinburnian femme fatale was fully conceptualized and linked to aestheticism in 1861. First, the three short tales deserve brief attention, for each of them is indicative of his current interests. Although all three are really exercises in medieval atmosphere, archaic diction, and concentrated plot
development, several interesting elements arise, particularly in "The Portrait." Like the other two, but more strongly so, the tone of the story implies disdain of moralistic, Philistine values. In this tale the beautiful wife of a merchant and her lover, the painter Peter, decide to murder the merchant. Peter will paint her portrait, dabbing the lips with poison; the merchant, Gian, will kiss them and die, leaving the lovers to enjoy their passion and his money. Unfortunately for them, he also kisses his wife after bussing the canvas; merchant and lady die, the crime is disclosed, and Peter is hanged. From the beginning it is obvious that Swinburne is enjoying himself by adopting the voice of a self-righteous, pious narrator who condemns artists out of hand:

he [Peter] was a man that rejoiced in all manner of shameful dealing, and was also unclean of his life, as is the fashion of men that paint and men that make songs and verses; for this Peter also made many amorous poems, and played upon stringed instruments marvelously well. And the lives of such men as are painters, or such as are poets, are most often evil and foolish; therefore it may be well conceived of this Peter that he was a very lewd man.\textsuperscript{24}

One can almost see Swinburne's glee at imagining the pleased reactions of his Pre-Raphaelite friends to his tongue-in-cheek story. Of course, the opposition of merchant-artist is itself an implied criticism of the acquisitive,
burgeoning English middle class whose values and interests were, if not antithetical, at least widely divergent from those of Swinburne and his friends; and "The Portrait" reveals not only that Swinburne was becoming increasingly aware of this cultural conflict but also that he was giving it greater emphasis in his writing. The description of the painting itself is a hymn to beauty, sensuality, and eroticism which overshadows duty, conscience, and marital obligation. The work of art creates an aesthetic synaesthesia that rises above morality:

She had her gown all ungirt on one side (I believe it was the left side) and the fastenings of it undone; so that all her body from the breast downward, and over against the flank, was naked between two edges of gold colour that met like two lips. And the beauty of her body was a great wonder. And one who saw this picture some way off says yet to this day that to behold it was like the hearing of strong music or the drinking of sweet wine; for not the wonder and hunger of the eye only, but also the mouth and the ears were feasted and fully satisfied with the deliciousness of the painting of it; and to men beholding it it was as the burning of a great perfume which they smelt.

(p. 5)

This detailed verbal picture describes the beauty of the lady and the skill of the artist, and explains why Gian would be so overcome that he must kiss it. The ensuing melodrama, of course, affords an opportunity for more moralizing from the narrator, a voice of Philistia
reminiscent of the critics whom Gautier denounces in the introduction to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*: "Certainly therefore it may be supposed that this manner of craft, except if it be of a chaste habit, and only employed in the likeness of holy things, is without doubt very displeasing to God" (p. 8).

Neither Swinburne's impish sense of humor nor his aestheticism is as obvious in the two shorter tales, "Dead Love" and "The Marriage of Monna Lisa." The plot of the latter is not congenial to his imagination, since it focuses on a simple, pure maiden who is engaged to one man, but who pines away for a free-living knight. The idea of a victimized woman intrigued by a *homme fatal* does not excite Swinburne. "Dead Love," however, affords another opportunity for an oblique attack on a society that cannot allow events or behavior which do not conform to expected mores.

Set in France during the Middle Ages, the tale shows Swinburne's continued interest in the period and reinforces the notion that by distancing certain kinds of behavior in time and place he believed that he could have his works published more easily than if he set the events in nineteenth-century England. In "Dead Love," as the title suggests, necrophilia is a theme. A knight named Amaury transports the body of Jacques, who has slain Olivier, to Olivier's widow, Yolande, to show her that her husband's death had
been avenged. Yolande falls in love with Jacques and brings him back to life through her love. Amaury, discovering them, kills both. The public believes that "the evil one" is responsible; the implication is that the Puritan consciousness is unable to comprehend such miracles of passion. Actually, all three stories end unhappily for those who dare to love outside of the restraints of an officially sanctioned union, and Swinburne is squarely, as always, on the side of the rebels.

After these three exercises, he turned to three more lengthy studies of femmes fatales. Having fully delineated the Terrible Mother in the character of Catherine, he creates a pure study of the femme fatale in his account of Fredegond which is largely derivative because he is limited by historical events; in The Chronicle of Tebaldeo Tebaldei and in Chastelard he adds the artists-androgynes as admirers of the heroines, Lucretia Borgia and Mary Stuart.

Lafourcade has observed that "Dans Fredegond comme dans Tebaldeo Tebaldei il [Swinburne] s'efforce de copier les gaucheries et les naïvetés de la syntaxe médiévale." Even so, the style contributes to the medieval atmosphere and augments the feeling of removal from Victorian society, whose judgments on femmes fatales were uncomprehending and hostile. Queen Fredegond is, in brief, the prototype of the sadistic, cruel heroine who fully engages Swinburne's
imagination. The highlights of her career speak for themselves—she arrives at King Chilperic's court as a handmaiden to his first wife, whose murder she instigates. Then by trickery she forces his second wife into a nunnery. Next Chilperic marries Fredegond, who has been his lover since his first marriage. Eventually she manages to kill his brother, his second wife, and all of his children, and has several menials tortured to death. Finally, she arranges Chilperic's murder after he discovers that she and Landry have been lovers for years. Fredegond rules uncontested until her death. Unlike the shorter tales, the story of Fredegond Swinburne narrates with the objective tone of the historian recounting events for posterity. He catalogues her career, showing that she is totally ruthless but courageous, strong-willed, autonomous, and, above all, intoxicatingly beautiful with the typical Pre-Raphaelite hair:

And she was the fairest woman alive; for she was taller than the queen, and her hair was yellow like fine gold, and so thick that she could put three rows of pearls within it, the one upon the other, and two of them were hidden in her hair by reason of its thickness, and it was so long that she could kneel down upon it, and hold it up again as high as her bosom. As for her face, it was the fairest that may be devised of any man; and there was no fault in her body; and the nape of her neck was more white and sweeter to smell than the face of another woman.

(p. 24)
King Chilperic worships her; submissive to her every whim, he serves her meals dressed as a "kitchen fellow" and accepts her beatings: "All this did King Chilperic for great dotage on the queen's beauty, and was not ashamed" (p. 38). The strong kings David and Henry have been supplanted by the victimized male. Chilperic even imposes harsh taxes and penalties on his subjects to please Fredegond: "And all the evil that he did was to get the love of his wife, and she was all her life given to evil... Thus was all the land miserable and unhappy because of the great beauty that was in Fredegond" (pp. 46-47). Her lover, Landry, afraid of the king's wrath, fully appreciates the effects of a femme fatale: "It was an evil day that I ever saw your face, for your fair face has been deadly to many good knights, and many men have ye slain and destroyed by your beauty and your great craft" (p. 50). Nevertheless, Fredegond escapes punishment because beauty is beyond judgment of good and evil. Her beauty propels her to power; even when she is dying, her loss of beauty is her only regret:

and now I shall die and yet I am pleasant and beautiful, and no man will ever behold me but he shall love me for my beauty in his heart. Alas, alas, this is a bitter and evil thing that no woman may always abide in her beauty but some day she shall die and depart from it.

(p. 56)
One of Chilperic's speeches makes the point that a femme fatale is a work of art, of beauty that defies morality: "Ha, Lord God, it is well seen you are a cunning man and a good painter, that made the colour of my sweet lady; doubtless you made her not without much trouble and thought, for it were easier to make the whole world than to make another such lady" (p. 38). As Lafourcade says, the chronicle becomes "une sorte de justification et de sanctification du crime par la beauté." In the character of Fredegond, Swinburne has clearly linked the beauty and autonomy of the femme fatale to aestheticism, for Fredegond stands apart from those around her, unrestrained by the strictures that limit their behavior and unmoved by the slavish adoration her beauty inspires.

In his last two works of this early period, Swinburne refines and, to some extent, humanizes the figure in the characters of Lucretia Borgia and Mary Stuart, two women from history who fascinated him.

The Chronicle of Tebaldeo Tebaldei has attracted little critical attention, probably because, first, it is incomplete, a fragment of the projected work and, second, it is generally unavailable, having been published once, in a limited edition by Randolph Hughes. This lack of attention is unfortunate, for the chronicle sheds light on Swinburne's development of the femme fatale; it shows his
experimentation with first-person narration in prose, and it contains a celebration of aestheticism rivaled in his work only by his essay William Blake.

The document purports to be an account of Lucretia Borgia's life narrated by Tebaldeo Tebaldei, a page in her household. Tebaldeo from the start makes clear his sympathetic point of view:

I have here undertaken surely no slight work, but to set down ... some little of the great praise of the most noble and gracious court ... since Caesar. ... And beyond and over this, to refresh the honour of the most perfect and most fair woman that ever was glorified above men for the wonder and worship of the very Love himself. 27

Indeed, Tebaldeo proves to be as staunch a defender of the Borgias as they could desire, and surely more than they deserve.

Tebaldeo is a naive narrator who notes events without fully comprehending their significance; thus, the reader is forced to draw conclusions that Tebaldeo's naivety or bias prevents him from drawing. Naturally, these incidents would be uncomplimentary to the memory of Lucretia, since they implicate her in murder and incest. Other than describing his passion for and devotion to Lucretia, Tebaldeo reveals little about his feelings, opinions, or background. Nevertheless, he emerges as a precursor of the
androgynous lovers to follow in Swinburne's works of the early 1860's. At first he is a toy for the Borgia brothers to strew at the feet of their sister-lover. Tebaldeo reveals that Caesar had acquired him from Franciscus "only that he might give me again as a gift to his sister" (p. 24). Tebaldeo then meets Lucretia and is immediately totally enthralled by her beauty. Her physical presence becomes an assault on his senses, and he happily enters an emotional bondage:

Domina Lucretia had on some green silken stuff, lined in the sleeves with violet and flowered a little with gold delicately. Out of her fair and flower-like eyes came the pleasant light that is about beautiful women, and her tender body was of itself scented all over more than many roses. Her hair was thick, yellow-coloured like most rare gold or like new juice shed out of honeycombs and so long. . . . It was full of little waves like sea-waves in the sun under a low wind. For her sweet mouth, it was red and roundish. . . . She had the most long, full, and fair neck of any woman. . . . And my body and soul became like one lute to be played upon by her most sweet laughter.

(pp. 24-25)

Those critics who accuse Swinburne of being too diffuse and rambling have obviously never encountered the ornate, carefully wrought detail of this prose. Through the figurative language, the descriptive command of color, posture, texture, and odor Tebaldeo himself emerges as a sensitive writer, cognizant of sensate experience and able
to express it verbally. In short, one suspects here and knows after reading his statement of aestheticicism later that Tebaldeo is an artist who worships beauty in the form of Lucretia. He is not overtly feminine, but he surely lacks the masculine assertion of the male Borgias: the pope, who is her father, and her two brothers. Tebaldeo kills another page who dares to hint that Lucretia poisoned a rival—the mistress of her brothers—and in order to prove himself worthy of Lucretia he leaves Rome once to take part in an ill-fated battle with the French. However, he only observes the rout and on his flight back to Rome must be rescued from drowning by a friend who carries Tebaldeo across his own saddle. In addition, Tebaldeo's youthful good looks are described by Caesar as "fair face," a requirement for Lucretia, who will tolerate neither ugliness nor illness in those around her; and he displays the unmanly propensity for crying when he is overcome by his passion for her. Finally, there is an implication of the ambivalent sexuality of the androgyne in Tebaldeo, for he refers to his companion Michael as "always my true lover and good friend" (p. 35). But it is his obsession with Lucretia that completely dominates him.

From his first sight of her he is in love, but she takes steps to enslave him totally when he returns from the battle. Only then does she find it necessary to grant the
physical relationship that the *femme fatale* uses to ensnare her admirers. Their first sexual encounter is, to Tebaldeo, his moment of epiphany. From this erotic experience of possessing beauty and enjoying pure pleasure, he later formulates his aesthetics, expressed in "The Treatise of Noble Morals." This chapter, entitled "Of the gift of amorous mercy," is a prose poem that becomes a lyrical celebration of physical union. Tebaldeo transforms the erotic act into a spiritual experience while keeping it grounded in the flesh; the result is a pagan hymn to Lucretia from her novitiate in sexuality, Tebaldeo. She has sent for him after his brief venture into battle, and when he enters her chambers he is overwhelmed by the vision he encounters. The description Swinburne provides, filtered through the senses of the aroused, infatuated Tebaldeo, is remarkable for its sensual detail; the influence of the visual arts impresses the reader at once—intricate shadings of color, attention to posture, texture, background—the silk and linen bedclothes, the disheveled pillows; but here too is animation—subtle movements of breathing, wetting the lips, flickers of the eyes. Swinburne never expresses more powerfully the full impact of the *femme fatale*’s beauty and sexuality on her lover. The first-person narration by the relatively inexperienced teenager provides a clear understanding of the bewitching, fatal allure of Lucretia and
her fellow heroines. Tebaldeo writes:

There was nothing upon her, not a shred of silk or purple, but only the clothing of that adorable and supreme beauty of her flesh which God made her with for the delight of men. She lay along upon great soft pillows that were tumbled about under her body, and was turned clean over on her left side . . . A low delicate breath compressed and lightened the two fair fruits of her bosom, and about every fifth breath she took her whole body moved and quivered like a keen note of music . . . the delicate glorious shape of her cheeks . . . was enough to divide the soul from a man's body . . . And when I came in and beheld all these things . . . the sight thereof so caught me as it were by the throat and made my breast and all my body throb and heave up and down, while my head and feet only seemed to be fixed and set fast as in a vise, and my brain and blood to go mad and I knowing of it, that I could neither speak for a little nor see anything, only I smelt acutely the soft and keen scent of her body and her clothes.

(p. 47-48)

The passage also gives exquisite renderings of her hands, eyelids, feet, chin. Even her abandoned clothes evoke response: "The hollow heavy-looking clothes emptied of her beautiful and desirable body, lay all upon a great carven chair some way off, and all the soft silk and hard gold kept in them the sweetness of her limbs, that had been there before she put off her raiment" (p. 48). The imprint of the female body here recalls Madeline's "warmed" pearls which she unclasps in "The Eve of Saint Agnes"; indeed, the
lush sensuality of the entire work is as heavily an echo of Keats as it is of the pictorial qualities of Pre-Raphaelitism. Tebaldeo's senses are swimming from the myriad stimuli he relates; like a worshipper at a religious ceremony, he is now prepared to participate in a sacrament with Lucretia, the sublime work of art, serving as both priestess and goddess. He is not disappointed in the act of union:

And she cast herself on me embracing me, and her lips clove to my cheek and I felt them like fire wandering over my face... then plunged her face into the hollow of my throat biting and kissing it, and as if in a rage rent off a part of my raiment with her hands; and each gathered the other close, and trembled at the meeting of our bodies and mouths. But of the pleasure ensuing who shall ever be worthy to speak? for before the face of that supreme sweetness are the faces of the very gods made pale and the lips of Delight too harsh to make songs of it... And of what pleasure can anything alive be capable beyond this of having his soul made part of another and his body made part of another body through the marvelous work of the pleasure of love? but especially when the body and soul enjoyed by him are so infinitely more beautiful and noble than his own that he is actually and naturally received into a very present heaven, the which may be touched and handled and understood of all the fleshly senses?

(p. 49)

She is the aggressor with a hint of sadism in her lust, and the strong, active verbs underscore the intensity of their passion; but Tebaldeo's whole personality, his "soul," is also enjoined in the coupling, a fully complete experience
which transcends the physical to a dimension of spiritual pleasure.

Nothing remains to be said regarding Lucretia's credentials for beauty and powerful sexuality. But there are at least two more aspects of her behavior that need to be mentioned, for they make her a particularly Swinburnian femme fatale: her incest and her amoral cruelty. Tebaldeo is blind to the evidence of incest about him, but not so the reader. Swinburne briefly hints of a relationship with her father the Pope and repeatedly offers indirect evidence of more than fraternal love between Lucretia and her brothers, both of whom subtly compete for her attention. In addition, it is obvious to all but Tebaldeo that she poisons not only the brothers' mistress but also a Turkish prince. Her bloodlust even the page cannot overlook when the Pope stages for his mistress and family a gruesome amusement involving Jews and pigs attacking one another; she "shouted for pure joy when a pig got the upper hand, and cried out once or twice, Down with the Jew" (p. 33). In addition, she demands submission from Tebaldeo and initiates some sadistic (her part), masochistic (his) sexual play. Never does she display a pang of conscience over any of her activities; rather, she revels in them. Obviously, there is no Terrible Mother figure extant at the house of the Borgias to inhibit her, her family, or Tebaldeo. One
suspects that such a restricting, controlling personage would only have breathed until a sufficient dose of poison could be readied.

Instead, the only prohibiting force is the implied critics and their arguments which Tebaldeo addresses in his "Treatise," and they are really closer to Swinburne's idea of moralizing Philistines. However, the "Treatise" can also be seen as a refutation of a work written in Italy during Tebaldeo's time—Castiglione's The Courtier, Bembo's Neo-Platonic discussion of love in particular. Swinburne retains the mask of Tebaldeo during the chapter by continuing the page's prose style and by references to love for Lucretia, but his identification with Tebaldeo is clear. The page refers to masochistic pleasure and starts his attack upon Castiglione "Upon this fifth day of April," Swinburne's birthday (p. 57). In the Renaissance handbook, Bembo, of course, urges his listeners not to linger with sense on the lower levels of the stairway to Beauty/Goodness/God, but to progress with reason, then understanding, to the higher reaches:

And because in oure soule there be three manner wayes to know, namelye, by sense, reason and understandinge: of sense, there arriseth appetite or longinge, which is commune to us with brute beastes: of reason arriseth election or choice, which is proper to man: of understanding, by the which man may be partner with Aungelles, arriseth will.28
Although it is understandable that young men will follow sense and appetite when inspired by a beautiful woman, Bembo believes the soul cannot be allowed to see herself "drowned in the earthly prison" for long (p. 345). Instead, reason and understanding, which separate humanity from the beasts, must intercede and lead men to aspire to the idea of beauty, and thence to the creator, God. Wallowing in sensual bliss on the lowest rung of the ladder is to be despised; however, a passionless kiss can be allowed occasionally:

the reasonable lover . . . hath a delite to joigne hys mouth with the womans beloved with a kysse: not to stir him to anye unhonest desire, but because he feelth that, that bonde is the openyng of an entrey to the soules, which drawn with a coveting the one of the other, power them selves by tourn, the one into the others bodye, and be so mingled together, that ech of them hath two soules, and one alone so framed of them both ruleth (in a maner) two bodyes . . . For this do all chast lovers covett a kisse, as a cooplinge of soules together. (pp. 355-56)

Tebaldeo mounts a frontal attack on Neo-Platonic idealism in a paean to sense and pleasure.

"The Treatise of Noble Morals" is pure praise of "sense" and aesthetic/sensual pleasure:

I begin this my treatise of noble morals and of the excellent goodness which is above all other virtues. These morals are called pleasures, and this goodness is bodily beauty; than which there is
nothing more good and gracious and pro-
fitable, and without which all just or
merciful conduct and all kinds of virtu-
ous behavior are as rags and weeds and
dust and dung . . . Beauty is the begin-
ning of all things, and the end of them
is pleasure.

(p. 57)

One hears twisted echoes of Biblical phrasing and sees a
harbinger of Walter Pater in the passage; then, using Teo-
baldeo's lexicon, his reader realizes that the document is
actually a treatise of noble "pleasures" with "beauty" as
the greatest value and that Swinburne is operating on at
least two levels which fuse to function unobtrusively within
the context of Tebaldeo's chronicle. That is, Swinburne
develops his prose with syntax and diction to create a fic-
tive Renaissance document, and he augments this form by
refuting a sixteenth-century writer, Castiglione. At the
same time, he stands firmly in the tradition of the French
aesthetics, particularly Gautier, and the Coleridgean defi-
nition of poetry; moreover, he attacks by implication the
Philistine critics and public of nineteenth-century England
who required that a work of art inculcate morals. So, by
clever verbal sleight of hand, he too, through Tebaldeo,
will teach morals, redefined as pleasure and beauty; thus,
the theme at the core of the treatise is an implicit oxy-
moron: aesthetic morality. This concept is illustrated by
discussion as well as by tough-minded epigrammatic examples
that presage the syntax of his novels: "A beautiful soft line drawn is more than a life saved; and a pleasant perfume smelt is better than a soul redeemed" (p. 58).

Elevating sense from the province of the beast to a level above the angels, Tebaldeo inverts Bembo's values; simultaneously, Swinburne attacks Puritanical restraint and prohibitions:

So that if one think to make himself godlike by mere action and abstinence, he is a fool. To refrain from evil and to labour in doing good are as it were the two feet and hands of a man where-with he walks and climbs; but to enjoy the supreme and sovoreign pleasure is to have the wings and the eyes of the angels of God.

(p. 58)

Following the dichotomy he will use in "Hymn to Proserpine" and the dramatic situation of "Laus Veneris," Swinburne, through Tebaldeo, stresses the correspondence among erositicism, aestheticism, and paganism and laments the triumph of Christianity over them:

Then I, musing and looking at her [Lucretia], who was now sitting on the extreme edge of sleep with his fingers upon her eyelids: It is most certain, I made answer, that she is more just and gracious than righteousness itself, yea the righteousness of angels; howbeit I well know that the virtue of her is not according to the virtue of devout persons, neither is her goodness like the goodness of the saints who are praised
of the daily people. For her life is sweet and amorous, and her faith is the faith of the fair old gods in their pleasant centuries . . . So she turned about and woke and had great joy of me; but the joy I had of her is not well to be imagined even of God . . . So my soul shewed me the foolishness of such as dispraise pleasure and follow after the things which are called good only of those who know not what is verily good indeed.

(p. 59)

The feelings here are concretely grounded in a return to flesh, and Tebaldeo's total immersion in the sensual is diametrically opposed to the cautious kiss of Bembo's chaste lovers. He praises sexual activity as a spiritual and physical pleasure and scoffs at those who practice denial: "But these men follow after things hateful, even abstinence and anguish and deadly labour; and they eschew most laudable and desirable things, namely pleasure and love and the beautiful possession of beauty . . ." (p. 60). Equally to be disdained are those who indulge themselves then try to atone through guilt and penitence: "Let a man therefore, if he will repent and be wise, repent not of his sin, but of his repentence whereby he hath made to himself both evil and good profitable" (p. 60). To discard the Puritanical burden of guilt is to free the self from conventional morality and external judgments, to accept one's own internal passions and to feel pleasure and enjoy beauty. The implication for an artist is that he is autonomous, free to pursue his own
vision, to create beauty. He need not be encumbered by creeds, codes, or religions that shackle the imagination and abort its creations. Tebaldeo's treatise grows out of his slavish passion for Lucretia, the *femme fatale*, epitome of beauty, out of his need to refute Bembo's Platonic denial of physical pleasure; it becomes an argument for the autonomy of art, for the intrinsic value of beauty, for the right to enjoy pleasure, and, most importantly, for aesthetic freedom.

The Terrible Mother is here only by implication; in those men who abstain from pleasure or who indulge and then repent; in the "devout persons," the "daily people" who hold to restrictive codes and cannot appreciate beauty; in any men who condemn Lucretia because they apply an inappropriate standard of judgment to her. But these manifestations of inhibition are strong enough for Tebaldeo to feel the urge to answer them in his "Treatise," which concludes the Chronicle. Swinburne had projected several more chapters, but he probably sensed that they would have been anticlimactic. His major theme, the sovereignty of beauty, is fully developed at the close of the "Treatise."

While Swinburne was writing the tales of his proposed *Triameron*, he was working on *Chastelard*, which he had begun at Oxford. The passion of Tebaldeo finds a parallel in *Chastelard*; Lafourcade says that "Chastelard est à Mary
Stuart ce que Tebaldeo Tebaldei est a Lucrezia. . . .

Tebaldeo is fortunate because his infatuation with the femme fatale is not of sufficient duration for him either to suffer greatly from his love or to die from it. But Chastelard begins toward the end of the affair, when Mary must demand his death to save her reputation and secure her power. Here, for the first time, the prototypical Swinburnian male lover is fully depicted; Chastelard's erotic enslavement to Mary and his pursuit of her become a successful quest for death. The epigraph to the play prepares the reader for the femme fatale's actions and for the unfortunate fate of her lover:

Another Yle is there toward the Northe, in the See Occean, where that ben fulle cruele and ful evele Wommen of Nature: and thei han precious Stones in hire Eyen; and thei ben of that kynde, that zif they beholden ony man, thei slen him anon with the beholdynge, as dothe the Basilisk.

Maundeville's Voiaage and Travaile, ch. xxviii

Throughout the drama references to the fatal woman accumulate: Mary becomes the lamia, the vampire, the serpentine woman who feeds off her lover, requiring his sacrifice and drawing strength and profit from it. Here Swinburne does not fully develop the Terrible Mother; nevertheless, what she represents is present symbolically in Edinburgh itself, including the citizens and their spokesman John Knox, who
become the repressive force of morality and conformity, but it is Mary, the *femme fatale*, not Chastelard, who must respond to Philistine opinions and gossip. Nor is it unusual to use Edinburgh in this fashion; Jung says, "The city is a maternal symbol, a woman who harbours the inhabitants in herself like children."\(^{31}\)

To Swinburne, limited again by history in the full development of his subject, Chastelard must have seemed an ideal exemplar for his artist-lover. According to Archibald Strong, Chastelard has the requisite credentials:

Chastelard, for all his flightiness and folly, had the gentlest blood of France in his veins, for he was Bayard's grand-nephew. He was a brilliant swordsman, a gallant courtier, and a graceful poet. He would match her [Mary] at rhyming or in courtly compliment, and could partner her gallantly in the dance. His open infatuation with her was probably all the more welcome by contrast with the fulminations of John Knox, which had given her most poignant, though not her earliest experience of a Scottish welcome home.\(^{32}\)

In his first appearance Chastelard establishes his position as the besotted lover who recognizes Mary's beauty and cruelty, who feels acutely and welcomes the pain mingled with pleasure. In the opening scene he tells Mary Beaton of his love for the queen; after describing Mary's eyes, hair, temple, wrists, he continues, recalling the words of Swinburne's epigraph:
or her mouth,
   A flower's lip with a snake's lip, stinging sweet,
And sweet to sting with: face that one would see
And then fall blind and die with sight of it--
   . . . I know no whit
How much I love them.                (I, i, p. 16)

From the beginning, his language reveals that in his infatuation with Mary he courts death. Though he does not possess the strongly androgynous traits of the young men in Swinburne's novels, he, nonetheless, has certain feminine qualities which the Scottish lords observe and which he reveals in his relationship with Mary. Darnley, watching the pair dancing, remarks, "For all his soft French face and bright boy's sword,/ There be folks fairer: and for knightliness,/ These hot-lipped brawls of Paris breed sweet knights" (I, ii, pp. 25-26). Later, Chastelard and Mary engage in a role-playing game which she would not request of her more taciturn, traditionally masculine Scottish retainers. She demands, "Speak to me like a woman, let me see/ If I can play at man" (II, i, p. 43). Chastelard willingly acquiesces to her whim.

Indeed, he pursues self-destruction in a manner that demonstrates nearly conscious intent. The events that precipitate his beheading stem from his own actions, though Mary need not have dealt with him so harshly. Twice he enters her bedroom, first concealing himself beneath the bed, next bursting in at night while she is still with her
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Maries. (There are five characters named Mary in the play, the queen and her four ladies-in-waiting.) Purposefully he places himself in the position of the Swinburnian male lover; that is, he becomes the victimized male of a powerful, beautiful woman. When he is hiding in her chamber, he acknowledges the choice he has made, "Now I have kissed the sea-witch on her eyes/ And my lips ache with it; but I shall sleep/ Ful soon, and a good space of sleep" (III, i, p. 54). He chooses to die at the height of his passion for Mary rather than witness the gradual decay of beauty and feel the erosion of passion. He wants to sacrifice himself immediately on the spot, rather than "die meanlier some time . . . My blood shed out about her feet--by God,/ My heart feels drunken when I think of it" (III, i, p. 54). His excitement rises as he envisions this exquisite fusion of pleasure and pain, and he confesses to Mary that his own masochism has destined him to his love and death. The speech could stand as a representative one for Swinburne's victimized men:

Look, it may be love was a sort of curse
Made for my plague and mixed up with my days
Somewise in their beginning; or indeed
A bitter birth begotten of sad stars
At mine own body's birth, that heaven might make
My life taste sharp where other men drank sweet;
But whether in heavy body or broken soul,
I know it must go on to be my death.  
(III, i, p. 65)
Rather than fight his predisposition to suicidal passion, he totally capitulates to his masochism and exonerates Mary of any responsibility.

In his eyes, through the vision of the artist-lover, her beauty, like that of Fredegond and Lucretia, sanctifies and justifies her actions. When she visits his prison cell to demand the return of her reprieve (characteristically, he has already torn it up), he speaks with the voice of aestheticism:

You never could have mercy. My fair love, Kiss me again, God loves you not the less; Why should one woman have all goodly things? You have all beauty; let mean women's lips Be pitiful, and speak truth: they will not be Such perfect things as yours. Be not ashamed That hands not made like these that snare men's souls Should do men good, give alms, relieve men's pain; You have the better, being more fair than they, They are half foul, being rather good than fair; You are quite fair: to be quite fair is best. (V, ii, p. 119)

Chastelard elevates beauty far above goodness and truth; those who embody the elect of the beautiful need not concern themselves with good works and humane gestures. Like a work of art, they need only to be beautiful. And their admirers, like Chastelard, can expect no pity, no reprieve from them. Knowing her fatal allure and his own impending death, Chastelard recognizes that others will follow in his path:
I know not: men must love you in life's spite;  
For you will always kill them; man by man
Your lips will bite them dead; yea, though you
would,
You shall not spare one; all will die of you. . . .
(V, ii, p. 122)

Beheaded off-stage in the final scene, Chastelard receives
the fate he has sought—sacrifice at the altar of beauty,
blood at the feet of Mary.

Mary, according to Mario Praz, is "the Fatal
Woman par excellence, a type drawn from the poet's own inti­
mate sensual nature and without reference to historical
truth." The Maries prepare the audience for her entry
by discussing her beauty and the fascination she exercises
on men: she "Plucks all souls toward her like a net" (I, i,
p. 13). As if to underscore this observation, Mary enters
with her new piece of jewelry, a breast-clasp which she
describes:

A Venus crowned, that eats the hearts of men:
Below her flies a love with a bat's wings,
And strings the hair of paramours to bind
Live birds' feet with . . .
The legend is writ small:
Still one makes out this—Cave—if you look.
(I, ii, p. 20)

She wears the emblem with pride, fully aware of her effect
on those who "look," for she brings death to those who love
her. Angry that she can be criticized for an affair a king
would be unscathed by, she exclaims, "Would God/ I had been
a man!" (II, i, p. 41), and briefly acts the role of King James to Chastelard. She envies the direct, physical action men are allowed but realizes that her power lies in her beauty and allure: "Fair mirror-glass, I am well ware of you,/ Yea, I know that, I am quite beautiful" (III, i, p. 58). Continuing her narcissistic monologue before her mirror, she firmly places herself in the tradition of the vampire, like Gautier's Clarimonde:

He [her first husband] would have given his body to be slain, Having embraced my body. Now, God knows, I have no man to do as much for me As give me but a little of his blood To fill my beauty from, though I go down Pale to my grave for want--I think not. Pale-- I am too pale surely--Ah! (III, i, pp. 58-59)

She breaks off, fittingly enough, because she has just seen Chastelard, her next victim, in the glass. Lafourcade reads in the speech the cruelty and bloodlust of the Swinburnian heroine: "Enfin, elle est cruelle car elle se plait à voir la souffrance qu'elle a le pouvoir d'infliger; sa beauté pour rester pleine doit de nourrir de sang; c'est une déesse à qui il faut des sacrifices humains; c'est un vampire." Indeed, in the same scene she acknowledges not only the fate of her victims, but also her inability to cry or feel pity for them. She tells Chastelard, "I shall be deadly to you" (III, i, p. 64) and then continues:
No tears in me; I never shall weep much,
I think, in all my life: I have wept for wrath
Sometimes and for mere pain, but for love's pity
I cannot weep at all . . .
I shall live out the sorrow of your death
And be glad afterwards . . .
God made me hard, I think.  

(III, i, p. 65)

The tears fall only for her own thwarted plans or pain; she displays the femme fatale's emotional detachment from others. In fact, as Strong says, "Mary dallies with Chastelard rather than loves him." Thus, when his impetuosity interferes with her ambition and threatens her reign, she dispatches him to his death and announces her plans to marry Darnley, an event Swinburne moved back in time for dramatic effect. The pressure that Mary feels from Scotland to end her affair with Chastelard and to feign innocence becomes an implicit force in the play. Actually, the Scottish setting becomes the Terrible Mother, but it is not the lover-artist who is threatened by convention; it is, this time, the femme fatale herself. To retain her sovereignty and autonomy, she must destroy the source of scandal, Chastelard.

In a dialogue in the first scene, Mary Carmichael and Mary Seyton speak of the contrast between France and Scotland. France is a land of poetry, warmth, gaiety, and beauty where they "Sat in that Louvre garden and plucked fruits/ To cast love-lots with in the gathered grapes" (I, i, p. 9). On the other hand, Scotland is cold, harsh,
and severe, ruled not by Catherine and her harlots but by
the theology and rigidity of John Knox:

Mary Carmichael: Ay, hateful men;
For look how many talking mouths be there,
So many angers show their teeth at us.
Which one is that, stooped somewhat in the neck,
That walks so with his chin against the wind,
Lips sideways shut? A keen-faced man—lo there,
He that walks midmost.

Mary Seyton: That is Master Knox.
He carries all these folk within his skin,
Bound up as 'twere between the brows of him
Like a bad thought; their hearts beat inside his;
They gather at his lips like flies in the sun,
Thrust sides to catch his face.
(I, i, p. 8)

In fact, Mary was thrust from the easy morality of the French
court, from the elegance and luxury of the Louvre, from the
company of Ronsard, du Bellay, and Brantôme to the fog and
damp of Edinburgh, to the stone fortresses of Holyrood and
Edinburgh Castle, and she became a victim of the severe Cal­
vinism of Knox. Swinburne had read Knox's account of the
Chastelard incident and uses it in his play; he also recog­
nizes that Knox voiced his opinions to his followers. Mary
becomes uneasy when her Catholic priest, Father Black, is
ridiculed in the streets and stoned by the townspeople. He
tells her what the citizens had shouted at him:

This devil's mass-priest hankers for new flesh
Like a dry hound; let him seek such at home,
Snuff and smoke out the queen's French . . .
"--French paramours that breed more shames than
sons
All her court through;” forgive me.
(II, i, p. 36)

Trained by Catherine and her Guise relatives in power politics, Mary fears Chastelard’s passion will jeopardize her reputation, hence, her authority and rule among the Scottish Protestants.

Before trying unsuccessfully to persuade her kinsman Murray to kill Chastelard, she regrets reprieveing the poet for his first venture into her chamber:

lo the thanks I get,
To set the base folk muttering like smoked bees
Of shame and love, and how love comes of shame,
And how the queen loves shame that comes of love.
(IV, i, p. 73)

The restricting morality of her subjects requires her to jettison Chastelard so that her ship of state can sail ahead; the disapproving public presence in the background of the drama is a force which Mary can placate only by ordering Chastelard’s death. Swinburne uses the stern voices of the citizens as thinly disguised Philistine views. As Lafourcade remarks, "... les références continuelles au scandale et aux convenances font sourire, malgré le fond historique qui les explique, et suggèrent un salon victorien plutôt que Holyrood au XVI siècle."36

Indeed, it is a blessing that Chastelard seeks his own death, for Knox has inflamed the populace to demand it.
At the beginning of Act V, four citizens of Edinburgh recall his earlier sermons on the queen and await his new one. Swinburne concentrates here on Knox's disgust with eroticism that was inflamed by poetry:

He [Chastelard] used to sit and jangle words in rhyme
To suit with shakes of faint adulterous sound
Some French lust in men's ears; she made songs too,
Soft things to feed sin's amorous mouth upon—
Delicate sounds for dancing at in hell.

(V, i, pp. 104-105)

Thus Swinburne links the attack upon Mary and her lover to the stance of moralistic critics. Knox is blind to her beauty and grace; he damns her as a modern Cleopatra, wallowing in degradation and dragging others down with her:

This is she,
Yea the lewd woman, yea the same woman
That gat bruised breasts in Egypt, when strange men
Swart from great suns, foot-burnt with angry soils
And strewn with sand of gaunt Chaldean miles,
Poured all their love upon her: she shall drink
The Lord's cup of derision. . . .

(V, i, p. 108)

Knox's new sermon begins on the same theme when he appears:
"The mercy of a harlot is a sword/ And her mouth sharper than a flame of fire" (V, i, p. 109). Mary can be free and autonomous only by submitting to Knox. Thus, the art object, the *femme fatale*, is compromised by this bowing to convention,
and the poet-lover dies to fulfill his own masochism and to placate the moralizing preacher. While operating within a historical framework, Swinburne has implied his aesthetic values.

That is not to say that his characters become static mouthpieces who appear to recite Swinburne's views; from his earliest efforts they function dynamically and often dramatically within their respective works while they also embody positions in the artistic controversy that concerned Swinburne. The few years from 1856 to 1861 show rapid poetic development from "Queen Yseult," heavily imitative of Morris, to the graceful language and careful construction of Chastelard. His wide reading and constant writing honed his talents; his imitations of French and Italian tales give him practice in describing characters; his devotion to dramatists enabled him to depict characters through speech and action. With Mary Stuart, his femme fatale is clearly drawn, and he reveals increasing skill in creating an androgynous, victimized artist in Chastelard. Moreover, he is experimenting in a sophisticated manner with the Terrible Mother figure in Chastelard, having drawn a complete portrait of her, at great length, in The Queen Mother. Underlying these archetypes, in all the works, is his insistence that artists be unfettered by a Philistine public and moralistic critics to create beauty. Swinburne was ready
in 1861-62 to turn to longer prose works and to develop his characters and themes in the novel. At the same time he continued to write short poems that he would eventually publish in Poems and Ballads, the volume that offended Victorian sensibilities and challenged critical opinion with its combination of sado-masochistic eroticism and aestheticism.
NOTES

1 Throughout Swinburne's life the poet wrote less serious works, humorous in intent. Among them are the following: "The Monomaniac's Tragedy," 1858; Laugh and Lie Down, 1859; La Fille du Policeman, 1861; La Soeur de la Reine, 1862; "The Flogging Block," 1862-81.


4 Ibid., p. 59.

5 Ibid., p. 41.


7 Ibid., p. 191.

8 Lafourcade, La Jeunesse, II, p. 44.

9 Stevenson, The Pre-Raphaelite Poets, p. 196.


11 Ibid., p. 243.

12 The Complete Works, VII. Tragedies, I, p. 204. All references to Rosamond and The Queen Mother are to this volume.

13 Lafourcade, La Jeunesse, II, p. 244.

14 Ibid., p. 237.

15 Ibid.


21 Ibid.


24 *The Complete Works*, XVII. Prose Works, VII, p. 4. All citations to "The Portrait" and "The Chronicle of Queen Fredegond" are to this volume.


26 Ibid., p. 85.


30 *The Complete Works*, VIII. Tragedies, II, p. 4. All citations are to this volume.


34 Lafourcade, La Jeunesse, II, p. 278.


36 Lafourcade, La Jeunesse, II, p. 275.
In the early 1860's Swinburne was becoming more actively concerned with the controversy over the role of the artist—whether the first obligation of the artist is to create beauty or to inculcate morality. In June 1862 he wrote to the Spectator, protesting an article on George Meredith's Modern Love. The Spectator had published an article attacking Modern Love not on poetic grounds but on moral principles. In the letter he uses a calm tone and begins by stating that he wants "to appeal seriously on general grounds against this sort of criticism as applied to one of the leaders of English literature." The type of criticism he opposes is the sort that judges a work on moral grounds, a criterion totally inappropriate to Swinburne, who continues:

There are pulpits enough for all preachers in prose; the business of verse-writing is hardly to express convictions; and if some poetry, not without merit of its kind, has at times dealt in dogmatic morality, it is all the worse and all the weaker for that. As to subject, it is too much to expect that all schools of poetry are to be forever
subordinate to the one just now so much in request with us, whose scope of sight is bounded by the nursery walls; that all muses are to bow down before her who bab-bles, with lips yet warm from their priste-pine pap, after the dangling delights of a child's coral. . . .

Of course, Swinburne was furiously loyal to his friends and notoriously hostile to the enemy camp (here he attacks Coventry Patmore), but these same critical tenets also appear in essays he wrote during 1862. One of them, "Charles Baudelaire," has been discussed earlier as containing his aesthetic views, but three others---"Théophile," "Les Abîmes. Par Ernest Clouet," and "M. Prudhomme on Art and Science at the International Exhibition"---deserve attention since they provide a window on Swinburne's theory of art at the time he was writing A Year's Letters.

In 1840 Gautier had reviewed the reputation of the seventeenth-century Huguenot poet Theophile de Viau in an essay which prompted a new edition of de Viau's work in 1856. Swinburne, always responsive to Gautier's opinions, composed his own essay, "Théophile," in 1862. Swinburne praises de Viau's lyricism and, particularly, his appreciation of beauty; then, he makes an unequivocal statement of his own precepts: "To me he [Theophile] seems worthy of remembrance and of distinction for one reason only: that the work he did, at its best, was and is and will be admirable for its positive and actual beauty of form." The basis for
judging poetry is, of course, beauty, poetry for poetry's sake.

The other two essays go a step further. Not only do they implicitly assert the same doctrine, but they also attack its detractors—the bourgeois voices of Philistia who were becoming increasingly irritating to Swinburne. In "M. Prudhomme" he takes the character of Prudhomme from the literary, artistic creation of Henri Monnier, and, as his name implies, Prudhomme is indeed a prudish Philistine, overly sentimental and squeamish. Swinburne adopts the persona of a journalist who follows Prudhomme around the exhibit of contemporary paintings and scientific inventions and records his reactions. Like his essay on Clouët, the work is a hoax directed at his opponents. Swinburne admits that although "The immortal Prudhomme type is French by birth," he is now alive and flourishing in England:

Nowhere is there such a rank overgrowth of the stout rampart weed as in these fat pastures of ours; surely no people was ever so hag-ridden, so bullied and beaten about, by the race of Prudhomme as we are.

. . . The Rugby and muscular-Christian schools have pretty well infected the very race of boys with Prudhomme views—exquisite Prudhomme sentiment and "godly, manly" Prudhomme religion.

. . . Prudhomme walks among us as a man—as many men, for indeed he is everywhere. . . .

As Prudhomme progresses through the exhibition, he sheds tears at the sentimental sight of "Mlle. Brown's nursing
sisters," but pictures he disapproves of are removed from the hall. Next, he wanders inadvertently into a medieval display where he falls into convulsions on a medieval couch. The unfortunate piece of furniture, Swinburne explains, has since "been broken up for firewood, in consequence of a complaint by M. Prudhomme that it was 'angular,' and 'did not match his opinions'--a verdict which struck every hearer with hopeless awe and a devout perplexity" (p. 407). Fortunately, Prudhomme is revived by science, by the "sight and smell of Machinery" (p. 407) so that his health and spirits return.

Swinburne is obviously amusing himself in this essay, but he makes links here which will reappear in his novels. The Philistine voice of prudish custom, antithetical to the aesthetic artist, is joined to the philosophy of the "muscular-Christian" schools and to the materialism of scientific progress. "We are born and baptized into the Church of Prudhomme, the most Catholic of all churches, outside of which there is no human salvation for us, and in that fold we must die, or take up with the worst fate of the worst heretics" (p. 402). Although Swinburne had not yet read the works of de Sade, the seeds of Swinburne's Sadian theory of "holy insurrection," which he later develops in William Blake, are here: in a hostile environment, the artist must rebel against the precepts of his culture and choose heresy,
if it be so labeled, in order to pursue his own vision of beauty.

Swinburne's essay "Les Abîmes. Par Ernest Clouët" is also a hoax, both work and French writer his own inventions. Swinburne, tongue in cheek, condemns Clouët for his objectionable writing, which is offensive to any moral person. He quotes Clouët: "'La vertu selon les philistins ... c'est tout bonnement l'étiage de l'âme humaine.'" Swinburne explains that the Frenchman praises crime and that "The doctrine of moralists is to him a 'croassement de grenouilles,' their daily life a 'croupissement de crapauds'" (p. 99). At the close of the essay, the reviewer offers advice to Clouët in a fatherly tone:

We recommend him to give up all idea of making headway against the tide of modern morals, even with the Titan-phantom [de Sade] of the Arch-Unmentionable pulling stroke-oar in his boat. . . . We implore him to think of some honest trade—say of grocery—as an opening in life . . . and very heartily wish him speedy repentance, timely silence, and compassionate oblivion.

(p. 102)

The patronizing voice of the reviewer which Swinburne adopts mocks the Philistines whom he also condemns in the fake Clouët quotations. Thus, the essay cuts two ways against the moralistic critics whose strictures he deplored.

By this time, the late summer of 1862, Swinburne had
begun reading de Sade. His praise of vice and crime over virtue echo the sentiments of de Sade's Justine, and it is apparent that Swinburne is beginning to associate his aesthetic doctrine with de Sade's inverted system of values. However, the connection would not be explicitly worked out until Swinburne wrote Atalanta in Calydon and William Blake. Nevertheless, references to and echoes of de Sade begin to appear here.

In addition to these essays, in 1862 Swinburne began writing a novel which was not published until 1877 when it was serialized in the Tatler as A Year's Letters under the pseudonym Mrs. Horace Manners; in 1905 it was reissued as Love's Cross Currents. But before he turned to this longer work, he produced a fragmentary prose sketch, probably intended to be part of a novel, entitled "Reginald Harewood." In this brief piece appear themes, character types, and names that recur in A Year's Letters and, later, in Lesbia Brandon.

The sketch briefly describes Kirklowes, the country home of the Harewoods: father; daughter, Helen; and son, Reginald—a name Swinburne frequently used for himself. The father enjoys birching Redgie, an event which Helen enjoys witnessing despite her love for her brother. The psychological masochism of Swinburne's earlier male figures here begins to manifest itself as true physical masochism as well,
and Helen, clearly depicted through description and action as a *femme fatale*, revels in watching the infliction of pain. The brother-sister relationship is not fully depicted with all of the incestuous overtones of Lesbia Brandon, but Redgie does feel "an animal worship of his sister's beauty." Helen possesses the attributes of the *femme fatale*, the artist's projection of unattainable beauty untainted by moral judgments:

She was by nature untender, thoughtful, subtly apprehensive, greedy of pleasure, curious of evil and good; had a cool sound head, a ready, rapid, flexible cleverness. There was a certain cruelty about her which never showed itself in a harsh or brutal way, but fed with a soft sensual relish on the sight or conceit of physical pain. . . . At bottom she had no moral qualities at all; was neither good nor evil, and took no pleasure in helping or harming others. . . . She was curiously beautiful; her features were clear, tender, regular; she had soft and subtle eyes, the shifting colour in them drowned and vague under heavy white eyelids and curled eyelashes. (pp. 172-73)

Like a work of art, she exhibits perfection of form unmarred by moral considerations—the criteria Swinburne stresses in his essays for judging artistic efforts. Helen marries, but leaves her husband, who commits suicide, for a lover, Champneys. However, he suffers the fate of a man in the thrall of a *femme fatale* too. Helen, rather than attempting to save him, watches him drown with pleasure when
the sea tosses the "hideous ruined body" on shore: "But her lips had the look of laughter and her eyes shone and smiled; all her face was warmed and lit with pleasure" (p. 180). Champneys drowns in the ocean. Indeed, the water teases him so that he grasps a shingle, believes himself saved, then is horribly pulled back and dashed against a reef. He is, naturally, trying to reach Helen, the incarnation of his ideal of beauty, the destructive anima projection of his own unconscious. But his quest fails, doomed from its inception; ideal beauty is unattainable in the real world; to seek it is to pursue self-annihilation, the fate of the poet in Shelley's Alastor.

Although Swinburne abandoned this fragment to write A Year's Letters, he retains the character Redgie Harewood in the latter. However, the darkness, the pessimism, and the sensuous prose of "Kirklowes" do not reappear until Lesbia Brandon, where they coalesce to create a heavy, fevered atmosphere of decadence. Although A Year's Letters contains Swinburne's bizarre triad of figures—Terrible Mother, femme fatale, androgyne—as well as slightly incestuous adultery and an unexpected drowning, the novel is basically a comedy of manners, heavily flavored with irony. Furthermore, the epistolary style of the novel forces Swinburne to create a lexicon and syntactical pattern for each character—from the sugary sentimentalism of Amicia through
the sparkling epigrammatic wit of Lady Midhurst to the "muscular-Christian" style of Captain Harewood. To accentuate the comic spirit, Swinburne begins the work with a familiar voice; there is a letter "To the Author" from an anonymous moralist who echoes the opinions of Clouet's reviewer and Prudhomme. He suggests to Mrs. Manners that her "sojourn in France" has "vitiated [her] principles and confused [her] judgment."^8 The letter concludes with smug, Philistine advice:

I recommend you therefore to suppress or even to destroy this book, for two reasons: it is a false picture of domestic life in England; because it suggests as possible the chance that a married lady may prefer some stranger to her husband, which is palpably and demonstrably absurd; it is also, as far as I can see, deficient in purpose and significance. Morality, I need not add, is the soul of art; and picture, poem, or story, must be judged by the lesson it conveys. If it strengthens our hold upon fact, if it heightens our love of truth, if it rekindles our ardour for the right, it is admissible as good; if not, what shall we say of it?

(p. 4)

Swinburne's most casual reader should be forewarned that he plans to attack sanctimonious Victorian woman worship, to destroy the domestic "idyll" by knocking the pure wife/mother/goddess off her pedestal, and to denigrate the sentimental concept of sacramental love. Posing as a Philistine reviewer who has absorbed the opinions of Mrs. Sarah
Stickney Ellis, he writes:

The wives and mothers of England are exempt, through some inscrutable but infallible law of nature, from the errors to which women in other countries (if we may trust the evidence of tradition) are but too fatally liable. . . . Marriage in England is indissoluble, is sacred, is fortunate in every instance. Only a few—happily a very few—perverse and fanciful persons still venture to imagine or to suggest that a British household can be other than the chosen home of constancy and felicity.

(p. 3)

Naturally, Swinburne happily counted himself and Meredith among the "perverse" few, and it is clear that both his character—tyrannical mothers, unfaithful wives, unconventional young men—and his choice of themes—adultery, cruel physical or emotional manipulation of others, and a hint of incest—are intended as aesthetic symbols with which to assault the moralistic critics and the devotees of the madonna of the home.

Before Swinburne begins the series of letters which constitute the bulk of the novel, he includes a "Prologue," which serves two purposes. It provides the reader with a necessary, but extremely complicated, explanation of the consanguineous relationships among the Cheyne-Midhurst-Harewood families, embellished with descriptions of their country homes and character sketches of Lady Midhurst and her brothers; in addition, Swinburne renders a brief scene
which occurs in 1849, twelve years before the action of the novel. This scene focuses on Redgie and Frank, allowing Swinburne to explain their childhood traits, later discernible in them as young adults. It is the only occasion on which the characters are described and do not speak directly through their own letters, which they (especially Lady Midhurst and Clara) are frequently writing in order to manipulate someone else. Thus, the "Prologue" provides invaluable exposition and interesting insights into the limited cast of characters, particularly the dominant one, Lady Midhurst, nee Helena Cheyne.

The intrigue of the novel is based upon Lady Midhurst's manipulation. After engineering her daughter's, Amicia's, first marriage and subsequent divorce to Captain Harewood, she selected Amicia's second husband and resided with them, becoming "in a quiet though effectual way mistress of the whole household" (p. 11). Indeed, this Amicia and her husband, Frederick Stanford, are scarcely mentioned in the novel. They are only brought in as weapons in Lady Midhurst's arsenal when she wants to exert greater emotional blackmail on Redgie, so she tells his mother of his affair with Clara. Lady Midhurst, a Terrible Mother tempered with humor and characterized by worldly experience, coolly assesses the strengths and weaknesses of her niece and nephew, Clara and Frank, and of her grandchildren, Amy (daughter of
Amicia) and Redgie. As Swinburne reveals in the "Prologue," she devotes her considerable energies to controlling these four in order to further the interests of her grandchildren:

Lady Midhurst was really very much fonder of her two grandchildren than of any one else alive. Redgie was just her sort of boy, she said, and Amy just her sort of girl. It would have been delicious to bring them up together; (education, superintendence, training of character, guidance of habit in young people, were the passions of the excellent lady;) and if the boy's father would just be good enough to come to some timely end!

(p. 18)

Her "passions," then, are domination and manipulation of those within her family. Thwarted by a society which made it difficult, if not impossible, for a woman of superior intelligence and considerable force of personality to exercise these talents, Lady Midhurst exerts her power in the only realm available to her--the countryhouses of her extended family.

Like Catherine in The Queen Mother, Lady Midhurst hovers over the others, using whatever means possible to achieve her end--success (by her definition) for her grandchildren. In a letter to W. M. Rossetti, Swinburne emphasizes her central position in the novel: "This book stands or falls by Lady Midhurst; if she gives satisfaction, it must be all right; if not, Chaos is come again." The few critics who comment on the novel agree. Edmund Wilson
remarks, "Lady Midhurst is indeed at the center of Love's Cross-Currents, prevailing, persuading, pushing, resorting to blackmail if necessary—always bringing pressure to bear."\(^{10}\) Randolph Hughes senses the Terrible Mother behind the nineteenth-century facade: "There is something in this highly cultivated Victorian English gentlewoman of the tribal matriarch in primitive times."\(^{11}\) Georges Lafourcade, in discussing Swinburne's debt to Mme de Merteuil, the central character in Choderlos de Laclos' novel Les Liaisons Dangereuses (1782), sums up the character of Lady Midhurst and stresses the same traits and motivations:

Even before one traces her connivances through the letters, her links to the archetype of the Terrible Mother and to the Philistine emphasis of maintaining proper appearances and respectability begin to emerge. However, Lady Midhurst is fully capable of speaking for herself.

In fact, the novel is framed by her letters; she
writes eleven of the thirty letters, including the first and the last; and the majority of the others are written either at her instigation or to her. Her goal in the novel is to insure that her grandchildren, Amy and Redgie, live their lives according to her plan: that is, that Redgie's infatuation with his cousin Clara, the *femme fatale*, be destroyed, and that Amy's affair with her cousin Frank be ended so that her position as Lady Cheyne will not be jeopardized. Lady Midhurst achieves these goals through clever, ruthless manipulation of her victims, for she arises out of the tradition of the French psychological novel wherein strong, dominant characters dissect the weaker ones. Having analyzed their vulnerabilities, the strong can then exploit the weak and control their reactions. Lady Midhurst, a woman of powerful intellect, molds language to her ends and uses her superior verbal skills to dash all dreams that challenge her Philistine goal of keeping appearances up and scandal down. Since Frank and Amy are basically malleable and responsive to her strictures, their own consciences, and social pressure, their affair does not pose a serious challenge to her authority. However, the liaison between Clara and Redgie presents a greater threat to her pride in directing family affairs. The contest between Lady Midhurst, Terrible Mother, and Clara Radworth, *femme fatale*, for power over Redgie, the androgynous poet, provides the greatest
conflict in the novel and the only real challenge to Lady Midhurst's plans for her family.

Lady Midhurst, the tactician, controls the intrigue. Her plans are carefully laid, premeditated with close attention to the psychological makeup of her victims. She plays games, and metaphors cluster about her talent for gamesmanship. Her first letter, in which she urges Clara to dissuade Frank from seeing Amy in order to avoid "ridicule," describes a roman à clef in which she appears:

> If you ever see an old novel called (I think) Vingt-et-Un or some such name--I know there are cards in it--you will find a picture there of your aunt painted by the author. . . . I am the Lady Midhurst of that nice book. I cheat at cards. I break the heart of a rising poet. . . . I make two brothers fight a duel, and one is killed through my direct agency. I run away with a Lord Avery. I am not certain my husband dies a natural death.

(p. 32)

Obviously, her skilled manipulative abilities have been apparent to others for years—though not always applauded. Moreover, one sees that Swinburne envisions Helena as a femme fatale in her youth. No longer able to enchant and destroy men with her beauty, she has since moved into the role of the Terrible Mother, controlling the only people left under her sway—the younger generation of her family. Also, in retrospect one realizes that this passage is a
veiled warning to Clara that Lady Midhurst is an experienced, worthy opponent capable of recognizing and thwarting behavior she has indulged in herself. For later she reveals that she already knew of several earlier entanglements Clara has been involved in.

Midway through the novel Lady Midhurst repeats her metaphor when she pointedly advises her niece on the grounds of Victorian custom and mores to quit toying with Redgie: "I told her the sort of thing was not a game permitted by the social authorities of the time and country; the cards would burn her fingers after another deal or two" (p. 71). However, Clara continues to play; unfortunately for her she tries to outmaneuver her aunt. First she sends one of Redgie's letters to Lady Midhurst; then she writes Redgie what purports to be a letter of dismissal but what in actuality is a missive calculated to fan the fires of his adoration and passion. Clara also intends for him to show the letter to Lady Midhurst, hoping the latter will accept it at surface value. Of course, Lady Midhurst sees through the scheme and refutes Clara's letter to Redgie:

Very well played too by forwarding me your letter... Upon the whole, as it seemed to her, she could not fail to come out admirably from the test in my eyes... she cares for the duties and devotions no more than I should care for her reputation were she not unhappily my relative.

(pp. 90-91)
Referring to herself as an "old critic," Lady Midhurst then explicitly explains her motivation to control Redgie; she uses the language of the Terrible Mother frustrated by an obstacle, Redgie's infatuation with Clara:

If I could have taken you with me from the first and reared you . . . I would have broken you in better. . . . I had always hungered after a boy. So I took to you from the beginning in an idiotic way, and by this time no doubt my weakness is developing into senile dotage. . . . However I so trust you will be as good a boy as you can, and not bring me to an untimely grave in the flower of my wrinkles.

(pp. 92-93)

Being a "good" boy naturally entails following Lady Midhurst's orders, even though Redgie is nearly twenty-four. But like most victims of a femme fatale, he is too enthralled to hear, much less to heed, his grandmother's advice. Therefore, Lady Midhurst musters her full resources as manipulator par excellence and turns to blackmail. Having failed to dampen Redgie's ardor by dissecting Clara's letter, she decides to give Clara a lesson in gamesmanship. In her final letter to Clara, Lady Midhurst returns to the image of the card game just before she delivers the coup de grace:

About Reginald, I may as well now say once and for all that I can promise to relieve you for good of any annoyance in that quarter. We must both of us by
this time be really glad of any excuse to
knock his folly about you in the head.
Here is my plan of action, to be played
out if necessary; if you have a better,
please let me know of it in time, before
I shuffle and deal; you see I show you
my hand in the most perfectly frank way.
(p. 151)

No longer is she referring to herself as a character in a
novel, no longer is her threat veiled. Her hand is all
trumps; if Clara does not dismiss Redgie at once, Lady Mid-
hurst will show him the letters Clara wrote to Octave during
her dalliance with the Frenchman. Clara has no choice but
to acquiesce, so Lady Midhurst emerges victorious. Having
vanquished Clara, she prepares to take the reins of Redgie's
life again: "I shall simply reconquer the boy, and hold him
in hand till I find a woman fit to have charge of him" (p.
165). Needless to say, one suspects that that woman may
never be found.

Lady Midhurst's machinations do not pass unobserved
by her puppets, but they describe her in less flattering
metaphors than her self-image of a card player. Even Redgie,
her favorite, realizes that his aunt has prompted Amy to
write him, asking that he break off with Clara on moral
grounds:

That poor child at A. H. writes me piteous
little letters in the silliest helpless
way about the wrong of this and the right
of that; she has been set upon and stung
This unpleasant, destructive bird imagery appears in the correspondence of Clara and Frank as well. It is an appropriate choice, for Erich Neumann notes in his discussion of the Terrible Mother that vultures, ravens, and other birds connected to death, darkness, or carrion are frequently associated with the archetype. In an early letter to her brother, Clara notes, "To me she always looked like a cat, or some bad sort of bird, with those greyish green eyes and their purple pupils" (p. 38). Frank not only sees her in the same terms, but he also displays an understanding of her motivation and a fear of her actions. In a letter to Clara he writes:

She has the passions of intrigue and management still strong; like nothing so well evidently as the sense of power to make and break matches, build schemes and overset them.... I am more thoroughly afraid of hearing from Lady M. again than I ever was of anything on earth: no child could dread any fortune as I do that.... Those two are her children, and she always rather hated us for their sakes.... she is rather
of the vulturine order as to beak and diet.

(pp. 131-33)

His fears are, of course, well-grounded; he loses Amy, and Clara must break off with Redgie. Lady Midhurst quiets scandal, routs the *femme fatale*, and rests, happily anticipating the rearing of her great-grandchild.

That Clara is a *femme fatale* is clearly established by the descriptions of others, by her own actions, and by her effect on Redgie. Randolph Hughes agrees: "Clara is another avatar, although on a relatively much lower, and far less heroic level, of the peculiarly Swinburnian woman, the Swinburnian woman par excellence, of whom Lucretia Borgia and Mary Stuart may be taken as the extreme types."¹⁴ Lady Midhurst, in fact, points out her similarities to Mary Stuart in a letter to Redgie:

She is quite Elizabethan, weakened by a dash of Mary Stuart. At your age you cannot possibly understand how anybody can be at once excitable and cold. . . . A person who does happen to combine those two qualities has the happiest temperament imaginable. She can enjoy herself, her excitability secures that; and she will never enjoy herself too much, or pay too high a price for anything.

(p. 57)

Clara embodies the principal traits of the *femme fatale*, and Lady Midhurst knows that she will emerge emotionally unscathed from her newest affair. Furthermore,
she understands that part of Redgie's attraction is based on two other traits associated with the fatal woman—her sterility and her beauty:

I could not quite gather his reasons, but it seems the absence of children is an additional jewel in her crown. . . . And all the time it is too ludicrously evident that the one point of attraction is physical. Her good looks, such as they are, lie at the root of all this rant and clatter.

(p. 1)

Furthermore, there is adequate evidence that she has previously enthralled several other men: her cousin Edmund, a Lord Charnsworth, and Octave, not to mention the suffering she has brought to her husband Ernest. Indeed, Octave's friend Mme de Rochelais says of Clara:

Elle a toujours voulu faire sauter les gens en marionnettes; mais mon Dieu, quel saut de carpe que celui-ci! Quant à ce pauvre Octave, il s'est déjà cassé quelque ressort à vouloir faire paillasse auprès d'elle.

(p. 143)

Lady Midhurst is even more critical; throughout the novel she implies that Clara is a vampire and Ernest and Redgie her victims—a motif recalling Gautier's Clarimonde and other femmes fatales.

This imagery is not blatant; basically it involves references to Ernest Radworth's gradually becoming more
colorless and enervated, being gradually drained of his life's blood by his wife. Lady Midhurst writes to her granddaughter:

When I saw him [Captain Harewood] last he was greyer than Ernest Radworth. That wife of his (E. R.'s I mean) is enough to turn any man's hair grey. . . . She will be the ruin of poor dear Redgie if we don't pick him up somehow and keep him out of her way. . . . I am quite certain she will be the death of poor Redgie.

(pp. 40-41)

Lady Midhurst warns Redgie directly of the cruel treatment in store for him, adding disease/infatuation imagery to her description of Clara:

She amuses herself in all sorts of the most ingenious ways; makes that wretch Ernest's life an Egyptian plague to him by contrast friction of his inside skin and endless needle-probings of his sore mental places: enjoys all kind of fun. . . .

(p. 56)

Her goal is to "extricate your brother, half-eaten, from under her very teeth" (p. 66), although she expresses doubt to Amy that she can succeed:

he must and will be eaten up alive, and I respect the woman's persistence. Bon appetit. I bow to her and retire. She has splendid teeth. I suppose she will let him go some day. She can hardly think of marrying him when Ernest Radworth is killed off. Do you think the
Radworth has two years' vitality left in him? (p. 63)

Lady Midhurst has no thought of surrendering Redgie; she uses this ruse to frighten Amy into influencing her brother to give up Clara. Instead, Lady Midhurst continues to envision Redgie as diseased by his love, so she will use Clara's letters to Octave as "small ink-and-paper pills" to cure him (p. 152). Ernest, however, has no rescuer.

When Lady Midhurst pays a triumphant visit to the Radworths after she has forced Clara to give Redgie up, she observes that Ernest is still victimized, becoming thinner and paler, like a vampire's prey:

I called at Blocksham and saw the Radworths in the flesh—that is in the bones and cosmetics; for the male is gone to bone and the female to paint. The poor man calls aloud for an embalmer. . . . She will hardly get up a serious affair again, or it might be a charity to throw her some small animal by way of lighter food. . . . her sensation-shop is closed for good. (pp. 160-61)

Although she tortures Ernest, there is good reason to believe he will never be destroyed by her as Redgie would have been, for Ernest is a scientist, specializing, ironically, in osteology. Even Swinburne damns him in the "Prologue" by noting, "There was always the strong flavour of the pedant and philistin about Ernest Radworth" (p. 16),
and Redgie describes him as an "ingenious laborious pedant
and prig" (p. 136). Being human, he can suffer, but Ernest
lacks the sensitivity, the greater capacity for feeling
that Redgie, the poet, possesses. Not only is he incapable
of projecting his ideal of beauty onto Clara as Redgie does,
but he lacks the imagination necessary to envision an ideal,
and beauty does not interest him as much as his dry studies.
Nevertheless, he is slowly being vitiated by his daily con­
tact with the femme fatale. The results are simply less
dramatic in the practitioner of science than they are in
the creator of art. However, Redgie is prevented from suf­
fering the full ill effects of his infatuation by the inter­
vention of Lady Midhurst.

In the "Prologue" Swinburne introduces Redgie at ele­
en when the Harewoods pay a brief visit to the John Cheynes.
The episode—the only one Swinburne chooses to render
directly—reveals traits in Redgie the child which predis­
pose him to becoming the admirer of a femme fatale as a
young man. Swinburne describes his androgynous appearance:

The visitor was a splendid-looking fellow,
lithe and lightly built, but of a good
compact make, with a sunburnt oval face and
hair like unspun yellow silk in colour, but
one mass of short rough curls; eyebrows,
eyes and eyelashes all black, shewing
quaintly enough against his golden hair and
bright pale skin. His mouth, with a rather
full red underlip for a child, had a look
of such impudent wilful beauty to suggest at
once the frequent call for birch in such a boy's education. His eyes too had a defiant laugh latent under the lazy light in them. . . . delicately costumed . . . but by no means after the muscle-manful type.

(p. 20)

In addition, Redgie is already a poseur, striking postures carefully calculated to evoke admiration and interest in his younger cousin Frank. Sensitive to language, he displays an awareness of "verbal subtleties" and chooses his words with attention to their sounds and precise meanings. The first opinion he expresses is actually an aesthetic judgment on his name:

Mine's Reginald—Reginald Edward Harewood. It doesn't sound at all well (this with a sententious suppressed flourish in the voice, as of one who blandly deprecates a provoked contradiction); no; not at all; because there's such a lot of d's in it.

(p. 20)

Cowing Frank with his self-assurance, Redgie inspires awe and respect in his cousin with graphic description of "swishings" he has received. Redgie's masochism is clearly established; furthermore, he takes pride in his ability to withstand pain and savors the memory of his ordeals as a sensory experience with erotic overtones. They inspire "a sort of sensual terror which was not so far from desire" (p. 26), and Swinburne says, "The boy was immeasurably proud of his flogging, and relished the subject of flagellation"
as few men relish red wine" (p. 24). Predictably, this masochism and his artistic sensibility, capable of projecting an ideal of beauty, make him unusually psychologically suited to becoming the victim of a *femme fatale*. Hence, one is prepared for his response to Clara's beauty, expressed though it is in adolescent slang:

> Well, she [Lady Midhurst] says my sister is no end of a good one to look at by this time; but I think yours must be the jolliest. I've known lots of girls (the implied reticence of accent was, as Lady Midhurst would have said, impayable) but I never saw such a stunner as she is. She makes a fellow feel quite shut up and spooney.

(p. 28)

So, in Redgie's first appearance in the novel, he demonstrates the characteristics of the androgynous young artist, in addition to masochism and attraction to the young *femme fatale*. In her presence he drops the lordly air he assumes with Frank and becomes "quite subdued, 'lowly and serviceable.'" The quotation is particularly apropos considering the worship and devotion Redgie lavishes upon Clara in the letters. His attitude reminds the reader of Tebaldeo's toward Lucretia; moreover, though Redgie's birthday, April 7, does not coincide with those of Swinburne and Tebaldeo, April 5, it falls only two days later. Swinburne admitted that the portrait of the young man was autobiographical. In a letter to W. M. Rossetti, Swinburne writes:
I think you may be reminded of a young fellow you once knew, and not see very much difference between Algie Harewood and Redgie Swinburne. . . . I want you to like . . . Reginald Harewood, who, (though nothing can possibly be more different than his parents and mine) is otherwise rather a coloured photograph of

Yours,
A. C. Swinburne—15

Redgie's passion for Clara certainly escapes no one's notice. The members of his family comment upon it with varying degrees of disapproval, but they all regard it, literally, as a form of worship and note that Redgie places himself in a subordinate role. Never one to mince words or hide her opinions, Lady Midhurst writes Redgie:

If you are in effect allured and fascinated by the bad weak side of her I can't help it. . . . I don't want to have my nice old Redgie made into a burnt-offering on the twopenny tinselled side-altar of St. Agnes of Bohemia.

(p. 58)

A shrewd observer, she later informs Amy that she "thought at one time he was sure to upset all kinds of women with that curious personal beauty of his," but now she realizes that "his lot in life lies the other way, and he will always be the footstool and spindle of any woman who may choose to have him" (pp. 120-21). Frank, too, believes his cousin's devotion is growing excessive and advises his sister to discourage Redgie: "His idolatry is becoming a bore,
if not worse; you should find him an ideal to draw his worship off you a little" (p. 132). Clara, however, is still enjoying the adulation and attention of her bewitched younger cousin.

Redgie expresses his own feelings in the five letters he writes, the most interesting of which relates a story about the seventeenth-century poet Reginald Harewood after whom he was named. This Reginald, too, was in love with a femme fatale, the Lady Cheyne of that time, who made love with the poet then demanded that her husband kill him. Redgie suggests that her portrait should bear an inscription: "I should put Sans merci on the frame if it were mine" (p. 116). Although the parallels are painstakingly clear to others, Redgie still regards Clara with uncritical love and writes her impassioned love letters begging her to leave Ernest. He says that he looks upon her "with a perfect devotion of reverence and love" and that he loves her "as no woman has ever been loved by any man" (pp. 76, 77). A part of this adoration, however, is an attitude of rebellion against society which is a part of his nature. The young Redgie is already "visibly mutinous" (p. 19), and Captain Harewood points to this trait when he writes Redgie in his muscular-Christian style and accuses his son of an "utter disregard of duty and discipline" (p. 125).

Obviously, there is an aesthetic element to this
feeling as well—an artistic disdain for the properties of Victorian society which Lady Midhurst represents. Redgie tries to persuade Clara to run away with him to France, naturally, and insists, "We will have a good fight with the world if it comes in our way" (p. 146). It is this proposed flight to France that forces his grandmother to blackmail Clara, for Lady Midhurst regards the elopement as a direct affront to Philistine morals: "Redgie again was mad to upset conventions and vindicate his right of worshipping you" (p. 157). But the Terrible Mother enforces her will, her opinion that "what a far better thing it is to live in the light of English feeling and under the rule of English habit" (p. 157). She continues to control Redgie, to restrict his freedom; she has prevented him from going to sea and from becoming a diplomat, and now ends his affair with a femme fatale. Although she is not a monster like Catherine, Lady Midhurst is patronizingly certain that her values and opinions are the correct ones. Like Prudhomme, the Philistine at the exhibition who rejected paintings that did not conform to his standards, she too enforces conformity and adherence to Victorian morality in her family. Since the novel is basically comic, she is not malicious; rather, she operates from a smug, Philistine belief that she knows what is best for others, much like Clouet's reviewer advising him to sell groceries. The result, then, of
severing the artist from his destructive ideal here is that Redgie is probably saved from becoming a clown like Octave or an enervated, spiritless man like Ernest. Lady Midhurst does prevail, and Swinburne maintains his light touch throughout the novel.

But Lesbia Brandon, his other uncompleted effort in the genre, which uses the same archetypal characters, is different. The comic spirit vanishes, and diseased relationships supplant it.

The date of Lesbia Brandon's composition and the history of the manuscript are disputed, at best. One can be certain only that the novel was begun by 1863-64, and that it remains a fragment. Also beyond dispute is that Watts-Dunton conveniently lost four chapters of the novel in 1877 when Swinburne had it set up in type. Even though Swinburne wrote Watts several times, asking for the return of his manuscript, the chapters were not forthcoming. After Swinburne's death, T. J. Wise acquired them. It seems fair to assume, however, that Watts considered portions of the work far too shocking to allow Swinburne to have them set up in type. Edmund Gosse agreed; he and Wise thought the fragment should never be published. Randolph Hughes thought otherwise, so he reassembled the work and published it in 1952.

Watts's reluctance to allow the publication of the manuscript in 1877 is understandable, for Lesbia Brandon
deals unabashedly with themes that would horrify some twentieth-century readers, much less Victorian ones: incest, transvestitism, sado-masochism, androgyny, and lesbianism. It is a tough-minded combination of realism and poetry which undertakes an unflinching examination of Herbert Seyton's psycho-sexual, artistic, emotional development and a briefer, but no less honest, study of those who influence him—his sister Margaret, his half-brother and tutor Denham, his brother-in-law's uncle, Mr. Linley, and Lesbia Brandon herself, his *femme fatale*. The sea also plays a crucial role in forming Bertie's responses to beauty and women, and its rhythms and power recur throughout the novel. Swinburne, early in the work, establishes Bertie as the young artist-androgyne who becomes the masochistic lover of the *femme fatale*. Bertie's *femmes fatales* are both his sister and Lesbia; at different times in his life both women become his projection of ideal beauty, unattainable to Bertie because of the incest prohibition or because of lesbianism. Neither woman is by nature cruel or malicious; however, their effect on Bertie is the same as if both were, for he still suffers pain and psychological subjugation. In addition, Denham, obsessed with passion for Margaret, vents his frustration by birching Bertie. Margaret is a *femme fatale* to Denham: "He would have given his life for leave to touch her, his soul for a chance of dying crushed down
under her feet: an emotion of extreme tenderness, lashed to fierce insanity by the circumstances, frothed over into a passion of vehement cruelty" (p. 38). Hence, indirectly Bertie suffers physically from the effects of the *femme fatale*; he becomes a surrogate whipping boy for Denham's necessarily repressed passion, to a large extent because of the uncanny resemblance between Bertie and Margaret.

The first chapter of the novel, incomplete though it is, departs from any conventional expectations of opening exposition. The three pages are a provocative exercise in comparison and description; that is, Swinburne focuses at amazingly close range to give a detailed study of Margaret's beauty, particularly the eyes and head. Then he reveals that Bertie is, essentially, her male double, though quite feminine himself. The entire chapter rather defies summary, but a brief excerpt provides an example of Swinburne's technique:

Looked well into and through, they [Bertie's eyes] showed tints of blue and grey like those of sea-mosses seen under a soft vague surface of clear water which blends and brightens their sudden phases of colour: They were sharp at once and reflective, rapid and timid, full of daring or of dreams: with darker lashes, longer and wavier than his sister's: his browner eyebrows had the exact arch of hers . . . his lips were cut after the model of hers . . . his chin and throat were also copies from her in the due scale of difference, and his hands, though thinner
and less rounded, were what hers would have been with a little more exposure to sun and wind. . . .

(p. 3)

Gone is the epigrammatic, conversational, epistolary style of *A Year's Letters*; instead, one sees a return to the lush passages of Teobaldeo's prose. The intense visual imagery here not only stresses Bertie's androgynous nature, but also lays the foundation for a work which will examine the quest for sensation—both as a normal part of childhood and as an adult escape from disillusionment, pain, and thwarted dreams. The references to Bertie's femininity recur; he has a "soft sunburnt hand with feminine fingers," and he looks like "a small replica of his sister, breeched and cropped" (pp. 16, 30). In at least two instances, Swinburne blatantly depicts him as an androgyne: "There was a strong feminine element in Bertie Seyton; he ought to have been a pretty and rather boyish girl" (p. 30). Then, when Bertie meets Lesbia for the first time, his sexual ambiguity is heightened because, at the insistence of Lord Linley and Lady Midhurst (a peripheral character and friend of the family here), he is costumed as a girl for his part in a charade:

His full and curled hair had been eked out with false locks to the due length, and his skin touched up with feminine colours: so that "solutis crinis ambiguo-que vultu" he was passable as a girl.

(p. 87)
Lord Linley's role in and motivation for enforcing Bertie's appearance as a transvestite will be examined later, but without Bertie's overtly feminine characteristics, Lord Linley's manipulation would be impossible here. Nevertheless, it is important to note, particularly considering Lesbia's pronounced preference for women, that Bertie is not a homosexual. Instead, his erotic responses—beginning with his reaction to the sea, continuing with his attraction to his sister, and culminating in his adoration of Lesbia—are aroused and stimulated by females (the sea included) who inspire him both aesthetically and sensually. Thus, Swinburne fully explores the artist-androgyne in this novel, exploring the wellspring of his aestheticism and dramatizing the results of his pursuit of the destructive ideal of beauty, the *femme fatale*.

To Jung, of course, the sea is the greatest symbol of the unconscious, and, as he says, "water represents the maternal depths and the place of rebirth; in short, the unconscious in its positive and negative aspects." Mrs. Seyton died when Bertie was born; hence, his sister and the sea combine in his early childhood to become his substitute mothers. After his father dies, he is taken to Ensdon to live with Margaret and her husband, and he is overcome by his first sight of the sea. Bertie's response is clearly both aesthetic and sexual:
The wind played upon it wilfully, lashing it with soft strokes, kissing it with rapid kisses, as one amorous and vexatious of the immense beautiful body defiant even of divine embraces and lovers flown from heaven . . . weary beauty on its immortal face, soft sighs and heavy murmurs under the laughter and dance-music of its endless stream. The water moved like tired tossing limbs of a goddess, troubled with strength and vexed with love.

To this, the only sight of divine and durable beauty on which any eyes can rest in the world, the boy's eyes first turned, and his heart opened and ached with pleasure. His face trembled and changed, his eyelids tingled, his limbs yearned all over: the colours and savours of the sea seemed to pass in at his eyes and mouth; all his nerves desired the divine touch of it, all his soul saluted it through the senses.

(pp. 6-7)

The attraction is immediate and permanent; Bertie is figuratively engulfed by the sensations that the sea's sensuality and beauty arouse in him. Already he perceives it as a lushly provocative feminine presence, and his unconscious begins to order the stimuli into the outline of a femme fatale—a goddess, autonomous in her beauty, incapable of being controlled or fully possessed by anyone. Left virtually alone, "he lived and grew on like an animal or a fruit . . ." (p. 8). During this period, Bertie spends countless hours by the sea, "gathering up with gladdened ears all the fervent sighs and whispers of the tender water . . . all sweet and suppressed semitones of light
music struck out of shingle or sand by the faint extended fingers of foam . . . " (p. 9). And the music of the sea inspires Bertie to compose "scraps of song" to sing back to it. His ideal of beauty continues to be molded by her presence, and her underlying potential for cruelty becomes part of the ideal; knowing "how many lives went yearly to feed with blood the lovely lips of the sea furies" (p. 10), he succumbs to the sea as to a vampire: "all cruelties and treacheries, all subtle appetites and violent secrets of the sea, were part of her divine nature, adorable and acceptable to her lovers" (p. 10). Symbolically, the sea is Bertie's true mother and his first lover; it permeates his unconscious with a plethora of sensations—visual, auditory, tactile—that coalesce to create an enduring ideal of beauty inextricably mixed with cruelty. In addition, Bertie learns a behavior pattern; he can never dominate or control the sea. He can love it, bathe in it, be soothed and caressed or stung and chilled by it, but he is always powerless in the face of its force. So, he learns submission:

[he] grappled with them [the waves] as lover with lover, flung himself upon them with limbs that laboured and yielded deliciously, till the scourging of the surf made him red from the shoulders to the knees, and sent him on shore whipped by the sea into a single blush of the whole skin, breathless and untried.

(p. 18)
This response is the same passionate submission he will feel for the human *femmes fatales* in his life, Margaret and Lesbia. It is the masochistic submission of the artist to his art, knowing that to merge with the ideal would be death but that to live without fully possessing it is unrelenting pain.

His propensity for masochism is accentuated when Lord Linley sends Denham to tutor Bertie. Then Denham begins to birch the boy out of his own repressed desire for the sister.

However, Denham's presence has its positive effects as well; the tutor's "clear trained intellect served to excite and expand his own" (p. 18). Under Denham's influence, his animal, sensate experiences are overlaid with classic literature as Denham prepares him for Eton, and, naturally, Bertie is intrigued by the figures of Helen and Electra. He hypothesizes that Electra was as beautiful as Helen, her aunt, and he hopes that Margaret would support him as Electra did Orestes. Already intrigued by Electra's devotion to Orestes, when he studies *The Odyssey*, his propensity toward fatal women in mythology is revealed. Of Circe, Calypso, and Penelope, he observes, "'I'd rather have seen Circe, I think'" (p. 25). The enchantress, the witch who turns men into swine, fascinates him; the dutiful wife and the devoted lover do not provide the same imaginative stimulus.

Once the sea has consciously become a woman to Bertie,
he is ready to project his ideal upon the closest, most beautiful, and unattainable woman, Margaret. This transference from sea to sister is facilitated by his lessons as his cognitive powers develop:

It appeared he had been thinking much "about things" and had deduced a fact of some value from the floating mass of evidence; namely that in every row ever heard of there was a woman somewhere. . . . "I think they were right to put a lot of women in the sea: it's like a woman itself: the right place for sirens to come out of, and sing and kill people." (p. 24)

Bertie's passion for Margaret is decidedly both erotic and aesthetic; moreover, the attraction is narcissistic and incestuous. A. J. L. Busst points out that brother-sister incest is frequently associated with the androgyne, along with male masochism and female sadism. He finds the association logical in the nineteenth century, particularly among those writers who shared Swinburne's aestheticism: "if art has no other end than itself, and if, artistically, good and evil are meaningless words, then the hermaphrodite, as a product of pure art, must be beyond and above good and evil." Hence, Bertie suffers no moral qualms over his feelings for Margaret, but she remains forever, like the femme fatale, beyond his reach. Margaret is exquisitely lovely: "Her godlike beauty was as blind and unmerciful as a god" (p. 31). It recapitulates Bertie's own
prettiness so that the two are described as male-female twins: "For two creatures more beautiful never stood together ... either smiled with the same lips and looked straight with the same clear eyes" (p. 39). When Bertie looks at Margaret, he naturally sees both his inspiration, the sea, and himself. Thus, his quest for ideal beauty contains narcissistic overtones which underscore its ultimate futility more fully. However, there exist a tenderness and a unifying bond between Bertie and Margaret that vibrates with color, music, and feeling. When they are together, there is a harmonious blending of shared experience and kindred interests—represented through their mutual love of ballads—which neither of them can achieve alone or with another. The passages describing their relationship reveal this unity and recall Plato's myth of the hermaphrodite in which the primordial wholeness of the hermaphrodite is sundered by its division into sex. When Bertie leaves for Eton, their separation leaves only emptiness and pain.

The most important and revealing scene between Bertie and Margaret occurs in his bedroom after a particularly eventful day. Bertie has been severely birched by Denham for disobeying instructions not to swim in the ocean, though unbeknown to the tutor Bertie entered the water to save a boy in danger of drowning. That night, a neighbor comes to praise Bertie's heroism, only embarrassing the boy, who is
further tormented by Lord Linley's cruel needling at a dinner party. Margaret, in an effort to soothe her brother, visits his room, finding him asleep: "she bent down and pressed her lips into his; they answered the kiss before he woke, and clung close and hung eagerly upon hers . . . " (p. 76). She sings a haunting, melancholy ballad, and Bertie, the artist, is overcome by his erotic, aesthetic feelings. Her beauty, reinforced by music recalls his formative experience with the sights and sounds of the ocean:

Her voice held the boy silent after she had done singing; the faint profound light in her eyes, fixed and withdrawn, touched him like music. . . . Kneeling with his face lifted to hers, he inhaled the hot fragrance of her face and neck, and trembled with intense and tender delight. Her perfume thrilled and stung him; he bent down and kissed her feet, reached up and kissed her throat.

"Oh! I should like you to tread me to death! darling!"

(p. 80)

Overwhelmed by her presence, Bertie assumes a worshipful, submissive posture and declares his masochistic subjugation to this ideal of beauty. Knowing his desires cannot be fully quenched, nevertheless, he quests for more sensation by asking that she let down her hair, that is, release her own sexuality and thereby heighten his own desire to an exquisite torment. Her hair tumbles down, metaphorically like a flood of uncontrollable water, once again linking
Margaret to Bertie's original obsession with the sea:

she loosened the fastenings, and it rushed downwards, a tempest and torrent of sudden tresses, heavy and tawny and riotous and radiant, over shoulders and arms and bosom; and under cover of the massive and luminous locks she drew up his face against her own and kissed him time after time with all her strength.

(p. 81)

This experience is as close as Bertie can come to his dream of obtaining the femme fatale. Rather than lose the ecstasy of the moment, Bertie would rather die at the feet of his sister-lover:

His whole spirit was moved with the passionate motion of his senses; he clung to her for a minute, and rose up throbbing from head to foot with violent love.

"I wish you would kill me some day; it would be jolly to feel you killing me. Not like it? Shouldn't I! You just hurt me and see."

(p. 81)

Swinburne then notes that "After that day's work Herbert became (in Lord Wariston's words) his sister's lapdog and lackey" (p. 83). The development from young boy excited by the ocean to an adolescent enslaved by a destructive, masochistic ideal of beauty is complete. When he departs for Eton, his aesthetic, erotic orientation is fixed; at Eton it will be sealed by the sadistic birching practices which are the school's custom. However, this separation of brother
and sister disrupts both lives, leaving them empty and
desolate, easy prey to the painful relationships they both
form later. Bertie, "like one torn alive out of life"
feels "sharp division and expulsion"; Margaret, too, feels
the void and can find "nowhere much comfort or interest in
her life" (pp. 84, 85). Unmoved by her husband, unfulfilled
by the roles of wife and mother, she fears "that she would
live out her time without colour in her life" (p. 85). App­
propriately, with Linley's prodding, she will eventually
turn to her other (half) brother Denham to supply the mis­
sing sensations. And to him, long a victim of her charms,
she will truly be a fatal woman. Several years later, during
their affair, he leaves her embrace and shoots himself.

Bertie continues at Eton, returning home for holi­
days; during one visit he meets Lesbia at the dinner party
where he is dressed as a girl. Before their relationship
intensifies, however, Bertie, the young androgyne, dreams
of a femme fatale. On the evening the dream occurs, Bertie
and his friend Lunsford have taken a moonlight ride to the
ocean; Bertie has called the sky "a leopard's skin of stars"
and has observed of the waves that "their breaking and
blossoming beauty betrayed their floral kind" (pp. 97, 96).
These natural objects, already somewhat transfigured by his
artist's perception, coalesce in his unconscious and reap­
pear in his dream:
He saw the star of Venus, white and flower-like as he had always seen it, turn into a white rose and come down out of heaven with a reddening centre that grew as it descended liker and liker a living mouth; but, instead of desire, he felt horror and sickness at the sight of it, and averted his lips with an effort to utter some prayer or exorcism, vainly, for the dreadful mouth only laughed, and came closer.

(p. 97)

In the dream female symbols projected from his unconscious reveal the futility and pain inherent in his pursuit. Unconsciously Bertie recognizes that his devotion to the vampire ideal is eventual destruction; he can neither exorcise his own demon nor escape the frightening submission demanded of him by the blatantly female image (Star, Venus, flower, mouth, genitalia). Furthermore, as the flower finally fades, he hears the sea in his dream as "a shrill threatening note without sense or pity" and awakens "with a sense of sterility and perplexity" (p. 97): "The torture of the dream was the fancy that these fairest things, sea and sky, star and flower, light and music, were all unfruitful and barren; absorbed in their own beauty; consummate in their own life" (p. 97). The dream imagery is a symbolic representation of the femme fatale—a sterile, self-contained symbol of art, autonomous in her beauty, and devastating in her demands. Bertie can only submit to the image and painfully pursue its fleshly incarnation, which, like the star and the flower,
will remain unmoved and, finally, unattainable. To Bertie, that which can be controlled and possessed is, by nature, not desirable, for its availability removes it from the realm of the ideal. What could be more fitting, then, than for Bertie to find his next ideal in Lesbia, a poet, who can never return his affection because she is a lesbian?

Before examining Lesbia and the implicit commentary that her suicide makes on the inhospitable Victorian climate toward art, one must look at the role Lord Linley plays in the novel. Not until late in the novel does Swinburne reveal the extent of his manipulation of the other characters. For he is the controlling Terrible Mother inverted; that is, rather than epitomizing Philistine morality and restraint, he represents libertinism, and encourages incest, adultery, and sensation. He, like Swinburne's typical Terrible Mother figures, attempts to destroy the artist's (Bertie's) devotion to an ideal; Linley exerts control not through restraint and morality, but through an appeal to indulgence and immorality. He tries to seduce Bertie away from Lesbia with a prostitute and a life of momentarily exciting, but ultimately deadening, experiences; he is the ancestor of Lord Henry in The Picture of Dorian Grey. Being a man does not prevent him from functioning as a Terrible Mother. Jung says that the archetype of the Terrible Mother can be represented "by the magician, a negative
father-figure, or by a masculine principle in the mother herself. . . ." He is surely a "negative father-figure," filled with malice and cruelty, who tries to impose his own degradation and disillusionment on Denham, Bertie, and Margaret.

Linley first appears at Ensdon for the dinner party which takes place on the day Bertie receives the severe whipping for rescuing a drowning neighbor. His looks suggest his character, for he resembles "a shaven satyr with the ears rounded; fair-skinned, with large reverted lips and repellent eyes" (p. 45). His face reveals "the seal of heavy sorrow and a fatal fatigue," suggesting the ennui his life has produced; and many people "abhorred him as a thing foul and dangerous" (p. 45). He is both. Attracted to Bertie's beauty, he refers to the boy's angelic look and determines to torture him, beginning with a cruel pinch on the chin. However, his forte is psychological cruelty and embarrassment:

The torturer had a little pack of questions ready . . . secure that one or two must always hurt. . . . The minutest forms of trivial tyranny, the poisonous pinpricks and wasp-stings of puerile cruelty, gave him some pleasure. . . .

(p. 66)

Aware of Bertie's recent flogging, he probes at this sensitive wound, advising Denham to continue to birch the boy:
"'I hope you don't spare him, Denham. It would be a sin to spare a boy like this'" (p. 67). The torment he inflicts on Bertie pleases him: "he seemed to inhale his [Bertie's] pain and shame like a fine and pungent essence; he laughed with pleasure as he saw how the words burnt and stung" (p. 67). Moreover, another member of the dinner party quotes one of Linley's remarks: "'One must face the misfortunes of virtue in this universe, my dear child, and put up with the prosperities of vice'" (p. 64). His commonplace is an amalgamation of the subtitles of de Sade's most famous works—Justine ou les Malheurs de la Vertu and Juliette ou les Prospérités du Vice—and an appropriate homily for the sadist he is.

For, as the novel progresses, Linley as a Terrible Mother figure emerges as a manipulator, far stronger than a tyrant of the dinner table and a tormentor of children. He skillfully assesses the weaknesses of his victims and tries to thrust them into the company of others who will corrupt them. For instance, only he knows the complicated consanguinary relationships among the younger characters, and he uses this knowledge to throw them together in the ways best suited to erode their stronger qualities and to bring their weaker ones to the surface. Furthermore, in so doing he acts partially out of personal vengeance: he punishes the children (Denham, Lesbia) of Margaret Brandon
because of his unrequited love for her, and he tortures Frederick Seyton's children (Denham, Margaret, and Bertie) because Frederick succeeded with Margaret. Bertie he particularly hates because Bertie reminds him of his own dead son whom he despised and abused in order to punish his wife, Margaret Brandon's sister. Linley asks Margaret Wariston if she sees the likeness of his dead son to her brother. Then, he explains to Denham how he exploited his family:

And I never cared for any one (that is, for more than half an hour) as I did for her [his wife's] sister. And when her sister was dead I set myself to torment her. There was nothing else left me. . . . She was curiously fond of her boy; I used to scourge her through him. . . . then [after the deaths of his wife and son], being alone in the world I sent for you. . . . You came . . . and stayed until I sent you down to Ensdon.

(p. 127)

This conversation serves two purposes: it fully reveals the incredible malignity of Linley's character, and it completes his goal of destroying Denham. Linley knows that Denham is now involved in a passionate affair with Margaret, and the revelation of incest leads to Denham's suicide, an act which simultaneously destroys the only solace and love Margaret has found since Bertie left Ensdon. Linley had, of course, subtly prodded Margaret into the affair earlier by offering her sanction for the liaison based on her beauty.

Linley is "an idle Iago" and "a satyr struck frigid
and grown vicious," a man who "took a childlike pleasure in the infliction of pain, but of pain at once acute and mental and durable" (pp. 118-19). Linley poses to Margaret a quasi-Sadian, aristocratic philosophy that excuses any action she might undertake, especially the one he knows her to be contemplating, an affair with Denham:

Beauty you see is an exception, and exception means rebellion against a rule, infringement of a law. That is why people who go in for beauty pure and plain—poets and painters . . . are all born aristocrats on the moral side. Nature . . . would grow nothing but turnips; only the force which fights her . . . now and then revolts, and the dull soil here and there rebels into a rose . . . . The comfort is that there will always be flowers after us to protest against the cabbage commonwealth and insult the republic of radishes.

(pp. 119-20)

This argument, is, of course, basically the same one which Swinburne has previously used to justify the acts of Fredegond, Lucretia, and Mary Stuart, and he was using it at approximately the same time in *Atalanta in Calydon* to sanction the rebellion of Meleager. In those works, however, he stresses the need for such a belief in order to create beauty in a hostile Philistine climate. Here Swinburne explores the dangers of the philosophy when it is promulgated by a villain who uses it to manipulate weaker, more susceptible individuals. In other words, Swinburne inverts the excessively moral Terrible Mother into the essentially
evil, depraved Linley who also enforces a code on others—a code of immorality. Margaret asks Linley, "Did you ever write moral essays?" He responds, "I thought of it once . . . but a friend suggested the addition of a syllable to the adjective, and of course I refrained" (p. 120). Lord Linley, then, represents the opposite of Philistine morality; he too preaches at and manipulates others, but not in an attempt to get them to conform to conventional mores. Instead, he is an ambassador of evil who tries to corrupt and degrade the younger characters. The debauched aesthete, he proselytizes for unchecked pursuit of sensation and vice—a path as rigid and dangerous for the artist as its opposite. His depiction exposes the dangers of over-reacting to excess against the Prudhommes; his path is the dark side of aestheticism which Swinburne himself deplored. As he says in his essay on Baudelaire, both extremes—that is, making art the handmaiden of either good or evil—are to be avoided: "It is not his [Baudelaire's] or any artist's business to warn against evil; but certainly he does not exhort to it, knowing well enough that the one fault is as great as the other."22 Hence, Lord Linley, the Terrible Mother transmogrified, is as destructive as any of his conventionally moral sisters.

He ultimately fails, however, in his attempts to seduce Bertie into his own fleshly pursuits, for Bertie, unlike his siblings Denham and Margaret, is sustained by
his own artistic vision. That ideal, focused now on Lesbia, is destructive enough, and Linley, to be sure, helped to focus it years earlier when he introduced Bertie and Lesbia. However, when Bertie is a young man, Linley—disillusioned, dissipated himself—wants to crush Bertie's vision and to lead Bertie into a life of physical sensation and debauchery. He stages his plan carefully, selecting a woman who "could not but purge the young fellow's head of puerile fumes and fancies" (p. 104). Born Susan Farmer, beautiful, coarse, and stupid, she exists, as Linley says, "Above the street, below the boudoir" (p. 103). He renames her Miss Leonora Vane Harley, with a sly pun, and prides himself on his creation: "Mr. Linley was always happy to insinuate that he first had taught her a new name and a new trade" (p. 103). Linley invites Bertie to dine with him and Leonora, but she "repelled him" (p. 117). When she kisses him rapaciously, making her availability blatant, he, the devotee of the unattainable, unpossessable femme fatale, is disgusted. The image of Lesbia rises before him, and Linley's plan fails:

A face unlike hers [Leonora's] rose between her eyes and his; with close melancholy lips . . . with sombre and luminous eyes . . . with large bright brows, and chin and neck too sensitive and expressive to be flexible as these before him. This face, he thought . . . would bend and expand to any man as to him. (p. 117)
Bertie departs to pursue his vision of Lesbia, an impossible pursuit, doomed to fail, but a dream which arms him against Linley's latest trap. Margaret and Denham are easier victims for the Terrible Mother's manipulation than Bertie, for he is already under the sway of Lesbia.

Years before Bertie ever meets Lesbia, her father, Lord Charles Brandon, comes to dinner at Ensdon. Margaret, telling her brother about the invited guests, mentions in passing that Brandon has a dark daughter, slightly older than Bertie, who writes poetry. Jokingly, she says with unconscious irony, "I foresee that Lesbia Brandon is your fate" (p. 44). Of course, this prediction comes to pass. His interest is piqued that evening when he learns that she is an accomplished poet in both Latin and English. Bertie, however, is too young to understand the implications of the discussion of the content of her poems:

I suppose she writes about the natural sort of thing for verses; lovers; she always takes the man's part. . . . Lady Midhurst said a little thing of hers about a fellow looking at a nun and thinking you know by Jove what an infernal shame it was one couldn't get at her through the grate--said it was splendid, and she would be the real modern Sappho. . . .

(p. 54)

There are other clues to Lesbia's sexual preference as well; she was, apparently, in love with her governess, and Brandon describes her as "half male," and adds: "she wanted all her
life to be a boy" (pp. 53, 54). A few years later, they
meet at Ensdon with Bertie masquerading as a girl. Lesbia,
naturally, exerts far more charm than she would otherwise
have done had she been aware of his true sex, because Ber­
tie's androgynous nature makes the disguise succeed. During
this scene, Bertie's ideal of beauty begins to adapt itself
to the image of Lesbia, and the transference is easy to
understand. Her darkness balances his golden coloring; her
masculinity, his femininity. He has a strong desire to
fuse these oppositions into a unity, but it is a dream that
will forever elude him. He is struck by her appearance,
which includes the paleness of the femme fatale:

Miss Brandon was dark and delicately
shaped . . . she had thick and heavy
hair . . . so brown that it seemed black
in the shadow. . . . Her cheeks had the
profound pallor of complexions at once
dark and colourless. . . . apart from
whatever it might have of beauty, the
face was one to attract rather than
satisfy.

(p. 89)

And attract him it does. Having learned his aesthetic-
erotic responses from his experiences with the sea and Mar­
garet, Bertie is ready to respond to Lesbia. When she
presses his cheeks between her hands, "he looked at her with
wide shining eyes from which the light of laughter had
vanished and melted into eager and dubious passion" (p. 90).
The transference of passion to Lesbia continues when she
speaks to him of her poetry. Susceptible to the music of
the ocean, he responds now to the sound of her words: "Her
voice was like a kiss as she said this, the boy thought:
remembering the only kisses he knew, his sister's" (p. 90).
Shortly thereafter, Bertie has his dream, crystallizing his
devotion to the unattainable woman, to the autonomy of
beauty and art.

For Lesbia is both poet and femme fatale in her ef­
fect on Bertie. She loves Margaret whom she can never
possess, and Bertie devotes himself to Lesbia, who will
never feel desire for a man. In the next scene between
them, when he is twenty-four, he declares his love for her,
and she explains that she can never marry him or return his
passion as he desires. Scattered throughout this chapter
are detailed descriptions and bits of conversation that
delineate a classic study of an encounter between the maso­
chistic male and his femme fatale. Bertie tells her:

if you liked, if you thought it would
amuse you, I would go right over the
cliff there and thank God. I should
like to have a chance of pleasing you,
making a minute's difference to you.

(p. 99)

In turn, she explains that although she can love him as a
friend, she can never consider lovemaking or returning his
passion; she pities him but, like the femme fatale, is "all
but incapable of tears" (p. 100). Bertie longs "to beat
his face upon the ground at her feet" and suffers torment at her rejection: "Lesbia was so wholly ignorant of man's love as not to feel herself cruel, and he loved her too much to show that he did: but his heart was wrung and stung meantime by small tortures" (pp. 100-101). This talk has occurred on the downs at Ensdon, and as they near the house Lesbia remarks that they are near home. And the chapter ends: "For they had been on foot and homeward again, without thinking of it, longer than they knew" (p. 102). The implication is that both adults are now predestined to be locked into their own personal infernos. Psychologically subjugated to Lesbia, Bertie will remain devoted to her and tormented by his love until she dies. Lesbia, prototype of the artist, lives in her own hell. Existing in a society which neither accepts nor understands her lesbianism, she seeks self-destruction through the oblivion of drugs.

The paths they have followed are revealed in "Leucadia," the chapter describing Lesbia's death scene, named after the island where Sappho leaped to her death. Lesbia, about to die, sends for Bertie. Bertie, having successfully rejected Linley's temptation of Leonora, has nonetheless lapsed into a state of dejection and inactivity close to ennui; he has overindulged in champagne and a mindless social life since his desire for Lesbia has remained unfulfilled. The sight that greets him in Lesbia's curtained chamber is
lurid, with a strong flavor of moral decay and a dash of necrophilia:

She had killed herself off by inches, with the help of eau-de-Cologne and doses of opium. . . . Along her sofa . . . lay or leant a woman like a ghost; the living corpse of Lesbia. . . . Her beauty of form was unimpaired. . . . She looked like one . . . whose life had been long sapped and undermined by some quiet fiery poison.

(p. 158)

In spite of the funereal atmosphere and her personal decay, Bertie still feels his attraction to her, "which shot heat into his veins instead of the chill and heaviness of terror or grief" (p. 158). But she remains unattainable, requiring of him the final cruelty: he must listen to her speak of love for Margaret and then remain with her until she dies. It is clear that she pursues death as a surcease from pain, as an end of unpleasant sensation and alienation. She describes an opium dream of an afterworld populated solely by women and poppies and presided over by a Proserpine with Margaret's face. The femme fatale even excludes Bertie from her paradise, a place as she says, with "no men there, and no children" (p. 162). The smells of flowers and drugs mingle in the garish light with "red and yellow colours as of blood and fog" (p. 165). The scene is the culmination of the flower imagery which Swinburne uses throughout the novel to suggest Bertie's fascination with the femme fatale--
ocean, sister, or Lesbia. And here, among the odors of floral essences—cologne and opium—Bertie's fatal woman dies in the lamplight, the sun blocked out by the heavy drapes. The room is appropriately lit by artificial light; for without it Bertie's symbol of beauty, his artifice, perishes. Lesbia, driven to suicide by a hostile Victorian environment, dies a poet alienated and rejected by her society. Bertie remains alive, but doomed to a meaningless existence. His desire to merge with the incarnation of his vision, of course, remains unfulfilled. Swinburne remarks: "As for him, I cannot say what he has done, or will do, but I should think, nothing" (p. 168).

Bereft of his artistic vision, a masochistic lover without a mistress to torment him, Bertie literally can do nothing. There is no longer a quest to pursue, no longer a femme fatale to supply the exquisite medley of pleasure and pain he has always sought. So Bertie, too, is spiritually and artistically dead; the fire, the imagery, the color, and passion—the energy he has generated from his devotion to femmes fatales over the years—vanish. By sustaining his vision of Lesbia, Bertie avoids the evil preached by Linley; then, ironically the hostile, rigid heterosexuality of Philistia denies him her presence.

This conclusion—fragmentary though it is since the novel remains incomplete—is bleak, fatalistic, and
psychologically inevitable. The comedic ending of *A Year's Letters*, ruled by the smug success of Lady Midhurst's connivings, stands in sharp contrast to the emptiness at the close of *Lesbia Brandon*. Moreover, the light touch of the earlier novel will not reappear in *Poems and Ballads*, nor in *Atalanta in Calydon*, works in progress during the composition of *Lesbia Brandon*. Swinburne does continue in these poetic works, however, to manipulate his three basic archetypes—the *femme fatale*, the Terrible Mother, and the androgyne—to examine the erotic-aesthetic quest of the artist torn between his own destructive ideal of beauty and the expectations of a public of Prudhommes.
NOTES


2 Ibid., 52-53.

3 "Théophile" remained unpublished until the Bonchurch edition in 1926.


5 The Complete Works, XV. Prose Works, V, pp. 401-402. All citations from the essay are to this volume.

6 New Writings by Swinburne, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1964), p. 99. All citations from the essay are to this volume.

7 A. C. Swinburne, Lesbia Brandon, ed. Randolph Hughes (London: The Falcon Press, 1952), p. 172. All citations to "Reginald Harewood" and to Lesbia Brandon are to this text.

8 A. C. Swinburne, A Year's Letters, ed. Francis Jacques Sypher (New York: New York University Press, 1974), p. 3. All citations from the novel are to this text.


20. Ibid., p. 54.


CHAPTER IV

POEMS AND BALLADS, FIRST SERIES

AND ATALANTA IN CALYDON

The decade of the 1860's was Swinburne's most productive, creative period. In addition to his two novels, he wrote an original and seminal study of William Blake, as well as other critical essays. He composed Atalanta in Calydon, Poems and Ballads, and the poems in Songs before Sunrise. In fact, while he was actually writing Lesbia Brandon, he also completed Atalanta, William Blake, and the lyrics that constitute Poems and Ballads, First Series. Not surprisingly, the ideas he expresses in Blake appear in his poetry and provide an aesthetic and intellectual underpinning for the verse, particularly for the theology voiced in the choruses of Atalanta and echoed in "Anactoria." Moreover, Swinburne's use of female figures evolves during this period as his own intellectual interests broaden. His recurring triad, Terrible Mother-androgyne-femme fatale, emblematic of his aesthetic concerns, culminates in Atalanta, where it reaches its clearest, most dramatic form. After Atalanta, in the mother archetypes of Poems and Ballads,
Swinburne slowly moves away from the rapacious, murderous Terrible Mother toward the more ambivalent figure of the Great Mother. This archetype, reaching its apotheosis in "Hertha," dominates Songs before Sunrise.

William Blake is Swinburne's primary statement of his aestheticism and his explicit defense of art for art's sake with its corollary, disdain for Philistia. However, there are additional ideas expressed and images examined in Blake which illuminate Swinburne's thinking and, hence, his own poetry. For the essay not only analyzes Blake's work; it also contains an attack on theism which is based on the ideas of de Sade. However, before we examine this attack, it is enlightening to observe his comments on Blake's use of female characters. According to Swinburne, Blake believed "that the extremest fullness of indulgence in such desire and such delight as the senses can aim at or attain was absolutely good, eternally just, and universally requisite." The sentiment here is the theme of Tebaldeo's "Treatise," and just as Swinburne embodied it in the person of Lucretia, he sees Blake using female figures to present ideas. He remarks that it was Blake's "custom of getting whole classes of men or opinions embodied, for purposes of swift irregular attack, in some one representative individual" (p. 101), and his reading of the Visions of the Daughters of Albion reveals that he sees Blake using female
figures to express both freedom and restraint, even as he had been doing for years with the archetypes of the *femme fatale* and the Terrible Mother.

Swinburne observes that "The perfect woman, Oothoon, is one with the spirit of the great western world; born for rebellion and freedom, but half a slave yet, and half a harlot" (p. 228), and he adds:

That is, woman has become subject to oppression of customs; suffers violence at the hands of the marriage laws. . . . "Emancipation" . . . never had a more violent and vehement preacher. Not love, not the plucking of the flower, but error, fear, submission to custom and law, is that which "defiles" a woman in the sight of our prophet.

(p. 228)

And, he might have added, in his own eyes. Needless to say, the very qualities which Mrs. Ellis wished to inculcate in her readers, which Ruskin praised in his prose, and which Patmore prescribed, Swinburne despises. Woman is not ennobled in his eyes by serving as the guardian of domestic virtue, by elevating the fleshly passion of her husband into reverential worship. Rather, she is "defiled" by these forces of restraint and restriction which warp her natural, sensual instincts. These ideas are more fully developed when Swinburne interprets Blake's *Leutha* and *Europe*:
Leutha is the spirit emblematic of physical pleasure, of sensual impulse and indulgence. But crossing the sea eastward to find her lover, the strong enslaved spirit of Europe, she, type of womanhood and freedom, is caught and chained as he by the force of conventional error and tyrannous habit, which makes her seem impure in his eyes; so they sit bound back to back, afraid to love; the eagles that tear her flesh are emblems of her lover's scorn; vainly, a virgin at heart, she appeals to all the fair and fearless face of nature against her rival, the prurient modesty of custom, a virgin in face, a harlot at heart; against unnatural laws of restraint upon youths and maidens... the tyranny of times and laws, is heavy upon them to the end.

(p. 229n)

In this scene, Swinburne obviously finds a situation and characters similar to ones he has used himself—a woman of passion and sexuality opposed by constricting conventions and mores. Here, her lover, unable to fight the forces himself—as Swinburne's male lovers try to do—is brainwashed and chained by his own acceptance of these "unnatural laws," and his love, consequently, is deformed and warped by the accepted morality, by the "prurient modesty of custom." The hostility of custom toward Leutha and the freedom inherent in her destroys Europe's own ability to accept and love her. In order to sustain his love, Swinburne implies, Europe must free himself from the dictates of convention and rebel against their tyranny without concern for the opinions of others.
The implication, naturally, is that the artist, creating in a hostile environment, must rebel as well, lest he find himself and his art deformed by custom. He cannot expect approval or understanding from an insensitive, moralistic public "because the sacramental elements of art and poetry are in no wise given for the sustenance of the salvation of men in general, but reserved mainly for the sublime profit and intense pleasure of an elect body" (p. 36). The underlying metaphor here suggests that art is a religion whose worshippers are distinguished by aesthetic sensitivities which set them apart from hoi polloi. Attempting to reach those unendowed with this sensibility and trying to echo commonly held beliefs blaspheme the religion of art and degrade the artist:

Those who try to clip or melt themselves down to the standard of current feeling, to sauce and spice their natural fruits of mind with such condiments as may take the palate of common opinion, deserve to disgust themselves and others alike. (p. 206)

Restraint and custom are, to Swinburne and Blake alike, evils to be overcome:

This is Blake's ultimate conception of active evil; not wilful wrong-doing by force of arm or of spirit; but mild error . . . embodies in an external law of moral action and restrictive faith, and clothed with a covering of cruelty
which adheres to and grows into it.
(p. 263)

To rebel against this "active evil" becomes an aesthetic necessity to Swinburne, and he finds justification for his rebellion in the works of de Sade. Swinburne labels the required rebellion "holy insurrection" and explains it as a necessary heresy:

The belief in "holy insurrection" must be almost as old as the oldest religions or philosophies afloat or articulate. . . . Earlier heretics than the author of Jerusalem have taken this to be the radical significance of Christianity; a divine revolt against divine law; an evidence that man must become as God only by resistance to God . . . that if Prometheus cannot, Zeus will not deliver us: and that man, if saved at all, must indeed be saved . . . by ardour of rebellion and strenuous battle against the God of nature: who as of old must yet feed upon his children. . . .
(p. 154)

He buttresses this argument in a long footnote that he describes as a "paraphrase" of a "lay sermon by a modern pagan philosopher" (p. 158). Georges Lafourcade cites the passages from Justine, which Swinburne condensed and translated, and he remarks that the poet could not resist the temptation to develop "la doctrine bien différente de la souffrance, du meurtre et de la destruction considérés comme lois universelles de la nature."3

Indeed, Swinburne vividly repeats de Sade's theories
of a universe governed by cruelty and pain:

Nature averse to crime? I tell you nature lives and breathes by it; hungers at all her pores for bloodshed, aches in all her nerves for the help of sin, yearns with all her heart for the furtherance of cruelty. . . . Good friend, it is by criminal things and deeds unnatural that nature works and moves and has her being; what subsides through inert virtue, she quickens through active crime; out of death she kindles life; she uses the dust of men to strike her light upon; she feeds with fresh blood the innumerable insatiable mouths suckled at her milkless breast; she takes the pain of the whole world to sharpen the sense of vital pleasure in her limitless veins. . . .

(p. 158)

The implications, which de Sade worked out in Justine and Juliette, are clear. The gods who visit these universal principles upon nature have no sympathy for man. Man, by conforming to these laws, embraces evil and, hence, becomes either sadistic himself in emulation of the natural pattern or masochistic, if he turns the destructive impulses inward. Should he, like Justine, pursue the Christian virtues, he becomes an obliging victim. The only other option, the one Swinburne explores in Atalanta, is to revolt, to choose "holy insurrection," and thereby deny this evil god. In order to rebel, one must create his own ideal or vision and find a source of values within the self. This idea Swinburne transmutes into the terms of an aesthetic philosophy.
For a god, one substitutes beauty and worships the ideal of beauty, or its embodiment, which emanates from his own aesthetic perceptions. To Swinburne, this theory naturally includes rebellion against the demand that literature be submissive to moral and religious codes, a belief he repeatedly voices in Blake.

The artist, then, must free himself from restrictive dogmas so that any theistic creed becomes a stultifying prison: "Rational deism and clerical religion were to him [Blake] two equally abhorrent incarnations of the same evil spirit, appearing now as negation and now as restriction" (p. 189). Swinburne is expressing his own beliefs here and throughout the essay where he continually opposes theism to what he considered to be Blake's religion—pantheism. The laudatory core of pantheism to Swinburne is its insistence on man's own divinity and freedom. Speaking of Blake, he sounds a note that will reverberate through Songs before Sunrise: "'God is no more than man; because man is no less than God:' there is Blake's Pantheistic Iliad in a nutshell" (p. 166n). Theism does not allow man unfettered choice; it denies him freedom and demands his obedience to self-denying codes. To practice theism in any religious paradigm is to limit freedom and to chain creative expression to approved dogma: "Theism is not expansive, but exclusive: and the creeds begotten or misbegotten on this lean
body of belief are 'Satanic' in the eyes of a Pantheist, as his faith is in the eyes of their followers" (p. 226). Thus, Swinburne places himself and Blake on the side of the angels and paints Theists as worshippers of de Sade's evil divinity. Having formulated and articulated these ideas in *Blake*, Swinburne expresses them forcefully in *Atalanta in Calydon* through the chorus and, more imaginatively, dramatizes them in the interaction of Althaea, Meleager, and Atalanta—the Terrible Mother, the artist-androgyne, and the *femme fatale*.

Unlike many of Swinburne's works, *Atalanta* can be precisely dated on the basis of a letter he wrote to Lady Trevelyan on March 15, 1865:

> I think it [Atalanta] is the best executed and sustained of my larger poems. It was begun last autumn twelvemonth, when we were all freshly unhappy [after the death of his sister], and finished just after I got the news in September last, of Mr. Landor's death. . . .

Thus, Swinburne worked on the poem intermittently from the fall of 1863 to September 1864, during the same time that he was writing *Blake*. In another letter, to Lord Houghton, he admits that the philosophy underlying the poem is de Sade's, the same views apparent in the critical essay:

> I only regret that in attacking my Antitheism you have wilfully misrepresented
its source. I should have bowed to the judicial sentence if instead of "Byron with a difference" you had said "de Sade with a difference." The poet, thinker, and man of the world from whom the theology of my poem is derived was a greater than Byron. He indeed, fatalist or not, saw to the bottom of gods and men.5

There is, then, in Atalanta a conscious effort to develop his ideas dramatically, to attack theism—a faith that was diametrically opposed to his own humanistic beliefs and aesthetic concerns. Furthermore, it is doubly appropriate that he use his triad of archetypes to express the conflict: first, for years he had been experimenting with and repeating the characters in his own works; second, he found support for his use of females in the writing of Blake and de Sade.6 The result is a drama whose music reinforces its meaning, a play that demonstrates both the necessity and the tragedy of "holy insurrection."

In his play Swinburne retells the myth of Althaea, her son Meleager, and Atalanta. Althaea, the wife of King Oeneus of Calydon, controls her son's destiny, for when he was a week old the Fates had appeared to Althaea and had thrown a log into her bedroom fire. They told her Meleager could live only as long as the brand remained unburned, whereupon she pulled it from the fire and hid it. Years later Artemis, enraged because Oeneus had forgotten her when he sacrificed to the gods at harvest time, sent a
boar to ravage Calydon. Oeneus then organized a hunt of Greek heroes to kill the boar, and Atalanta, a skilled huntress, joined them. Meleager fell in love with her at first sight. On the hunt, she wounded the boar first, and after its death Meleager offered her its hide. His maternal uncles were furious, and they tried to prevent this gift. Infuriated at their insult to Atalanta, Meleager killed them. Thus, Althaea had to decide whether or not she should kill Meleager and avenge her brothers' murders. Jealous of her son's love for Atalanta, she hurled the brand into the fire. When it was consumed, Meleager was dead.

Atalanta has attracted more critical attention and praise than any of Swinburne's other works, probably because of its quality and because it lacks the overt sado-masochism of so much of his other writing. John O. Jordan has examined the drama by analyzing Althaea, in part, as a Terrible Mother; Ian Fletcher has briefly suggested that Meleager is a rather feminine aesthete; and Richard Mathews has argued that Atalanta is an anima projection to Meleager. However, neither they nor other commentators have put these three ideas together and viewed the poem as an examination of the aesthetic quest. In order to do so, it is necessary to examine not only these three figures but also the chorus and Althaea's brothers, Toxeus and Plexippus. The latter two voice harsher, coarser versions of their sister's views;
and the former, the theology of the poem. In addition, the chorus integrates patterns of imagery that underscore the opposing forces in the play. However, the central figure is Althaea, for the tragedy revolves around the tragic choice that is forced upon her: to save her son or to avenge her brothers.

Or so the choice appears at first. Swinburne certainly utilizes the Greek idea that blood which is commonly shared is the strongest bond, a belief at the core of Antigone. But if one looks closely at Althaea—her motivations and manipulations—it becomes apparent that she is saving her son for herself by killing him. If Meleager lives, he is lost to her, for he has abandoned duty—familial, religious, and dynastic—in his pursuit of Atalanta. Rather than lose him in this fashion, to another woman who is her antithesis, Althaea will toss the brand into the consuming fire and figuratively devour her own son. John O. Jordan observes that "Her real motive is a devouring jealousy." And he explains:

By extinguishing the brand and hiding it close by her in a secret place, she endeavors to preserve his love for herself alone; so long as the brand lies safely with his mother, concealed as it were within her protective womb, and so long as he does not burn with love for any other woman, Meleager is assured of great strength and good fortune.
Indeed, Swinburne has consciously reshaped the myth in order to place the queen at its center. Whereas Ovid does not bring Althaea into the story until after the brothers are dead, Swinburne introduces her at the opening of the drama. He also eliminates any reference (found in both Homer and Ovid) to Meleager's wife, this making the prince more youthful and insuring that Atalanta is the first threat to Althaea's control over his life. Ian Fletcher observes:

Swinburne was fascinated by matriarchal, aristocratic figures subtly controlling their families. Althaea is a tragic version of the ruthless anti-romantic Lady Midhurst of Love's Cross-Currents. 10

She is also a descendant of the Queen Mother. Furthermore, she uses the same type of insidious psychological manipulation through language and emotional blackmail that both Catherine and Lady Midhurst employ in their machinations. However, Swinburne, more firmly in command of his material, develops Althaea's character more subtly. Her long dialogue with Meleager deserves close attention, but first one must examine her as the guardian of memory and representation of fecundity. For through remembrance she clings to her son, and through her own fertility she feels most threatened by the sterile Atalanta.

The famous, often anthologized first speech of the chorus praises Artemis and emphasizes the dynamism, power,
and process of nature. The chorus begins, "When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces"; spring returns, streams fill, grasses ripen: "And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,/ And in green underwood and cover/ Blossom by blossom the spring begins." This description heralds Althaea's entrance, but she is less than pleased by the praise for Artemis, and the references to burgeoning fecundity prompt her to remind the chorus that the boar is after all devastating the growing crops and herds: "First Artemis . . . I praise not" (11. 163-64). The tusks and hooves of the boar are destroying "Green pasturage and the grace of standing corn/ And meadow and marsh . . . / Flocks and swift herds . . ." (11. 166-68). But to Althaea the curse of the boar pales into insignificance compared to Atalanta, a greater threat which Artemis has sent: "Love, a thwart sea-wind full of rain and foam" (1. 184). She elaborates on her remark:

Love is one thing, an evil thing, and turns Choice words and wisdom into fire and air. And in the end shall no joy come, but grief, Sharp words and soul's division and fresh tears. . . . (11. 209-12)

These comments require elaboration, for Swinburne introduces images and ideas in this exchange which he expands throughout the play. Artemis, Atalanta, erotic love, and sterility compose a constellation in the poem which opposes
Althaea, generation, duty, and family. The motif of erotic love as a "sea-wind of rain and foam," reminiscent of Aphrodite's birth, will be reiterated by the chorus and Meleager. It is the type of love Althaea attacks as leading to "Sharp words and soul's division" because this particular love--Meleager's for Atalanta--not only is directed outward, away from the family, but also is sterile from its inception. Atalanta, dedicated to the virgin Artemis, has pledged never to marry or bear children. Hence, Althaea's dream for her son to rule Calydon and continue the family dominance will be doomed. Moreover, Atalanta's choice is, to Althaea, a direct refutation of the queen's own life, which has been the approved Victorian course of dutiful wife and mother. Thus, Meleager's pursuit of his ideal, Atalanta, is an especially painful and threatening rejection to Althaea on the human level of the drama. On the figurative, symbolic level, it is, of course, a choice for beauty over duty, for adventure and sensation over convention and custom.

Althaea, however, clings to Meleager; she has yet to concede victory to her enemy, and she holds her son through memory, just as she later justifies murdering him by remembering childhood experiences with her brothers. Recalling his birth and her pulling the brand from the fire, she remembers Meleager as "most piteous" and calls him "a
tenderer thing/ Than any flower of fleshly seed alive"
(ll. 256-57). She uses memory to recreate the past and to
reaffirm his dependency upon her: "Yet was he then but a
span long, and moaned/ With inarticulate mouth inseparate
words,/ And with blind lips and fingers wrung my breast . . . ."
(ll. 272-74). The memory revalidates her role as nurturer;
she speaks with renewed confidence that she can still ful-
fill Meleager's needs: "I go hence/ Full of mine own soul,
perfect of myself,/ Toward mine and me sufficient" (ll.
306-308). Thus, she is strengthened for the conversation
that follows, a dialogue that reminds the reader of the
scene in The Queen Mother where Catherine masterfully mani-
pulates Charles.

Here, however, the results differ. Althaea, like
Catherine and like Lady Midhurst in her letters, pushes
various psychological buttons in an attempt to destroy
Meleager's love for Atalanta. But every appeal fails, and
destruction ensues. Concerning Althaea, Jordan points out
that "To achieve the desired end neither Althaea nor Lady
Midhurst hesitates to use her power over language in order
to persuade, cajole, intimidate, or flatter her listeners."12
In this case, Althaea appeals to "the law," implying that
Meleager's quest is both blasphemous and unnatural. She
also paints a domestic scene of long, honorable life and
afterlife which she represents and he disdains; then she
resorts to the guilt-inducing argument of the mother-martyr. Her appeal to the law begins with a categorical imperative: "Love thou the law and cleave to things ordained" (l. 454). She expands this order and elaborates it by linking it to familial and procreative responsibilities and by underscoring it with a warning of Atalanta as a fatal woman. The polarization of values which the play dramatizes is explicit in her speech:

Child, if a man serve law through all his life
And with his whole heart worship, him all gods
Praise . . .

So shall he prosper; not through laws torn up,
Violated rule and a new face of things.
A woman armed makes war upon herself,
Unwomanlike, and treads down use and wont
And the sweet common honour that she hath,
Love, and the cry of children, and the hand
Trothplight and mutual mouth of marriages.
This doth she, being unloved; whom if one love,
Not fire nor iron and the wide-mouthed wars
Are deadlier than her lips or braided hair.
For of the one comes poison, and a curse
Falls from the other and burns the lives of men.
But thou, son, be not filled with evil dreams,
Nor with desire of these things; for with time
Blind love burns out. . . .

(ll. 466-68, 475-78)

In the first place, her words are a bit hypocritical since earlier she has expressed distrust of the gods, but she persuasively argues that Meleager should follow the apparently divine plan of marriage and children. C. M. Bowra has said that the law she advocates "is not so much moral law as embodied use and wont, established habit and respected
Ian Fletcher, too, sums up her philosophy: "One must be wary, attempt to sustain patterns of civility, kingdom and family, our only refuge in a cruel world: the Victorian parallels are clear. She belongs with those who practice restraint and distrust nature." Althaea's jealousy of Atalanta is also evident, and the queen proceeds with her strategy, which emphasizes the long and honored domesticity of Meleager's life without Atalanta, a conservative plan which recalls the life which Tennyson has Telemachus choose, the kind that his Ulysses rejects in order to pursue a dream of adventure and experience. Althaea's description, too, stresses order, devotion to country, family, and concern for the opinions of others, the last a notion that Swinburne disdains in Blake. To Althaea it is anathema for her son to love a manly woman who will never devote herself to husband and children.

When these arguments do not prevail, she uses the sharpest weapons of a mother—sentimental memory and guilt, hoping to shame Meleager into obeisance: "I pray thee that thou slay me not with thee./ For there was never a mother woman-born/ Loved her sons better" (ll. 657-59). After the reminder of her maternal love, she tells Meleager that she still sees him as "a child and weak,/ Mine, a delight to no man, sweet to me" (ll. 669-70). The admission is revealing, for it shows that Althaea, the Terrible Mother,
cannot relinquish control of Meleager because she stubbornly clings to the image of him as a dependent infant, whose every need she can satisfy. Her cool, intellectual appeals dissolve; her self-control vanishes, and she resorts to unequivocal emotional blackmail, suggesting that he will destroy his own mother if he pursues his dream:

What dost thou,
Following strange loves? Why wilt thou kill mine heart?
Lo, I talk wild and windy words, and fall
From my clear wits, and seem of mine own self
Dethroned, dispraised, disseated; and my mind
That was my crown, breaks, and mine heart is gone. . . .

(ll. 693-97)

The three alliterative past participles she uses to describe her feelings underscore her archetypal character; she has been "dethroned," "dispraised," and "disseated" as the most important woman in her son's life--she no longer rules his heart and actions.

This self-revelation continues in Althaea's last speeches--after the messenger has informed her of her brothers' deaths at the hands of her son. For Meleager to murder them--extensions of her--is the irrefutable proof that he is lost to her. The civilized, queenly facade--cracked in the earlier speech--splits asunder, revealing the dark monstrosity of the devouring mother. Having fired the brand and sentenced her son to certain death, she speaks
to the chorus:

Thou, old earth
That has made man and unmade; thou whose mouth
Looks red from the eaten fruits of thine own womb;
Behold me with what lips upon what food
I feed and fill my body; even with flesh
Made of my body.

(11. 1866-71)

The unpleasant, powerful imagery of maternal cannibalism bespeaks her own pain. Unable to control the adult child, she figuratively returns him to the womb of earth and death rather than allow him to achieve selfhood and independence. The nurturer becomes the destroyer:

Delicately I fed thee . . .
My name that was a healing, it is changed
My name is a consuming.

(11. 1936, 1944-45)

However, she too is destroyed, because the center of her life is dying; she feeds for the last time in consuming her son: "My lips shall not unfasten till I die" (1. 1947). Like Iago, she becomes silent until the end of the play.

The aesthetic implications of Althaea's restriction and restraint can be more fully explored by examining her brothers, Atalanta, Meleager's responses to his mother, and the role of the chorus.

In short, Toxeus and Plexippus are Philistines, offensive boors, intolerant, opinionated, and coarse.
Aggressive and militant, they mock Meleager's love and suggest that he is weak-voiced and unmanly. Plexippus taunts his nephew: "a man grown girl/ Is worth a woman weaponed" (ll. 921-22). Unable to appreciate Atalanta as a pure symbol of beauty, the brothers insist a virgin is of no use: "Except she give her blood before the gods,/ What profit shall a maid be among men?" (ll. 932-33). The use of "profit," a subject complement moved from its usual position in the sentence, thus stressed, accentuates the materialistic, acquisitive spirit of the pair, who have no use for ideals. In addition, Plexippus reiterates, in a cruder fashion, Althaea's argument that to love Atalanta is unnatural, a violation of natural order:

shall she live
A flower-bud of the flower-bed, or sweet fruit
For kisses and honey-making mouth,
And play the shield for strong men and the spear?
Then shall the heifer and her mate lock horns,
And the bride overbear the groom, and men
Gods; for no less division sunder these. . . .
(ll. 937-42)

The implication is clear: a woman who is willing to be a sacrifice neither to the gods nor to a husband and family is aberrant. Her existence threatens the social order and the harmony of the family. Toxeus and Plexippus emerge as Philistine tentacles of Althaea, and Erich Neumann notes that the Terrible Mother can be extended in this manner: "the matriarchal stratum . . . can appear in male form; for
example, as a mother's brother, who represents the authority and punishment complex of matriarchal society. . . ."15

Thomas L. Wymer discusses the possibility of the brothers' connection to Swinburne's Victorian enemies:

The brothers are not, of course, allegorical symbols of literary critics, but there are some prophetic correspondences between their attack on Meleager's language and some critics' later attacks on both Swinburne and Rossetti. More important is the fact that they are representative of a broader Victorian spirit, not, of course, the Victorian spirit, but the naively conservative one. They are typical of the worst of the Philistines who reacted violently and angrily against any public deviation from moral norms, especially sexual ones, many of which were based on appeals to the natural order but had no real basis other than use and wont.16

Crass and vulgar, the brothers reinforce Althaea and denigrate Atalanta and Meleager. Beauty is not a sufficient excuse for being to them. They demand usefulness, profit, and obedience to convention.

Atalanta, however, is oblivious to their narrow-minded expectations and unresponsive to Meleager's passion. An "alien" in Calydon, she has sublimated her own erotic impulses in order to pursue "higher thought." The chorus observes that though she "hath no touch of love,"

She is holier than all holy days or things . . . Chaste, dedicated to pure prayers, and filled With higher thoughts than heaven; a maiden clean,
Pure iron, fashioned for a sword; and man
She love not; what should one do with love?
(11. 195-200)

The question is rhetorical, for she obviously has no need for human ties. Like Swinburne's concept of art, she is purged, purified, of any dross. She, an ideal of beauty for Meleager, has made her own life an aesthetic devotion to the ideal of the chaste goddess Artemis, and she understands what she must delete from her life in order to remain "pure":

I shall have no man's love
For ever, and no face of children born
Or feeding lips upon me or fastening eyes
• • •
but a cold and sacred life, but strange,
But far off from dances and the back-blowing torch,
Far off from flowers or any bed of man
Shall my life be for ever . . .
• • •
So might I show before her perfect eyes
Pure, whom I follow, a maiden to my death.
(11. 967-69, 972-75, 990-91)

The speech is clearly contrary to Althaea's values; Atalanta will have no child's lips clinging to her breast, no husband, no family. Her endeavor is to create a sterile--pure and barren--life, cold and self-contained like Keats's urn, a "Cold Pastoral"--inhuman. She will surrender her independence to no one; instead, virginal and isolated, she does not fit into the society of Calydon, and her otherness
alarms those who do by posing an implicit threat to their values. As Swinburne says in *Notes on Poems and Reviews*, "Ideal beauty, like ideal genius, dwells apart, as though by compulsion; supremacy is solitude." Atalanta exhibits the antisocial autonomy of an artifact; for she, like Swinburne's concept of art, must exist outside the strictures of morality, of societal codes and mores. Understandably, her presence is subversive and threatening to the Philistines. But it gives meaning to Meleager's life.

To Meleager, Atalanta is a *femme fatale*, and his pursuit of her culminates in his death. She is, according to Richard Mathews, Meleager's anima projection: "The virgin Atalanta seems potentially filled with anima characteristics, and therein lies her forceful appeal to Meleager." Thomas L. Wymer too views her as Meleager's ideal: "For Atalanta, the impregnable woman, is the symbol of beauty and art and life." Meleager, the weak-voiced young man with soft hands, particularly androgynous in contrast to the armed, warlike Atalanta, devotes himself to her: "Most fair and fearful, feminine, a god,/ Faultless whom I that love not, being unlike,/ Fear, and give honour, and choose from all the gods" (ll. 619-21). In *Lesbia Brandon* through his analysis of Bertie's sexual-aesthetic growth, Swinburne reveals clearly that he understands that appreciation of beauty grows out of the erotic impulse.
Meleager's ideal, realized in Atalanta, is an erotic pursuit that simultaneously becomes a quest for death. For his Eros is not generative and creative; it cannot result in the fertility of Althaea. Instead, he pursues a pure, sterile woman; his erotic response, thus, results in the death wish, for it opposes procreation.

His pursuit of Thanatos he reveals when he opposes Althaea, the principle of fertility, and when he desires to join with the cold ideal, Atalanta; moreover, his deathly quest is elaborated by the chorus.

Meleager is subtly depicted as an aesthete throughout the drama. Ian Fletcher says that he "represents the aestheticist," and he continues: "Yet Meleager chooses joy, love, and it has been suggested, in the Paterian mode, art." Swinburne hints at this characterization in the epigraph to his drama and in the "Argument." The epigraph, a fragment from Euripides' lost Meleager, reads, "to do good to the living; each man, dying is earth and shadow; the nothing sinks into nothingness" (p. 199). The passage echoes the fatalism of the Rubaiyat, and like Meleager's responses to Althaea implicitly suggests a pagan philosophy of living fully before sinking into nothingness. Swinburne's "Argument" stresses the kindred theme—pursuit of beauty as a quest for death: "and this was his [Meleager's] end, and the end of that hunting" (p. 206). More telling
though are Meleager's own words. When Althaea is bombarding him with the weapons of her psychological assault, his response is oblique. He does not offer a rebuttal; rather, in order to explain his rebellion, he gives a description of his expedition with the Argonauts, not focusing on any of their battles and adventures, but on the thrilling exhilaration of being a part of the quest and, significantly, on being stimulated by the sea:

And I too as thou sayest have seen great things; seen otherwhere, but chiefly when the sail first caught between stretched ropes the roaring west, and all our oars smote eastward, and the wind first flung round faces of seafaring men. White splendid snow-flakes of the sundering foam, and the first farrow in virginal green sea followed the plunging ploughshare of hewn pine, and closed, as when deep sleep subdues man's breath. Lips close and heart subsides . . .

Yet we drew thither and won the fleece and won Medea, deadlier than the sea. . . .
(11. 583-92, 615-16)

Meleager's language shows that, like Bertie, he had an early encounter with the sea and that experience shaped his erotic aestheticism. The description is sexual; the ship of heroes ploughs the "virginal" sea. The "snow-flakes" recall Atalanta, the "snowy-souled" maiden, and the foam reminds the reader of Althaea's appositive for erotic love, "a thwart sea-wind full of rain and foam." Moreover, Meleager admits, they secured the fleece, but "Medea" receives more importance
in the prosody. The alliteration of the passage, augmented by the plethora of verbals, stresses motion, movement that quiets, post-orgasmically, when Meleager mentions the "deep sleep"—both post-coital rest and death. His carpe diem philosophy continues when he replies to Althaea's martyr appeal.

Possessing the sensitivity and idealism of the artist, he is pained by her words. Nevertheless, he holds to his ideal while acknowledging the guilt his mother inflicts:

And thy fair eyes I worship, and am bound
Toward thee in spirit and love thee in all my soul.
For there is nothing terribler to men
Than the sweet face of mothers, and the might.
But what shall be let be! for us the day
Once only lives a little, and is not found.
(ll. 708-13)

This passage, like the words of the chorus, is central to Swinburne's last full treatment of his triad of archetypes. The artist Meleager is painfully torn between the power—emotional, societal, maternal—of the Terrible Mother and the appeal of the femme fatale. But in rejecting Althaea, he must cast off restriction to achieve artistic selfhood, to live fully before dissolving into nothingness. Even if the pursuit, like Jason's quest for the fleece, is dangerous and ultimately fatal, to give it up is another type of death, the death of beauty, adventure, and joy. To the artist, life is not measured in hours but in intensity and sensation. To
relinquish them in favor of long years, respect, and grandchildren is unthinkable to Meleager.

Thus, when his uncles insult Atalanta, he slays them, insuring his own death at the hands of his mother: "thy fire and subtlety . . . devour me" (11. 2222-23). But as he dies, Meleager's last wish is to merge with his ideal, the static symbol of art, a union that can exist only in death. He speaks to Atalanta:

And stretch thyself upon me and touch hands
With hands and lips with lips: be pitiful
As thou art maiden perfect; let no man
Defile me to despise me, saying, This man
Died woman-wise, a woman's offering, slain
Through female fingers in his woof of life,
Dishonorable; for thou hast honoured me.
(11. 2300-2306)

Even in death he repeats his choice without regret and with typical Swinburnian disdain for common opinion. His erotic, artistic vision is not compromised by the hostile forces in Calydon, but its splendor is short-lived for it was, from the outset, inextricably mingled with the quest for death. As the chorus says in its famous lines on the contraries of existence, the gods "circled pain about with pleasure,/ And girdled pleasure about with pain" (11. 1069-70).

The closer one looks at Atalanta, the more important the role of the chorus grows as a synthesizing force in the play. It prepares the reader for the entrance of each major character; it voices the theology of the play; and it draws
together the strands of imagery that underscore both the necessity for rebellion against the "law" and the ultimate fatalism of that revolt. First, for example, the chorus reinforces Meleager's depiction as aesthete and artist, pursuing an ideal. It speaks of man, but the application to Meleager is clear, for as soon as the lines end, he makes his first entry:

    In his heart is a blind desire,
    In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
    His life is a watch or a vision
    Between a sleep and a sleep.

(11. 356-57, 360-61)

More importantly, in the long speech that follows the central dialogue between Meleager and Althaea, the chorus explains that the erotic-aesthetic pursuit is fraught with destruction, pain, and death. The chorus picks up the "foam" strand of Althaea and connects it to the ship cleaving the sea-beauty-adventure images of Meleager; both of these patterns are fused into the birth of Aphrodite:

    For an evil blossom was born
    Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood,
    A perilous goddess was born
    And the waves of the sea as she came
    Clove, and the foam at her feet,
    Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth
    A fleshly blossom.

(11. 729-30, 743-46, 760-61)
The chorus repeats the same nouns and verbs of the earlier speakers, stressing the pain that accompanies the pleasure of the quest. Later in the ode, it describes the destructive power of the sea (which Meleager has mentioned): "Loud shoals and shipwrecking reefs" (l. 813) and reiterates that this power is connected to the lure of the beautiful, of Aphrodite: "In the uttermost ends of the sea/ The light of thine eyelids and hair" (ll. 829-30). Furthermore, the chorus refers to Jason and Medea, and in mentioning "Lamentation of one with another/ And breaking of city by city" (ll. 837-38) reminds one of the devastation of Troy that is to come. Althaea is, after all, the sister of Leda and the aunt of Helen, Clytemnestra, and the twins, who are at the hunt.

The chorus returns to these themes but expands and deepens them in the crucial, infamous theological ode. Here the chorus indict[s] the gods for creating men, for giving them dreams of pleasure and immortality and simultaneously cursing them with pain and mortality. The chorus voices the futile demand that the gods should experience these contraries too: "Rise up and rest and suffer a little, and be/ Awhile as all things born with us and we,/ And grieve as men, and like slain men be slain" (ll. 1127-29). Then comes the condemnation that horrified Christina Rossetti: "Smites without sword, and scourges without rod;/ The
supreme evil, God" (11. 1149-50). Their words recall the
Keatsian fusion of pain and pleasure, as well as, again, the Rubaiyat:

Thou has sent us sleep, and stricken sleep with dreams,
Saying, Joy is not, but love of joy shall be.
Thou hast made sweet springs for all the pleasant streams,
In the end thou hast made them bitter with the sea.
Thou hast fed one rose with dust of many men. . . .
(ll. 1162-66)

The last line picks up the imagery of the Rubaiyat: "I sometimes think that never blows so red/ The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled." Man's dreams are doomed; he will turn to dust in a universe ruled by a deity at best unconcerned, at worst malign. This divinity is obviously the perverse deity whom Swinburne attacks in Blake, the god of de Sade who has created a tormenting, mutable world where virtue leads to misfortune, vice to prosperity. It is the god of theism whose rule dictates "holy insurrection" and the formulation of a personal code. Thus, Meleager says that he worships Atalanta as a "god," for he has made the aesthetic substitution of beauty for religion. He has found an erotic-aesthetic response within the self and has made a value of it while rejecting "the supreme evil."

Moreover, the religious code under attack here is a nineteenth-century system, not an Attic one. Samuel C.
Chew observes that "it is obvious that the arraignment of the divinity is no mere literary archaism but a direct challenge to the religious ideals of Victorian England." Lafourcade believes the denial of these ideas is the core of the play: "Atalanta n'est pas la tragédie de la virginité ni de l'amour maternel; c'est avant tout une tragédie théologique." Hence, Meleager rebels against Althaea's strictures to follow the "law," for the materialistic, theistic, restrictive society she represents views art as "alien"; it, of course, cannot allow his pursuit, and through Althaea it kills him. However, paradoxically, he is simultaneously pursuing his own death by his desire to merge with the destructive ideal of the femme fatale.

Alienated from a society that condemns him and his ideal, the artist only wrests sensation from life until his masochistic quest proves suicidal. Swinburne has pushed his triad of figures and the tensions inherent in their conflict to its pessimistic extreme: the artist is destroyed both from within and without. If the Terrible Mother does not devour him, the femme fatale kills. An impasse exists.

Not surprisingly, then, in Poems and Ballads, First Series (1866) one sees a shift occurring, not to be fully realized until Songs before Sunrise (1871). The femme fatale still dominates, but the effects of the erotic impulse Swinburne depicts as tortuous and tormenting. More
important, perhaps, is the muting of the Terrible Mother figure, for Swinburne begins to shift the archetype closer to the ambivalent Great Mother, to move away from the totally devouring figure. Poems and Ballads is a Janus-faced book in Swinburne's career; it fully explores masochistic infatuation with the femme fatale, but it also reveals that the pain of this enthrallment leads to a desire for surcease of torment, for oblivion and loss of consciousness.

This release is a form of the death wish, and Swinburne expresses it as a desire to escape either through a suicidal immersion in the ocean or by removal to the underworld, ruled by Persephone. Both escapes represent metaphorically a return to the mother, for they release the tortured lover from tension and conflict and offer him the promise of restoring the quiescent equilibrium of the womb. However, since neither path contributes to personal growth, to separation from the mother and assertion of self, they are both aspects of the Terrible Mother. In Jung's symbolism, "Water represents the maternal depths and the place of rebirth; in short, the unconscious in its positive and negative aspects." The negative aspect prevails when an individual feels "a deadly longing for the abyss, a longing to drown in his own source, to be sucked down to the realm of the Mothers." The appeal is exacerbated in a young
man, according to Erich Neumann: "The projection of his own masculine desire, and, on a still deeper level, of his own trend toward uroboric incest, toward voluptuous self-dissolution in the primordial Feminine and motherly, intensifies the terrible character of the Feminine." Furthermore, Neumann says that this desire for self-dissolution may express itself in symbols of containment and shelter: "To this world belong not only the subterranean darkness as hell and night but also such symbols as chasm, cave, abyss, valley, depths, which in innumerable rites and myths play the part of the earth tomb that demands to be fructified." All of these symbols, however, can be both benign and malign. The Great Mother archetype is both good and bad, for she includes aspects of the Terrible Mother and the Good Mother, and in Poems and Ballads Swinburne moves toward her. The release from pain offered in the sea or underworld is positive; the death wish inherent in loss of consciousness, negative. But this ambivalence is new; the Terrible Mother, heretofore a totally destructive force representing Philistine restriction, becomes more attractive as devotion to the femme fatale becomes increasingly destructive. In Poems and Ballads the short dramatic monologues make a full depiction of Swinburne's triad of figures difficult, if not impossible. So the Terrible Mother softens; no longer the Philistine villainess, she moves toward the
configuration of the Great Mother, for she does offer, in
the form of the ocean or the underworld, soothing oblivion
as balm for the wounds inflicted by the *femme fatale*.

It is impossible to date all of the works in *Poems*
and *Ballads* with certainty. Morse Peckham says that they
were composed between 1862 and 1865; thus, many of them
come from the period when Swinburne was obsessed with the
*femme fatale*. One of his essays from this period, "Notes
on Designs of the Old Masters at Florence," reflects his
continuing interest in the archetype. In the essay he
describes a drawing by Michelangelo which he saw on his
trip to Italy in 1864:

But in one separate head there is more
tragic attraction than in these: a
woman's . . . beautiful always beyond
desire and cruel beyond words; fairer
than heaven and more terrible than hell;
pale with pride and weary with wrongdoing;
a silent anger against God and man burns,
white and repressed, through her clear
features. . . . In some inexplicable way
all her ornaments seem to partake of her
fatal nature, to bear upon them her brand
of beauty fresh from hell . . . Her eyes
are full of proud and passionless lust
after gold and blood; her hair, close
and curled, seems ready to shudder in
sunder and divide into snakes . . .
her mouth crueler than a tiger's, colder
than a snake's, and beautiful beyond a
woman's. She is the deadliest Venus incar-
nate . . . Lamia re-transformed, but
divested of all feminine attributes not
native to the snake—a Lamia loveless and
unassailable by the sophist, readier to
drain life out of her lover than to fade
for his sake at his side. . . .
Swinburne interprets Michelangelo’s drawing as a cold, beautiful vampire, a serpentine woman capable of any cruelty. To love her is masochism, a perfect complement to her sadism. The erotic impulse directed toward her can only produce pain and, ultimately, death or the longing for it. These ideas, expressed in the poetry as well, prompt John Rosenberg to say, "The association of love with death is the underlying theme of almost all of Swinburne's major poetry." Morse Peckham agrees with Rosenberg: "Swinburne knew the longing for death more intimately and profoundly than did any English poet, even Keats, but he did not approve of it." Swinburne finally expresses this disapproval when he rejects the femme fatale in Songs before Sunrise, but in Poems and Ballads he is still intellectually and artistically committed to exploring the effects of infatuation with the destructive ideal.

Before we examine the famous femmes fatales themselves—Faustine, Dolores, Venus—it is enlightening to examine Swinburne's picture of "Desire," found in the sonnet "A Cameo." The ornament itself is "a graven image of Desire/ Painted with red blood on a ground of gold" (11. 1-2). He is accompanied by Pain, Pleasure, "insatiable Satiety," and "the strange loves that suck the breasts of Hate." Desire, or Eros, exists in the midst of contradictions, of warring elements and antitheses. These
personified abstractions, internalized and engraved upon the self, can only result in fragmentation, emotional chaos, and destruction. Swinburne presents their logical outcome in his last lines: "Death stood aloof behind a gaping grate,/ Upon whose lock was written Peradventure." Desire and his companions are "walking" in the poem. Since one assumes they are heading toward Death, Swinburne has apparently allegorized the themes that are implicit in his longer poems. Tension, of course, between Desire and Death, remains, for the figures on the cameo are static. Like the figures on Keats’s Urn, they cannot move to completion of activity. Nevertheless, the direction is suggested. Moreover, Swinburne has made this ultimate movement of Desire to Death into an artifact. Not only is his description of the scene an aesthetic object, but also it delineates another one—a cameo, a piece of jewelry. The erotic experience results in the mingling of pleasure and pain, of hate and love, in death, and in an aesthetic pursuit, realized in the cameo and the sonnet.

Actually Swinburne announces these dominant themes, conveyed throughout the volume in the female archetypes, in his two introductory ballads, "A Ballad of Life" and "A Ballad of Death." In both poems Lucretia Borgia, the epitome of beauty, passion, and the cruel female, appears to the speaker in a dream; inspired by her beauty, he dedicates
her verses to her, implicitly rejecting the conventional morality which opposes her. Julian Baird believes that these companion poems reflect Blake's influence:

Indeed, to the extent that "A Ballad of Life" recalls a lost golden age, it is Swinburne's equivalent of one of Blake's Songs of Innocence. "A Ballad of Death," which follows it, is linked to the first poem in the same fashion that poems in Songs of Experience are tied to companion pieces in Songs of Innocence.

The "golden age" of the first poem is an era, like the pagan age of "Hymn to Proserpine," where devotion to beauty is free from the condemnation of Christian asceticism. The speaker worships Lucretia as the incarnation of his ideal: "Now assuredly I see/ My lady is perfect and transfigureth/ All sin and sorrow and death" (ll. 61-63). Other than her carrying "a little cithern by the strings,/ Shaped heart-wise, strung with subtle-coloured hair/ Of some dead lute-player" (ll. 11-13), there are no references to Lucretia as a murderess, adulteress, or incestuous sister and daughter. These depictions of her are moralistic considerations which have no bearing on her beauty, and the speaker does not hesitate to call her "righteous." She becomes his muse, and he orders his poetry to praise her:

Forth, ballad, and take roses in both arms,
Come thou before my 'lady' and say this;
Borgia, thy gold hair's colour burns in me,
Thy mouth makes beat my blood in feverish rhymes.
(ll. 71, 75-77)

The passion that the dream image of the living Lucretia inspires continues in the second poem even though she now appears, accompanied by Venus, "crowned and robed and dead" (l. 72). Her hair is now "spoilt gold"; the mouth "whereby men lived and died" is shut and no longer red. Her beauty and appeal have been tarnished by a hostile world that cannot accept beauty as an autonomous value. The poet, grieving over her death, still desires her; his necrophilia is readily apparent when his tears run down "Even to the place where many kisses were,/ Even where her parted breast flowers have place" (ll. 84-85). His heightened devotion is described in religious imagery: "Her mouth an almsgiving,/ The glory of her garments charity,/ The beauty of her bosom a good deed" (ll. 93-95). Like Tebaldeo, the speaker finds in her beauty and in sensual pleasure a substitute religion that is vastly preferable to conventional goodness: "And all her body was more virtuous/ Than souls of women fashioned otherwise" (ll. 99-100). But he implies that she has died because a code of sin and shame has drained her vitality. Consequently, the roses his ballad bore in "A Ballad of Life" are replaced by flowers of death: "Now, ballad, gather poppies in thine hands . . . And say 'My master that was thrall to Love/ Is become thrall to Death'"
Rather than exist in a world where beauty and love are vitiated and destroyed, the poet hopes to die as well: "For haply it may be/ That even thy feet return at evening/ Death shall come in with thee" (ll. 112-14).

These opening poems not only announce the themes of Poems and Ballads— the erotic, aesthetic fascination with a femme fatale and the death wish— but also implicitly attack the Victorian ethical code which demanded that beauty be accompanied by morality. Swinburne could not acquiesce to this mandate, even though he acknowledges the pain inherent in devotion to the femme fatale. Therefore, his concern is not to examine the moral consequences of the erotic pursuit, but instead to explore the emotional responses of those trapped and obsessed by their eroticism. Thus, a number of the poems, "Satia te Sanguine," "Faustine," "Dolores," "Laus Veneris," contain speakers who exist in a state of emotional chaos, tormented by their devotion to the lacerating lady, the femme fatale, but unable to free themselves.

In "Satia te Sanguine" the title refers to the blood-thirsty woman who fascinates the speaker. In the first quatrains he admits the futility of his love: "You do not love me at all" (l. 4), but her beauty enslaves him: "O beautiful lips, O bosom/ More white than the moon's and
warm,/ A sterile, a ruinous blossom" (ll. 5-7). Cold, sterile, and destructive, she is "crueller" than "hatred, hunger, or death" (l. 46). Moreover, she is explicitly revealed as the vampire woman who thrives on the blood, the emotional subjugation of her lover:

You suck with a sleepy red lip
The wet red wounds in his heart.
You thrill as his pulses dwindle,
You brighten and warm as he bleeds.
(ll. 59-62)

The speaker is helpless before her power, but he resents his enslavement and vengefully hopes death will punish her and end his torment: "I wish you were stricken of thunder . . . Consumed and cloven in sunder/ I dead at your feet like you" (ll. 37-40). Even in death, however, he will still lie at her feet, his masochism fully achieved.

The speaker in "Faustine" also realizes the destructiveness of his infatuation; self-mockery is inherent in his epigraph for the poem, "Ave Faustina Imperatrix, morti-turi te salutant," the traditional greeting of the gladiators to the emperor and empress, and in his choice of names for his ideal: Faustine, synonymous with licentiousness. She emerges as the eternal fatal woman who has undergone transformations or reincarnations to reappear throughout history: she has been "a queen at first" and a Lesbian too:

Stray breaths of Sapphic song that blew
Through Mitylene
Shook the fierce quivering blood in you
By night, Faustine.

(11. 117-20)

The implication in these lines is that she has enslaved
women as well as men, an idea Swinburne explores more fully
in "Phaedra" and "Anactoria." She belongs to the devil
and feeds off her victims like the vampire woman she is:

She loved the games men played with death,
Where death must win;
As though the slain man's blood and breath
Revived Faustine.

(11. 65-68)

But she is sterile. Eros lies in a "barren bed"; there is
"flower of kisses without fruit/ Of love" (11. 131-32).
Not only is Faustine the typically sterile femme fatale,
but also, as the speaker implies, her influence on men is
castrating. This suggestion is imbedded in the bestial
image that occurs in one of his questions: "What coiled
obscene/ Small serpents with soft stretching throats/
Caressed Faustine?" (11. 134-36). Instead of being a
vigorous phallic symbol, the snake here is small, soft,
and servile, implying impotence, which Swinburne has fre­
quently ascribed to the bewitched lovers of the femme
fatale. Faustine herself serves the phallic god Priapus,
"The Lampsacene," yet she destroys and consumes the virility
of her lovers. The speaker recognizes her murderous
potential when he queries, "You'd give him--poison, shall we say?" (l. 163). He clearly recognizes her deadly qualities; she is, like an artifact, non-human, "a thing that hinges hold,/ A love-machine/ With clockwork joints of supple gold" (ll. 141-43). His imagery suggests that she is a beautiful automaton--composed of a chemically stable metal, gold; she is pure: barren, mechanical, and insensitive. As an erotic, aesthetic ideal she offers only beauty and masochistic gratification for her lover while she gains complementary sadistic fulfillment for herself. As his references to blood, poison, and mutilation indicate, the logical outcome of the speaker's devotion can only be torment and death.

The pursuit of Eros voiced by the speaker in "Dolores" is more blatantly linked to the pursuit of death, for Dolores, "our Lady of Pain," is the offspring of the two impulses: "Libitina thy mother, Priapus/ Thy father, a Tuscan and Greek (ll. 51-52). Libitina, the Roman goddess of corpses, and Priapus, the phallic garden god, combine in Dolores, who inspires her lovers to exchange "The lilies and languors of virtue/ For the raptures and roses of vice" (ll. 67-68). She represents a beautiful, aesthetic ideal of freedom, even license, in contrast to constricting, moralistic codes:

Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion,
And thy limbs are as melodies yet,  
And move to the music of passion  
With lithe and lascivious regret,  
What ailed us, O gods, to desert you  
For creeds that refuse and restrain?  
Come down and redeem us from virtue,  
Our Lady of Pain.  

(11. 273-80)

A "goddess new-born," Dolores possesses "a beautiful passionate body/ That never has ached with a heart" and "lips that no bloodshed would satiate" (11. 81-82, 263). Her devotees can expect "orgies" of sensual pleasure and pain, ceremonies that are ends in themselves, not directed toward preparation for a Christian heaven. Like Faustine and like art, she seems eternal, though she is also sterile and deadly with the pallor of the femme fatale:

Thou art fed with perpetual breath,  
And alive after infinite changes,  
And fresh from the kisses of death;  
Of languors rekindled and rallied,  
Of barren delights and unclean,  
Things monstrous and fruitless, a pallid  
And poisonous queen.  

(11. 58-64)

Indeed, as the speaker admits, Dolores is "The one thing as certain as death" (l. 428). Her mortal lovers can only hope to "know what the darkness discovers/ If the grave be shallow or deep" (11. 433-34). To worship Dolores is to reject convention while simultaneously seeking beauty, pain, and death.

As it did for Meleager, the erotic impulse again ends
in death in the sado-masochistic relationship. Swinburne's *femmes fatales* destroy their lovers; Eros mingles with Thanatos. Sigmund Freud explains that this mixture is universal: "the two kinds of instinct seldom—perhaps never—appear in isolation from each other in varying and very different proportions."32 Freud expands his theory with a comment that can serve as a gloss to *Poems and Ballads*:

> In sadism, long since known to us as a component instinct of sexuality, we should have before us a particularly strong alloy of this kind between trends of love and the destructive instinct; while its counterpart, masochism, would be a union between destructiveness directed inwards and sexuality.33

The ladies in "Satia te Sanguine," Faustine, and Dolores inflict physical suffering on their lovers; the speakers in those poems pursue a punishing death. However, there are other situations in *Poems and Ballads* where the masochist does not suffer physical distress nor is the aggressive lover consciously sadistic. The emotional rending persists, though, and psychic bondage to the *femme fatale* produces wounds just as painful and deadly as those resulting from fleshly torture. Tannhauser in "Laus Veneris," Phaedra, and Sappho in "Anactoria" exhibit this pain.

Swinburne's "Laus Veneris" is a reinterpretation of the medieval German legend of Tannhauser and the Horselberg
Venus. In Notes on Poems and Reviews, Swinburne explains that he intended "to rehandle the old story in a new fashion":

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

(pp. 334-35)

The knight lived behind "golden bars" in a suffocating, hellish environment of cloying sensuality. He is imprisoned by his own lust for Venus, the epitome of beauty and sexual attraction, and tortured by the guilt that derives from his Christian concept of sin: "I knew the beauty of her, what she was,/ The beauty of her body and her sin,/ And in my flesh the sin of hers, alas!" (ll. 310-12). Moreover, we see a hint of the androgyne here, for Venus has stripped him of his many pursuits. His combat and camaraderie among "beautiful mailed men" are gone; she has inverted his knightly quests into an insatiable thirst for erotic pleasure: "the fighting face is grown aflame/ For pleasure" (ll. 226-27). She has become the aggressor; he exists only to satisfy her desires which coincide, of course,
with his. Like the femme fatale, she uses her victims to the death ("Yea, all she slayeth; yea, every man save me," l. 138), and she "weaves and multiplies/ Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain" (ll. 119-20). But the agony Tannhauser suffers is the internal agony of conscience, not physical torment. Hence, he longs for the release of death, envisioned as the death of the senses that have enslaved him: "Would God my blood were dew to feed the grass/ Mine ears made deaf and mine eyes blind as glass" (ll. 61-62). Tannhauser has internalized the ascetic Christian code of the duality of body and soul; thus his greatest pleasure, sexual gratification with Venus, becomes masochistic torture, and he exists in an emotional hell. Nevertheless, he chooses to remain within the Venusberg (mountain, death, the womb) where "all her eager hair/ Cleave to me, clinging as a fire that clings/ To the body and to the raiment, burning them" (ll. 403-405), even though he believes that the fire of passion presages the flames of hell: "As after death I know that such-like flame/ Shall cleave to me forever" (ll. 406-407). Tannhauser's adherence to a restricting code dictates this agonizing acknowledgment and condemns him to an inferno of his own creation.

The pain that Phaedra and Sappho feel is self-imposed as well, but their torment results not from satiety, but from thwarted desire, Phaedra's for Hippolytus and
Sappho's for Anactoria; Hippolytus' and Anactoria's unresponsiveness affects the speakers as does the cold self-possession of the femme fatale. In both cases unfulfilled, obsessive Eros drives Phaedra and Sappho to suicide; the death wish, unlike the erotic urge, is fulfilled.

At first appearance, it seems that to regard Hippolytus as a femme fatale is, at best, paradoxical, at worst, ridiculous and contradictory. However, we must remember Swinburne's description of his volume. He maintains in Notes on Poems and Reviews that "the book is dramatic, many-faced multifarious" (p. 326); and, as we have seen, he focuses on the emotional effects of Eros. Hence, a portion of his examination must include an analysis not only of men, but also of women in bondage to Eros. As Morse Peckham explains, "'The Triumph of Time' is preceded by 'Laus Veneris,' the story of a man enslaved by the erotic perception of femininity, and by 'Phaedra,' a parallel instance of a woman enslaved by the erotic perception of masculinity."34 It seems as though Swinburne has inverted his usual presentation in that the homme fatal has caused the death of a woman, but the same basic pattern actually holds true—a total absorption with Eros leads to death.

"Phaedra" is laced with blatant overtones of incest and bestiality, posing a challenge to Victorian prudery. Phaedra, the active pursuer, demands that Hippolytus slay
her, but the imagery of death by his "sword" is overtly sexual:

Come, take thy sword and slay;
Let me not starve between desire and death,
But send me on my way with glad wet lips;
For in the vein-drawn ashen-coloured palm
Death's hollow hand holds water of sweet draught
Yea, if mine own blood ran upon my mouth,
I would drink that.
(11. 16-20, 23-24)

Her masochism is intense and vivid; like Tannhauser, she admits her agony and maintains that it has driven her mad. But she finds the roots of her lust in her lineage, with its ultimate source lying in the goddesses Ate and Aphrodite, who have cursed both her mother, Pasiphae, and her with "Love loathed of love, and mates unmatchable,/ Wild wedlock, and the lusts that bleat or low" (11. 150-51). Pasiphae was, of course, the queen of Crete who forced Dedalus to construct a mechanism that allowed her to have intercourse with a bull and subsequently to give birth to the Minotaur, Phaedra's half-brother. Thus, Phaedra explains, "My veins are mixed, and therefore am I mad" (1. 51). The cold, distant Hippolytus recognizes and condemns her passion, knowing that it is animalistic: "Man is as beast when shame stands off from him" (1. 46). In a reversal of the situation in Atalanta, Swinburne depicts the young man adhering to law while his step-mother begs him to desert the
chaste Artemis. But his rigidity and her desperation are mutually fatal; the reader knows that the episode ends with Phaedra's suicide and his murder, a result of her false accusation of rape.

The dynamics of Phaedra's psychological makeup are quite similar to Sappho's, and both of them exhibit the same progression that occurs within Denham in Lesbia Brandon, when his lust for Margaret cannot be satiated:

Silent desire curdled and hardened into poisonous forms; love became acrid in him, and crusted with a bitter stagnant scum of fancies ranker than weeds. Under the mask or under the rose he was passing through quiet stages of perversion. He could not act out his sin and be rid of it... Her he did not hate, but he hated his love for her. As he could not embrace her, he would fain have wounded her; this was at first; gradually the wound rather than the embrace came to seem desirable... Devotion was still mixed with his passion; but a deadly devotion that, if need were, could kill as well as die.35

In Notes on Poems and Reviews, Swinburne is particularly defensive about "Anactoria." The essay was written in response to John Morley's attack on Poems and Ballads. Morley had written, "The only comfort about the present volume is that such a piece as 'Anactoria' will be unintelligible to a great many people."36 Thus, Swinburne explains that to Sappho "pleasure culminates in pain, affection in anger, and desire in despair"; her blasphemy of God is "the outcome
or outburst of foiled and fruitless passion recoiling on itself" (p. 330). Like Phaedra and Denham, her masochistic pursuit of the erotic ideal twists into sadism and the desire for its ultimate conclusion, murder.

Sappho addresses her **femme fatale**, Anactoria, and reveals the torture of her intense desire: "thine eyes/
Blind me, thy tresses burn me" (ll. 1-2). Bestiality, often associated with the fatal woman, appears here too, when Sappho says, "Ah, ah, thy beauty! like a beast it bites" (l. 115); Sappho, the poet, wants to consume Anactoria, her ideal of beauty. This urge is presented in rending images that suggest cannibalistic, sadistic Lesbian sex:

Ah that my mouth for Muses' milk were fed
On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled!
That with my tongue I felt them, and could taste
The faint flakes from thy bosom to the waist!
That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat
Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet
Thy body were abolished and consumed,
And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!
(11. 107-14)

To unite and become one with Anactoria would be for Sappho the supreme achievement of aesthetic experience, for she pursues the transcendent aesthetic ideal in her love affair with the girl: "Take thy limbs living, and new-mould with these/ A lyre of many faultless agonies" (ll. 139-40). But her thwarted passion turns into a desire to inflict pain:

"I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,/ Intense
device and superflux of pain;/ Vex thee with amorous
agonies" (11. 27-29). Ennui and a longing for forgetfulness in the sea—suicidal wishes—accompany her murderous urges: "I am sick with time"; "Lotus and Lethe are on my lips like dew,/ Thick darkness and the unsuperable sea" (11. 225, 302-304). But a preferable death would be to merge with her lover, to achieve the fusion of the artist with beauty:

O that I
Durst crush thee out of life with love, and die,
Die of thy pain and my delight, and be
Mixed with thy blood and molten into thee.
(11. 129-32)

In expressing these violent passions, Sappho reveals that she conforms to the sadistic philosophy of the god she blasphemes. He has sent man hunger, thirst, and "hath cursed/ Spirit and flesh with longing" (11. 175-76). She queries, "Is not his incense bitterness, his meat/ Murder?" (11. 171-72). This deity is the god of Atalanta, the Sadian divinity described in William Blake, the one whose rule demands the "holy insurrection" of Meleager. Sappho does replace him with her own vision of beauty and art, but she follows his methods and emulates his brutality; she cries, "God knows I might be crueler than God" (1. 152). Therefore, her rebellion is incomplete; she is too entrapped by her own destructive impulses to enact an inversion of
values and to revolt completely against God. Hence her only consolation is to seek escape through death and to achieve immortality through her art: "Memories shall mix and metaphors of me" (l. 214). Consequently, she prepares for the "supreme sleep" that will bring her "bloodless ease." Only death can release her from her private emotional hell, an inferno created by her devotion to the femme fatale.

Indeed, Swinburne fully explores the destructive effects of obsessive love in Poems and Ballads. In doing so, he probes the personalities of the speakers who declare their allegiance to the femme fatale. Furthermore, in each case where Eros dominates, the death wish is present. This death wish, as we have seen, is expressed as a longing for poppied sleep, for Lethe and the lotus, for the soothing maternal waters of the sea. It is a subtle rendering of the archetype of the Terrible Mother, for death, loss of consciousness through a symbolic return to the womb, occurs. But the feeling of peace and comfort that accompanies death shades the archetype toward the Great Mother, who nurtures and encloses. Moreover, four important poems in the volume focus primarily on this archetype, symbolized either by the goddess of the underworld or by the sea: "The Triumph of Time," "Hymn to Proserpine," "The Garden of Proserpine," and "Hesperia." In "A Cameo" Death stands in the background,
Desire in front. Similarly, the *femme fatale* dominates many of the poems, but in these four Death steps to the foreground, and Desire moves into his shadow.

In "The Triumph of Time" the speaker longs for death because his love has rejected him. Since erotic union with the lady is denied, he turns to the sea for fulfillment. The depiction of the contradictory maternal image is reinforced metaphorically by an oxymoron: "A barren mother, a mother-maid,/ Cold and clean as her faint salt flowers" (ll. 67-68). She retains the engulfing characteristics of the Terrible Mother: "Thou art subtle and cruel of heart, men say./ Thou has taken, and shalt not render again:/ Thou art gull of thy dead, and cold as they" (ll. 290-92). But she offers more; she is also "tender-hearted" and constant: "But when hast thou fed on our hearts? or when,/ Having given us love, hast thou taken away?" (ll. 295-96). The abyss, which Jung mentions as a figurative representation of the archetype, accentuates the ambiguity connected with the image: "Thou art strong for death and fruitful of birth;/ Thy depths conceal and thy griefs discover" (ll. 303-304). The sea becomes the focus of the speaker's death wish, and his thwarted erotic urges center on her too, revealing the inseparability of the two impulses.

Swinburne weaves these themes together in a passage that deserves to be quoted at length:
I will go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea.
I will go down to her, I and none other,
Close with her, kiss her and mix her with me,
Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast:
(11. 257-61)

Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,
Thy large embraces are keen like pain.
Save me and hide me with all thy waves,
Find me one grave of thy thousand graves.
(11. 267-70)

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;
My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside,
Sleep and not know if she be, if she were. . . .
(11. 273-77)

The speaker's immersion in the sea is orgasmic; it is an erotic suicidal, incestuous union. The enveloping death is a return to a primal beginning in the amniotic fluid of the womb. Furthermore, the death that follows this union is sleep—the characteristic post-coital condition of peace and oblivion. The speaker will become part of the eternal flux of the ocean; reabsorbed into the mother he will rise and subside with her rhythms. Significantly, he demands that the sea "Set free [his] soul," that is, enable him to escape the pain of his unrequited love. Suicide becomes emancipation from the horrors of Eros, a theme Swinburne will return to in "The Garden of Proserpine" and "Hesperia."

These poems, like "Hymn to Proserpine," use the goddess
of the underworld as the maternal symbol. The qualities associated with the goddess correspond to several of the characteristics enumerated by Jung in his discussion of the mother archetype. Proserpine, daughter of Ceres the goddess of agriculture, was abducted by Hades to rule with him in the underworld. When she left the earth, her mother grieved so that all vegetation died. Consequently, Proserpine was allowed to return for six months of each year—when nature flourishes. Because the vegetative cycle begins anew when she returns to earth in the spring, she represents both fertility and the dormant period of winter, the forgetfulness and sleep represented in the poppy. Proserpine, as she appears in Swinburne's poetry, exhibits none of the cruelty inherent in the *femme fatale*. Instead, she offers solace from the pain and ennui of life. The death wish, directed toward her, is oblivion and escape. The speakers seek release from the pangs of Eros, and Proserpine becomes a redemptive figure who proffers peace and comfort.

In "Hymn to Proserpine" the speaker decries the usurpation of paganism by Christianity. The pagan deities, including Proserpine, offer a religion of beauty, vitality, and color:

The laurel, the palms and the paean, the breasts of the nymphs in the brake;
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath;
All the wings of the Loves, and all the joy
before death;
All the feet of the hours that sound as a single
lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings
that flicker like fire.
(ll. 24-28)

Christ will destroy this beauty and provide a religion
drained of vitality, beauty, and poetry: "Thou hast con­
quered, O pale Galilean, the world has grown grey from thy
breath" (l. 35). The new, restrictive religion replaces
nymphs with martyrs: "O ghastly glories of saints, dead
limbs of gibbeted Gods!" (l. 44). The speaker does not
wish to witness this change; he feels that he has "lived
long enough," he is "sick of singing," and he desires "To
rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain."
As an alternative, he turns to Proserpine: "Goddess and
maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend./ Thou art
more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that laugh or
that weep;/ For these give joy and sorrow, but thou, Proser­
pina, sleep" (ll. 2-4). Proserpine is the supreme goddess
because she represents the sleep of death; she affords not
only an escape from the ennui of life, but also timeless­
tess, the antithesis of a mutable world where even the gods
change: "Thou art more than the Gods who number the days
of our temporal breath;/ For these give labour and slumber;
but thou, Proserpina, death . . . For there is no God found
stronger than death, and death is a sleep" (ll. 103-104, 110).

Venus also appears in the poem, representing beauty and eroticism in contrast to the life-draining Virgin. The pagan's response to her is at once erotic and aesthetic, and he describes her with rapturous lyricism:

... a blossom of flowering seas,
Clothed round with the world's desire as with Raiment, and fair as the foam,

Her deep hair heavily laden with odour and colour of flowers,
White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendour, a flame,
Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name. . . .
(ll. 78-79, 82-84)

The assonance of the long "o" sounds links foam, odour, colour, rose— all words which reinforce her sensual beauty; and the alliteration of the sibilant and bilabial consonants softens the lines and contributes to this paean to her lushness. The anapests too stress her allure, for their soft, rapid movement creates a mesmerizing effect on the reader like Venus's upon the pagan speaker. The sensuous imagery underscores her erotic appeal, but Venus is more than an object of desire. She represents ideal beauty as well—a beauty that has vanished with the advent of Christ and the Virgin. The speaker will escape their grey, ugly world by seeking the poppied sleep of the underworld.
This idea is more clearly expressed in "The Garden of Proserpine." Here Eros has become directed to an aesthetic ideal that transforms the death wish from a yearning for total destruction into a desire for removal from the contraries of existence, for a state soothing to the senses. The motherly image is figuratively implied in the title by the maternal symbols of the garden and the underworld, but the poem describes the garden as pure artifice, as an aesthetic State. Proserpine rules where "the world is quiet;/ Here, where all trouble seems/ Dead winds' and spent waves' riot" (ll. 1-3). Her garden contains:

[... bloomless buds of poppies,]
Green grapes of Proserpine,
[... bloomless buds or 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.
(11. 27-32)

The oblivion she offers is preferable to love's pain ("Her languid lips are sweeter/ Than love's," ll. 53-54), and she emancipates the speaker from eroticism:

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.
(11. 81-88)
The erotic return to the womb of the sea has become a more peaceful quest for "Only the sleep eternal/ In an eternal night" (ll. 95-96). Here the return to the mother has been taken out of experience and time; it has become an infinite moment of aesthetic pleasure and a quest for a more soothing ideal, as exemplified in "Hesperia."

Swinburne was aware of this movement in Poems and Ballads. In preparing the volume for publication, he placed "Dolores," "The Garden of Proserpine," and "Hesperia" in consecutive order. Although he was unaware of Jungian archetypes, his discussion of this placement reveals that he was consciously manipulating female symbols and trying to show a movement away from the lacerating femme fatale toward the more benevolent Great Mother. In Notes on Poems and Reviews, he explains that "Dolores" is first:

I have striven here to express that transient state of spirit through which a man may be supposed to pass, foiled in love and weary of loving, but not yet in sight of rest; seeking refuge in those "violent delights" which "have violent ends," in fierce and frank sensualities . . . She [Dolores] is the darker Venus, fed with burnt-offering and blood sacrifice. . . .

The next act in this lyrical monodrama of passion represents a new stage and scene. The worship of desire has ceased; the mad commotion of sense has stormed itself out; the spirit, clear of the old regret that drove it upon such violent ways . . . dreams now of truth discovered and repose attained . . . "Hesperia" . . . born in
the westward "islands of the blest" where
the shadows of all happy and holy things
live beyond the sunset . . . dawns upon
his eyes . . . But not at once, or not
for ever, can the past be killed and
buried; hither also the huntress follows
her flying prey, wounded and weakened,
still fresh from the fangs of passion . . .
Only by lifelong flight, side by side with
the goddess that redeems, shall her slave
of old escape from the goddess that con­
sumes . . .
This is the myth or fable of my poem;
and it is not without design that I have
slipped in, between the first and the
second part, the verses called "The Garden
of Proserpine," expressive as I meant they
should be, of that brief total pause of
passion and of thought, when the spirit,
without fear or hope of good things or
evil, hungers and thirsts only after the
perfect sleep.

(pp. 331-32)

The appeal of the femme fatale wanes, and a more benevolent
figure replaces her.

In "Hesperia" the speaker again longs to be trans­
ported from life into the realm of Proserpine (the goddess
of Hesperia, the land of the west, of the happy dead and
memories, is Proserpine). He imagines himself there: "From
the bountiful infinite west, from the happy memorial places/
Full of the stately repose and the lordly delight of the
dead" (ll. 33-34). According to Erich Neumann the west is
a symbol of the Great Mother archetype close to her nega­
tive axis, the Terrible Mother, because the west does repre­
sent a loss of consciousness, not separation from the
mother and independence:
For underworld, night sky, and unconscious are one and the same . . . the west is the place of the world before the world, the uroboric existence of unconscious perfection.

Going west is, of course, a literary commonplace for dying. The speaker wishes to escape love that "wounds as we grasp it, and blackens and burns as a flame" (1. 46); he has been in thrall to Eros, in the form of Dolores, who would recall him to servitude. But he prefers the soothing maternal caress of Proserpine, who offers a redemptive stasis from searing sensuality:

Thine eyes that are quiet, thine hands that are tender, thy lips that are loving,
Comfort and cool me as dew in the dawn of a moon like a dream.
(11. 25-26)

Come back to redeem and release me from love that recalls and represses,
That cleaves to my flesh as a flame, till the serpent has eaten his fill;
From the bitter delights of the dark, and the feverish, the furtive caresses.
(11. 37-39)

The poet appeals to Proserpine, "Our Lady of Sleep," to save him from the torment of "Our Lady of Pain," who is "flushed as with wine with the blood of her lovers." The death proffered by Proserpine is viewed both as a pleasing condition that frees the speaker from his prison and as a flight ("By the meadows of memory, the highlands of hope, and the shore
that is hidden") in the company of the goddess. The death wish then becomes both a desire for a release from the pain of life and a desire for a more ideal existence. Proserpine, the maternal symbol, provides a pleasant death, as opposed to the masochistic torment of the speaker's erotic desire for Dolores.

The femme fatale no longer dominates Swinburne's poetry, nor does the Terrible Mother. Having exhausted the tensions inherent in his triad of figures--femme fatale, Terrible Mother, androgyne--in Atalanta, Swinburne frees himself from continued repetition of the static archetype in Poems and Ballads, for as the Terrible Mother begins her transformation into the Great Mother, the androgyne alters too.

Although Tannhauser resembles the androgyne in his abdication of knighthood, he is not presented as an aesthete, as is Meleager. Instead, in Poems and Ballads Swinburne presents a pure hermaphrodite. His conception of the image was influenced by his viewing the sculpture of Hermaphroditus in Paris and by Blake's "dark hermaphrodite . . . who from of old was neither male nor female, but perfect man without division of flesh, until the setting of sex against sex by the malignity of animal creation" (pp. 21-22). Later he observes that in Blake's poetry "the hermaphroditic emblem is always used as a symbol seemingly of duplicity
and division, perplexity and restraint" (p. 278). The figure was becoming more of an abstraction to Swinburne, rather than the dramatized character he had previously created. Consequently, in "Hermaphroditus" he describes the statue and comments on the ambivalence of the symbol. He/she—the bisexual nature dominates—can "choose of two loves and cleave unto the best" (l. 6), but both ironically produce "the waste wedlock of a sterile kiss." Complete fulfillment for the hermaphrodite with a lover of one sex is impossible, as is procreation:

Yet by no sunset and by no moonrise
Shall make thee man and ease a woman's sighs,
Or make thee woman for a man's delight.
To what strange end hath some strange god made fair
The double blossom of two fruitless flowers?
(ll. 34-38)

The hermaphrodite suggests both an ideal of unity and wholeness as well as frustrated desire, bisexuality, and otherness. Here it is an artifact, an ideal of beauty, but its erotic possibilities make it fraught with ambivalence. Whoever looks at it feels "A strong desire begot on great despair,/ A great despair cast out by strong desire" (ll. 13-14). It is not a symbol for the artist here, but a work of art itself, one which arouses aesthetic appreciation alloyed to its troubling connotations.

The androgyne too has changed; it has moved to the
physical hermaphrodite, incorporating both male and female
traits. In *Songs before Sunrise* not only will the Great
Mother archetype fully emerge, but she will also become an
encompassing figure, a goddess for humanity, male and female.
Swinburne's dramatic opposition of male and female figures
will be ended for a while, and his blending of their ele-
ments into the hermaphrodite, though ambivalent in *Poems
and Ballads*, points the way toward the synthesizing figure
of Hertha.
NOTES

1See Chapter I of this study, pp. 27-31, for a discussion of William Blake as a statement of aestheticism.

2William Blake, ed. Hugh J. Luke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1940), p. 190. All citations are to this text.


8Jordan, p. 104.

9Ibid., p. 102.

10Fletcher, p. 35.

11Poems and Ballads, Atalanta in Calydon, ed. Morse Peckham (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 11. 65, 94-96). All citations to Poems and Ballads, Atalanta in Calydon, and Notes on Poems and Reviews are to this text.

12Jordan, p. 105.

14. Fletcher, p. 35.


17. Mathews, p. 38.


19. Fletcher, p. 36.


24. Ibid., p. 355.


26. Ibid., p. 44.


33 Ibid.


In a letter to W. M. Rossetti, dated October 9, 1866, Swinburne described "A Song of Italy," the poem he was currently writing and he added:

After all, in spite of jokes and perversities—malgré ce cher Marquis et ces foutus journaux—it is nice to have something to love and believe in as I do in Italy. It was only Gabriel [D. G. Rossetti] and his followers in art (l'art pour l'art) who for a time frightened me from speaking out; for ever since I was fifteen I have been equally and unalterably mad—tete montee, as my Mother says—about this article of faith; you may ask any tutor or schoolfellow.

The classmate best qualified to support his claim was John Nichol, the founder of Old Mortality, whom Swinburne met at Oxford in 1856. Nichol reinforced Swinburne's atheism and republicanism, and under his influence in 1857 Swinburne composed "Ode to Mazzini." Widely traveled, Nichol had met Mazzini, and he indoctrinated Swinburne into the cause of the Risorgimento. Georges Lafourcade says, "As far as the
problem of abstract liberty and of foreign nationalities is concerned, Nichol was Swinburne's tutor—almost a prophet. 2
However, as we have seen and as Swinburne explains in his letter, from 1857 to 1866 the poet turned to other mentors—Rossetti, Gautier, Baudelaire, de Sade.

Nevertheless, there is an undercurrent of his Italian interests even in the works which celebrate aestheticism through the archetype of the *femme fatale*. Both Redgie in *A Year's Letters* and Bertie in *Lesbia Brandon* share Swinburne's enthusiasm for political freedom and two of the poems in *Poems and Ballads* express the same concern for liberty. In *A Year's Letters* Redgie becomes an admirer of Hugo, as Swinburne did at Eton. Captain Harewood disapproves of Redgie's republicanism, but Redgie remains devoted. He discusses his feelings for Hugo:

As to me, and I suppose all men who are not spoilt or fallen stolid are much the same, when I see a great goodness I know it—when I meet my betters I want to worship them at once, and I can always tell when any one is born my better. When I fall in with a nature and power above me I cannot help going down before it . . . I feel my betters in my blood; they send a heat and sting all through one at first sight. And the delight of giving in when one does get sight of them is beyond words; it seems to me all the same whether they beat one in wisdom and great gifts and power, or in having been splendid soldiers or great exiles, or just in being beautiful. 3
The passage clearly reveals how the psychological propensity for submission to the *femme fatale* can also be transferred to another dominant figure. Thwarted by Lady Midhurst's machinations in his romance with Clara, Redgie begins to shift his attention toward Hugo, who embodies his ideal of liberty. The *femme fatale*, after all, represents aesthetic freedom, so the movement toward political liberty, like the shift in archetypes which occurs in *Songs before Sunrise*, is less unexpected than it first seems.

In *Lesbia Brandon*, Swinburne's other autobiographical character, Bertie, has two meetings with Attilio Mariani, an Italian exile who had been wounded in 1849 fighting with Garibaldi to defend Rome from the French forces of Louis Napoleon. Mazzini had been at Garibaldi's side in this fight and made a daring escape to England following the battle. Swinburne describes Mariani's effect upon Bertie:

His influence over young Seyton was great from the moment of their meeting, and became in time immeasurable . . . His [Bertie's] creed for a certain time might have been resumed in four words: "I believe in Mariani." At his age he might have worshipped worse gods. His idol, if not superhuman in stature of intellect, was wholly pure and flawless . . . That life, it is certain, he [Mariani] was ready to lay down at any moment in any manner, if that could serve or avail the cause of Italian unity. He was called a radical Republican and would not on any terms accept the presence or supervision of a king.
It is obvious from this passage that not only does Bertie share Swinburne's political opinions and devotion to an exiled Italian leader but also that Swinburne believes that this idolatry is essentially a healthy, inspiring emotion, an implicit contrast to Bertie's destructive fascination for Lesbia. Mariani's (Mazzini's) emphasis on personal sacrifice for Italian unity and liberty will later sound throughout *Songs before Sunrise*. Formerly a masochistic requirement of the lover of the *femme fatale*, this worship will become an essential element of devotion to the Great Mother archetype in Swinburne's volume of political poems.

Even *Poems and Ballads*, however, contains two poems of hero-worship—"In Memory of Walter Savage Landor" and "To Victor Hugo." Swinburne greatly admired both poets for their calls for freedom. They, along with Shelley, Byron, and Whitman, provided Swinburne with artistic sanction for the reversal he was about to make in his own work. This movement can be clearly traced in his letters, and it can be easily explained by the mythic pattern Jung calls "The Battle for Deliverance from the Mother."

Nearly six months after Swinburne wrote to W. M. Rossetti describing "A Song of Italy," his reverential tribute to Mazzini, he met his hero at the home of Karl Blind. However, the patriot had already begun a correspondence with the poet, urging him to use his poetic gifts to further
Mazzini wrote to Swinburne on March 10, 1867, after he read the poet's "Ode on the Insurrection in Candia" (which supports freedom fighters in Crete). In the letter Mazzini demands that the poet abandon his exploration of eroticism and his fascination with the *femme fatale* in order to continue his celebration of liberty:

But now, arising, with the most admiring and communing impression, from the reading of your Ode on Greece, I cannot help writing a few words to tell you how grateful I felt at the time and how hopeful I feel now: hopeful that the power which [sic] is in you has found out its true direction and that, instead of compelling us merely to admire you, you will endeavour to transform us, to rouse the sleeping, to compel thought to embody itself into Action. That is the mission of Art; and yours. . . . Don't lull us to sleep with songs of egotistical love and idolatry of physical beauty: shake us, reproach, encourage, insult, brand the cowards, hail the martyrs, tell us all that we have a great Duty to fulfill, and that, before it is fulfilled, Love is an undeserved blessing, Happiness a blasphemy, belief in God a lie. Give us a series of "Lyrics for the Crusade." Have not our praise, but our blessing. You can if you choose.

Mazzini, of course, hoped to enlist Swinburne in his campaign to propagandize for Italian unification, and he asked that the poet sacrifice his aestheticism and write didactic verse to promote the cause. This idea would have been anathema to Swinburne a few years earlier, and he found it a bit disturbing even after being introduced to Mazzini.
The meeting was all he had envisioned, and he described it rapturously in a letter to his mother:

The minute he came into the room, which was full of people, he walked straight up to me (who was standing in my place and feeling as if I trembled all over) and said "I know you," and I did as I always thought I should and really meant not to do if I could help—wept down on my knees and kissed his hand.6

Nevertheless, a month later, May 7, 1867, he wrote his mother that he hesitated to accede to Mazzini's demands:

He is always immensely kind and good to me, but all he wants is that I should dedicate and consecrate my writing power to do good and serve others exclusively; which I can't. If I tried, I should lose my faculty of verse even.7

But by early October Swinburne was reconciled to the project and busily writing the poems for Songs before Sunrise. As he explained to W. M. Rossetti, he believed he was emulating Hugo and Whitman:

I think I may some time accomplish a book of political and national poems as complete and coherent in its way as the chatiments or Drum Taps ... There is room for a book of songs of the European revolution, and if sung as thoroughly as Hugo or as Whitman would sing them, they ought to ring for some time to some distance of echo.8

By the time the volume was completed, Swinburne was
pleased with his poetic commitment; he had overcome any lingering doubts about using his verse to inculcate republicanism. Consequently, he sent Mazzini a copy of "Dedication: To Joseph Mazzini," the first poem in Songs before Sunrise; then he quoted Mazzini's response to W. M. Rossetti in a letter dated March 31, 1869:

Mazzini writes for me to a third person in return for a little poem of dedication I had forwarded to him. "I do not write to him because the dedication is to me. But the fact beautiful lines will strengthen, if there be need, the firmness of my actual purpose: they must be prophetic or a branding reproach." . . . "If there be need"—Par exemple! Anyhow you see my poetry is "art and part" in the immediate action of the Republic having given this feeling so practical a minute to the leader.

More than thirty years later, in his essay "Changes of Aspect," composed between 1904 and 1906, Swinburne was still defending the didacticism of Songs before Sunrise:

Humble and futile as the attempt may have been, I have written a book of verse which from beginning to end is devoted to the expression and inculcation of principle and of faith, a book which above all others would incur the contemptuous condemnation of those actual or imaginary creatures who affirm that poetry must never be moral or didactic—that the poet must put off his singing robes when he aspires to become a preacher or a prophet.10

As we have seen, between 1857 and 1866 Swinburne himself was
among "those actual or imaginary creatures," but he came to believe that during those years he had been too heavily influenced by the proponents of aestheticism. On August 10, 1887, he admitted to Theodore Watts that he had been overly adamant about the doctrine of art for art's sake:

I was just at that time [the early 1860's], with regard to literary and ethical questions, too much under the morally identical influence of Gabriel Gautier and of Theophile Rossetti not to regret—and feel it only proper to express that regret, with or without flippancy—that a work of imagination should be coloured or discoloured by philanthropy, and shaped or distorted by a purpose. 11

Swinburne interchanges the names of his mentors to stress the similar effect their theories had upon him, and implicit in these retrospective remarks is the idea that art, which must be beautiful or it is not art, can also be didactic. This theory underlies Songs before Sunrise, a volume whose central figure is the archetype of the Great Mother.

In Songs before Sunrise the femme fatale, the Terrible Mother, and the androgyne have disappeared; in their place Swinburne pursues the ideal of the Great Mother. Poems and Ballads had closed with the nihilistic death wish to lose consciousness in the oceanic abyss of the Terrible Mother, as an escape from the erotic torment of prostration before the femme fatale. Indeed, the last line of the
Neumann's study The Great Mother rests upon the theories of Jung, who calls this submersion in the Terrible Mother for rebirth "The Battle for Deliverance from the Mother." Neumann's study The Great Mother rests upon the theories of Jung, who calls this submersion in the Terrible Mother for rebirth "The Battle for Deliverance from the Mother."14

Jung summarizes the psychological pattern:

Whenever some great work is to be accomplished before which a man recoils, doubtful of his strength, his libido streams back to the fountainhead—and that is the dangerous moment when the issue hangs between annihilation and new life. For if the libido gets stuck in the wonderland of this inner world,
then for the upper world man is nothing but a shadow, he is already moribund or at least seriously ill. But if the libido manages to tear itself loose and force its way up again, something like a miracle happens: the journey to the underworld was a plunge into the fountain of youth, and the libido, apparently dead, wakes to renewed fruitfulness.15

Jung then explains that this introversion and regressive descent into the mother occurs only "when a new orientation and a new adaptation are necessary, [so that] the constellated archetype is always the primordial image of the need of the moment."16 That is, the new growth of consciousness that results from the descent and subsequent struggle for rebirth coincides with the constellation of a new, energizing archetype in the unconscious. In Poems and Ballads, Swinburne had turned from the femme fatale to seek oblivion and death in the Terrible Mother (sea, underworld); however, this regression fortunately presages a renewal, the formation of a new archetype, the Great Mother, who heralds growth. The Terrible Mother becomes the Great Mother when she nurtures as well as destroys. Neumann explains:

But it is inherent in the mysteries of the Great Goddess and in her spiritual character that she grants life only through death, and development toward new birth only through suffering...

(p. 279)

Unlike the Good Mother who is totally beneficent, the Great
Mother exacts sacrifice for the rewards she grants. Hence, in *Songs before Sunrise* the Great Mother—whether she be Mother Italy, Liberty, Hertha, Mater Dolorosa, Mater Triumphant—demands, like Mazzini, sacrifice from her devots.

Without recognizing the archetypal pattern underlying the process, critics have remarked upon the demarcation of *Songs before Sunrise* in Swinburne's literary career. W. B. D. Henderson comments upon the growth he sees in the volume of political poems:

> Here art and morality, love of beauty and moral passion go hand in hand. And the love of beauty is the nobler because allied with a virile inspiration . . . The difference between the two creeds, between the two series of poems of which they are counterparts, is the difference between Swinburne's youth and his maturity.

T. Earle Welby sees the same change:

> In relation to her [Liberty], and nowhere else, can he be wholly himself. In this book alone he attains to completeness of life; with much in him transformed but nothing excluded or repressed.

The "transformative character" of the Great Mother archetype accounts not only for the optimism and energy of *Songs before Sunrise* but also for one of the dominant patterns of imagery in the volume and for the disappearance of the androgyne.
The title of the work literally implies that Europe sleeps in the night of tyranny and repression which precedes the dawn, the glory of achieved freedom and republicanism. In the light of Jung's analysis of the symbols frequently associated with rebirth and development of masculine consciousness, Swinburne could not have chosen a more appropriate unifying metaphor for his book. Jung explains that in rising the sun "tears himself away from the enveloping womb of the sea" just as "the son tears himself loose from the mother," even though he carries within himself "a deadly longing for the abyss."\(^{19}\) The son, like the sun, must rise; "he must fight and sacrifice his longing for the past in order to rise to his own heights."\(^{20}\) Hence, as Swinburne's letters reveal, we see him turning from aestheticism and making a new commitment to a former interest, the crusade of Mazzini. Moreover, Swinburne's instinctual use of this archetypal symbolism is clear when the last line of Poems and Ballads, "Night sinks on the sea," is juxtaposed to the anticipated sunrise in his next volume.

This successful struggle against the death wish also makes the androgyne unnecessary. Jung says that the hermaphrodite derives from the child archetype, who is, in turn, necessarily still attached to the mother in an unconscious, instinctive state.\(^{21}\) Thus, frequent appearances of the symbol point "to a goal not yet reached."\(^{22}\) Jung further
explains that "the primordial being becomes the distant goal of man's self-development, having been from the very beginning a projection of his unconscious wholeness." When greater consciousness is achieved, the symbol loses its dynamism; it is no longer an energizing archetype, and its frequency diminishes or disappears. Thus, in *Songs before Sunrise* the androgyne is, at most, an indistinct presence, barely implied in the encompassing life force of Bertha who subsumes both male and female, humanity.

Indeed, Swinburne received support for his humanitarian interests, for his atheism, for didacticism, and for the symbol of the Great Mother from a new nineteenth-century system of thought—the Positivism of Auguste Comte. Cecil Lang, John A. Cassidy, and Hoxie Neale Fairchild have either mentioned or briefly discussed the influence of Comte's system on *Songs before Sunrise*. Positivism was developed by Auguste Comte in France and then promulgated in England by G. E. Lewes, Harriet Martineau, Frederick Harrison, and by one of Swinburne's heroes, John Stuart Mill, who published *Auguste Comte and Positivism* in 1865. According to Walter E. Houghton, "Perhaps the most important development in nineteenth-century intellectual history was the extension of scientific assumptions and methods from the physical world to the whole life of men." In the *Cours de Philosopie Positive*, in six volumes published between 1830 and
1842, Auguste Comte systematized his philosophy in terms of the scientific method. He stated that the theological and metaphysical chimeras of the past were obsolete stages in man's progress to the Positivist era. But only two of his central theories bear heavily upon *Songs before Sunrise*: first, his Law of the Three Stages of Intellectual Progress, with its corollary, man's moral, spiritual, and intellectual evolution, and second, his deification of humanity. Both of these ideas carry implications for the artist which coincide with Swinburne's goal in *Songs before Sunrise*.

Comte's work began when he served as secretary to Henri de Saint-Simon, whose views of recurrent historical epochs Comte originally adopted. However, he augmented this theory with his own evolutionary doctrine of the history of ideas. To Comte, man's thought had passed through two phases and was entering the third, or positive, stage. The English Positivist John Henry Bridges has summarized Comte's tenets:

That law was the well known law of three stages; this tendency of the mind to resort in the first place [theological] to fictitious explanations of phenomena derived from the attribution of its own internal emotions to outward objects; to limit itself in the last place [Positive] to finding out laws, or general facts of coexistence and succession; and, between the first stage and the last, to pass through a set of intermediate stages called by Comte metaphysical, in which abstractions and long, obscure words
were made to do duty for facts and realities.27

Obviously, these theories would be attractive to Swinburne, who in William Blake had attacked all theistic systems.

Moreover, the implication of Comte's three stages is that man himself is evolving into a higher being as he outgrows the superstitions of priests and the tyrannical rule of kings which had dominated past eras and which had limited his freedom and personal development. The theory of man's spiritual, moral, and intellectual evolution was a cornerstone of Positivism. Complementing the Victorian emphasis on striving, it resembles Tennyson's apotheosis of the dead Hallam into a more highly evolved spiritual being in In Memoriam. Of course, Hallam's evolution occurs beyond the grave, whereas Positivism emphasizes man's evolution on this side of the grave. Positivism is, after all, a materialistic philosophy, and In Memoriam a statement of faith. Mill's Auguste Comte and Positivism elaborates Comte's belief in the "ideal human beings yet to come."28 Moreover, he refers to the theory in On Liberty, where he mentions a time when "mankind shall have entered a stage of intellectual advancement which at present seems at an incalculable distance."29 Swinburne admired On Liberty. As early as 1859 he owned a copy, and on October 9, 1866, he wrote to W. M. Rossetti: "I greatly admire his [Mill's] 'Liberty.'"30 In 1874 his
statement was stronger: "I never had the honor to meet him, but ever since his Liberty came out it has been the textbook of my creed as to public morals and political faith." Some years later, the poet included the essay on his list of the fifty most precious in literature.

Through his idea of the three stages, Comte dethroned both the gods of polytheism and the god of monotheism so that man could take his rightful place in the world as ruler of his own destiny; Comte enshrined a new deity—Man. Swinburne affirms his belief in "Hymn to Man" and throughout other poems in Songs before Sunrise. Comte says, "In a word, Humanity definitely substitutes herself for God. . . ." Moreover, he believed that man's egoism would become subordinated to his altruism through service to the new god. According to John E. McGee, this deity was "an aggregate which he [Comte] designated as Humanity and personified as a Great Being—a Great Goddess, at once good, wise, and powerful, from whom we receive all the blessings we enjoy." G. H. Lewes also described the figure:

Humanity is thus the great collective Life of which human beings are the individuals; it must be conceived as having an existence apart from human beings, just as we conceive each human being to have an existence apart from, though dependent on, the individual cells of which his organism is composed. The Collective Life is in Comte's system the Etre Supreme; the only one we can know,
therefore the only one we can wor-
ship. 34

Comte obviously symbolized his new goddess in the archetype
of the Great Mother, and this synthesizing figure, greater
than the sum of her parts, bears a striking resemblance to
Hertha.

Finally, both Comte's central ideas—the three stages
of intellectual development and deification of humanity—
contain implications for the artist. Since the Positivist
conception of human evolution denies the personal immor-
tality of a Christian afterlife, Comte believed that a man
could exist after death only in the memory of others. To
Comte men possess "two successive lives": the first is con-
scious, temporary, bodily, and "objective"; the second is
unconscious and permanent. It leaves "each one to exist
only in the heart and mind of others, [and] deserves the
name of subjective." 35 This idea stresses secular duty and
service to humanity in order for one to gain subjective im-
mortality in the memory of others. In addition, as Mill
points out, the artist's role is clear:

He [Comte] not only personally appreci-
ciates, but rates high in the moral-
value, the creations of poets and
artists in all departments, deeming
them, by their mixed appeal to the
sentiments and the understanding, ad-
mirably fitted to educate the feelings
of abstract thinkers, and enlarge the
intellectual horizon of people of the world.36

Obviously, the artist was to serve humanity by debunking outdated systems and theologies and by inculcating the new catechism of Positivism, a societal role similar to the political one Mazzini envisioned for Swinburne as the poet of the crusade for Italian unity.

Thus, many factors coalesce in Songs before Sunrise: Swinburne's own psychological growth, his recoil from dogmatic aestheticism, the impassioned appeals of Mazzini, and the Positivism of Comte. The result is forty-two undeniably sincere, but repetitive, and, for the most part, forgettable poems. Unfortunately, the Great Mother as muse does not inspire Swinburne to create works that are as powerful and as artistically successful as those inspired by the destructive femme fatale. In order to explore this shift in the archetypes— from femme fatale, Terrible Mother, and androgyne to Great Mother—it is necessary to examine representative poems. The Great Mother appears in most of the poems in various embodiments: Mother Italy, Mother Earth, Mother England, Liberty, Mater Dolorosa and Triumphalis, St. Catherine, the French Republic, Signora Cairoli. But her most important appearances occur in the most artistically successful works in the volume: "Super Flumina Babylonis," "The Pilgrims," "On the Downs," and "Hertha." First,
however, the "Prelude" deserves attention, for, like "The Ballad of Life" and "The Ballad of Death" in *Poems and Ballads*, it announces the themes of *Songs before Sunrise*.

In the "Prelude" Swinburne allegorizes his renunciation of passionate devotion to the *femme fatale* and announces his new poetic commitment to the cause of liberty. "Youth," the poet, sits and sings by "Time," who teaches him "truth." The poet rejects "Delight whose germ grew never grain,/ And passion dyed in its own pain." The alliteration of the g's in the words signifying growth, a growth negated by "never," reminds the reader of the sterility and futility of infatuation with the *femme fatale*. The idea is reinforced by the alliterative linking of "passion" to "pain" and "Delight" to the pun in "dyed." Youth then stands and treads down "dreams of bitter sleep and sweet," the desire for nihilistic oblivion in the sea of the Terrible Mother which dominates the close of *Poems and Ballads*. Instead, the lassitude of the enervated lover has dissipated; Youth stands "and his spirit's meat/ Was freedom, and his staff was wrought to strength, and his cloak woven of thought" (p. 70). No longer does he sink into night; rather, "His soul is even with the sun," the sun of heightened consciousness and truth, the light of freedom and republicanism. He accepts the Mazzini and Positivist call to duty for the deity man, "Because, man's soul is man's God still" (p. 73);
and he pledges that his work will become part of the historical, temporal movement toward the dawn of liberty:

we run
With girded loins our lamplit race,
And each from each takes heart of grace
And spirit till his twin be done,
And light of face from each man's face
In whom the light of trust is one.
(p. 74)

He has learned to use time for productive effort, to help others to escape the shackles of religious and political bondage, just as he has freed himself from psychological bondage to destructive ideals:

A little time that we may fill
Or with such good works or such ill
As loose the bonds or make them strong
Wherein all manhood suffers wrong.
(p. 75)

At the close of the poem, the poet imagines standing on a hill at dawn and looking out over the sea:

These are who rest not; who think long
Till they as from a hill
At the sun's hour of morning song,
Known of souls only, and those souls free,
The sacred spaces of the sea.
(p. 75)

The Jungian pattern is clear: the sun rises from the sea; the poet/youth/son has also arisen. No longer does he vicariously dwell within the fevered Venusberg, nor does he
long for the underworld, for the depths of the sea, nor does he exist in the darkness of night. In the light of daybreak, he is elevated on a hill, figuratively a spiritual ascent, and he calmly gazes at the sea as an emblem of freedom, not as a womb/tomb. With new strength and commitment, he is ready to sing the songs of the crusade.

One of these lyrics, "Super Flumina Babylonis," a plea for anticlerical republicanism, reinterprets two Biblical passages, Psalm 137 and Christ's resurrection on Easter morning, in terms of Italy. The children of Italy/Israel sit "By the waters of Babylon" and weep over the bondage of their mother to the repressive tyranny of the Pope/Babylon. But "with morning song/ Came up the light/ . . . And thy sons were dejected not any more" (p. 102). Swinburne then shifts to the New Testament theme, and the angel of Italy's resurrection appears to her children to reassure them:

And her body most beautiful, and her shining head,
These are not here;
For your mother, for Italy, is not surely dead:
Have ye no fear.

(p. 105)

Nevertheless, like the Great Mother, she demands sacrifice of her sons:

Unto each man his handiwork, unto each his crown
The just Fate gives;
Whoso takes the world's life on him and on his own lays down,
He, dying so, lives.  
(p. 106)

The Christian promise of life after death for the devout and righteous is reinterpreted here. Italy's children, like Christians, must abnegate selfish goals and use their "handiwork" (to the poet, his poetry) for the cause. But the freedom of the reborn mother is their goal, not heaven, and they can only achieve the Positivist "subjective" immortality "On the mountains of memory . . . In all men's eyes" (p. 106). The children receive sustenance from the thought of the renewed mother: "So the son of her suffering, that from breasts nigh dead/ Drew life, not death" (p. 107). Escape from captivity seems certain in the dawn of the arisen goddess: "That the waters of Babylon should no longer flow/ And men see light" (p. 107). With these lines the poem closes, once again continuing the light imagery which illuminates the volume. Moreover, the four-line stanzas organically echo the meaning of the lyric. Rhyming abab in alternating lines of six and two feet, the lines are basically iambic, although Swinburne uses substitutions in each stanza. The unbalanced lines produce an effect of expansion and contraction within each stanza, ending with the contraction of the last stanza when the waters of captivity cease and light appears. Although Swinburne is describing a river, his rhythm echoes the ebb and flow of
the sea, the only body of water he ever really depicts. Here the ebb of the river of repression coincides with the end of the poem and with the renewed flow of the milk of freedom from the breasts of the arisen Mother Italy.

In "The Pilgrims" Swinburne uses his skills as a dramatist to construct a dialogue. Samuel C. Chew describes the poem:

> It is a colloquy between l'homme sensuel moyen, mindful of his own cares and pleasures, and the Pilgrims, devotees of their Lady of Liberty, leaving all things for her sake and content to wait and watch and work.\(^{38}\)

The underlying motif of the poem is the pilgrimage, the religious journey fraught with pain and sacrifice, to the shrine of liberty—a spiritual ideal which the materialistic, hedonistic questioner cannot comprehend. He asks: "Who is your lady of love?," "Is she a queen, having great gifts to give?," "Hath she on earth no place of habitation?" (p. 170). Moreover, he observes that the pilgrims sing "gladly at once and sadly" (p. 170). Of course they do, for their "lady of love," their "queen" is the Great Mother, giving and demanding at once:

> that whoso hath seen her shall not live
> Except he serve her sorrowing, with strange pain,
> Travail and bloodshedding and bitterer tears;
> And when she bids die he shall surely die.
> (p. 170)
In these lines the alliteration of the aspirant, sibilant, bilabial, and dental consonants musically links the Great Mother Liberty and her pilgrims (her, he, her, she, he) to the common ground of the sacrifice (sorrowing, strange pain, travail, bloodshedding, bitterer tears, bids, shall surely) that they must offer her. However, she is also nurturing and sustaining with her "divine/ Face and clear eyes of faith and fruitful breast" (p. 171). She offers freedom and inspiration to the pilgrims' souls, for she is not a physical incarnation but a spiritual force, a concept the questioner cannot comprehend: "For if in the inward soul she hath no place,/ In vain they cry unto her" (p. 170). She is an internalized ideal for the pilgrims, and they must work to enshrine her externally by embodying her spirit in democratic human institutions. Thus, the pilgrims reject hedonistic abandonment to the "fair soft present" which the questioner advocates, and they overcome the desire for nihilistic sleep:

And surely more than all things sleep were sweet,
   Than all things save the inexorable desire
      Which whoso knoweth shall neither faint nor weep.

(p. 172)

Strengthened by "the inexorable desire" for freedom, the pilgrims continue their sacrificial journey, content in the knowledge that through their continued quest those who
follow will dwell in the light of liberty: "And we men bring death lives by night to sow,/ That man may reap and eat and live by day" (p. 173).

The speaker in "On the Downs" must achieve the belief and faith which the pilgrims already possess. The poem is a miniature version of the pattern of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, for the speaker, like Teufelsdröckh, must move from the nihilism of the Everlasting No through the Centre of Indifference to the Everlasting Yea. Moreover, the affirmation of the latter is signaled by the light of the sun, the rebirth image of both works. At first, the speaker stands on the downs overlooking the sea, but the world he observes is colorless, devoid of meaning, beauty, and life:

Through wind-worn heads of heath and stiff
Stems blossomless and stark
With dry sprays dark,

I send mine eyes out as for news
Of comfort that all these refuse.
(p. 252)

Spiritually desolate and alone, he expresses his hopelessness in language that echoes a specific line—"And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye"—from Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode," as well as the isolation and pain of that poem:

By footless ways and sterile went
My thought unsatisfied, and bent
With blank unspeculative eyes
On the untracked sands of discontent
Where watched of helpless skies,
Life hopeless lies.

(p. 253)

His soul looks in vain for light, but it finds only inhumanity and tyranny: "And saw men laughing scourge mankind,/
Unsmitten by the rod/ Of any God" (p. 253); "And my soul heard the songs and groans/ That are about and under thrones" (p. 254). At its spiritual nadir, the soul weeps until it hears the voice of Mother Earth, the Great Mother figure who admonishes the soul for losing hope that the life force of freedom will ultimately prevail:

The wise word of the secret earth
Who knows what life and death are worth,
And how no help and no control
Can speed or stay things come to birth

With all her tongues of life and death,
With all her bloom and blood and breath
From all years dead and all things done,
In the ear of man the mother saith,
"There is no God, O son,
If thou be none."

(p. 255)

The alliteration of the bilabials in bloom, blood, and breath stresses the generative force the Earth Mother embodies, the life previously missing from the speaker's subjectively perceived landscape. Furthermore, "blood" signifies the sacrifice demanded for the inexorable progress of freedom. Man, as Comte decreed, must become god; he
alone can dethrone the tyrants and break the rods with which men scourge one another. Like Shelley's Prometheus, he must unchain himself. But like Teufelsdröckh, he must overcome passivity and actively serve duty, in this case liberty and, more specifically, as the close of the poem reveals, Italian unification. The Great Mother blesses, encourages, and inspires, but she demands service. The speaker is renewed by her words, and his spiritual rebirth is, like Teufelsdröckh's, projected externally. Through the dark, bleak, lifeless scene breaks the sun, and the world reverberates with color, here the colors of the Italian tricolor flag—red, green, and white:

And the sun smote the clouds and slew,
And from the sun the sea's breath blew,
And white waves laughed and turned and fled
The long green heaving sea-field through,
And on them overhead
The sky burnt red.

(p. 256)

The speaker figuratively recognizes his duty; and his rebirth, a legacy of Mother Earth, is symbolized in the last lines of the poem by the dominant image of Songs before Sunrise, the rising sun: "And with divine triumphant awe/
My spirit moved within me saw/ . . . Time's deep dawn rise"
(p. 257). The Great Mother renews the speaker's will to live and act, unlike the Terrible Mother and the femme fatale, both of whom sap strength and eventually enervate
body and soul.

However, as powerful as she is and as successful as the poem "On the Downs" is, the Earth Mother depicted there pales before "Hertha," the finest poem in Songs before Sunrise and, in Swinburne's opinion, one of his best works. On January 15, 1870, he wrote to W. M. Rossetti:

Yesterday was a good day for me, for just before your parcel came I had completed and copied out my Hertha—the poem which if I were to die tonight I should choose to be represented and judged by. . . . It has the most in it of my deliberate thought and personal feeling or faith, and I think it as good in execution and impulse of expression as the best of my others.40

His letters reveal that he had been working on the poem for at least two and a half months, for on October 26, 1869, he sent W. M. Rossetti several stanzas of, in his own words, his "mystic atheistic democratic anthropologic poem called 'Hertha.'"41 In another letter to W. M. Rossetti, dated January 8, 1870, he calls Hertha the "All Mother" and "a good republican." Then he explains some of the thought behind the symbol:

the best stanzas of "Hertha" strike such a blow at the very root of Theism that, I can confidently assure you, compared to them my chief chorus in Atalanta might have been signed by Dr. Watts [a hymnist], and Anactoria by Dr. Keble. I have broken the back (not only of God, but)
of the poem in question . . . as it was not at all evident why the principle of growth, whence and by which all evil not less than all good proceeds and acts, should prefer liberty to bondage, Mazzini to Buonaparte. . . .

Swinburne's careful craftsmanship has reaped accolades from his critics, who have plumbed the literature of Scandinavia, Greece, India, France, Israel, Italy, Germany, England, and America for its sources. Their searches reaffirm Swinburne's goal—to create an all-encompassing Great Mother who represents, as Fairchild says, "literally everything." He continues:

We must turn to Hertha, however, for a complete setting-forth of the "God = Freedom = Man = Earth" equation . . . In this remarkable poem Hertha is not merely external matter . . . she is the World Soul [and] she is also the physical universe.

Among the myriad sources he cites are both Mazzini and the Great Being of Comte.

Swinburne takes her name from the Teutonic earth goddess, the equivalent of Demeter, and her dominant form is that of the world-ash, the Scandinavian tree Yggdrasill, whose blossoms are humans ("the flesh-coloured fruit of my branches") and whom both Neumann and Jung discuss as an important mythic symbol of the Great Mother. Hertha is the speaker in the poem, and her words are a stirring plea
to her children, humanity, to free themselves from the false, restrictive gods they have created, to abolish the tyrannical political systems they accept so that they can participate in the universal progress and liberty that flows through Hertha: "And my growth have no guerdon/ But only to grow" (p. 142). She is a unifying force, timeless, active, and living; she can kill and create:

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn;
Out of my man and woman, and wild-beast and bird;
before God was, I am.
(p. 137)

The imaginative presentation of Darwinism in this passage added to the implicit suggestion at its close—that she exists before God because God is simply a fallacious concept of man's—probably made Swinburne's Victorian audience uncomfortable, for, as he intended, the poem attacks theism. Moreover, one can see that the fertile vitality of Hertha, omnipresent in man and the universe, is echoed in the stanzas themselves, which move rapidly through four short lines, only to slow majestically in an over-long fifth. This building, breaking pattern suggests an eternal natural rhythm which flows through Hertha and, she hopes, through her children.

Therefore, she chides her offspring for their false
creeds and codes. Her speech reiterates the Positivist view of theology—that man has moved through polytheism to mono­theism (though some thinkers have advanced to the metaphysical stage), and that man must proceed to the Positivist era where he becomes god himself and destroys all systems that infringe upon his freedom:

Mother, not maker,
Born, and not made;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion,
she stirs not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith;
Give thou as I gave thee,
Thy life blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy fruit, and red fruit of thy death.

(pp. 139-40)

The reference to sacrifice for the Italian tricolor is obvious; Swinburne also repeats his light imagery. To ful­fill his destiny of freedom, man must escape the darkness of outmoded systems to emerge into the light of liberty, truth, and selfhood. Hertha admits that this progress is her hope: "I have need of you free/ As your mouths of mine
air;/ That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the
fruits of me fair" (p. 143). Furthermore, she sees that
"God trembles in heaven . . . For his twilight is come on
him"; in his place man will form "the beloved Republic" and
worship the god of the Positivist era--Humanity: "Man equal
and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I"
(pp. 144-45). "Hertha" is, then, a triumphant declaration
of the freedom, the joy, and the power man will feel when
he emulates the growth and force of the Great Mother, when
he overthrows restrictive creeds and institutions and as­
serts his birthright, as Hertha's child, to liberty. The
artist, too, is free in this environment to create without
fear of attack from the devotees of obsolete orthodoxies.
Swinburne sweeps his audience along through the rise and
fall of the stanzas and the universal references; his af­
fective persuasion equals, if not exceeds, the careful con­
ceptual argument he structures. According to the poet in
a letter to D. G. Rossetti, February 19, 1870, such was
his intention:

For instance in Hertha I have tried not
to get the mystic elemental side of the
poem, its pure and free imaginative part,
swamped by the promulgation of the double
doctrine, democratic and atheistic,
equality of men and abolition of gods.48

In these remarks we see balance returning to the
didacticism Swinburne had embraced when he accepted Mazzini's
plea to write lyrics for the crusade. Love of beauty was too deeply ingrained in Swinburne for him to renounce aestheticism permanently. He was too exquisitely sensitive to language and literature, even after renunciation of the *femme fatale*, not to demand that a literary work be beautiful. Thus, in 1872, one year after the publication of *Songs before Sunrise*, we find Swinburne asserting a balanced theory in his essay *Victor Marie Hugo*. He demands beauty as the hallmark of literary merit, but as in *Songs before Sunrise* he still maintains that political poems can exhibit this beauty:

The well-known formula of art for art's sake . . . has like other doctrines a true side to it and an untrue. Taken as an affirmative, it is a precious and everlasting truth. No work of art has any worth or life in it that is not done on the absolute terms of art . . . The rule of art is not the rule of morals. . . . Therefore, as I have said elsewhere, the one primary requisite of art is artistic worth . . . We admit then that the worth of a poem has properly nothing to do with its moral meaning or design . . . but on the other hand we refuse to admit that art of the highest kind may not ally itself with moral or religious passion; with the ethics or the politics of a nation or an age . . . In a word, the doctrine of art for art's sake is true in the positive sense, false in the negative; sound as an affirmation, unsound as a prohibition.49

The spokesman for aestheticism speaks again, but he
enunciates his theory without strident denunciation of his opponents. He escaped destructive thralldom to the *femme fatale*, and he overcame the death wish embodied in the Terrible Mother. Swinburne finally constellated the archetype of the Great Mother and emerged from her dominance with a more balanced, mature vision of the possibilities of art and the role of the artist.
NOTES


8 "To W. M. Rossetti," October 6, [1867], Letter 222, Letters, I, p. 268.


13 The Great Mother, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955), p. 42. All further citations are to this text.

15 Ibid., pp. 292-93.

16 Ibid., pp. 293-94.


20 Ibid., p. 356.


22 Ibid., p. 174.

23 Ibid., p. 175.


30 "To W. M. Rossetti," October 9, [1866], Letter 149, Letters, I, p. 197.


34 Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences (London: Bohn, 1853), pp. 341-42.

35 Comte, Catechism, p. 55.

36 Mill, Positivism, p. 117.


41 "To W. M. Rossetti," October 26, [1869], Letter 316, Letters, II, p. 45.


43 See Fairchild, Religious Trends, Vol. IV, p. 449; Chew, Swinburne, p. 113; P. A. C. Wilson, "Indian and Mithraic Influences on Swinburne's Pantheism: 'Hertha' and 'A Nympholet,"" PLL, 8 (1972 Supplement), pp. 57-60.
45Ibid.
46Ibid., p. 445.
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