Swinburne and Wagner: Poetry and Music

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Statement of originality

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Abstract – Swinburne and Wagner: Poetry and Music

Several critics have proposed that Swinburne's poetry has an aesthetic relationship with the music of Richard Wagner, although previous studies, hampered by biographical errors and misinformation about Swinburne's understanding of music, have been able to suggest only tentative links. However, by building on these studies and through a series of close readings of Swinburne's 'Laus Veneris' (1866), *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), and lyrics from *A Century of Roundels* (1883), set alongside comparisons with Wagner's prose works and his operas *Tannhäuser* (1845/1861), *Die Meistersinger* (1868), and *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), this interdisciplinary study demonstrates the clear affinity of Swinburne's poetry with Wagner's music and suggests how it may have been directly influenced by Wagnerian musical performance.

In so doing, this thesis thoroughly re-examines biographical information concerning Swinburne's relationship with Paris Wagnerites such as Charles Baudelaire and Henri Fantin-Latour, re-evaluates the reception of Wagner's music in London during the 1850s and 60s (showing that Swinburne was likely to have been aware of Wagnerism's core principles), and greatly expands current knowledge concerning his friendships with Francis Hueffer, Edward Dannreuther, and George Powell, leading members of the London Wagner Society. It also seeks to rectify misinformation concerning Swinburne's own interest in music. Making use of previously overlooked archival material, it reassesses the impact of Swinburne's lyrics on the era's wider musical culture and highlights their importance within the Victorian and early twentieth-century musical repertoire.

Finally, in the light of this impact, this study repositions T. S. Eliot's infamous essay 'Swinburne as Poet' (1920), as an expression of anxiety concerning the importance of Wagner to Eliot's own Modernist aesthetics, and as an attack – in the terms of a nineteenth-century debate between Wagnerite exponents of 'programme music' and believers in objectified or 'absolute music' – on Swinburne's 'musical' dominance.

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List of Abbreviations

TSL – The Swinburne Letters, ed. by Cecil Y. Lang, 6 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959-1962)

UL – Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne, ed. by Terry L. Meyers, 3 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005)

RWPW – Richard Wagner's Prose Works, trans. by William Ashton Ellis, 8 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd, 1892-1899)

Haynes, *P&B – Poems and Ballads & Atalanta in Calydon*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (London: Penguin, 2000)

SCPW – Swinburne's Collected Poetical Works, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1924)

Note:

I have retained the original capitalization and italicization in all sources. This is particularly noticeable in Ashton Ellis's translation of Wagner's prose works, where words are continually emphasized, often without consistency.

Swinburne and Wagner: Poetry and Music

Introduction

It has long been known that an affinity exists between Swinburne's poetry and Wagner's music, but a full study of the relationship has never been made. Previous accounts have featured in general surveys of Wagner's effect on contemporary literature and art – where Wagner has been the focus – or in longer biographical works on Swinburne, which have mentioned the connection in passing. Such studies have tended to find only tentative links or made generalized comments on the potential relationship. Stoddard Martin's *Wagner to 'The Waste Land'* (1982), for example, states that Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* is 'musical throughout', and that 'Swinburne emphasizes the association of love and death with a musical onrush of words' akin to Wagner's operas.[1] Elliott Zuckerman makes similar suggestions when he tells us, perhaps pejoratively, that 'Swinburne's verbal excesses were like Wagner's musical excesses', and adds that 'criticism of Swinburne sounds like the criticism of Wagner'.[2] Biographical studies of Swinburne have managed to go beyond the mere association of 'sounding alike' by emphasizing the poet's friendships with leading Wagnerites, while more recent critical studies (McGann 1972, 2009) have made some intriguing suggestions as to how Swinburne's poetry might be related to the theories that underpin the composer's works. However, no study has yet analyzed the relationship between Swinburne and Wagner in a continuous and systematic way, nor has any study related Swinburne's poetry directly to the techniques and motivations of Wagner's music.

This study aims to examine a significant selection of Swinburne's poetry that treats the same subjects as Wagner's works, and to relate it, in both content and style, to the composer's operas and make connections with his wide-ranging and complex theoretical works. It will greatly expand current biographical knowledge concerning Swinburne's relationships with leading Wagnerites in England and Paris but will also stress how his reception of Wagner's works

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[1] Stoddard Martin, *Wagner to 'The Waste Land': A Study of the Relationship of Wagner to English Literature* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 28, 30.
[2] Elliott Zuckerman, *The First Hundred Years of Wagner's 'Tristan'* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 184

affected the writing of his poetry. Ultimately, this study argues that in the early part of his career, Swinburne – like Baudelaire – found great affinity with the composer and that *Poems and Ballads* paralleled Wagner's aims, in content, style, and purpose. It also argues that Swinburne's later poem, *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), was written directly in conversation with Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1865). However, while celebrating affinities, *Tristram* demonstrates a shift away from the fatalism at the heart of the Wagnerian world-view.

I begin with an analysis of current Swinburne-Wagner studies, and in chapter one, address and overturn the persistent idea that Swinburne was unmusical or that 'he lacked all capacity to appreciate and distinguish musical compositions by hearing them'.[3] The second chapter will then re-examine and significantly alter current knowledge of Wagner's reception in England in the 1850s and early 1860s. It will also place Swinburne's work at the heart of the same Franco-German strain of musical Romanticism that Wagner's music inhabits. Chapter three will examine Swinburne's friendships with leading Wagnerites in both Paris and London with regard to the origins of his poem 'Laus Veneris' (1866). Chapter four will give a detailed close reading of 'Laus Veneris', directly relating it to Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser* (1845/1861) and the musical techniques within it. The influence of Schopenhauer will then be discussed in relation to both works, before a concluding analysis of Swinburne's 'Hermaphroditus' (1866) with reference to Wagner's *Opera and Drama* (1851). Chapter five will examine the political nature of Swinburne's Wagnerism, showing the extraordinary correspondence of Wagner's philosophy of music with Mazzini's campaign for Italian nationalism. A detailed look at Swinburne's friendships during the 1870s with leading Wagnerites in London follows this, before chapter six demonstrates how *Tristram of Lyonesse* responds to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and analyzes the Wagnerism of *A Century of Roundels* (1883). Finally, chapter seven will re-examine T. S. Eliot's anti-Swinburne arguments in the light of nineteenth-century ideas about absolute music and Wagner's programme music.

[3] Edmund Gosse, 'Letter to the editor: Swinburne and Music', *Spectator*, 4636 (5 May 1917), 516.

Sex and the embryonic nature of Swinburne and Wagner studies

To begin my analysis of Wagner's relationship with Swinburne's poetry and criticism I shall review four previous studies and build on their findings: Clyde K. Hyder's 'Swinburne's "Laus Veneris" and the Tannhäuser Legend' (1930), Francis J. Sypher's 'Swinburne and Wagner' (1971), Jerome McGann's *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism* (1972), and his 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne: Poetry in the Condition of Music' (2009). In addition, I will make use of other critical works, such as Anne Walder's *Swinburne's Flowers of Evil: Baudelaire's Influence on 'Poems and Ballads' First Series* (1976), Stoddard Martin's brief look at Swinburne in his *Wagner to 'The Waste Land'*, and some recent music history and theory. Over the course of the following chapters I will also discuss a large range of unpublished letters and drawings, music manuscripts, records and other material that are related to Swinburne's engagement with the musical world of the late nineteenth century, making reference to Swinburne's poetry and criticism as necessary.

Hyder's article need not detain us long, as it is essentially interested, as its title suggests, with the wider influence of the Tannhäuser legend on Swinburne's 'Laus Veneris' and this poem's origins. Although he entertains the possibility of Wagner's influence, this is abruptly dismissed:

> Both Wagner's opera and Heine's *Tannhäuser* have been suggested as sources of Swinburne's knowledge. The former he could not have seen. Baudelaire's commentary reached him after his poem had been written. Wagner may be ignored, then, for the present.[4]

[4] Clyde K. Hyder, 'Swinburne's "Laus Veneris" and the Tannhäuser Legend', *PMLA,* 45.4 (December 1930), 1201-1213 (p. 1203).

One of the reasons for Hyder's dismissal is that he had no easy access to all existing Swinburne correspondence. However, Sypher's article, published nearly ten years after the publication of Lang's *The Swinburne Letters* (1959-62), draws a very different conclusion. By drawing together many of the references to Wagner from these letters, Sypher associates the names of important Wagnerites with Swinburne for the first time and he even attempts a nascent analysis of the influence of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* on Swinburne's own version of the Tristan legend, *Tristram of Lyonesse*.

In his *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism*, McGann looks at Swinburne's technical aspects and poetic form and highlights what he interprets as Wagnerian systems, such as the leitmotif, in Swinburne's *Erechtheus* (1876). He then develops this approach in his 2009 article, which, like Sypher's essay, was written in the wake of an edition of hitherto unpublished Swinburne correspondence, Terry L. Meyers's *Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (2005). However, it makes no use of this material, despite the assistance it provides to Swinburne and music studies. By building on his own work in *Experiment*, McGann then arrives at a much more specific view of Swinburne's incorporation of musical methods, which again he links directly to the Wagnerian leitmotif and ideas of the symphonic. He states that Swinburne was, in effect, intent on musicalizing his poetry towards the 'condition of music', to use Walter Pater's phrase, which he quotes in his article's title.[5]

Sypher and McGann, therefore, act as a corrective to Hyder's dismissal. Both discuss aspects of Wagner's critical works, such as his *Lettre sur la musique* – also known as *The Music of the Future* or in a German version as *Zukunftsmusik*. This was originally published in French in Wagner's *Quatre poèmes d'opera* (1861) – a copy of which Swinburne owned. McGann calls *The Music of the Future* 'a succinct account of Wagner's central ideas about the relation of music to poetry'.[6] Sypher also notes Swinburne's ownership of this text and adds – speculatively, but on

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[5] Walter Pater, 'The School of Giorgione', *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Literature*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 83-98 (p. 86).
[6] Jerome McGann, 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne: Poetry in the Condition of Music', *Victorian Poetry*, 47.4 (Winter 2009), 619-632 (p. 622). *Lettre sur la musique* was first translated into English in 1873 by Swinburne's friend, Edward Dannreuther, as *The Music of the Future: A Letter to M. Frédéric Villot by Richard Wagner*, trans. Edward Dannreuther (London: Schott &

the authority of Samuel Chew – that Swinburne 'must have read Wagner's complete text [of *Tristan und Isolde*] in his copy' of *Quatre poèmes* when writing his own *Tristram of Lyonesse.*[7]

However, despite Hyder's interest in sources, Sypher's comparison of content, and McGann's interest in formal musical patterning in Swinburne's poetry, it must be said that Swinburne-Wagner criticism is still embryonic. Its method involves asking whether Swinburne might have read Wagner's writings or heard his works and then making comparisons, mainly in terms of narrative content or by labelling Swinburne's technical experiments – in repetition, phrasing, etc. – as Wagnerian musical devices. In addition, the criticism tends to take Wagner's works and Swinburne's poetry as homogenous, unchanging wholes. No thought is given to the changes in Wagner's ideas after the publication of *The Music of the Future* (such as in his 1870 essay, 'Beethoven'), and McGann's method – at least in his 2009 article – takes a similar uniform approach to Swinburne's work, in that he studies these 'Wagnerian techniques' from 'Anactoria' (1866) to 'A Nympholept' (1891), alongside the claim that 'The "scheme of music and modulation [*sic*]" that Swinburne deployed in "Anactoria" and *Tristram of Lyonesse* is latent in all his verse. A similar musical structure can be tracked in *Erechtheus*'.[8] This implies that there is little – if any – development in Swinburne's attitude to Wagner during his career, and risks conflating all Swinburne's poems into a series of comparable, if not identical patterns, which are, perhaps, 'borrowed' from Wagner.

There is little nuance in these critical appraisals, not least because an extremely limited sample of Wagner's work is used for comparison. Sypher does not discuss the possible connection between Swinburne's poetry and Wagner's music and concentrates on highlighting

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Co., 1873). As the text is known by multiple names, for convenience I will hereafter call it by the name given by Dannreuther (*The Music of the Future*). This should not be confused with Wagner's similarly titled *The Art-work of the Future* (1849).

[7] Francis J. Sypher, 'Swinburne and Wagner', *Victorian Poetry*, 9.1/2 (Spring – Summer, 1971), 165-183 (p. 176). Sypher quotes Chew as stating that Swinburne's and Wagner's versions of the Tristan myth 'show parallels […which are] "astonishingly close if they are ascribed to coincidence only"', although he adds that Chew 'does not specify which passages he has in mind'. For Chew's comments, see Samuel C. Chew, *Swinburne* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1929), p. 168. *Quatre poèmes* contains the libretti of *The Flying Dutchman* (1843), *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin* (1850), and *Tristan und Isolde*.

[8] McGann, 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne', p. 629. This misquotes *TSL*, II, 74, and should read 'scheme of movement and modulation'.

biographical possibilities and plot. McGann uses *The Music of the Future* but does not respond to the operas themselves or to Wagner's other considerable and, arguably, more important theoretical works. Likewise, in his *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism*, the idea of the leitmotif is raised, but he gives no musical examples or analysis of what this might mean within music and so its application to poetry seems fragile. Instead a leitmotif comes to suggest patterning or rather cloudy notions of poetry as 'musical notation'. For example, McGann's speaker 'Kernahan' talks of the 'Wagnerian principle of leitmotif', but he does not define what this is, nor does he seem to understand that a leitmotif is more a practical action within Wagner's music, a 'gesture' that is, or a musical motion with a certain meaning, rather than a principle.[9]

In contrast, I will not spend time seeking Wagnerian leitmotifs in Swinburne's work. Music does not carry semantic information within it (except that which has been attached to it by convention, etc.), but Wagner attempted to create semantic signification within his operas so that a composer might give 'voice to that which has remained untold', or, as he put it more prosaically in *Opera and Drama*, 'Music cannot think: but she can materialize thoughts […]. A musical motive (*Motiv*) can produce a definite impression on the Feeling, inciting it to function akin to a Thought'.[10] A short musical phrase, then, might mean 'jealousy' or 'revenge' and so become a 'motif' to 'lead' an audience's understanding. Poetry, on the contrary, carries semantic knowledge within it as words. It has no need of the leitmotif. However, it may wish to create semantic suggestions through sound patterning, but poets have been doing this from before Wagner's time, and it would seem a very generalized activity trying to indicate this or that pattern as being 'Wagnerian'. Instead, I intent to concentrate on identifiable characteristics of Wagner's music (that differentiate it from, say, Beethoven or Offenbach), which were noticed by contemporary theorists and musicologists or are discussed in Wagner's prose works, and then see how these actions or 'gestures' and their associated theories are also apparent and find voice in Swinburne's verse.

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[9] Jerome McGann, *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1972), pp. 121, 119.
[10] Wagner, *The Music of the Future*, p. 47, and 'Opera & Drama', *RWPW*, II, 329.

All of these previous evaluations, moreover, fail to draw what is perhaps the most obvious comparison between Wagner and Swinburne, and the area of most fruitful study – that of their shared interest, expression, and indeed pleasure in the representation of sexual desire. No work has been done to compare both the content and form of Swinburne's verse against Wagner's musical explorations of the sensual patterns of desire (and here I mean musical form and both the music's narrative and symbolic content). I would claim that no critical examination of Swinburne and Wagner could feasibly be done without such a comparison.

This is unusual, given Swinburne's subject matter in *Poems and Ballads, First Series*, which seems to me to be the most Wagnerian of collections because of its obsessional desire. Indeed, McGann's formalism and his interest in Swinburne's words being 'translated into prosodic semblances' leads to an oddly sexless reading of 'Anactoria', which is strange, as the motifs that are in play here – such as androgyny, pleasure and pain, and the union of word and music (all essential Wagnerian tropes) – are powerfully imbued with a sexual violence that is alluring and repulsive.[11] One of McGann's final claims, arguably influenced by T. S. Eliot's 1920 essay 'Swinburne as Poet' (a text intent on claiming the idea of 'poetic music' from Swinburne to appropriate it for its own Modernist ambitions), suggests to me the very opposite of the bodily sexuality that 'Anactoria' seems to revel in:

> The poem's unfolding network of motivic modulations are less keyed to the actual words and phrases […] than to the transformational rule – a kind of fractal rule – they instantiate […] Swinburne's Sappho is the poet of the music of the Lucretian spheres.[12]

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[11] McGann, 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne', p. 630.

[12] McGann, 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne', pp. 629, 630. Is McGann's adjective 'Lucretian' erroneous? Perhaps he means Pythagorean, as in the music of the spheres? Lucretius' universe in *De Rerum Natura* is infinite, not arranged in spheres for music. McGann originally makes this assertion in his *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism* (see p. 45), where he says that 'In such minutiae [unsought sounds] are glimpsed the reality of a music of the spheres, of a harmonic fatality upon which all life and poetry can rely. Music descends as a gift from outside one's self' and that 'Here [in the poem 'The Roundel'] the circle as a form of perfection is explicitly related both to the cycles in nature and the circling form of the roundel' (p. 44). I cannot see McGann's assertions about spheres and music in Swinburne's verse in the way he suggests, since it appears to me that music is a bodily production for Swinburne (both in producing and listening) – as

The implied idea of reaching upwards, to 'Nature's utmost sphere, | Till the world's shadowy walls are past and disappear', to quote Shelley's 1824 poem 'To Constantia, singing' (with its imagery taken straight from Socrates's description of the action of 'love' in Plato's *Phaedrus*), seems counter to the chthonic ambitions of much of *Poems and Ballads, First Series* and, indeed, *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865).[13] While 'Anactoria' undoubtedly demonstrates a multiplication in song, and the self is continually recreated across time, the original body of Sappho remains pulsating in its heart-felt rhythms – indeed, her body appears both present and rippling outwards ('And music, and in grasp of lip and hand […] Memories shall mix and metaphors of me'). It desires to use other bodies, to consume them, as fuel for this process (as music could be described as being parasitic on a hearer's body when it is performed):

> 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![14]

McGann claims that Swinburne's poetic action is like Wagner's wish to dissolve a poet's words into music, so that his 'metaphors, memories, and images, morphemes and phonemes […] are perpetually fleeing beyond themselves, dissolving into their single pervasive scheme of musical

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Sappho says 'thy body is the song | Thy mouth the music' (Haynes, *P&B*, p. 49) – while his poetry generally does not involve itself in Platonic ideas of progress and perfectibility.

[13] Quotation from Shelley taken from *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson and G. M. Matthews (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 539. For the origin of Shelley's heaven-bound, wing-borne imagery, see Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 40. Despite Swinburne's friendship with Benjamin Jowett, Swinburne was essentially anti-Platonic is his views (even if Plato occasionally bleeds into his writings). For more on this, see chapter five, but also see *TSL*, IV, 40, for example, where Swinburne says 'in my humble opinion [Plato] ought to have made acquaintance with the properties of hemp as intimately as his dear Master did with those of hemlock'. Presumably, by 'hemp' Swinburne means a whip, or hanging, and as such, Plato would be made aware of the body through pain.

[14] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 53, 50.

transformation'.[15] But this risks taking the body out of Swinburne's music (where, as I intend to show, it is both performed and felt). Indeed, the erotic tension of the human body shapes and propels the work of both artists.

Sypher's view of 'Laus Veneris' and his comparison of Wagner's *Tristan* with Swinburne's *Tristram*, also do not address the bodily sexuality that saturates these works and which, as will be shown in *Tristram* in particular, gives Swinburne's work a remarkably different form of poetic drive that reaches out, bodily, across the text. Hyder, too, ignores the erotic element of 'Laus Veneris'. In contrast, Stoddard Martin gets the closest to a comparison of the erotic in Wagner and Swinburne by noting the latter's Wagnerian 'association of desire and sin with love and death' in 'Laus Veneris' and the general linking of gentleness with cruelty. However, he goes little further than this and does not discuss the eroticism of Swinburne's poetry in general and what this might mean for Wagner comparisons. Martin also seriously mistakes Wagner's intentions for *Tannhäuser* by placing the opera in opposition to 'Laus Veneris' when he states of Swinburne that 'he, like many of his French contemporaries, tipped the balance in favour of erotic indulgence where Wagner always opted in the end for Christlike renunciation'.[16]

That the body has been taken out of discussions of the relationship between Wagner and Swinburne is perhaps understandable. Generally speaking, the study of Swinburne's highly transgressive expression of the erotic has tended to be neglected. There is, perhaps, a hint of embarrassment in his sexual interests, and when the subject does get discussed, it is sometimes not taken entirely seriously.[17] Certainly, in many discussions, Swinburne's sexuality has been

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[15] McGann, 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne', p. 630.
[16] Martin, *Wagner to 'The Waste Land'*, p. 24. For Wagner, Love is *eros* not *agapē*
See my discussion of this in chapter four.
[17] Notable exceptions include Yopie Prins, whose analysis of Swinburne's methods alongside his sado-masochist interests and the Sapphic sublime can be found in *Victorian Sappho* (1999) and Catherine Maxwell's *The Female Sublime from Milton to Swinburne: Bearing Blindness* (2001) which, too, discusses the metrics of masochism and also castration and hermaphroditism. McGann's *Swinburne* discusses the subjects of flagellation and masochism in its dialogues, but in relation to *The Flogging Block* and ironizes their nature. On sexuality and desire in general, the character of Woodberry states that Swinburne's 'life, according to all indication, was singularly removed from the outward manifestations of ordinary sexual passion. All these drives seem to have been uniformly internalized, and hence to have been released only in a variety of fantastic forms, some poetic some not' (McGann, *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 212). The nature of poetic sexual desire (and, indeed, 'ordinary' sexuality), is of course, open to question,

made more acceptable or has even been caricatured, as Catherine Maxwell has shown, with Swinburne rolled into the image of '"some pagan creature, at once impish and divine, leaping on to the sleek lawn, to stamp its goat-foot in challenge"'.[18] This tendency to caricature or make light of Swinburnian sexuality may be responsible for causing many critics to look beyond the poetry's eroticism, placing emphasis on technical readings that foreground 'serious' studies.

This has led to some asexual readings of Swinburne's most sexually-charged poems. For example, Linda K. Hughes's description of 'Dolores' (1866) claims that the poem 'pictures no sexual acts or erotic zones, though its ample biting and blood evoke sado-masochism and its sheer excess suggests perversity. Swinburne's is a sexuality of epithet and idea rather than graphic physicality'.[19] On the contrary, I would suggest that 'Dolores' *is* a sexual act that is unable to end itself (possibly because it does not want to), and the poem encompasses a number of sexual encounters in various forms:

> The white wealth of thy body made whiter
> By the blushes of amorous blows,
> And seamed with sharp lips and fierce fingers,
> And branded by kisses that bruise;
>
> or,
>
> Thou shalt touch and make redder his roses
> With juice not of fruit nor of bud;
> When the sense in the spirit reposes,

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but the 'fictional' dialogues of this book tend to blur any definite discussion of sexuality and lead to speculative statements from its characters, such as: 'Not only did he [Swinburne] never openly show an ordinary romantic interest in his beloved cousin, he preserved a similar external appearance toward all women' (p. 212).

[18] Catherine Maxwell, *Swinburne* (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers, 2006), p. 7. Maxwell is here quoting T. Earle Welby's *A Study of Swinburne* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1926), p. 14.

[19] Linda K. Hughes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 236.

> Thou shalt quicken the soul through the blood.[20]

'Dolores' enacts sexual intercourse and sado-masochistic desires or 'furious embraces' both on its subjects and, in effect, on its readers too, and in its repeated images of castration and blood-lust.[21] Even if the reader refuses to let the words of 'Dolores' work on his or her own blood – denying Swinburne's attempts to generate an erotic trance as the poem is spoken – the poem has an autoerotic fervour that makes it appear to carry on even after a reading has stopped.[22]

Elisabeth K. Helsinger's recent discussion of 'Sapphics' (1866) and Swinburne's 'visible song' in her *Poetry and the Thought of Song* (2015) also bypasses the sexual to move straight into formalism. While she does allude to the flesh, by a reference to Yopie Prins's ideas about poetic rhythms and flagellation, her reading of 'visible song' turns to the 're-embodiment of Sappho's "Ode to Aphrodite"' into 'an English accentual-syllabic lyric', and that it is 'Swinburne's own poem, of course, [that] literally makes Sappho's song visible'.[23] But by turning to metrical intricacies, Helsinger blurs the point that Sappho's visible song includes Aphrodite seeing the bodily expression of passion, or – bluntly – Lesbian sex. For she

> Saw the Lesbians kissing across their smitten
>
> Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound of lute-strings,

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[20] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 130, 129.
[21] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 127: 'The desire of thy furious embraces | Is more than the wisdom of years'. Hughes's qualification of 'perversity' also cleanses the reading experience by making it something 'other', as if to hold it at arms-length. The unending nature of 'Dolores' is a perfect example of the ideas of Friedrich Schlegel, to whom I refer shortly in my discussions of the theoretical context to *Poems and Ballads*. Schlegel describes truly romantic poetry as infinite becoming: 'indeed, its peculiar essence is that it is always becoming and that it can never be completed. It cannot be exhausted by any theory, and only a divinatory criticism might dare characterise its ideal'; see Friedrich Schlegel, '*Dialogue on Poetry' and 'Literary Aphorisms',* trans. by Ernst Behler and Roman Struc (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), p. 141.
[22] The difference between silently reading and speaking 'Dolores' out loud has to be mentioned here. 'Dolores' sounds like an incantation when spoken, as if it is trying to summon something into being through its words and sounds (or, perhaps, bring something up in various ways). Arguably Swinburne's poems demand to be read aloud to realize their full power/potential.
[23] Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *Poetry and the Thought of Song* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press), p. 167.

Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her chosen,
Fairer than all men;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,
Full of songs and kisses and little whispers,
Full of music; only beheld among them
Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,
Made of perfect sound and exceeding passion,
Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,
Clothed with the wind's wings.[24]

Here, song is truly embodied in the music of sexual union, which is a thing of touching mouths, hands, and fingers. Song is sexual intercourse. It is a 'visible song' of bodily union, from which a perfect tune takes flight – but not heavenwards, as in the Shelleyan flights of 'To Constantia, singing', nor in the direction of Aphrodite and the realm of the Gods ('the gods waxed pale'). It reverberates instead from the body and vibrates through the universe to 'move' both 'the heart of the shaken heaven | […and] break the heart of the earth with pity'.[25] Here the body and its sexually resonant song shake the earth's heart and onwards to the entire cosmos, upsetting its ordered hierarchies, not least in its depiction of transgressive Lesbian sex as musical union.

The nervousness around Swinburne's sexuality, has, I suggest, also given weight to the preponderance of prosodic approaches to Swinburne's poems that tend to set aside semantics. This kind of approach was given impetus by T. S. Eliot's suggestion that Swinburne is 'literally saying next to nothing', stating also that his words are unrelated to the real world, so they are 'not

[24] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 164-65. Presumably, it is quite difficult to sing 'mouth to mouth', symbolic though this image may be.
[25] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 165. Note that here song moves the 'shaken heaven', not the other way around, as would be the case with the music of the spheres.

erotic'. This is the easiest possible way of not engaging with Swinburne's content and denying his poetry's bodily presence and power.[26] One suspects that Swinburne's depiction of Lesbians was, as far as Eliot was concerned, also a subject not related to the real world.

Certainly, the prosodic approach to Swinburne was much in evidence at the 2016 *Poems and Ballads* 150th Anniversary Conference in Cambridge, where the event's rather anodyne subtitle – 'A poet for poetic students' – potentially bleached the contents of Swinburne's collection, something that Swinburne himself may have baulked at.[27] Certainly, given the scandal that the sexual imagery provoked on its publication, one would have expected a great deal more discussion of the sexual content, which one contemporary reviewer called the 'mere deification of incontinence […] depraved and morbid in the last degree'.[28]

With regard to the more 'proper', de-sexualized forms of criticism, Swinburne and Wagner also share a critical history. In his lifetime, Wagner's work generated many of the same kind of outraged views as Swinburne's, and not least from the British press during his residency in London in 1855 and 1877. But in academic criticism, Wagner has suffered a similar fate as Swinburne, even if – unlike Swinburne – interest in Wagner has never diminished. That Wagnerian criticism has not waned, makes Laurence Dreyfus's point in *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse* (2010) even more interesting – for like Swinburne, Wagner has suffered from a lack of scholarly engagement with the eroticism of his art:

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[26] A Christian ascetic denial of the body can be keenly felt in these comments by Eliot. See T. S. Eliot, 'Isolated Superiority', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, ed. Jewel Spears Brooker, Ronald Schuchard and Anthony Cuda, et al., 8 vols. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber & Faber Ltd, 2014-2019), III: *Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927-1929*, 321-325 (323), pp. 321-325 (p. 323), and T. S. Eliot, 'Swinburne as Poet', *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1960) pp. 144-150 (p. 149).

[27] This comment – '"the poet for poetic students"' – originates in William Michael Rossetti's *Swinburne's 'Poems and Ballads': A Criticism*, which was written in the wake of the collection's withdrawal by the publisher Edward Moxon in 1866 over fears concerning its licentiousness. Rossetti wrote his criticism both as a way of defending Swinburne's work but also, partly, to shift attention away from its depictions of sexual desire. See William Michael Rossetti, *Swinburne's 'Poems and Ballads': A Criticism* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1866), p. 35.

[28] Clyde K. Hyder (ed.), *Swinburne: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 37. The original review was unsigned and in the *London Review*, XIII (4 August 1866), 130-1.

> While contemporary scholarship on Wagner is rich in historical research and analysis, most writers have steered clear of tackling what has long been blatantly obvious – that Wagner was the first to develop a detailed musical language that succeeded in extended representations of erotic stimulation, passionate ecstasy, and the torment of love. Beyond academic groves, on the other hand […] writers point without fail to long stretches of the composer's music that pulsate with an acute and an unforgettable eroticism.[29]

Dreyfus links the lack of academic reflection on Wagner's eroticism to a confusion between high and low art, where blatant eroticism – except in the strange, alien distance of the 'classics' – is usually associated with the low. This confusion has surely led, in part, to nineteenth-century prejudices about Wagner's music not being 'real music' at all.[30] Swinburne's art, too, attracted similar accusations. While Robert Buchanan (1841-1901) stated that he had written his review of *Poems and Ballads* in the 'face of many pages of brilliant writing', he added that on the basis of the content, Swinburne was either 'no poet at all, or a poet degraded from his high estate, and utterly and miserably lost to the Muses'.[31] Buchanan was, of course, not denying the technical brilliance of Swinburne's achievement, but his judgement about what constitutes poetry rested upon the content. The same was true for John Morley (1838-1923), who acknowledged Swinburne's 'mastery of the music of verse', but complained that 'the lurid clouds of lust or of fiery despair and defiance never lift to let us see the pure and peaceful and bounteous kindly aspects of the great landscape of human life'. Certainly, the way in which Swinburne's poetry was described would indeed suggest a confusion between high art and low, as would the need to

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[29] Laurence Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 2. I presume that one of the reasons for a lack of critical engagement with the erotic is that, by its very nature, it challenges critical distance or the disinterest that one is supposed to affect.

[30] 'For Hanslick […] the perception of musical beauty […] demanded a detached, contemplative mode of attention. Music that affected only the emotions and not the intellect was in this sense not really music at all'. See Mark Evan Bonds, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 9. As I shall argue in the final chapter, it is this distinction that Eliot brings to bear on his critique of Swinburne.

[31] Hyder, *Critical Heritage*, p. 31. The original review was published in the *Athenæum*, 4 August 1866.

mythologize him – to make Swinburne alien by turning him into a fawn or 'the libidinous laureate of a pack of satyrs'.[32]

It is in this confusion that the Swinburne and Wagner connection feels most resonant, for both infuse their traditionally high art forms with an eroticism that is both overwhelming and transgressive. In saying this, I do not wish to imply that music 'discovered' sexuality at this point, but instead found a dangerously new method of expressing it, a method that threatened traditional categories and appeared to encourage transgression.[33] Of course, music has always been suspected of encouraging licentiousness, but Wagner's music foregrounded a desire-laden musical line in which the performance of desire appeared to be its first and ultimate aim. In its manner of expression, with its continual, sensual waves of rising and falling repetitions, it appeared to represent desire not framed by traditional categories, but – like Swinburne's poetry – as a force always 'in excess of its objects' and one that could never 'be fully satisfied by any object whatever,' to quote Lawrence Kramer on Freudian views of desire.[34]

While there is debate over the role of eroticism in Wagner's musical dramas, I foreground the eroticism for a number of reasons. As will be seen over the course of this thesis, in his theoretical works, Wagner continually relates his own music to the expression of the erotic human body. Indeed, in *Opera and Drama*, which Jean-Jacques Nattiez has described as 'an extended sexual metaphor', Wagner describes his compositional practice as a form of sexual intercourse.[35] Sexually-charged language and metaphors proliferate in both his writings and his libretti, and spread to encompass associated ideas and themes through recurrent images of blossoming, germinating, growth and fertility which serve to emphasize the representation of desire even

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[32] Hyder, *Critical Heritage*, p. 29. Morley was writing in the *Saturday Review*, 4 August 1866.
[33] The same would have to be said for lyric poetry, which has always been the medium for erotic expression. In Swinburne, however, there appears a transgressive, Decadent form that challenges conventions in the way, for example, that the link between eroticism and death is represented in extraordinary and unnerving and perhaps murderous ways.
[34] Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p. 141.
[35] Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, trans. by Stewart Spencer (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 38.

further.[36] It is in Wagner's music itself, however, where the erotic is most palpable in what I will describe as the continual deferral of resolution, or what Susan McClary defines as an 'association between desire and cadence', declaring that 'he [Wagner] imbues his chromaticism with a mixture of pleasure and pain as it continually defers the longed-for and dreaded telos'.[37] I see a similar action at work in Swinburne's early works such as *Poems and Ballads*, and in 'Laus Veneris' in particular, a poem of powerful desire which nonetheless continually defers the resolution of that desire through a series of alternating patterns of pleasure and pain.

The fluidity of these representations of desire which continually hesitate to end, are also powerfully transgressive, in that they collapse traditional roles and categories into their patterns, and to the point that a 'concept of a "normal" sexuality evaporates'. As Kramer suggests, the 'liquefaction of desire' not only represents a desire that is 'independent of its objects and forever transcendent of them', but also one that is independent of categories such as gender for indeed it 'deconstructs gender'.[38] As I will demonstrate, Wagner's music feminizes the male composer or listener, and, indeed, comes to represent them through the ever-shifting form of the hermaphrodite. Unlike more conventional erotic art, which tends to define roles securely so that, for example, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the hermaphrodite is an unstable form that is to be resisted, Wagner suggests that erotic instability and the androgyne is a state to be desired in itself (with all the suggestions of autoeroticism that this carries). Swinburne, too, makes this assertion in his poem 'Hermaphroditus', published in 1866, but written in 1863 during a trip to Paris where he met with the Wagnerite painter Henri Fantin-Latour.

This transgressive action casts both Wagner and Swinburne as exemplary Decadent artists. As such, it was the primary cause behind contemporary antipathy towards their respective arts. Critics began to question whether Wagner's music was actually music at all, and whether –

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[36] A potent example would be the apparent resolution of *Tannhäuser* where the blossoming Pope's staff is brought onto the stage and born aloft by the pilgrims, an event that could be interpreted not as a redemption through the restoration of Christian symbolism, but as the worshipping of a phallic symbol.

[37] Susan McClary, 'Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music', *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, 2nd Edition (Abingdon: Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), 2011), pp. 205-33 (p. 223).

[38] Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice*, pp. 142, 145-6.

as previously stated – Swinburne could really be called a poet. This reactionary response ultimately also informed T. S. Eliot's judgment of the poet in 1920. Aware that he was reading in Swinburne a representation of a desire that exceeded its object, Eliot claimed that Swinburne's verse was 'morbid' because in his language 'the object has ceased to exist'; meaning is 'merely the hallucination of meaning'.[39]

It is telling that in order to attack Swinburne, Eliot used an argument – as I will demonstrate – that was originally employed against Wagner's musical transgressions. Eduard Hanslick's *On the Musically Beautiful* (1854) is a sustained attack on the emotionalism of Wagner's music and on the idea of programme music in general. Eliot's use of it suggests that he had some sense that Swinburne and Wagner were related. Susan McClary has described the 'great tradition of nineteenth-century "Absolute Music"' and its 'Master Narrative' as a 'fig leaf' that instituted a 'denial of meaning in the instrumental repertory that has systematically blocked any attempt at feminist or any other sort of socially grounded criticism'. It has also given rise to the belief among some 'devotees of classical music' that their art is concerned with 'loftier matters' and that it is 'morally superior to those of the pop music fan: their art is not contaminated by the libidinal – or even the social'. As McClary goes on to describe, the libidinal is actually in plain view even in these supposedly 'loftier' forms of music, for it is 'exquisitely concealed in the presumably abstract, word-free context of many a symphony'.[40] What is at stake here, then, is not that music discovered sexuality – since as McClary argues, art in general is concerned with the 'organisation of sexuality' and the 'channeling of desire' and that 'music may perform these functions even more effectively than other media' – but that both Wagner and Swinburne present new forms of erotic expression that challenge conventional boundaries – forms which Eliot perhaps wanted to suppress.

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[39] T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 149.
[40] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, Sexuality* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 67, 55, 54, 67, 53.

In these representations, neither Wagner or Swinburne were interested, unlike Shelley, in rising to music's 'celestial' heights.[41] On the contrary, both pitched their 'music' and the goddess of love relentlessly downwards towards the body and the earth, essentially challenging those long-held distinctions of 'high' and 'low' (as in 'Sapphics' and in the underground lair of the Venusberg in 'Laus Veneris') by seeking transcendence in the body – an aspiration that would understandably confuse their critics, hence the criticism of Swinburne's 'deification of incontinence'.[42] Both appear to want to set aside the Platonic split between the intellect and the body, and in so doing, perhaps they ask us to 'feel' their art in new ways, in a whole-body sense that is perhaps problematic to some. As McClary highlights, music can be dangerous in that it can 'cause listeners to experience their bodies in new ways'.[43] The same could be said about Swinburne's poetry when read aloud. Its constant repetitions, its gatherings and sudden losses of energy, and its tendency towards the euphoric and ecstatic ask us to release powers within our own bodies that some may not see as a 'power' worthy of release, or which may be experienced as disturbing or even frightening.

The music of *Poems and Ballads* is essentially Orphic, continually searching for its Eurydice in a bodily Underworld, and discovering her in a variety of symbolic guises, as Proserpine, Venus, Dolores, Lucretia Borgia, and the parade of *femmes fatales* in 'The Masque of Queen Bersabe'. These guises are fragments of a greater figure, that of Sappho, who in turn threatens the cosmic order with her forms of love. She also re-enacts the fate of Orpheus both

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[41] To some, the operas *Tannhäuser, Lohengrin, and The Flying Dutchman* may well appear to have celestial aspirations for love. But while the aim may be spiritual, the spirit is certainly felt in the flesh, not in bodily loss. The orgiastic sounds of *Tannhäuser*'s Venusberg – in contrast to the staid and formal music of the Wartburg's royal court – suggest exactly where Wagner wants to head, a fact made even plainer in the *Tristan*-like rewriting of the Venusberg music for the Paris version of 1861; see Carolyn Abbate, 'Orpheus and the Underworld: The Music of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*', in Richard Wagner, and (series ed.) Nicholas John, *Tannhäuser* (London: Overture Publishing Ltd., 2011), p. 33. As Bryan Magee describes, Wagner's repudiation of Christian belief was wrapped into his celebration of 'the human body and sexual love'. Like Swinburne, Wagner saw the Church as teaching people to 'cease believing in human existence as an end in itself'; see Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 93.

[42] Buchanan's review essentially points out this characteristic of Swinburne's earth-bound poetry where he opens his review by contrasting it against what he called the 'the glory of our modern poetry', which 'is its transcendent purity'. See Hyder, *Critical Heritage*, p. 30.

[43] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings*, p. 25.

through the historic scattering of her own lyrics and, in 'Anactoria', in her attacks on the body motivated by her desire for pleasure and pain.[44]

Even short, minor lyrics, such as 'Rondel – Kissing her Hair' (1866), retain this downward Orphic gaze, where the circular weaving and unwinding of a woman's hair and the vision of her eyes, 'Deep as deep flowers', create sweet sensations that take the narrator into an underwater realm. Here, time and space are blended as the narrator dwells on the 'Sleep of cold sea-bloom under the cold sea', and the potential ending of everything in 'white death'.[45] The lyrics are wrapped in circular repetitions and a refrain that is subject to internal rhyme and assonance, creating a musically-resonant series of progressions but also one that evolves within a temporality that is somewhere otherworldly, almost outside of time itself.

The bringing of these Orphic desires, with their interchangeable symbols and figures, to the surface of a line that is constantly evolving in unsatisfied patterns of libidinal energy, has the habit of prioritizing the processes of expression themselves rather trying to define what such an expression might hold. It may, in turn, flood its semantic detail in sound and feeling as it attempts to make that primal urge explicit. This action suggests another way in which Swinburne's poetry is like music, although, ironically, this may have caused readers to miss its erotic potential. Just as a musical song can contain potentially divisive, disturbing and offensive lyrics and yet have these aspects unnoticed by an audience because they are absorbed into music or blended in sound, so it is with Swinburne's poems.[46] At any rate, some of the more aesthetically-minded contemporary readers of Swinburne's poems, such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-73), missed the overt sexuality of his poems exactly because of this reason: 'But the beauty of diction and mastership

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[44] On this re-enacting, see Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 121.
[45] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 103.
[46] What the tenor Ian Bostridge has stated about audiences not noticing the subject matter of German *lieder* can be applied to song in general, '"It matters *that* the song is saying something, not *what* it is saying"'; hence we can tolerate and even appreciate songs in another language. Quoted by Fiona Sampson, *Lyric Cousins: Poetry and Musical Form* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 139.

of craft in melodies really at first so dazzled me, that I did not see the naughtiness till pointed out'.[47]

I am not suggesting that like Bulwer-Lytton, academics too have been dazzled by the 'beauty of diction' and have succumbed to a formalist siren song that has captured their attention well before the body appears. But there certainly has been an anxiety in talking about Swinburne's transgressive sexuality that has led scholarly work towards the formal elements of Swinburne's work rather than the flesh that *Poems and Ballads* constantly caresses. However, a review of Swinburne's erotic lyrics alongside the musical eroticism of Wagner, as this thesis attempts, leads to the possibility of new readings of *Poems and Ballads, First Series*, *Tristram of Lyonesse*, and, indeed, of Swinburne's most political verse. Through its contact with the theories of both Wagner and Joseph Mazzini, I contend, the politics of *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) can now be seen with a greater, bodily urgency, where the erotic has political potential. With this is mind, I have provided new readings of 'Laus Veneris', and selections from *Songs before Sunrise*, *Tristram*, and a number of poems from *A Century of Roundels* (1883) in which I show Wagner's clear influence. I also seek to place their production within a wider context through their conversations and relationships with Wagnerian music and painting.

For the general reader, however, Swinburne's erotic touch has been all too near. After all, Lady Hengrave, in Maurice Baring's autobiographical novel *C* (1924), is not thinking in academic terms (or dazzled by its 'beauty of diction') when she flings on the fire a copy of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*, which she has found her son reading. Neither is Caryl (or 'C.') when attending a performance of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, which Baring describes thus:

> C. had never heard a note of Wagner, nor did he know what *Tannhäuser* was about. He looked forward to a painful evening, and to having to endure the kind of music he used to hear at his Aunt Fanny's. Then the orchestra began to play the overture. Never did he

[47] Quoted in Maxwell, *The Female Sublime*, p. 252; see the letter to his son Robert of 20 August 1866 in Hyder, *Critical Heritage*, p. 125. Perhaps Bulwer-Lytton also missed it because a new kind of erotic language needs a new form of erotic reading?

> receive a more violent electric shock, […] and when he was transported to the Venusberg, he felt he was witnessing a poem of Swinburne's in action.[48]

[48] Maurice Baring, *C*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1924), I, 87, 194-95. C. also notices that *Tannhäuser*'s second act is 'less exciting' (p. 95).

Chapter 1 – The case of Swinburne's missing 'ear'

One of the most persistent issues facing Swinburne and music studies is the general and critical belief that Swinburne was tone deaf or even musically illiterate. According to Edmund Gosse, Swinburne 'was remarkably devoid of "ear" – that is to say, he lacked all capacity to appreciate and distinguish musical compositions by hearing them', and that any 'expressions of stimulus from music as may be found in his family letters are the result of imaginative sympathy'. In Gosse's 1917 biography of the poet, Swinburne is even described as being aggressive towards musical production, for 'a performance on any instrument drove him wild with petulance and impatience'.[1]

These comments may seem slight or strange, but they have done considerable damage to Swinburne's reputation in both popular and critical terms. Prejudices about his musical illiteracy have stuck. One of the reasons for this is that the idea of a poet, who was so attracted to the 'music' of words, should also be so devoid of musical appreciation is an amusing and attractive image. But another reason for their longevity is that despite their persistence, the anecdotes have not been examined in detail and have too often been accepted without question. If such stories are true, however, they might suggest that studies into Swinburne's poetry and the music of the era may well be futile or even mistaken.

In what directly follows, I will not give all the evidence to refute these charges. Much of this will emerge in later stages of this thesis. Nor do I want to suggest that Swinburne had a hidden, unexplored, and vital passion for music that set him apart from the average listener. However, given their persistence, Gosse's comments (and also those of Theodore Watts-Dunton and others) need to be dismissed if I am to claim, as Swinburne himself did, that he was a 'fervent admirer' of Wagner's music.[2]

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[1] Edmund Gosse, 'Swinburne and Music', *Spectator*, 516. Edmund Gosse, *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1917), p. 163.
[2] *UL*, II, 65.

I must first highlight the critical impact of these anecdotes. In his introduction to *The Swinburne Letters,* Cecil Y. Lang, for example, accepts Gosse's stories as fact. The poet, he states, was the 'most unmusical of men', before, oddly, then mentioning two of Swinburne's engagements with music, both in performance and as a stimulant to poetry.[3] Robert L. Peters, in *The Crowns of Apollo* (1965), also appears to accept Gosse's stories, and he repeats Lang's 'most unmusical of men' comment. Swinburne's musical illiteracy, Peters adds, is the reason why his musical references are merely general and impressionistic. However, why a poet who uses musical terminology to describe his work should also have to be, as Peters claims, 'a competent judge of musical techniques and forms' is unclear. Rarely, if at all, is the equivalent asked of painters who compose nocturnes or sculptors who create symphonies.[4] In a review of music criticism in 1982 in the *Times Literary Supplement,* Anthony Burgess (whose musical credentials are without question) continues this tradition, stating that Swinburne's 'condition' caused detrimental effects on his poetry. 'If Swinburne had not been tone-deaf', Burgess states, 'he might have realized that it was not within his province to contrive pure patterns of euphony: there was another art that could quite satisfactorily exploit the allure of sound'. In so doing, Burgess reduces Swinburne's art to a sensory incapacity.[5]

However, there have been some more careful readers of Gosse's anecdotes, even if none have sought to disprove them. Philip Henderson in his *Swinburne: Portrait of a Poet* repeats a form of one of Gosse's stories, before wisely questioning it, giving a few musical examples to the contrary, and wondering if it is no more than an amusing story.[6] In 'Swinburne and Wagner',

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[3] *TSL*, I, xxx.

[4] Robert L. Peters, *The Crowns of Apollo: Swinburne's Principles of Literature and Art* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1965), pp. 103-104. Peters goes on to say that James McNeill Whistler's ear was also 'notoriously dull' (p. 104), and yet Whistler's most recent biographer demonstrates his liking for the music hall and for the symphonic, but with a preference for the former, see Daniel E. Sutherland, *Whistler: A Life for Art's Sake* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 103. Stoddard Martin takes Peters to task here by pointing out that Swinburne's supposed musical illiteracy does not 'preclude' him sharing aesthetic principles with Wagner. See Martin, *Wagner to 'The Waste Land'*, p. 25.

[5] Anthony Burgess, 'Sound and Settings', *Times Literary Supplement,* 4110 (8 January 1982), 25. Neither Gosse nor Theodore Watts-Dunton actually call Swinburne 'tone-deaf'. This seems to have become shorthand for Swinburne's 'condition', see, for example, 'Miscellany: Edited by "Lucio"', the *Manchester Guardian*, 19 October 1938, p. 6, which uses 'tone-deaf'.

[6] Philip Henderson, *Swinburne: Portrait of a Poet* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 140.

Sypher too wonders whether 'Gosse's statement is surely an exaggeration', before listing a few instances from *The Swinburne Letters* where Swinburne also responds to music.[7] Jerome McGann has pointed out that the claims over Swinburne's lack of musicality have obscured key parts of his poetic practice:

> Gosse's point – that Swinburne did not understand music on its own terms – has obscured the specific set of musical materials that ground his critical and poetic practice alike. 'Most unmusical of men' [McGann quotes Lang], in Gosse's sense, he may have been. His critical prose is nonetheless everywhere inflected with a musical vocabulary when he writes about the theory and practice of verse.[8]

Nevertheless, as can be seen in other examples that follow in these discussions, the idea of a 'tone-deaf' Swinburne is still widespread.

There are seven main sources for stories about Swinburne's musical illiteracy. Five emanate from Gosse. Another comes from T. S. Eliot; the last from Theodore Watts-Dunton (1832-1914). Gosse's first anecdote concerns Swinburne and the nursery-rhyme 'Three Blind Mice'. It originally appeared in Gosse's first published biographical piece two months after the poet's death, entitled 'Swinburne: Personal Recollections' (1909). It was reprinted verbatim in an expanded form of this article in *Portraits and Sketches* (1912). I give the story in full:

> and his [Swinburne's] lack of musical ear was a byword among his acquaintances. I once witnessed a practical joke played upon him, which made me indignant at the time, but which now seems innocent enough, and not without interest. A lady, having taken the rest of the company into her confidence, told Swinburne that she would render on the piano a very ancient Florentine ritornello which had just been discovered. She then played 'Three Blind Mice', and Swinburne was enchanted. He found that it reflected to perfection the

[7] Sypher, 'Swinburne and Wagner', 167.
[8] McGann, 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne', 621.

> cruel beauty of the Medicis – which perhaps it does. But this exemplifies the fact that all impressions with him were intellectual, and that an appeal to his imagination would gild the most common object with romance.[9]

This story has been extraordinarily persistent. It was re-published a few days after Gosse's article in the *Review of Reviews*.[10] The *Guardian* printed it in 1913, 1921 and 1938, and in 2006, while the *Observer* published it, along with mentions of Swinburne's 'disconcerting ways', in 1937.[11] Edward Thomas, writing in 1912, unfortunately uses the story to demonstrate how Swinburne's nature was in the habit of magnifying things, and 'taste directed his magnification towards sin and the sublimity of little-known or wholly imagined evil'.[12] Anthony Burgess takes the story at face value in an article on Gerard Manley Hopkins in *The Spectator* of 1967.[13] The anecdote has more recently appeared in *The New Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes* (2006) and in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry* (2013).[14]

The anecdote is a version of an old joke.[15] The original nursery-rhyme seems to have been popularized by James Orchard Halliwell in his *Nursery Rhymes of England* (1842/1843) and

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[9] Edmund Gosse, 'Swinburne: Personal Recollections', *Fortnightly Review*, 85.510 (Jun 1909), 1019-1039 (p. 1033). Gosse's comment 'that all impressions were intellectual' to Swinburne is very odd, and appears to immediately contradict itself. He makes similar comments on several occasions, presumably because he wants to emphasize Swinburne's 'hypertrophied intelligence' and 'enormous head', despite him also being as 'light as thistledown […or] a fairy' (this references Louisa May Alcott's story 'Lily-Bell and Thistledown' in *Flower Fables* (1855)), or 'a grasshopper' (p. 1023). These details, and many others, along with the fact that Gosse also throws in a reference to Nordau's *Degeneration* (1895) while simultaneously denying that Swinburne had the 'stigmata of the degenerate' (p. 1023) – thus lodging the thought in this readers' minds – makes this essay spiteful, capitalizing, as it does, on the poet's notoriety, two months after his death.

[10] 'Leading Articles in the Reviews', *The Review of Reviews*, 39.234 (June 1909), 527.

[11] *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 February 1913, p. 7; 5 September 1913, p. 5; 26 November 1921, p. 7; 19 October 1938, p. 6; and 'At Random', *The Observer*, 11 April 1937, p. 17.

[12] Edward Thomas, *Algernon Charles Swinburne: A Critical Study* (London: Martin Secker, 1912), p. 84.

[13] Anthony Burgess, 'Gash gold-vermilion', *Spectator*, 219.7265 (22 September 1967), 10.

[14] *The New Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes*, ed. John Gross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 179. Francis O'Gorman, 'On not Hearing: Victorian Poetry and Music', *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, edited by Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 745-761 (p. 760).

[15] I wish to thank Clive Simmonds for our discussions over this joke and Victorian visual culture during the *Poems and Ballads* 150th Anniversary conference at St. John's College Cambridge in 2016.

Edward Rimbault's *Nursery Rhymes with the tunes to which they are still sung* (1846). After these were published and throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, 'Three Blind Mice' was then persistently employed for its comic potential. The joke works by the pitting of the 'low-art' style of the rhyme against the 'high-art' aspirations of aesthetically-minded audiences. It was used for comic effect, for example, by the orchestral conductor Alfred Mellon (1820-1867) in 1863, whose concerts included a 'comic fantasia called "Three Blind Mice"'. [16] In 1881, the *Graphic* reports on the songwriter and comic, Mr Richard 'Corney' Grain (1844-1895) whose act, 'Our Institute' – which pretended at the 'enhancement of the masses' – included 'an allegorical cantata, in which the ancient strains of "Three Blind Mice" appear in Wagnerian guise'.[17] Grain was a friend of George Grossmith (1847-1912), who developed his own version of the joke. The *Era* and the *Glasgow Herald* in 1895, for example, noted his performance in an evening of sketches for a 'brilliant and fashionable audience' with skits on 'Ibsen's plays' (beloved and translated by Gosse), and one in which '"Three Blind Mice" was played in various styles – 'first on the barrel organ, and afterwards in the manner of Mozart, Mendelssohn, Gounod, and Chopin, the Chopin imitation being encored'.[18] The *Pall Mall Gazette* of 1889 also used the joke to satirize the opera singer Adeline Patti (1843-1919), who, we are told, 'in her more frivolous moments […] has even been heard to take part in the famous tragedy of "Three Blind Mice"'.[19] The joke was easily transposed into other arts. In 1893, Mr Ben Nathan was creating 'roars of laughter' with his 'imitation of [Henry] Irving reciting the nursey rhyme "Three Blind Mice"', while Arthur Helmore's 'vicar' act in 1894 took '"Three Blind Mice" as his text for a comic sermon'.[20] Audience recognition of 'Three Blind Mice' was greatly increased by the nursery rhyme's inclusion (as a story, text, or song) into various pantomimes of the era, which are far too numerous to mention here.

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[16] 'Alfred Mellon's Concerts', *Morning Post*, 11 August 1863, p. 5.
[17] 'Music', *Graphic*, 5 March 1881, p. 238.
[18] 'George Grossmith's Recital', *Era*, 1 June 1895, p. 11. 'Our London Correspondence', *Glasgow Herald*, 31 May 1895, p. 7.
[19] 'Patti's Favourite Song', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 March 1889, p. 3.
[20] 'Dramatic and Musical Recital at the Masonic Hall', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 January 1893, p. 3. 'Mr. Alfred Maltby's Matinee', *Era*, 30 June 1894, p. 15.

'Three Blind Mice' easily lends itself to humour, not just for its content or for its manner of singing – it is a continuous round that can be run on and on (and I presume its endless nature may have been part of 'Corney' Grain's sketch on Wagner) – but also because it is a song for children. Additionally, it enables comic comparisons with high art because it traces basic musical patterns and is instantly recognisable. The origins of the music are unclear, although a version appears in *Deutermelia, or the Second Part of Musick's Melodie* (1609). In terms of the Swinburne anecdote, therefore, it is not incorrect to say that the tune played by the apocryphal pianist was indeed 'ancient'. However, the story is simply too perfect to be true. Not only is it reliant on exactly the same context between low and high art found in the many previous examples that I have enumerated, but it also caricatures Swinburne's habit of juxtaposing beauty with cruelty. I suggest that this story has been fabricated by Gosse for dramatic effect.[21]

In *Portraits and Sketches*, Gosse adds another musical anecdote, with regards to the poet's stay in Étretat in 1869. He states that 'Swinburne did not recognize the difference between one tune and another, but he took a cerebral interest in music'.[22] However, he then appears to contradict himself by reporting an event at the spa town of Vichy, where Swinburne had stayed before reaching Étretat and where he had met the artist Frederic Leighton (1830-1896), the

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[21] See p. 39 onwards where I discuss Gosse's serial inaccuracy, endorsed by very clear comments from Alfred Noyes and Henry James. In her biography of Gosse, Ann Thwaite discusses Gosse's attempts to 'rearrange truth' and his habit of embroidering stories, for 'it was typical of Gosse to improve on stories with time'. She also quotes the essayist Frank Swinnerton (1884-1982) as having to warn editors that Gosse was '"not quite sound, I'm sorry to say"' and that Gosse's critical works should be ignored. Additionally, Thwaite quotes the novelist William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) as saying '"I am sure that he [Gosse] made them [his anecdotes] more amusing than they really were"'. See Ann Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1984), pp. 435, 297, 295, 328. See also the chapter in this biography entitled 'The Scandal of the Year' about the attacks of John Churton Collins (1848-1908) on Gosse's inaccuracies, pp. 276-295. In his summary of Gosse, John Gross states that 'we all make mistakes, but some of Gosse's are so glaring that one half suspects him of a psychological kink, an impulse towards self-betrayal'. He additionally states that 'when all the tributes have been added up, the impression which remains longest is one of artfulness and calculation, of literature subordinated to petty social ends' and he quotes Evelyn Waugh's memoirs thus: '"I saw Gosse as a Mr Tulkinghorn, the soft-footed, inconspicuous, ill-natured habitué of the great world, and I longed for a demented lady's-maid to make an end of him"'. See John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (London: Penguin Books (Pelican), 1973), pp. 178, 181.

[22] Edmund Gosse, 'Swinburne 1937-1909', *Portraits and Sketches* (London: Heinemann, 1913), pp. 3-58 (p. 29). I will deal with this quotation fully in chapter five with regards to George Powell.

explorer Richard Burton (1821-1890), and the opera singer Adelaide Kemble (1815-1879), also known as Mrs Sartoris. In the expanded version of this anecdote from the 1917 *Life*, Gosse dramatizes it thus:

> Mrs Sartoris sang to the friends, and her voice was still 'in the days of its glory'. Swinburne, unskilled as he was in all the technical part of music, confessed her singing to be 'miraculous and ravishing'. A quarter of a century later he declared that it was still vibrating in his brain. The memory of this enchanting encounter was celebrated by Swinburne in 1896, when, on hearing of Lord Leighton's death, he wrote the poem called 'An Evening at Vichy'.[23]

Gosse has now changed his story. Not unlike many people who are perfectly appreciative of music, Swinburne is now only said to be unskilled 'in all the technical part of music'. In fact, Swinburne commented on this event in a letter to his mother while he was in Vichy – a letter that Gosse would not have known about when he wrote his biography. Here, an ailing Swinburne says that Mrs Sartoris sang for him on several occasions: 'She plays and sings to me in private by the hour, and her touch and her voice are like a young woman's'. In a later letter that Gosse references (to W. M. Rossetti from 1904), Swinburne recalls the evening in question. It was Sartoris's singing of 'the Dirge in [Shelley's] Ginevra to her own music' that vibrated most in his mind: it 'would have entranced Shelley – it was worthy of his words'.[24] In both these letters, Swinburne defies Gosse's claim that he had no appreciation for music. 'An Evening at Vichy' (originally published in 1896 in the *Pall Mall Gazette* as 'Reminiscence: Leighton, Burton and Mrs Sartoris'), with its rhapsodic pentameter, is both an extraordinary lament for Leighton and a commemoration of Sartoris's music, which, in its sound, binds the fate of its listeners together. Swinburne's reaction to it was bodily and spiritual in its intensity:

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[23] Gosse, *Life of Swinburne*, p. 184.
[24] *TSL*, II, 24-25; *TSL*, VI, 184-185.

A woman's voice, divine as a bird's by dawn
  Kindled and stirred to sunward, arose and held
Our souls that heard, from earth as from sleep withdrawn,
  And filled with light as stars, and as stars compelled
  To move by might of music, elate while quelled,
Subdued by rapture, lit as a mountain lawn
  By morning whence all heaven in the sunrise welled.[25]

Here the verse mirrors the experience of a singer and listener. Skipping across caesuras, the sequence creates a rising and falling experience of listening, and, in the way that clauses are added to clauses within this stanza-long sentence, there is a sense of the voice singing ever higher progressions of notes. Where the human voice is able to 'move' the stars 'by might of music', the infinitives quicken the pace and tug at the form, and so the starlight is quelled, passively, by the light carried in the voice. (Note that the stars move because a human voice – a 'divine' woman's voice – moves them, not because of a tone generated by a heavenly sphere). There is also a sense of a reaching for breath in this sequence, both in singing and in hearing – a movement that is joined together as one in a constantly accumulating tension, until the movement is resolved in the final words of 'sunrise welled'. Here, all experiences are blended together (and the sense is brought back to the first line of the stanza with the 'dawn'). The following stanza starts with a notably changed mood as death makes an entrance and 'as morning's music she passed away'.[26]

The fourth Gosse source is a letter sent to the *Spectator* on 5 May 1917. Here is the full text:

Sir, – There is a single point in the full and valuable notice which you have given to *The Life of Swinburne* that demands a word of explanation, if you will be so kind as to grant me leave to supply it. On the score of some words of enthusiasm expressed to his

[25] *SCPW*, II, 1214.
[26] *SCPW*, II, 1215.

> eldest9sister, herself a musician, you have, very naturally, conceived that the general opinion is wrong, and that Swinburne loved and understood music. But this was not the case. He was remarkably devoid of 'ear' – that is to say, he lacked all capacity to appreciate and distinguish musical compositions by hearing them. Such expressions of stimulus from music as may be found in his family letters are the result of imaginative sympathy. Incapable of willingly deceiving, Swinburne was yet singularly liable to self-deception. It has been my duty to read several hundreds of his letters, addressed to a great variety of persons, and the discrepancies of superficial character in them are amazing. With regard to music, if told the nature of the piece and the history of the composer, he could genuinely believe himself to enjoy – and in a non-musical sense he did enjoy – a brief performance. But a deaf man could have done almost as much. – I am, Sir, &c.[27]

The combative tone of this letter brings to mind Virginia Woolf's comment on Gosse, that he was 'always a little afraid of being found out'.[28] The letter was inspired by a *Spectator* review of Gosse's Swinburne *Life*, which had drawn attention to his contradictions over Swinburne's attitude to music. Mrs Sartoris's singing at Vichy was felt especially inconsistent, and this led the reviewer to quote further examples. Unfortunately for Gosse, the *Spectator* was also reviewing a rival book alongside his, written by Mrs Disney Leith. *The Boyhood of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (1917) had printed Swinburne's letter to his mother about Mrs Sartoris's singing in private and claimed that Swinburne's father loved music.[29] Leith's *Boyhood*, said the *Spectator* reviewer, formed

> a most valuable supplement, and to a certain extent a corrective, to Mr. Gosse's Memoir. To take one example, Mr. Gosse's positive statement that Swinburne had no gift or

[27] Gosse, 'Letter to the Editor: Swinburne and Music', *Spectator*, 516. The final sentence is particularly pointed as Swinburne did indeed go deaf in his later years.
[28] Virginia Woolf, 'Edmund Gosse', *The Moment and Other Essays*, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1947), p. 75.
[29] See Mrs. Disney Leith, *The Boyhood of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1917), p. 245.

> appreciation for music, was totally devoid of ear, and was driven 'wild with petulance and impatience' when listening to 'a performance on any instrument', is hard to reconcile with his later reference to the delight he took in Mrs. Sartoris's singing, still harder with the enthusiasm he expresses for the music of Handel when played on the organ – 'I can hardly *behave* for delight at some of the choruses', he writes to his sister in 1863 – or his tribute to the pre-eminence of German music.[30]

The problem here was Gosse's methodology. For Gosse, the art of biography did not necessarily involve the 'truth' or accurate reporting, but was rather more about sweetening his subject instead, or what he might have called a record of 'mellification' or honey-making. As Gosse states in his preface to *Portraits and Sketches:*

> M. Paul Desjardins, in an amusing and illuminating phrase, speaks of the '*la cinématographie d'une abeille dans le mystère de la mellification*' [the cinematography of the bee in the mystery of honey-making]. This, I confess, is what I like best in a literary biography, and it is what I have attempted to produce. To analyze the honey is one thing, and to dissect a bee another; but I find a special pleasure in watching him, myself unobserved, in the act of building up and filling the cells.[31]

Biography is here presented as a form of natural history. Gosse's biographical subjects become like the specimens of his naturalist father, Philip Gosse (1810-1888), who used to explore rockpools with his son and then paint extraordinary, but abstracted, perfected versions of their inhabitants for his naturalist works. In such a way are Gosse's own biographical subjects made more mysteriously picturesque than they might have been in ordinary life.[32] Indeed, here, Gosse

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[30] 'The Life of Swinburne: Concluding Notice', *Spectator*, 4635 (28 April 1917), 490-91 (p. 491).
[31] Gosse, *Portraits and Sketches*, p. viii (my translation).
[32] This habit was certainly noticed by his contemporaries. E. F. Benson laments this 'mellification' when he points out Gosse's Victorian habit of writing biography as a 'stained-glass window', for 'Sir Edmund Gosse, that witty and ardent biographer, applied these glowing colours far too excessively'. Gosse also told Benson that 'novelists alone should be allowed to

goes beyond recording, and towards sugar-coating. Honey-making, like alchemy, is arguably the transmutation of base materials into something highly palatable, and it is surely Gosse's 'mellification' that Henry James was criticizing when, in a letter to Robert Louis Stevenson, he said that Gosse possessed, 'a genius for inaccuracy which makes it difficult to dress his wounds'.[33] Stevenson himself described Gosse as a 'gossip, singing like the fireside kettle', while in his memoirs, Alfred Noyes (who visited Swinburne on a number of occasions at The Pines), claims that Gosse's honeyed method was 'to make his articles interesting by very amusing additions to literary history. Probably he hardly expected either his hearers or his readers to mistake his playfulness for actual fact'. Noyes also describes Gosse's *Life* of Swinburne as a 'piquant cartoon'.[34]

However, I will go a stage further. Gosse transferred his own idiosyncrasies onto his biographical characters. In a letter written to Max Beerbohm on 29 April 1899, thanking him for a copy of his new volume of essays, Gosse ends by talking about music and states that he finds it insufferable. He comments:

> If you are insensible to form, sculpture may give you no pleasure, as music gives me none who am insensible to tune, but I have always refrained from saying that there is no difference between good and bad music, and that all music is insufferable.[35]

Gosse's lack of musical awareness is made even clearer in his memoir, *Father and Son* (1907):

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write biography [….as] biography was primarily a study of character'. See E. F. Benson, *Final Edition: Informal Autobiography* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1940), pp. 247-248, 250.
[33] *Henry James: Letters*, ed. by Leon Edel, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980), III, 338.
[34] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Talk and Talkers', *Cornhill Magazine*, 45.268 (April 1882), 418. Alfred Noyes, *Two Worlds for Memory*, (London: Sheed and Ward, Ltd., 1953), pp. 62, 60. Noyes is devastating about Gosse's literary methods. See also page 34, note 21.
[35] Evan Charteris, *The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1931), p. 262.

> I inherited a plentiful lack of musical genius from my Mother, who had neither ear nor voice, […] My lack of skill did not prevent me from being zealous at these vocal exercises [church hymn-singing], and my Father and I used to sing lustily together.[36]

Indeed, his own musical illiteracy led Gosse to sidestep any musical comments in his review of an autobiography written by a composer, *Impressions That Remained: Memoirs of Ethel Smyth* (1919). 'An autobiography must, in the nature of things', Gosse claims, 'be an apology', but he proceeds to attack Smyth's memoir for being 'naïve and candid almost to excess' and 'miles away from the ordinary record of triumphs in the concert-room' (presumably 'triumphs' serves the role of 'honey-making', while 'ordinary' is sarcastic). However, in his opening remarks, Gosse covers himself by stating that 'A complete and lamentable insensibility to the art of music leaves me incompetent to touch on the professional side of the autobiography of a very distinguished musician'.[37]

In her Gosse biography, Ann Thwaite confirms that he was unmusical. 'He was said to sympathize with a man who could not tell the difference between *Pop Goes the Queen* and *God Save the Weasel*', she states, before quoting a letter to his granddaughter, 'who was similarly unmusical: "It is a privation to be unable to appreciate music, but fortunately there are other channels of pleasure"'. Thwaite also reports that after a concert given at the home of the Alma-Tademas, Gosse wrote that "'the performances were so long, and so often repeated, that I nearly died of fatigue and stress'". The concert had included "'lots of hideous German musicians'".[38]

It is this methodology that surely accounts for my final example of Gosse's misrepresentation over Swinburne and music:

> The winter passed peacefully at Holmwood, where, as 'poetry is at a discount and music idolised', the unfortunate Algernon professed himself subject to a double torture. For

[36] Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 52.
[37] Edmund Gosse, 'A Stormy Petrel', *Books on the Table* (London: Heinemann, 1921), pp. 223-29 (p. 225).
[38] Ann Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, pp. 212, 213.

> music he had no gift or appreciation. Not to put too fine a point upon it, he was totally devoid of 'ear', and to listen to a performance on any instrument drove him wild with petulance and impatience. At Holmwood poetry was not delighted in, and the piano was triumphant. But this was a crease in the rose-leaf, and, in matter of fact, he was profoundly happy and serene at home.[39]

This anecdote springs from a wilfully misread letter written by Swinburne to his Wagnerite friend, George Powell (1842-1882), on 26 December 1866. Gosse had access to this letter when writing the biography (but it was unpublished until 1959) and he misquoted and misrepresented it for dramatic effect. In the original, Swinburne states that he hopes Powell will visit Holmwood shortly, as he will bring musical knowledge with which he can entertain Swinburne's family:

> I hope it will be in January as you will then meet my brother whom I want you to meet because he is passionate for music and your example would not be lost on him. *My art is at a discount here, but yours idolized* [my italics]; you could Schumannize and Wagnerize among us to some purpose. Remember that we hold you engaged.[40]

There is nothing about being tortured in this letter, but merely a suggestion that Swinburne's musically-adept family were – probably teasingly – less interested in Swinburne's poetry than he would like them to be. I say 'musically-adept', as Swinburne states that his brother Edward (1848-1891) was passionate about German music – I suggest a reason for this in chapter five – but also because of a great deal of other evidence. Powell, for example, posted music to the family in the following year, for which Swinburne thanks him 'on all our parts' as it has given 'my sisters great pleasure'. A few weeks later, he again says: 'My mother and sisters desire me to

[39] Gosse, *Life*, p. 163.
[40] *TSL*, I, 215 (My italics).

send you their best thanks for the music, which is bearing fruit and giving pleasure on all hands'.[41]

In fact, Swinburne appears to have gone to a concert with Powell the following year to hear Clara Schumann, the late composer's wife, playing the piano at St. James's Hall in Piccadilly. I tease out the full details of this letter to Powell sent on 31 March 1867 in chapter five, but it concerns the fact that the poet had failed to show up for Schumann's concert at Crystal Palace the day before. At the letter's close, Swinburne states, 'I will be with you tomorrow at six at the St. James' Hall if well enough'.[42] On that evening (1 April 1867), Schumann was to play Weber's 'Scherzo, A flat' (from his second sonata) in a concert with a complex and demanding programme that also featured music by Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Spohr, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Boccherini, Schubert, and Haydn. This was not a concert for musical novices, nor a listener for whom music was anathema.[43]

Both Edward and Alice Swinburne were able musicians, which is, perhaps, unsurprising for a family from a High Church tradition. An obituary for Isabel Swinburne (1847-1915) – whom Gosse hated – states that Alice had 'a rare musical talent' and 'entirely trained the first surpliced choir that ever sang in Shiplake Church'. It adds that Edward, who had 'a fine baritone voice was a member of the choir for many years'.[44] It was surely because of Alice's musical expertise that Swinburne wrote to her on receiving a commission to write the lyrics for a song in John Hollingshead's 1874 production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at the Gaiety Theatre, a song which was set to music by Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900). Such an enterprise might have worried both lyricist and composer if the former had had any musical impediment, and yet Swinburne was clearly excited to tell Alice the news. Had Alice suggested to her brother how he might write the song to make a composer's job easier? After all, the letter includes the proposed

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[41] 8 February 1867 and 22 February 1867, *TSL*, I, 226, 230.
[42] *TSL*, I, 236.
[43] A review of this concert, which was 'excessively crowded', can be found in 'Music: Monday Popular Concerts', *Daily News*, 2 April 1867, p. 6.
[44] *In Memoriam: Miss Isabel Swinburne*. See Terry L. Meyers, 'Supplementary Material to the Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne', *Algernon Charles Swinburne Project*, Digital Culture Lab, Indiana University, <http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/swinburne/images/swinburne/acs0000505-01-002.png> (accessed 6 February 2020).

lyrics and Swinburne also states that he has procured ‘a book of songs of Shakespeare’s time written to the music of English musicians – Dowland, Morley, etc. – of the day – some of which are *too* lovely, both as poetry and as melody […] Edward will be able to reset them’.[45] And so Edward also had the ability to write music. The Swinburne shown in this letter is not a person who on hearing ‘a performance on any instrument’ was driven ‘wild with petulance and impatience’, but one who seems to enjoy music.

‘Song’ (also known as ‘Love Laid his Sleepless Head’) is written in a series of four rhyming trimeter quatrains, formed from a mixture of iambs and anapaests:

1.

Love laid his sleepless head
On a thorny rosy bed,
And his eyes with tears were red
And pale his lips as the dead.

2.

And fear and sorrow and scorn
Kept watch by his head forlorn,
Till the night was over worn
And the world was merry with morn.

3.

And Joy came up with the day,
And kissed Love’s lips as he lay;
And the watchers ghostly and grey

[45] *TSL*, II, 354. ‘Love Laid his Sleepless Head’ was written for the character Anne Page in *The Merry Wives*. The lyrics were later republished in *Poems and Ballads, Second Series* in 1878, and in so doing were divorced from the original music. It did, however, become popular and was again set to music at least four more times (in 1879, 1907, 1913, and 1920 – see Appendix 3), although Sullivan’s original setting was used in several productions of for some years afterwards. To hear the music, see Michael Craske, ‘Love Laid his Sleepless Head’, www.verseandmusic.com, <https://verseandmusic.com/2016/08/30/love-laid-his-sleepless-head> (accessed 15 April 2020).

Sped from his pillows away.

4.

And his eyes as the dawn grew bright,

And his lips waxed ruddy as light.

Sorrow may reign for a night,

But day shall bring back delight.[46]

At a first reading the lyrics might appear to be an odd inclusion for *The Merry Wives*. Its subject is obscure, ephemeral, and not at all comic. It also employs the fairly commonplace character of 'Love' (or Eros, Cupid) on a bed of roses, although, unlike many Renaissance visual depictions of the same scene, this 'Love' cannot sleep, presumably because the bed is 'thorny' and 'fear and sorrow and scorn' keep watch over it. At the break of dawn, however, 'Joy' (or *Euphrosyne*, one of the three graces and the personification of beauty) kisses him and his 'watchers ghostly and grey' flee, causing the day to 'bring back delight'. Presumably, Swinburne had got hold of the copy of Dowland's and Morley's lyrics because he needed both guidance on how to write a successful song, but he also took inspiration from the imagery that these composers' songs contain.

'Song' is, perhaps, a metaphor, in a Shelleyan sense, of poetry, music, and beauty being linked though love. (I will return to this combination when discussing Wagnerian ideas of love and music in later chapters.) However, the simple rhyme scheme (AAAA, BBBB, etc.) is uncharacteristically bland for Swinburne, as is his constant use of the conjunction 'and' – twelve times in total, with most at the start of lines. The poem also ends with a commonplace climax of 'light' overcoming 'night'. Put back into the Gaiety's production, however, and 'Song' starts to resonate. It expresses both the melancholy and joy of Shakespeare's play, while the figure of Love complements the production's use of children dressed as fairies (in Act V). Taken a stage further, by thinking of the poem in terms of accompaniment, and the verses do indeed suggest

[46] *TSL*, II, 355. I here reproduce the version printed in the letter, instead of that in *SCPW*.

song. Swinburne's use of 'and' allows short, brisk musical phrases that would help shape the 'narrative' alongside the rhyme scheme and the clear rhythmical beat. Swinburne has also exchanged his characteristic alliteration for verses full of flowing assonance, which would give opportunities for a composer to extend the vowel sounds for expressive, tonal effect.

For the most part, however, Sullivan has avoided the opportunities that the verse potentially offered him (for the music set to the lyrics see the score in Appendix 1). As he had doubts about the actress's singing abilities, Sullivan was obliged to 'make it very simple and easy', and so he appears to have responded very sympathetically to Swinburne's rhythms, rather than altering them, with the beats of his music matching – in particular – the lyrics' anapaests.[47] Take, for example, the opening anapaest and two iambs of 'And his eyes with tears were red', which Sullivan scores as they would be said, with the two short beats of the anapaest as two quavers followed by a dotted crotchet, then two sets of a quaver and crotchet to match the following two iambs. The anapaestic pattern of two quavers and a crotchet is repeated several times. The previous line, 'On a thorny rosy bed', also scores an anapaest. Sullivan has, therefore, in a very workman-like manner, fitted the music to the words rather than elaborating them with the flourishes he is associated with in his later operettas.

Music major and minor

What has been overlooked in discussions about Swinburne's interest in music is that in a letter to his sister Alice, Swinburne clearly states his musical tastes. Like his poetry, Swinburne preferred music that had a serious intent. He did not like what he calls 'minor music'. This information is given in the letter quoted earlier and referred to within the *Spectator* review – the letter which had stirred Gosse's defensiveness. In the *Spectator* review, only a fragment is given (omitting the vital phrases). In Leith's *Boyhood*, however, the important section of the letter is quoted in full.

[47] Quoted from Arthur Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician*, 2nd edition (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992), p. 79.

> My greatest pleasure just now is when M— [Mary, later Mrs Leith] practises Handel on the organ; but I can hardly *behave* for delight at some of the choruses. I care hardly more than I ever did for any minor music*;* but *that* is an enjoyment which wants special language to describe it, being so unlike all others. It crams and crowds me with old and new verses, half-remembered and half-made, which new ones will hardly come straight afterwards: but under their influence I have done some more of my Atalanta.[48]

The emphasis is Swinburne's and '*behave*' perhaps suggests the sexual nature of '*that*' kind of music for the poet. It may feel odd to think of Handel's music being a sexual stimulant, but when the organist and her bodily movements are taken into account, it may appear otherwise. Swinburne clearly states here that he does not care for 'minor music'; however '*that*' kind of music (and presumably '*that*' kind from other composers too) has an extraordinary passionate effect on him and stimulates the poetic mood, causing fragments of poetry to surface from his subconscious. Either this poetry, or that which he will come to write, is a special form of poetic language which is somehow both of the past and yet of the future – since it inspires parts of *Atalanta*. Given the similarity with Wagner's own dream-orientated music and libretti, which I will describe in chapter six, I suggest that Swinburne is here referring to his own poetry as being that 'special language'.

T. S. Eliot and poetry 'which could not possibly associate itself with music'

Sullivan was not the only composer to set Swinburne's poetry to music. Many composers did so throughout Swinburne's life and beyond – see Appendix 3 for a full catalogue. This fact fatally undermines T. S. Eliot's comments about music and Swinburne's poetry in his essay 'Swinburne as Poet' (1920), which has undoubtedly also contributed to the image of Swinburne as being musically illiterate. The 'beauty or effect of sound' of Swinburne's verse, Eliot claims in this essay, 'is neither that of music nor that of poetry which can be set to music. […] What we get in

[48] *TSL*, I, 93. See also Leith, *Boyhood*, p. 61.

Swinburne is an expression of sound, which could not possibly associate itself with music'.[49] On the contrary, before this comment was published, many composers had found that Swinburne's lyrics lent themselves well to music. Some of the late Victorian era's best-known composers had set them to music, including James Molloy (1837-1909), Hamilton Aidé (1826-1906), Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924), and Hubert Parry (1848-1818). Several women composers, currently being reappraised, had also adapted Swinburne's words, including Mary Wakefield (1853-1910) and Adela Maddison (1862-1929). Swinburne was also commissioned by Sir George Grove, the director of the Royal College of Music, to produce lyrics for the state opening of the college's new building in 1894, which was attended by the future Edward VII.[50]

We are accustomed to thinking of Victorians and Modernists as existing within different eras. However, Eliot's 'Swinburne as Poet' was originally published in the *Athenæum* on 16 January 1920 as a review of *Selections from Swinburne* (1920), edited by Gosse and Thomas Wise. As he was reviewing Gosse's edition, it is highly likely that Eliot had consulted Gosse's *Life*, which had been published only three years earlier. It is also likely that he knew something of the controversy surrounding it.

I must also call into question the originality of a key moment in Eliot's essay, where he criticizes Swinburne's use of 'Time, with a gift of tears; | Grief, with a glass that ran' in *Atalanta in Calydon*.[51] This, he states, 'is not merely "music" […] when we wake up we find that the "glass that ran" would do better for time than for grief' and vice versa.[52] Catherine Maxwell has shown that to write this essay Eliot 'drew heavily' on John Drinkwater's work on Swinburne without direct citation or acknowledgment.[53] It is unsurprising, therefore, to find that this moment

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[49] T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 146. I will tackle Eliot's use of 'beauty' in the final chapter, as this, I contend, marks his ideas out as arguing for a new poetic music, modelled on Eduard Hanslick's anti-Wagnerian 'absolute music'.

[50] I gave an unpublished paper on this state opening at the British Association of Victorian Studies conference in Lincoln in July 2016: '"Music that shone from the word": Respectable Swinburne, the Royal College of Music, and the decadent voice'.

[51] Haynes, *P&B,* p. 258.

[52] T. S. Eliot, 'Swinburne' (latterly 'Swinburne as Poet'), *Athenæum*, 4681 (16 January 1920), 72.

[53] Catherine Maxwell, 'Atmosphere and Absorption: Swinburne, Eliot, Drinkwater', *Algernon Charles Swinburne: Unofficial Laureate*, ed. Catherine Maxwell and Stefano Evangelista (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) pp. 213-32 (p. 226).

in Eliot's essay may have been harvested from the *Saturday Review* of 1 April 1916, in which a letter appears about the 'glass that ran' line in *Atalanta in Calydon* using the same argument as Eliot's. The letter was followed up by another in the subsequent issue that defended Swinburne's word choice.[54] The controversies surrounding Swinburne at this time, caused by Gosse's many publications on the poet, may well have influenced Eliot's judgement here and affected the writing of 'Swinburne as Poet'. At the very least, his very confident statements about the suitability of Swinburne's lyrics for music should now be dismissed.

Watts-Dunton and musical indifference

Swinburne was unequivocal about how far his musical knowledge went. He knew nothing about its science, or what we now call musicology, and – of course – no listener of music needs such technical knowledge, just as a reader needs very little conscious knowledge of grammar in order to read. Writing a few days after the death of Wagner to the composer and collector Julian Marshall (1836-1903), who wanted to set some verses of *Chastelard* (1865) to music, Swinburne states:

> I am very ignorant of music as a science, though (as was a greater man but a brother ignoramus – Coleridge) very susceptible <of> to the enjoyment of such music as appeals to me – that, for instance, of 'the mighty master' [Wagner] just now gone from us.[55]

However, in contrast, Theodore Watts-Dunton did claim technical knowledge of music and was anxious to make this known.[56] He also knew something about composers and their music, and in his work *Poetry and the Renascence of Wonder* (1916) he talks about poetry and its relationship with Wagner:

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[54] 'Atalanta in Calydon', *Saturday Review*, 121.3153 (1 April 1916), 329. See 121.3155 (15 April 1916), 375 for the reply.
[55] *UL*, II, 325.
[56] Although he remained 'Watts' until 1896, I will call Theodore Watts-Dunton by his double-barrelled surname throughout.

> when we find that Shelley seems to have been without the real passion for music, that Rossetti disliked it, that Swinburne was indifferent to it, and that Coleridge's apprehension of musical effects was of the ordinary nebulous kind, we must hesitate before accepting the theory of Wagner.[57]

The comments about D. G. Rossetti seem incongruous given the times that music appears in his painting and poems, and, given what I describe in chapter five as a Wagnerite evening of mesmerism at Cheyne Walk.[58] The Swinburne comments, however, are more interesting for another reason. The essay, 'Poetry', from which this extract is taken, was originally published much earlier than the posthumously-published *Renascence of Wonder* (edited together by Thomas Hake). It had appeared in volume 19 ('PHY-PRO') of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1895) as its entry for 'Poetry'. However, this previous version – published while Swinburne was alive – omits Swinburne's name:

> When we find that Shelley seems to have been without the real passion for music, that Rossetti disliked it, and that Coleridge's apprehension of musical effects was of the ordinary nebulous kind, we must hesitate before accepting the theory of Wagner.[59]

I suggest that Watts-Dunton was inspired to add Swinburne's name to this passage when later editing it for re-publication because of Gosse's statements and his own immodesty, in order to facilitate claims about his scientific knowledge of music. In the anthology *Poets and Poetry of the Century* (1891), Watts-Dunton's sonnet sequence 'The Three Fausts' appears. This was eventually re-published in his collection *The Coming of Love* (1898). In the anthology however,

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[57] Theodore Watts-Dunton, *Poetry and the Renascence of Wonder* (London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd, 1916), pp. 60-61. I will describe some of these theories in the following chapters.
[58] See also Elizabeth Helsinger's work on Rossetti in *Poetry and the Thought of Song*, pp. 77-116.
[59] Theodore Watts-Dunton, 'Poetry', *Encyclopædia Britannica, A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, ninth edition (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1895), vol. 19: *PHY-PRO*, pp. 256-273 (p. 261).

the three sonnets are given individual titles, with the first being called ‘BERLIOZ’, the second ‘GOUNOD’, and the last ‘SCHUMANN’, and these are contained within an essay written by Henry Mackenzie Bell (1856-1930). Having quoted them in full, Bell states that ‘Mr. Watts, is, I think, one of the very few contemporary poets who have a scientific knowledge of music. Musicians have often rendered verbal expressions into music, but the attempt to render music into verse is rare’. On the ‘Faust’ sonnets Bell adds, ‘The musical reader will see at once that, in each case, the sonnet gives not only the musical idea of each composition, but gives it in a poetical movement answering to the musical style of the composer’.[60]

Watts-Dunton’s comments about Swinburne’s ‘indifference’ to music may have been added after the poet’s death because of professional jealousy and because Swinburne may have disagreed. Did Watts-Dunton feel that he was in Swinburne’s ‘musical’ shadow, as, it appears, did Eliot? Did Bell’s comments about Watts-Dunton’s musical knowledge actually originate from Watts-Dunton himself? Obviously, these are questions that can never be answered with certainty, but the evidence points strongly to suggest that Watts-Dunton, like Gosse, was not being entirely generous to Swinburne here.

Musical effeminacy

To conclude this chapter, and by way of introducing some of the themes in the following chapters, it is important to point out that the Victorian male in general may have felt it imperative to distance himself from music and its production. As Wagner was to state in *Opera and Drama*, music was a female power, and it summoned forth the feminine in man and threatened masculinity. It is perhaps for this reason that Victorian men, as Francis Hueffer describes in his *Half a Century of Music in England* (1889), were almost always keen to claim that they knew ‘nothing whatever about music’:

[60] Mackenzie Bell, ‘Theodore Watts-Dunton’, *The Poets and Poetry of the* Century, ed. Alfred H. Miles, 10 vols., VI: *William Morris to Robert Buchanan* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1891-7), p. 260.

> The general attitude of society towards the art was essentially that of Lord Chesterfield when he warned his son against a tendency towards being a 'fiddler', even in the amateur sense, as wholly unworthy of an English gentleman […]. There are still gentleman of the old school who have a certain pride in confessing their inability to distinguish 'God save the Queen' from 'Yankee Doodle'; and I remember that at the meeting convened for the discussion of the Royal College of Music, and graciously presided over by the Prince of Wales at St. James's Palace, the speakers, including such men as Mr. Gladstone, the late Lord Iddesleigh, Lord Rosebery, and the late Archbishop of Canterbury, almost without exception prefaced their remarks upon music by saying that they knew nothing whatever about music.[61]

It is possible that anxieties about being perceived as effeminate lie behind these statements of musical illiteracy – and, not least, behind Gosse's own concerns, both regarding Swinburne and himself, given his own homosexual leanings, evidenced in the letters he exchanged with the composer and poet Theophilus Marzials (1850-1920).[62] In the forthcoming chapters, I will both demonstrate Swinburne's encounters with musical theory and Wagner, but also suggest ways in which these ideas are related to femininity, and, in turn, how they gave rise to fears about moral degeneracy.

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[61] Francis Hueffer, *Half a Century of Music in England, 1837-1887: Essays Towards a History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1889), pp. 2-3. Tennyson was also described as being indifferent to music. Such attitudes still lingered even in the mid-twentieth century, and may, as I will show later on, have affected the writing of biographies of Victorian men, such as James Pope-Hennessy's biography of Richard Monckton Milnes (1955).

[62] See Marzials's letters beginning 'Dear Gossie' in John M. Munro's *Selected Poems of Theo. Marzials* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1974), pp. 7-12.

Chapter 2 – Wagner's reception and influence in England before the publication of *Poems and Ballads, First Series*

After surveying and critiquing the biographical details within this criticism concerning Swinburne's contact with Wagnerism and Wagnerites, I will address and develop knowledge concerning Wagner's reception in England during the 1850s and '60s. I will then demonstrate how Swinburne's work has a strong relationship with Wagner's, in the sense that they are both expressions of the same Franco-German Romantic trend, and, finally, demonstrate how Swinburne, in the early stages of his career, tacitly acknowledges the link between the composer and himself in his work *William Blake: A Critical Essay* (1867/8).

Wagner-Swinburne criticism has concerned itself with whether Swinburne read Wagner's words, heard his music, or saw his operas. Sypher's 1971 article essentially acts as a state-of-understanding regarding this. Since then, there has been little study of the issue, and – McGann's essay aside – the position has not greatly changed. However, while Sypher's work collates many of the mentions of Wagner from Lang's *The Swinburne Letters*, which he claims testify to Swinburne's 'special interest in Wagner', his work does little to counter Hyder's dismissal regarding 'Laus Veneris' that 'Wagner may be ignored, then, for the present'. However, even Sypher's evidence concerning Swinburne's later career seems somewhat tangential. In terms of *Tristram of Lyonesse*, he states:

> Even though Swinburne had little opportunity to hear a complete stage performance of *Tristan* before his poem was finished, it appears certain that in completing his *Tristram*, he had been influenced by reading Wagner's text, and by hearing his Prelude to *Tristan*.[1]

While this is a confident statement, its foundations are weak, given that it only 'appears certain' in Sypher's mind. Indeed, his tentativeness is underlined by the preceding statement that

[1] Sypher, 'Wagner and Swinburne', 176.

Swinburne had 'little opportunity to hear a complete stage performance'. Quite why a complete stage performance would be necessary for Swinburne to be influenced by Wagner's aesthetics is not clear, but Sypher is aware of the fact that the rest of the knowledge about what Swinburne might or might not have read, seen, or heard is still circumstantial. To counter this, he also mentions Swinburne's 'acquaintance' with the musicologist, journalist, librettist and occasional composer Francis Hueffer (1845-1889) from 1869 and with the conductor and composer Edward Dannreuther (1844-1905). As Sypher notes, both these men were founder members of the London Wagner Society and during the early 1870s wrote many articles on Wagner and on new musical trends. He also notes Dannreuther's participation in 'The Working Men's Society', the influence of which Michael Allis has recently surveyed.[2] The members of this group would meet regularly to play the 'works of Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, Berlioz, Chopin, and others – but especially Wagner', Sypher states. The pianist Karl Klindworth (1830-1916) was also a member of the society. He had arranged Wagner's works for piano and edited Chopin's for publication, and he, states Sypher, '"gave a portion of *Tristan*"' to the society. In 1869, however, Dannreuther went through the entire opera: 'This music had never been heard publicly in England'.[3]

However, while these facts are significant – and may well have been seen as persuasive after the publication of *The Swinburne Letters* as firm evidence of the link between Wagner and Swinburne – Sypher's survey omits some compelling biographical connections between these figures and Swinburne. Terry Meyers's *Uncollected Letters*, however, can be used to fill in some of these gaps. Swinburne's Wagnerite enthusiasm is born out in a letter of 1876 to a German merchant Jurgen Pfeiffer, who sent Swinburne some poems by his wife, Emily Jane Pfeiffer (1827-1890). These were apparently Wagnerian in aspect, and so Swinburne describes himself in

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[2] Michael Allis, 'Performance in Private: "The Working Men's Society" and the Promotion of Progressive Repertoire in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Music and Performance Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Bennett Zon (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 139–171.
[3] Sypher, 'Wagner and Swinburne', 172. Sypher also mentions that Constance Bache gives an example of the performance schedule of these meetings in her memoir. Sypher is here quoting Constance Bache, *Brother Musicians: Reminiscences of Edward and Walter Bache* (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), p. 199. Sypher also mentions George Powell (1842-1882) of Nanteos, near Aberystwyth, (though not as a Society member) and indicates that he is known to have influenced Swinburne's musical knowledge.

his letter of thanks as a 'fervent admirer of Wagner' and that he had turned with 'special interest to the two sonnets on the overture to Lohengrin [by Pfeiffer], which is to my mind only less in ^ [the] quality of delight given by it than the yet diviner & more tragic overture of Tristan'.[4] In an 1869 letter to Emilie Venturi (1821-93), the secretary of Joseph Mazzini (1805-1872) – Mazzini being an important figure for the study of Swinburne and music – Swinburne shows his appetite for Venturi's gossip about Wagner's extra-marital affairs:

> The Wagner affair was new to me. It is, indeed 'a *screaming* farce'. Where can I learn details? I delight in all the music of his I have heard. Some of the Fliegrunder Holländer [*sic*] is so salt of the sea, that one seems to feel the breeze and scent the brine merely to hear it, as I did, on the piano. I would indeed like to hear his music [from] <on> the Orchestra, but if it is his [Wagner's] custom always of an afternoon to elope with somebody's wife on the eve of performance, there will be little chance during his lifetime.[5]

That Swinburne had heard *The Flying Dutchman* on the piano (and, interestingly, recalled it in the synaesthetic terms of scent and touch) adds further weight to Sypher's claims. This letter also gives colour and tone to those contained in *The Swinburne Letters*. In this collection, for example, a comment written to his mother on 14 February 1868 – while in the company of George Powell in Étretat – about the health benefits of sea-crossings, is now given an ironic and musical twist. 'I *must* hail the Flying Dutchman and get taken on board in some capacity', he states, 'then, never stopping or landing, I shall always be well and happy'.[6]

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[4] *UL*, II, 65. I talk in detail about Swinburne's interest in *Lohengrin* in chapter six.
[5] *UL*, I, 164. Stoddard Martin has clarified that '"screaming farce"' refers to Wagner's affair with Cosima (1837-1930), the wife of the musical director of the Munich Opera House, Hans von Bülow (1830-1894). Cosima would later become Wagner's second wife. See Terry L. Meyers, 'Supplementary Material to the Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne', *Algernon Charles Swinburne Project*, <https://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/swinburne/view#docId=swinburne/acs0000505-01.xml> (accessed 4 February 2020)
[6] *TSL*, I, 308.

The *Uncollected Letters* also gives a sense of Swinburne's wider significance within the late-Victorian musical world, as it contains several letters to or from composers, including Charles Salaman (1814-1901), who set Swinburne's 'A Leave-Taking' to music in 1877, and the novelist Marie Corelli (1855-1924), who also wanted to adapt 'A Leave-Taking' but went on to perform an improvised musical version of 'Madonna Mia' at a concert in 1885 that Meyers claims Swinburne attended.[7] The Wagner society, perhaps mindful of his artistic kinship with the composer, tried to get Swinburne to become a member, as shown by a letter from the composer, critic, and the author of a biographical work on Wagner, Ferdinand Praeger (1815-1891). Praeger had been introduced to Swinburne by George Powell, as the former had wondered whether he might be able to adapt some of Swinburne's lyrics for music.[8] Eight years after this introduction, Praeger wrote to the poet:

> I have finished *Wagner as I knew him* for the Earl of Dysart [the first chairman of the London Wagner Society] & am translating it now into German & French, as it will be brought out in the 3 languages & reveal much that never would have been Recorded but for my telling.
>
> Our London Wagner society is doing good work & increasing daily in importance – We intend to translate all his 10 volumes. Might we put your eminent name on the Member list? the yearly expense is but 10/ for Members.[9]

[7] Both 'A Leave-Taking' and 'Madonna Mia' were both published in *P&B*. See *UL*, II, 122 and II, 338-9 for Salaman's and Marie Corelli's requests. For a review of Corelli's concert, which contains information about 'Madonna Mia' see 'Our Omnibus Box', *Theatre: A Monthly Review and Magazine*, 5 (January 1885), 51-52.
[8] January 1880? (Meyers's dating), *UL*, II, 187-188.
[9] 28 February 1888, *UL*, II, 442. In this letter, despite the potential eight-year gap (it was certainly considerable, as Powell had died in 1882), Praeger asks if he can adapt 'Between the seashore & the sea' from *Chastelard* (1865). Praeger's adaptations, if ever completed, do not appear to have been published. Whether Swinburne did join the Society at this late stage is unknown.

Praeger's posthumously-published book, *Wagner as I knew him* (1892) was sent to Swinburne in 1892 by Praeger's son Wilfred, which prompted Swinburne to reply that he would 'read it (I need hardly say) with the deepest interest'.[10]

Nonetheless, these extracts from the *Uncollected Letters*, like Sypher's material concerning Hueffer and the members of the 'Working Men's Society', relate to a period well after the publication of *Poems and Ballads* and so have little bearing on Hyder's statement about Wagner and 'Laus Veneris' – the writing of which he dates to the middle of 1862.[11] This time is also crucial to McGann's thesis as he claims that Wagner's ideas influenced the production of 'Anactoria'. With regards to Swinburne's ownership of Wagner's *Quatre poémes* and *Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris* (1861) by Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), McGann states that

> Assessing the impact that Wagner and Baudelaire had on Swinburne begins with assessing the importance of the year 1863. […] The two prose writings by Wagner and Baudelaire […] both stressed the importance of dramatic form (in particular the form of Greek drama), of mythic content, and of an inner musical structure based on the melodic transformations of key motifs. These ideas all emerge as major features of Swinburne's writings in the key works of late 1863.

McGann adds to this that the 'relation of "Laus Veneris" to both Wagner and Baudelaire is obvious and has been shrewdly examined by Walder'.[12] However, in truth, Anne Walder's account is only marginally concerned with Wagnerian aesthetics. Like Hyder, she is attempting to find sources for 'Laus Veneris', which she attributes more to William Morris's 'The Hill of Venus' (this was published much later as part of *The Earthly Paradise* in 1870), and Baudelaire's Wagner pamphlet.[13] What links she makes between Swinburne's poem and Wagner's opera are

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[10] *UL*, III, 31. The book was later discredited. Praeger seems to have been rather a loner. See Constance Bache's comments later in this chapter.
[11] Hyder, 'Swinburne's "Laus Veneris"', 1210.
[12] McGann, 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne', 626.
[13] Anne Walder, *Swinburne's Flowers of Evil: Baudelaire's Influence on 'Poems and Ballads, First Series*', (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1976), pp. 90-1. Walder incongruously formulates

tentative, nominal, and are related only to general content. Having stated that there are differences in plot between Wagner's opera and Swinburne's poem, Walder only notes a few general correspondences. In 'Laus Veneris', for example, we find the speaker 'longing for nature and life outside the Horsel', she states, 'which is alluded to by Wagner in Act III, sc. iii [of *Tannhäuser*]'. However, she concludes her comparison with the observation that

> these details may be a sign that Swinburne had had access to Wagner's drama either in a translation or on the stage. However, although we cannot of course exclude the possibility that both writers arrived at the same interpretation separately, it seems more likely that Swinburne was following Baudelaire when he composed 'Laus Veneris'.[14]

In his defence of 'Laus Veneris', published in *Notes on Poems and Reviews* (1866), Swinburne claimed that he had only received Baudelaire's pamphlet after he had completed the poem. Walder responds to this potential problem by stating – quite credibly – that Swinburne might actually have read the Wagner pamphlet before Baudelaire sent him a copy in 1863/4.[15]

Walder's knowledge of Wagner's opera is also limited. Like Sypher and McGann, she makes no relationship between its music and Swinburne's poem, or, indeed, with the opera and Baudelaire's pamphlet, and her interpretation is no more than the comment that the 'dominating idea of *Tannhäuser* is the struggle between Good and Evil, Heaven and Hell'.[16] As I will show, neither Swinburne's nor Wagner's interpretations of the Tannhäuser myth endorse this simple duality, and Baudelaire's comment on this goes beyond struggle to the recognition that heaven and hell co-exist and are interchangeable.[17] Wagner's Venus, like Swinburne's, is not simply the

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this by relating 'Laus Veneris' to lines found in Swinburne's much later 1868 lament for Baudelaire, 'Ave Atque Vale', written well after Swinburne had corresponded with the French poet and had become friends with George Powell. Is this because of the comment about Baudelaire's death in *William Blake*? (see chapter three, note 23)

[14] Walder, *Swinburne's Flowers of Evil*, p. 95.

[15] Walder, *Swinburne's Flowers of Evil*, p. 88.

[16] Walder, *Swinburne's Flowers of Evil*, p. 92.

[17] 'Every well-ordered brain has within it two infinities, heaven and hell; and in any image of one of these it suddenly recognizes the half of itself'. See Charles Baudelaire, 'Richard Wagner and

personification of Hell. Neither is his story a straightforward attempt by the eponymous knight to flee her power, but rather – as we shall see – a story about uniting the sexual body with the spirit.

The Wagnerian context of 'Laus Veneris'

The influence of Wagner's music and his aesthetics and theories, prior to the publication of *Poems and Ballads*, was much greater in England than has been noted before. This influence was not only because his music was played far more frequently in the 1850s and '60s than has been thought, but also because of the publication and dissemination of his writings. These theoretical works – for an audience in London who were becoming ever more receptive to musical performance in general – also highlighted to critics Wagner's primary position within Franco-German Romanticism. This influence, I contend had a direct bearing on the writing of 'Laus Veneris'.

As previously noted, Hyder's decision to 'ignore' the potential for Wagner to have influenced the writing of 'Laus Veneris' is based on a limited number of sources. He claims, having consulted *Wagner and his Works*, by Henry T. Finck (New York, 1898), that 'before the composition of 'Laus Veneris' only the overture [of Tannhäuser] had been given in England, in 1855, and that had been severely criticised'.[18] Sypher goes some way to correcting this by pointing out that the overture in 1855 was given at a series of concerts conducted by Wagner himself, at the behest 'of the directors of the Philharmonic'.[19]

The circumstances and difficulties surrounding Wagner's invitation to appear at these concerts have been well documented by Anne Dzamba Sessa and Rupert Christiansen, both of whom also detail the critical vehemence with which Wagner's works were greeted, a reaction to

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Tannhäuser in Paris', *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art & Artists*, trans. P. E. Charvet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 325-357 (p. 342).

[18] Hyder, 'Swinburne's "Laus Veneris"', 1203.

[19] Sypher, 'Swinburne and Wagner', 168. Wagner was briefly engaged by the Philharmonic Society to give a series of concerts in London in 1855, after which he returned to his adopted home in Switzerland.

what Sessa calls his 'confusing Continental notoriety'.[20] Sypher, too, highlights the critical onslaught that Wagner received, citing remarks from *The Times* that 'suggest the general impression that Wagner had made on the English musical public: "Herr Wagner has cut a sorry figure in this country where plain common sense goes for something"'.[21] Sypher then gives the impression that, because of this critical reaction, Wagner's light somehow failed in London in the years between his appearance in the mid-1850s until a revival that was led by his acolytes, Hueffer and Dannreuther – who arrived in England in the late 1860s to set up the Wagner Society. This impression is supported by other critics, such as Sessa, who claims – incorrectly – that after the 1855 Wagner concert series there 'were no public performances in England of Wagner's music drama in the late 1850s and 1860s, with the exception of portions of *Tannhäuser* and the "Entry of the Mastersingers", played by August Manns in his orchestral programs at the Crystal Palace in 1868'.[22] Stoddard Martin, working from Sypher's view, also states that 'Wagner was largely unknown in England at this time'. He continues:

> Orchestral excerpts from his operas had been given in London in 1855, but no complete work was produced until the mid 1870s. Full productions in German had to wait until 1892 […] Considering this slow and incomplete arrival of Wagner to England, it is clear that none of Swinburne's works on Wagnerian subjects could have been inspired by direct experience of the corresponding dramas.[23]

Sypher's unflattering quotation from *The Times* derives from Francis Hueffer's *Half a Century of Music in England*, but he does not quote the several caveats that Hueffer adds to this quotation, which show that during the 1855 concert series there was a marked difference between the

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[20] Anne Dzamba Sessa, *Richard Wagner and the English* (London: Associated University Presses, 1979), pp. 15-25, 19, and Rupert Christiansen, *Victorian Visitors: Culture Shock in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2000), pp. 42-59.
[21] Sypher, 'Swinburne and Wagner', 168.
[22] Sessa, *Richard Wagner and the English*, p. 25.
[23] Martin, *Wagner to 'The Waste Land'*, p. 19. I am not sure why German productions would be of importance here.

responses of the critics and those of the public. The quotation comes from a review written by the chief music critic of *The Times*, J. W. Davison (1813-85), who had a fearful reputation. He was 'a man of imagination,' Hueffer states, 'and, like all imaginative men, a good hater as well as a good lover'. Davison also 'had more than one reason' to 'dislike Wagner', not least his great friendship with the rival composer, the late Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), making Wagner '*à priori*, an object of aversion' and ensuring that 'calm criticism was a matter of extreme difficulty, almost of impossibility'.[24] However, while Davison did his best to upset Wagner's potential popularity, the final concert in the 1855 series was 'an absolute triumph for the much maligned conductor', with a standing ovation reported by the critic for the *Daily News*, who Hueffer quotes as saying, '"I was pleased at least to observe the independence of the public which this time it showed towards the critics"'.[25] The Philharmonic had in fact, Hueffer adds, offered Wagner a contract for the following year, as, in spite of the press, the 1855 concerts had been 'in a pecuniary sense' extremely successful, although Wagner declined the offer.[26]

Wagner's music was much more prevalent after 1855 than has been believed. If his influence was so limited, why did the *Musical World* translate and publish the entirety of Wagner's considerable theoretical work *Opera and Drama* during 1855-56? Anne Walder mentions this fact, although she states in relation to 'Laus Veneris' that 'this is a critical work which does not concern the story of Tannhäuser. The first English translation of *Tannhäuser* appeared in 1875'.[27] The *Musical World* had already translated the entire libretto of *Lohengrin* in April to May of 1855 (14 April to 5 May), clearly capitalizing on Wagner's concurrent visit to the Philharmonic, which it also reviewed. The translation of *Opera and Drama* followed on 19 May (with an exegesis of two Wagner songs in the intervening issue), and was published in weekly extracts until 26 April 1856. This shows both extraordinary commitment and belief in Wagner by

[24] Hueffer, *Half a Century*, p. 52.
[25] Hueffer, *Half a Century*, pp. 58, 59.
[26] Hueffer, *Half a Century*, p. 58.
[27] Walder, pp. 88-89. On the contrary, as I show in chapter four, Swinburne's poem and *Poems and Ballads* are related to the aesthetics of *Opera and Drama* in many ways. Also, Swinburne would probably have read *Tannhäuser* in French, having no need of an English translation, given that the libretto is contained in *Quatre poèmes.*

the *Musical World*, and some of the ideas contained within Wagner's critical work could hardly have failed to enter London's artistic circles. After all, the English version of *Opera and Drama* managed to reach Paris – for is this not the English translation spoken of by Baudelaire in his Wagner pamphlet? Having undergone 'a spiritual operation, a revelation' upon hearing Wagner's music, Baudelaire determined

> to discover the why and the wherefore, and thus to exchange my sensuous pleasure for knowledge, before a performance on the stage brought complete enlightenment. I consulted both my friends and enemies. I waded through M. Fétis's indigestible and odious pamphlet. I read Liszt's book, and at last, for want of *Art and Revolution* and *The Art-work of the Future*, both works untranslated, I laid hands on *Opera and Drama* in an English translation.[28]

There were far more public performances of Wagner's music in the 1850s and '60s than has been previously been believed. To begin with, Wagner's visit to London was prepared for and capitalised on by a series of concerts in 1854 conducted by Louis-Antoine Jullien (1812-1860), one of which included the overture to *Tannhäuser*, on which the *Daily News* commented at length, noting that 'this composer is one of the lights of a new school in Germany, who profess to have discovered capacities in music undreamed of before, and to make it speak in a tongue unknown to the older masters of the art'. Wagner was part of a 'a sect, who, if not numerous, are noisy'.[29] Clearly one of this sect lived at Buckingham Palace, given that the 'Court Circular' for 9 March 1854 records a dinner party that included several members of the royal family, the Palmerstons, and other political figures, during which 'the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards attended during dinner and played', amongst other pieces, 'Fest Marsch, "Tannhäuser auf Wartburg"' by Wagner.[30] Also in 1854, the Philharmonic Society held a series of concerts, at

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[28] Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings*, pp. 332, 333.
[29] 'Music: Jullien's Concerts', *Daily News*, 22 November 1854, p. 2.
[30] 'Her Majesty, &c: From the Court Circular', *Morning Post*, 9 March, 1854, p. 6. This means that Queen Victoria and Albert must have heard parts of *Tannhäuser* a year before they are

which, the *Standard* reported on 2 May, the overture to *Tannhäuser* was performed.[31] Rather aptly, given the preponderance of flower imagery in *Tannhäuser*, selections were played from this opera for the opening of the Crystal Palace Flower Show of 1857, along with other selections from *Lohengrin* and works by Weber and Rossini.[32] Parts of *Lohengrin* were again performed at the Crystal Palace in 1861, while selections were played at 'Howard's Saturday Evening Popular Concerts' at Edinburgh's George Street 'music hall' on 23 November later that year.[33] Indeed, the same music hall premiered music from *Tannhäuser* in Scotland in 1861.[34] The Philharmonic was again playing *Tannhäuser* at a concert in 1862.[35]

Wagner's music had clearly become a mainstay at Buckingham Palace by 1858 as 'selections of *Lohengrin* (the words partly altered and adapted for the present occasion by Mr. Thomas Oliphant) Bridal Procession, Wedding March, and Epithalamium' were played 'by upwards of 200 performers' at the marriage of the Princess Royal and Prince Frederick William of Prussia on 25 January.[36] In 1864, a state concert was held at Buckingham Palace, which again included Wagner's overture to *Tannhäuser* by an orchestra formed by performers from the Philharmonic, Her Majesty's Theatre, and the Royal Italian Opera.[37]

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supposed to have heard it for the first time at one of Wagner's own Philharmonic concerts. Interestingly, the Queen records discussing Wagner's operas in a journal entry of 1851: 'We had some talk with them about the new Operas, Wagner's & Nicolai's (a German, full of talent, who is dead)'. Prince Albert's brother, Duke Ernst II of Saxe-Coburg, who was a frequent resident in Buckingham Palace at this time, was an admirer of Wagner, and wrote his own operas. His *Santa Chiara* (1854) was given at London's Covent Garden in 1877; see Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Giacomo Meyerbeer: A Critical Life and Iconography* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018) p. 303. For Queen Victoria's journal, see 'Monday 18 August 1851', *Queen Victoria's Journals*, The Royal Archive, <http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?ItemNumber=6&FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=3163873978168&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=4&ItemID=qvj06827&volumeType=PSBEA> (accessed 17 February 2020).

[31] 'New Philharmonic Society', *Standard*, 2 May 1854, p. 1.

[32] 'Crystal Palace – Flower Show', *Morning Post*, 29 May 1857, p. 1.

[33] 'Crystal Palace – This Day', *Morning Post*, 12 February 1861, p. 1.; 'Public Amusements', *Caledonian Mercury*, 21 November 1861, p. 1.

[34] 'Howard's Saturday Evening Popular Concerts', *Caledonian Mercury*, 4 November 1861, p. 2.

[35] 'Philharmonic Concert', *Liverpool Mercury*, 5 November 1862, p. 3.

[36] 'Brief Chronicle of the Last Month', *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 8.180 (1 February 1858), 191-193 (p. 193).

[37] 'State Concert', *The Times*, 12 May 1864, p. 11.

These are just some of the public performances that disprove the critical view, but the number of private renditions was surely much higher, given that the *Musical Times* was advertising the publication by Ewer & Co. of the music to '*Tannhauser* [*sic*] by R. Wagner – March, from this famous opera' in time for Christmas 1854, while Wagner was again part of the same company's 1858 'Pianoforte album […] the most superb ever published in this country […containing] Twenty-six new compositions by the best modern authors'.[38] These advertisements suggest that the meetings of 'The Working Men's Society', as reported by Constance Bache, might not have been quite so extraordinary as she suggests, and that Sypher's reliance on Bache as a source for his understanding of the state of Wagner's influence in England might also be flawed. While I do not question Bache's statement that the Society 'may be said to have formed the nucleus of the *later* development and diffusion of Wagner's work in England' (my italics) there was clearly a tendency among its members to overstate their efforts and frame them as a 'fight'.[39]

A photograph in *Brother Musicians* (see figure 1) of the members of the society – showing Edward Dannreuther, Walter Bache (1842-88), Wilhelm Kümpel (1822-1880), Karl Klindworth, Alfred James Hipkins (1826-1903), and Frits Hartvigson (1841-1919) – is set alongside the comment that 'except for '[Frederick] Praeger, who fought alone, there was no one else to champion Wagner's cause'.[40] Additionally, Walter Bache is quoted by his sister as saying about the first performance of a complete opera by Wagner in 1870 – *The Flying Dutchman* – at Drury Lane that '"There is every chance of a fiasco owing to a bad performance; and if there be a success it can't make enough stir in London to force the Press to acknowledge it". The last sentence is significant, as pointing to the uphill road Wagner has had to tread in England'.[41]

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[38] 'Advertisements', *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 6.134 (1 December 1854), 221 and 'Advertisements', 8.178 (1 December 1857), 162.
[39] Bache, *Brother Musicians*, p. 197
[40] Bache, *Brother Musicians*, p. 200.
[41] Bache, *Brother Musicians*, p. 201.

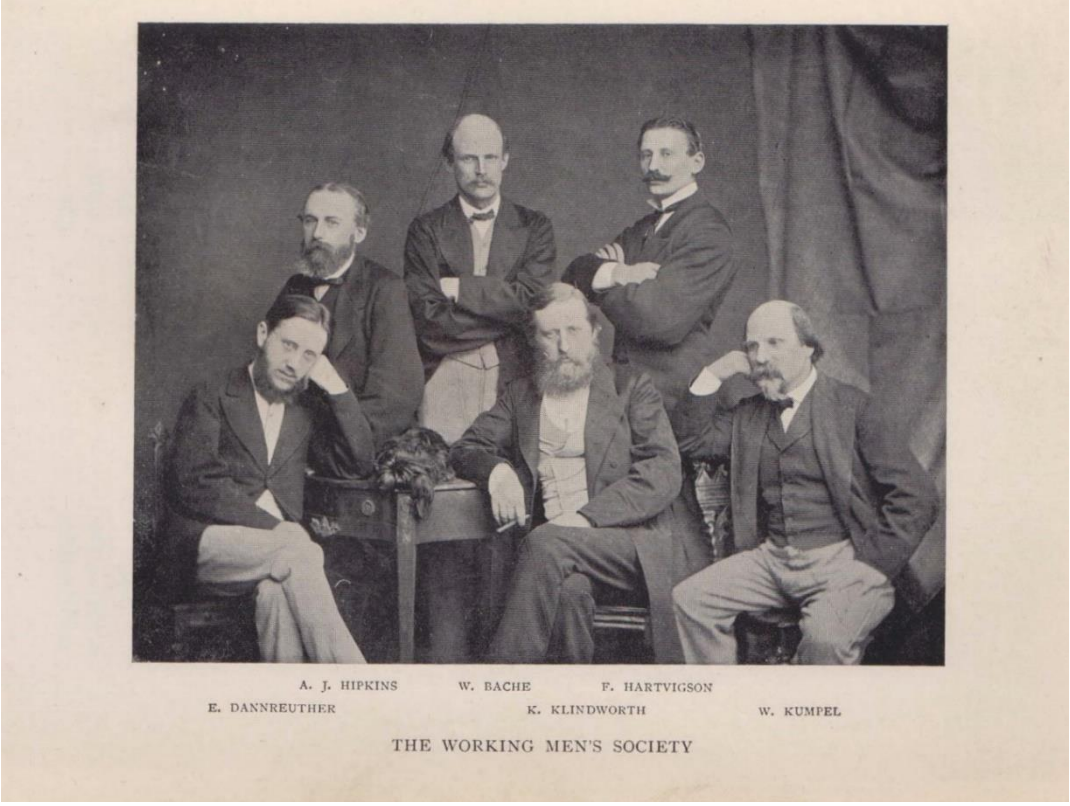

Figure 1: 'The Working Men's Society'. Photo from Constance Bache, *Brother Musicians: Reminiscences of Edward & Walter Bache* (London: Methuen & Co., 1901). From my own collection.

Yet the press did notice it, with several advance notices, including the *Pall Mall Gazette* heralding its appearance as 'a novelty which will probably possess more attraction for the musical public than any other' (while lamenting that 'it was at one time the fashion to promise *Tannhäuser* at the beginning of every opera season'). The *Standard* also suggested the opera as providing the best introduction to the 'new school of lyrical music'.[42] There were several reviews too, with a long article in the *Era* calling out to Wagner's critics that the opera could not leave them unmoved. It also praised the quality of singing and gave a brief summary of the composer's theories, explaining that Wagner's music, 'as in nature', tried to create 'exquisite pleasure from sounds, which have no definite character'.[43] The *Morning Post* highly praised the production, lamenting the 'obstinacy' of 'those determined not to know Wagner', and closed their lengthy

[42] 'The Opera', *Pall Mall Gazette,* 19 March 1870, p. 6.; 'The Italian Opera Drury-Lane', *Standard*, 21 July 1870, p. 3.
[43] 'Town Edition: Italian Opera, Drury-Lane (Last Night)', *Era*, 24 July 1870, p. 14.

review with the extraordinary statement that 'the success of Wagner's "Flying Dutchman" was another blow to unrelenting prejudice entertained against music which has hitherto [been] denied a hearing, and which will in no distant day fill opera houses to the brim'.[44] It is quite clear that Bache is overstating the efforts required by her brother to get Wagner noticed.

Francis Hueffer – vital though he is for Wagner's later reception in London and for the post-1866 sections of my own thesis – was also not above overstating his influence. In his posthumously-published *Half a Century*, Hueffer states, erroneously, and with a false modesty in the light of the above information, that the

> way for his [Wagner's] triumphant return [to London] in 1877 was paved by a literary movement which was started when only a single opera of his had been performed in this country, and when little more than his name was known to the general public. Of that movement it beseems the present writer to speak with modesty and a certain reluctance, for the reason that it was he who began it.[45]

The critical denunciations of Wagner by *The Times* in the 1850s, as described by Hueffer, also surely demonstrate that the composer's presence was much greater than has been previously acknowledged. Davison's attacks in 1855 already suggest this, but the year after the disastrous Paris performance of *Tannhäuser* in 1861, *The Times* continued its vociferous condemnations of musical fashion by sneering about Wagner's claims that 'existing [musical] models are all wrong, and the accepted composers all in the dark'. In 1863, it was again crowing about 'a species of nightmare, in the shape of Richard Wagner, [with] his monstrous theories and half-demented apostles'.[46] This is not the kind of language that gets directed at someone with little influence. The 'fear' is palpable in these words, and the Wagner 'species' as I have already shown, had

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[44] 'Italian Opera Drury-Lane', *Morning Post*, 25 July 1870, p. 2.
[45] Hueffer, *Half a Century*, pp. 65-66.
[46] 'Mr. Thalberg's Matinees', *The Times*, 8 July 1862, p. 14; 'Henry Leslie's Choir', *The Times*, 5 November 1863, p. 9. 'Apostles' suggests a movement already in progress. While these reports sound like Davison's style of writing, no author is given for either.

already reached the summit of households in the form of Buckingham Palace. Indeed, Swinburne need not have been in France at all to hear of the disaster of the Paris *Tannhäuser*, as the *Musical World* carried a lengthy and scornful article by the composer and professor of music, Oscar Comettant (1819-1898), which called the performance 'a riot', labelled Wagner's music as 'deplorable' and stated that his followers were 'fanatics' and 'impotent' musicians.[47] The *Musical World* continued its coverage of Wagner's fortunes when in 1866 it published a review of *Der Ring des Nibelungen: ein Bühnenfestspiel für drei Tage und einen Vorabend* (The Ring of the Nibelungen: A Grand Stage Play for Three Days and a Preparatory Evening), which was the libretto of the complete *Ring* Cycle, although Wagner – as he stated in the preface – had yet to complete the music.[48]

The German Romantic context of Wagner and Swinburne

As should now be clear, Swinburne did not write *Poems and Ballads* in an England barren of Wagner's music. The opposite appears to be the case. His theories also appear to have been generally known or at least tacitly understood by critics. However, the publication of *Opera and Drama* in English and the interest of the British press in Wagner's activities both during his visit in 1855 and well after, need to be understood in greater contextual terms. The interest in Wagner was part of an ever-growing sense of the importance of music in England by the mid-nineteenth century, and there was clearly an awareness that Wagner's views on music were the most controversial at this time. *Opera and Drama* was seen, essentially, as the cutting edge of musical theory, and as such represented the latest example in a European Romantic movement that sought to encompass all art into a general system of aesthetics, but with music at its summit. Indeed, the similarities between Swinburne's and Wagner's ideas need not be described, as McGann and Sypher both attempt to do, in terms of whether Swinburne had read this or that work of Wagner's or, indeed, whether he had heard Wagner's music as early as the 1860s. In general terms,

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[47] Oscar Comettant, 'The Judgement of Paris on *Tannhauser*', *Musical World*, 39.15 (13 April 1861), 228-230 (p. 230). See chapter five for details of this 'riot'.
[48] 'Richard Wagner's *Nibelungen*', *Musical World*, 41.31 (1 August 1863), 485-487 (p. 485).

Swinburne's ideas, and particularly those concerning poetic music, spring from the same European inter-art trend as Wagner's, a trend that in itself was a fusion of French and German Romanticism.[49]

The immediate forefathers of this movement were undoubtedly German. In general terms, Wagner's own aesthetics originate in the work of Goethe (1749-1832), E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1822), Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) and that of August and Karl Friedrich Schlegel (1767-1845, 1772-1829). As Jed Rasula has recently charted, the ambitions of these artists and critics, were involved in both a process of dissolution – with all the arts losing the definitions that separated them – and a contrary process of fusion in a search for totality or a transcendence away from a human sense of incompletion. In such processes, practices such as synaesthesia, where a sense impression is heightened by using impressions from other senses (an example of this would be Swinburne's Tristram who 'felt the sound and savour and swift flight | Of waves'), and the deliberate use of metaphors related to different arts come to the fore.[50] As August Schlegel proclaimed:

> We should strive to bring the arts closer together and search for bridges from one to the other. Statues will come alive to become perhaps paintings; paintings will become poems; poems will become music; and who knows, perhaps solemn religious music will rise up again as a temple in the sky.[51]

Imagined as an architectural temple in the sky – with a temple being, as it were, the summit of all transcendent human experience – music, it was believed, could supersede all the other arts, or the other arts might lend themselves to music or be turned into forms of music themselves. Schlegel's action describes a process of fusion that prioritizes music, with its unification of content and form

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[49] Wagner's Franco-German Romanticism is the reason why Nietzsche continually notes that the composer was more French than German. See Jeremy Coleman, *Richard Wagner in Paris: Translation, Identity, Modernity* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), pp. 1-18.
[50] *SCPW*, II, 126.
[51] Quoted in Jed Rasula, *History of a Shiver: The Sublime Impudence of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 63.

into sound, as an ultimate, complete artform. Schlegel's brother, Friedrich, also claimed in one of his aphorisms – which, according to Rasula, share their sloganeering with later Modernist manifestos – that 'Romantic poetry' was a 'progressive, universal poetry […] which embraces everything poetic […] its peculiar essence is that it is always becoming and that it can never be completed'.[52] Schlegel is here characteristically defining (or perhaps 'undefining') the 'poetic' and 'poetry' in terms of its Greek etymological roots as 'creative' or 'productive'. The Romantic spirit was, therefore, endlessly creative or productive. It was always in a process of 'becoming', and the art forms that enacted the process of infinite becoming more than any other were those involved in time. While written poetry itself evolves in time while being read, music, however, even temporalizes the process of definition, deferring it so that meanings can evolve. Swinburne certainly knew the work of the Schlegels. In his *A Study of Shakespeare* (1875/1880), Swinburne contests a point made by the 'modest and judicious Herr von Schlegel' about Christopher Marlowe's musical verse 'harmonies'.[53]

Wagner's system of 'endless melody', which he eventually admitted in his 1870 essay 'Beethoven' would swallow up all other arts into musical expression, certainly has a precursor in the Schegels' work, but also in the writing of E. T. A. Hoffmann. In his 1810 review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for example, Hoffmann suggests a chthonic origin for music, for 'Orpheus's lyre opened the gates of Orcus. Music reveals to man an unknown realm', and, by evoking the fusional arts of the alchemist, he claims that

> In singing, where the juxtaposed poetry suggests precise moods through words, the magical power of music acts like the philosopher's miracle-elixir, a few drops of which make any drink wonderfully delicious. Any passion – love, hate, anger, despair, etc. – presented to us in an opera is clothed by music in the purple shimmer of romanticism, so that even our mundane sensations take us out of the everyday into the realm of the

[52] Friedrich Schlegel, *Dialogue on Poetry*, pp. 140-41. Rasula, *History of a Shiver*, pp. 55, 57.
[53] A. C. Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1880), p. 231. This originally appeared in 1875 in the *Fortnightly Review*.

> infinite. Such is the power of music's spell that, growing ever stronger, it can only burst the fetters of any other art.[54]

A few years after this, Hoffmann published a short story called 'The Singer's Contest' (1819), which concerns the character of the mastersinger Heinrich of Ofterdingen. Wagner later adapted and blended this story into his opera *Tannhäuser*.[55]

The commercial success of opera throughout the nineteenth century and opera's apparent ability to make use of every other art in its performance certainly gave these ideas a certain force. It added to the sense that music, unlike the other arts that were in some way 'fettered' by either their form or content, offered the path to the greatest freedom. As Carl Dahlhaus has argued, nineteenth-century music's late entry to Romanticism gave it an 'untimely' or timeless quality (ironic for a uniquely temporal art from) for artists working in different mediums – an otherworldliness that could be exploited. For the late-Romanticism of Swinburne, Morris, and Rossetti – in a world of increased mechanism and metropolitan convergence – music might have 'stood for an alternative world. The saying "music is different" formed the nucleus of the musical aesthetic of an age of positivism'.[56] It is perhaps for this reason, too, that in the early years of the twentieth century, T. S. Eliot was keen to differentiate himself from the musical world of Swinburne, away from a Victorian poetry that he perhaps saw as being in service to music rather than to itself. He demanded a new poetry for a different world where the daily realities of city life

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[54] E. T. A. Hoffmann, 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony', *E. T. A. Hoffman's Musical Writings: 'Kreisleriana', 'The Poet and the Composer', Musical Criticism*, ed. by David Charlton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 236-7.

[55] The story also includes the sorcerer Klingsor, who features in Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882). Heinrich appears earlier in Novalis's novella *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1800), which Wagner certainly read as he references it in *Opera and Drama*. For Hoffmann's story, see E. T. A. Hoffmann, 'The Singer's Contest', *The Sand-Man and other Night Pieces* (Leyburn: Tartarus Press, 2008), pp. 173-211.

[56] Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*, trans. by Mary Whittall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 5-6. Dahlhaus points out that calling Wagner a late-Romantic is erroneous. Wagner labelled composers such as Berlioz and Meyerbeer late-Romantics, as he believed that they had created a 'distortion of, and falling-off from, the real thing [i.e. Romanticism]', (p. 5).

required a fresh language to tackle them, rather a poetry that looked, perhaps, to some transcendent realm.[57]

While this was, originally, a very German musical idea – and unlikely to hold much sway in the 'unmusical' England of the early 1800s – the 'melomania' doctrine quickly spread across Europe, fusing itself with the work of Romantic artists, before eventually finding a voice in the new English interest in music of the latter half of the century.[58] The doctrine was transmitted through the works of Shelley, who certainly knew August Schlegel's work and whose vision of poetry was in the 'permanent analogy of things by images which participate in the life of truth; […] being the echo of the eternal music'.[59] While Shelley's music is undoubtedly Pythagorean and Platonic in its aspiration to provide 'planetary music for mortal ears' with a poetry that 'lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world', the doctrine of analogy was evoked in more earthly and bodily terms as the century progressed.[60] This was undoubtedly caused by the sensual interests of French artists. Baudelaire's art criticism, for example, sounds similar in expression but involves a critical action that moves away from objective definition to encompass a personally transcendental and inter-connected reality. 'The right way of knowing whether a picture is melodious,' he claimed, 'is to look at it from far enough away to make it impossible for us to see what it is about or to appreciate its lines'. Baudelaire then quotes Hoffmann's *Kreisleriana* (1814):

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[57] 'But the language which is more important to us is that which is struggling to digest and express new objects, new groups of objects, new feelings, new aspects'. Eliot, 'Swinburne as Poet', *The Sacred Wood*, p. 150.

[58] On the 'unmusical' nature of the English and their subsequent love of music, see Francis Hueffer's introduction to *Half a Century*, where he states that 'there is no branch of human knowledge, or of human art, in which the change that the half-century of the Queen's reign has wrought, is so marked as it is in the spirit of music' (p. 1).

[59] On Shelley's quoting of Schlegel and reading of Schiller, see *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 351. The quotation is from Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*, see *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2002), p. 515

[60] *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 517.

> 'listening to music, I find an analogy and a close union between colours, sounds, and scents […] they are destined to unite in a wonderful concert. The scent of brown and red marigolds especially produces a magical effect on my being. I fall into a profound reverie and then hear as though from afar the solemn, deep notes of the oboe'.[61]

In contrast to Plato's rejection of the corporeal, here the body is now central – the analogies work to feed a subjective appetite and the body's senses all become aspects of taste. It is in the reception of the senses and the traffic between them where perception now occurs, with synaesthetic awareness creating a musical (potentially erotic) suggestion in a network of analogies. For Baudelaire it was the relation between colours that brought this sounding music to life, for 'colour then, means the balance of two tones' and 'in colour we find harmony, melody and counterpoint'.[62]

In such aesthetic systems, localised definition is not the goal. Importance lies in the connections between objects, or in the suggestions of correspondence, not in the objects themselves. British artists, such as James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), would soon be following their French counterparts, in labelling their paintings as symphonies and nocturnes. The most pertinent example of this is *The Little White Girl* (1864). Whistler pasted a manuscript version of some of Swinburne's verses from 'Before the Mirror' (1866) to this painting's frame for its exhibition in 1865 at the Royal Academy. Elizabeth Prettejohn discusses how Swinburne's poem acts as an annotation to Whistler's painting in a way 'much favoured by [Dante Gabriel] Rossetti' in his ekphrastic poems on paintings, but it also acts in a process of analogy.[63] On beholding the painting, a viewer's perception of the original artwork is transformed by reading

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[61] Charvet, 'The Salon of 1846: On Colour', *Baudelaire: Selected Essays*, pp. 57, 58.
[62] Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Essays*, pp. 56, 55.
[63] Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Yale University Press, 2007), p. 110.

Figure 2: *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* (1864). Whistler pasted a manuscript version of some of Swinburne's verses from 'Before the Mirror' (1866) to this painting's frame for its exhibition in 1865 at the Royal Academy. © The Tate Gallery, London, licensed by creative commons agreement

Swinburne's words, and the dynamics between the two artforms try to entice the viewer to look 'Behind the veil' (to quote 'Before the Mirror') into a transcendent, harmonious realm that is suggested in the relationship of the artworks but also through relations of colour and sound, word and line.[64] Indeed, the importance of process over completed actions is given in Swinburne's idea of being both 'Before' the mirror (and presumably seeing oneself reflected, as the subject of Whistler's painting sees herself in the mirror over the fireplace) but also looking 'Behind' it or past the reflection. Whistler latterly renamed this painting *Symphony in White, No. 2*, to imply the intangible and the way that music suggests sensations though the relation of notes.[65]

[64] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 104.
[65] As opposed to *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, a work produced in 1862.

The critic and poet Arthur Symons related Whistler's whole *oeuvre* to music. In his *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), he states that it 'was with the most precise accuracy that Whistler applied the terms of music to his painting, for painting, when it aims at being the vision of reality, *pas la couleur, rien que la nuance*, passes almost into the condition of music'.[66] In *Studies in Seven Arts* (1906), Symons related other painters' work to music, as if certain painters from all eras understood the terms of analogy that the greatest arts aspired to. 'It is musical terms that come first to one's mind,' he states about Whistler's paintings: 'Every picture has a purity of tone like that of the violin playing. Sometimes a Giorgione, sometimes a Watteau, comes to one as if in exchange for music; Whistler always'.[67]

The extraordinary ability of the idea of analogy and correspondence to develop and mutate throughout the nineteenth century also worked backwards, as this comment from Symons implies. Romanticism reworked the past into its own diffuse image through a series of temporal correspondences, so that historical distance is collapsed into the present. The philosopher Pierre Leroux's recasting of the thought of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) is a case in point. To quote Rasula, Leroux (1791-1871) turns Swedenborg's occultist doctrine into 'esoteric script of celestial wisdom', and, in so doing, he produces a message that sounds astonishing alike to Swinburne's ideas of harmony and poetic rhythm and his wish to see 'the veiled God's face':

> Poetry is the mysterious wing that glides at will in the whole world of the soul, in that infinite sphere, one part of which is colours, another sounds, another movements, another judgements, and so forth, all vibrating simultaneously, according to certain laws, so that a vibration in one region, communicates itself to another region. The privilege of art is to

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[66] Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (Manchester: Carcanet Press/Fyfield Books, 2014), p. 47. Symons bought Swinburne's copy of Baudelaire's *Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris* – see 'Lot 40' in *Sale Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons, Volume 6: Poets and Men of Letters*, ed. by John Woolford and A. N. L. Munby (London: Mansell, 1972), p. 258. Symons is also referencing Walter Pater's comment about all art aspiring to the condition of music. Given the inaccuracy of musical suggestion, there is surely irony in the phrase 'precise accuracy'.

[67] Arthur Symons, *Studies in Seven Arts* (London: Archibald Constable and Company, 1906) p. 132.

> feel and express these relationships, which are deeply hidden in the very unity of life. From these harmonic vibrations of the diverse regions of the soul an a*ccord* results, and this accord is life; and when this accord is expressed, it constitutes art. And so it happens that when this accord is expressed, it is a symbol, and the form of its expression is rhythm, which itself partakes of the symbol: that is why art is the expression of life, the reverberation of life, itself.[68]

Leroux's *accord,* a word with a musical etymology, is surely Baudelaire's *correspondences*. Contemplation is directed to the relations between objects. 'Judgement' or essentially the Enlightenment 'reason' is also relegated to a region of that 'infinite sphere' which vibrates with all other regions that are reached through the senses. The Pythagorean music of the spheres is again hinted at, with an obvious Platonic and Shelleyan relationship in the 'mysterious wings' and the 'harmonic vibrations'. But these vibrations are across regions of a diverse soul – at once 'life', but also when 'expressed' 'a symbol' – and are experienced through bodily senses and movements.

Swinburne, Blake, Wagner

Such a bodily recasting of Swedenborg's ideas would surely have appealed to Swinburne, whose *William Blake: A Critical Essay* is a recasting of Blake as a version of Swinburne himself. Feeding off the muscularity of Blake's imagery in his engravings and verse, Swinburne also brings Shelley into a web of artistic relationships. However, he complains that in 'Epipsychidion' (1821) Shelley 'scarcely preaches a more bodiless evangel of bodily liberty'.[69] For Swinburne, the body is central. He characterizes the Swedenborg-inspired Blake as a man to whom

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[68] Rasula, *History of a Shiver*, pp. 61-62. The Leroux quotation is from 'De la poésie de la notre époche,' from *Revue encyclopédique* 51 (1831), while Rasula's translation is from *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical* Anthology, ed. Henri Dorra (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 8. 'The veiled God's face' quotation is from the final line of Swinburne's 'Sonnet (with a Copy of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*)' (1878), *SCPW*, I, 362.

[69] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *William Blake: A Critical Essay* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1925), p. 140.

> The veil of outer things seemed always to tremble with some breath behind it: seemed at times to be rent in sunder with clamour and sudden lightning. All the void of earth and air seemed to quiver with the passage of sentient wings and palpitate under the pressure of conscious feet. Flowers and weeds, stars and stones, spoke with articulate lips and gazed with living eyes. Hands were stretched towards him from beyond the darkness of material nature.[70]

While unable to entirely escape the Platonic language of the growth of wings and flight in Socrates's depiction of love in *Phaedrus*, Swinburne's 'veil of outer things' is traversable through creative energy. The implication is that poetry, with its 'sentient wings' and 'conscious feet' – i.e. a body that thinks through itself rather than purely through intellect (the 'wings' and 'feet' imagery suggests the 'flying feet' of 'Sapphics') – is a vehicle that allows such a crossing (or perhaps a transgression) into a realm of infinite creativity.[71] While *William Blake* was not published until 1868, much of it was written in 1866 – the year of the publication of the bodily and ultimately orphic music of *Poems and Ballads*.

McGann demonstrates how Swinburne's reading of Blake is mediated by Baudelaire's idea of analogies and correspondences, and that Baudelaire's essays are wrapped into Swinburne's words.[72] But the extent to which Swinburne enmeshes his own words with those of Blake to harmonize with his precursor has yet to be fully appreciated. It is sometimes hard to decipher whether Swinburne's comments on various poems and plates, which often trip over themselves in great fragmented torrents of synaesthesia – separated only by semicolons and dashes – are his own words or adaptations from Blake himself. Indeed, in one such section, Swinburne becomes Blake, but also melts his predecessor into his poem 'Dolores' from *Poems and Ballads*, published two years previously. 'In these galliambics of Blake,' we are told,

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[70] Swinburne, *William Blake*, pp. 40-41.
[71] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 163.
[72] McGann, *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism*, p.51.

> we see the flint of Atys whetted for such work; made ready against the priests of Nature and her God, though by an alien hand that will cast no incense upon the altar of Cybele; no Phrygian's, who would spend his own blood to moisten and brighten the high places of her worship: but one ready, with what fire he can get, to burn down the groves and melt down the cymbals of Dindymus.[73]

Swinburne relates Swedenborg's work to Blake, Baudelaire, and his own work, and the Franco-German Romantic tradition by several paths. It is 'especially worth regretting', we are told, 'that Balzac, in his Swedenborgian researches, could not have fallen in with Blake's "prophetic" works', for he alone would have been able to truly bring 'a scale to weigh this water, a sieve to winnow this wind' – that is, to explore Blake's work of 'strange floating forces'.[74] Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier also make their appearance during a passionate advocacy of 'Art for art's sake', where Swinburne quotes Baudelaire's *l'hérésie de l'enseignement*, which he translates as 'the heresy of instruction', or the idea that art should not include any moral purpose, at least as its objective.[75] Baudelaire's 'heresy' comes from both his essay 'Théophile Gautier' (1859) and from 'Further Notes on Edgar [Allan] Poe'.[76]

However, Swinburne wraps all these writers and Blake himself, *ex ante*, into the spectral and musical presence of Richard Wagner. Although Wagner is never directly mentioned, the composer actually haunts the entire text of *William Blake*, and so the work's constant allusions to and suggestions of music and harmony, along with its frequent synaesthetic reveries, should be read with Wagner and particularly *Tannhäuser* in mind. Wagner makes this veiled appearance on the very first page of *William Blake* in the form of an untranslated epigraph (foreign languages

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[73] Swinburne, *William Blake*, p. 158. Swinburne is surely speaking figuratively here, as where does Blake write in galliambics? See chapter four on 'Dolores' and galliambics.
[74] Swinburne, *William Blake*, p. 102. Honoré de Balzac's short story 'Sarrasine' (1830) is a clear influence on Swinburne's interest in androgyny.
[75] Swinburne, *William Blake*, p. 91.
[76] In an essay in his translation of Gautier's biography of Baudelaire, Guy Thorne highlights the similarity between Swinburne and the two French poets. See Théophile Gautier, *Baudelaire: His Life*, trans. Guy Thorne (London: Greening & Co., 1915), pp. 171-181.

being, perhaps, another form of correspondence?). This is a quotation from Baudelaire, and it concerns itself with the 'mysterious laws' of poetry and the 'divine' aims in the 'poetic process'. But the conjurer of these mysterious laws is the 'Sorcerer of Bayreuth', or Wagner, as the quotation comes from Baudelaire's *Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris*. Charvet translates the words from this epigraph thus:

> On the contrary, all great poets naturally, inevitably become critics. I feel sorry for poets guided by their instincts alone; I regard them as incomplete. In the spiritual life of great poets, a crisis is bound to occur that leads them to examine their art critically, to seek the mysterious laws that guided them, the idea being drawn from this study a series of precepts whose divine aim is infallibility in the poetic process. For a critic to become a poet would be miraculous, whereas for a poet not to have a critic within him is impossible.[77]

Presumably, in writing his *William Blake* and opening it with Wagner and Baudelaire, Swinburne was indicating that he too had faced a 'crisis' which had led him to examine his own art and seek out its 'mysterious laws'. These laws were akin to those of Baudelaire and to Wagner, both of whom saw a correspondent visionary music behind the veil of the real world.

[77] See Swinburne, *William Blake*, p. 1, and Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings*, p. 340.

Chapter 3 – 'As mysterious a music of emotion': 'Charles Baudelaire: *Les Fleurs du mal*' (September 1862), Baudelaire's *Richard Wagner and 'Tannhäuser' in Paris* (April 1861), Swinburne's 'Laus Veneris' (1866) and *William Blake: A Critical Essay* (1867/8)

The reason why Swinburne links *William Blake* with Baudelaire and Wagner can be answered by looking at where Swinburne was and what he was doing during 1860-64. He visited Paris on several occasions, gaining a first-hand experience of its literary and art worlds. In England he was trying to locate and research – with William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919) – various Blake manuscripts. This was part of an attempt to finish Alexander Gilchrist's two-volume *Life of William Blake* (1863) after Gilchrist's premature death in late 1861.

Jerome McGann states that understanding the impact that Wagner and Baudelaire had on Swinburne 'begins with assessing the importance of the year 1863'.[1] However, the whole of this period is important as it was during this time that Swinburne began to explore his vocation as a poet and came to understand his affinity with European artists and poets. Those artists whose company he sought, or made contact with, were all influenced both by musical ideas in general and more specifically, the strange new music of desire created by Wagner.[2] It was in this heavy Wagnerian atmosphere that Swinburne wrote his version of the Tannhäuser legend, 'Laus Veneris'.

In the opening section of this chapter I consider the influence of Richard Monckton Milnes (1809-1885) on Swinburne's knowledge of German and French Romanticism, the writing of *William Blake*, and on 'Laus Veneris' in general – especially its sources. I also suggest that

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[1] McGann, 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne', 626. McGann appears to want to challenge Georges Lafourcade's opinion, who decides that 'although the fact has never been fully emphasized, 1862 was the crucial year in Swinburne's early life'. Lafourcade then calls 1863 'an anti-climax', which, in the light of the following material in this chapter is clearly not the case. See Georges Lafourcade, *Swinburne: A Literary Biography* (London: Bell & Sons, 1932), pp. 96, 107.

[2] A letter to Swinburne's friend Lady Pauline Trevelyan in early 1861 makes clear that Swinburne, who had just been to Paris, was highly receptive to new ideas as he contemplated his possible choice of career. He relates what he had seen in Paris, that he wants to meet Robert Browning, and that he plans to go on to Venice from Mentone in France. He also contemplates what profession he might take up that will allow him to continue his 'proper work if I can't live by it. […] There is really no profession one can take up with and go on working [i.e. at poetry]'. He briefly considers going to 'the bar'. *TSL*, I, 39 (19 January 1861).

previous Swinburne biographies have not noted the key role of Milnes in Swinburne's life at this time. I then examine and significantly add to knowledge concerning Swinburne's trips to Paris between 1861-4, reconsidering and exploring his friendship with a *mélofane* (or music-worshipping) group of artists, who considered themselves ardent Wagnerites. I also re-examine Baudelaire's undelivered letter to Swinburne of 1863 and the importance of the French poet's gift of his pamphlet, *Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris*. In rereading the undelivered letter, I show that its implications have not been fully understood and that Baudelaire wrote to Swinburne with the belief that he was already a Wagnerite. In the final section, I reconsider George Meredith's story of the writing of 'Laus Veneris' at Copsham cottage in 1862 after Swinburne had discovered Edward FitzGerald's translation of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859). I show how this story is only a part of a range of sources and influences that went into the creation of his poem.

Swinburne's friendship with Richard Monckton Milnes

Alexander Gilchrist died on 30 November 1861, leaving his Blake biography incomplete, but Swinburne's interest in Gilchrist's Blake book predates this event. As George Price Boyce records in his diary on 4 May that same year, Swinburne had been looking 'over some books of Blake's' with D. G. Rossetti at Gilchrist's house at 6 Cheyne Walk.[3] Earlier that day, Swinburne had replied to a letter from Richard Monckton Milnes – a Member of Parliament, poet, and literary collector – and accepted an invitation for breakfast for the following morning. Milnes owned a substantial collection of Blake manuscripts – which is possibly why Swinburne was in touch with him – and having seen various books by Blake at the Gilchrists' house, the meeting with Milnes must have become very important. Although in his note of the night before Swinburne was concerned that Milnes might not 'get this answer in time', Swinburne almost

[3] *The Diaries of George Price Boyce*, ed. Virginia Surtees (Norwich: Real World, 1980), p. 33. William Michael Rossetti details how the Blake project was started after Gilchrist's death in *Some Reminiscences of William Michael Rossetti*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), II, 306-8.

certainly did meet him the following day for breakfast at his home in Upper Brook Street.[4] While the entertainment diary of the Annabel Milnes – Richard's wife – does not record guests for breakfast on 5 May, Swinburne clearly became friends with the Milneses as a month later he attended breakfast on 5 June at their house, along with Richard Burton, Coventry Patmore, and several others.[5]

In her more detailed daily diary, Annabel also records Swinburne visiting Fryston Hall, the Milneses' house in West Yorkshire, later in the same year (August 1861). Although she does not give his date of arrival, she does note the Burtons '& etc' arrived on 12 August, which presumably included Swinburne. He stayed beyond 23 August (the Burtons left on 16 August), as on this day she records that Swinburne went with her and her husband, and Holman Hunt, Madame Mohl, and Francis Palgrave to dinner to Temple Newsam House.[6] While at Fryston, Swinburne undoubtedly took the opportunity to look over Milnes's Blake collection, which he was clearly impressed by. After Gilchrist's death in November, W. M. Rossetti initially asked for Swinburne's help in completing Gilchrist's Blake biography by revising material on the 'Prophetic Books'. But at some time between Gilchrist's death and his subsequent research at Fryston in 1862, Swinburne had realized that something more radical was required and that he would write his own book on Blake instead. Fearing that his contributions to Gilchrist's book would now seem like an 'extraneous tail or fin stitched on', Swinburne wrote to W. M. Rossetti on 6 October 1862, and he proposed 'a distinct small commentary of a running kind' to be set

[4] 4 May 1861, *TSL*, I, 44. The formality in this note suggests that Milnes and Swinburne were unacquainted before this breakfast. Lang says that this meeting was 'surely preordained' although 'how they became known to each other is still undetermined' (p. 44). Presumably it was because of the Blake manuscripts, and Gilchrist may have facilitated the connection.

[5] Annabel Milnes's entertainment diaries are composed of a series of small pocket books for various years, which list the guests at breakfast, lunch, or dinner either at 16 Upper Brook Street or at Fryston Hall. That no breakfast was noted as happening on 5 May does not mean that one did not take place, but more likely that Annabel was not in attendance. See 'Dinner Diaries' in 'Personal Papers of Lady Houghton', *Houghton Papers*, B43, Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge.

[6] 'Diary' in 'Personal papers of Lady Houghton', *Houghton Papers*, B43. This detail is also noted by James Pope-Hennessy in his *Monckton Milnes: The Flight of Youth, 1851-1885* (London: Constable, 1851), p. 132.

alongside it instead.[7] Rossetti wrote back to Swinburne on 2 November to say that for himself he '*must* make an effort to see' Milnes's collection, and 'Could you give me an inkling of how it is to be managed? I am sorry to trouble you now after you have so often volunteered aforetime'.[8] Swinburne volunteered again, however, and few days later he wrote to Milnes himself, unfavourably comparing the British Museum's collection of Blake manuscripts with those at Fryston, stating 'it has not a tithe of what you have in the way of Blakes; and we know of no other accessible place that has'.[9] By 25 November, he was again at Fryston and he wrote to W. M. Rossetti, asking when he, too, would be arriving.[10]

Seven months later, in April 1863, Swinburne was with Milnes in Yorkshire yet again. During this stay an incident took place that has been much recorded by Swinburne's various biographers.[11] Annabel Milnes's diary notes that a party at Fryston, which had arrived for Easter week, included William Makepeace Thackeray and his daughters, and the Archbishop of York.[12] At some point during this visit – most likely Sunday 12 April – Swinburne read aloud some poems, allegedly 'Les Noyades' and 'The Leper' (both published 1866). This made the Archbishop highly embarrassed and the Thackeray daughters giggle.[13] That Swinburne was a house guest for all of Easter and stayed on after the Thackerays left, demonstrates how much of a firm friend he had become to Milnes. Indeed, Annabel's entertainment diaries note that Swinburne breakfasted, lunched, or dined with the Milneses on twenty-one occasions between

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[7] *TSL*, I, 59, 50. This is not to say that Swinburne abandoned his work on the Gilchrist biography. Sections in this work occasionally suggest a hint of Swinburne's 'extraneous tail or fin'.
[8] *Selected Letters of William Michael Rossetti*, ed. Roger W. Peattie (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), pp. 125-6.
[9] 13 November 1862, *TSL*, I, 62.
[10] 25 November 1862, *TSL*, I, 63. Pope-Hennessy details some of Milnes's Blake collection in *The Flight of Youth*, pp. 151-53.
[11] Gosse dates this event in his *Life* to late 1862 (pp. 95-96), but he must have been confusing the two trips (November '62 and April '63) to Fryston as one. Annabel Milnes's diary confirms the event to have been in April 1863. Also, see Pope-Hennessy, *The Flight of Youth*, pp. 144-45.
[12] 'Diary' in 'Personal Papers of Lady Houghton', *Houghton Papers*. Thackeray notes their visit as Easter Week, April 6-13, 1863, see *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ed. Gordon Norton Ray, 4 Vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), IV, 285.
[13] 12 April comes from Annabel's diary. On the following day, both the Archbishop and the Thackerays are stated to have left.

1861-1869, though these dates are undoubtedly incomplete as she only appears to have noted guest names when she was with her husband. Certain years are also missing – 1868, for example.

The trip to Fryston in April 1863 is also important for another reason. The previous month Swinburne had been in Paris, where he wrote the poem 'Hermaphroditus' (included in *Poems and Ballads*, and which I will analyze for its Wagnerism in the succeeding chapter). The poem is footnoted by the comment '*Au Musée du Louvre, Mars* 1863'.[14] It has been thought, until now, that Swinburne went to Paris in March 1863 with Whistler. But it appears that he actually went with Milnes, as Annabel's diary notes on 18 March 1863: 'R [Richard] to leave for Paris'.[15] Swinburne certainly did not go to Paris until after 13 March, as Boyce's diaries record him at Cheyne Walk on that evening with D. G. Rossetti and Meredith. Boyce states that Rossetti was making 'several beautiful studies from divers women. The three walked with me as far as Buckingham Palace. Brought away my "Borgia" drawing'.[16]

Whistler does not appear to have travelled to Paris with Swinburne. He was still in London as late as Monday 23 March as on this day he wrote to his close friend in Paris, the artist Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904):

> I am coming! – I am coming to find you at home next Sunday [29 March] – I will explain everything and you will forgive my silence –

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[14] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 67.
[15] 'Diary' in 'Personal Papers of Lady Houghton', *Houghton Papers*.
[16] Boyce, *Diaries*, p. 37. Boyce's 'Borgia' drawing was created by Rossetti in 1850 and was originally called 'Caper Nimbly'. Rossetti borrowed back this drawing and converted it into 'a Borgia subject' in 1858, creating a watercolour of the same scene (pp. 25, 26). In 1862, he borrowed it again to make an enlarged copy. Interestingly, later versions contain a character with a mass of red hair, not unlike Swinburne. It appears that a few months after this, Swinburne thought of writing his two Borgia poems that start *Poems and Ballads*, 'A Ballad of Life' and 'A Ballad of Death' (and which are placed directly before 'Laus Veneris') as on 8 August 1863, Swinburne writes to W. M. Rossetti from East Dene to ask for a book by Padre Moorchesi 'on the Borgias' and 'my copy of Dumas' 'Les Borgia'"; *TSL*, I, 85. As Catherine Maxwell points out, during 1860 Swinburne was working on a narrative about Lucretia Borgia. See Catherine Maxwell, *Scents & Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 86.

> I am staying in Paris for one day – I am bringing 'The White Girl' [the 1862 *Symphony in White No. 1: The White Girl*] – ! may I unroll my canvas and frame it in your studio, so that we may see it together before sending it to the Salon? tell me this by return of post.[17]

After writing this, Whistler was still in London until at least 26 March when an exhibition showing some of his work opened. He had written to his solicitor, the day before, mentioning that a van would come for his painting 'The White Girl' on the day of the exhibition at 'two o-clock', presumably to take it to Paris.[18]

Lafourcade appears to have started the idea that Swinburne visited Paris with Whistler. He states that 'In March 1863 Swinburne visited Paris with Whistler; he was taken around the artistic circles in which the American painter was highly popular'.[19] However, I suggest that Swinburne either went on his own or with Milnes and they met Whistler at Fantin's studio on 29 March. Given that he only had one day in Paris, Whistler is unlikely to have accompanied Swinburne on his visit to the Louvre where the poem 'Hermaphroditus' was either conceived or written. Whistler's day was taken up with framing 'The White Girl' and visiting the studio of Édouard Manet (1832-1883). Swinburne went with Whistler and Fantin to meet Manet on this day, as he mentions this in an 1875 letter to Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898).[20] Milnes is not

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[17] Letter to Fantin-Latour, 23 March 1863, text and translation from *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855-1903*, edited by Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort and Nigel Thorp, and including *The Correspondence of Anna McNeill Whistler, 1855-1880*, edited by Georgia Toutziari; On-line edition, University of Glasgow <https://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/date/display/?cid=11456&year=1863&month=&rs=14> (accessed 26 April 2019).

[18] Letter to James Anderson Rose, 25 March 1863, *Whistler Correspondence*, <https://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/date/display/?cid=8983&year=1863&month=&rs=16> (accessed 26 April 2019).

[19] Lafourcade, *Swinburne: A Literary Biography*, p. 111. This is repeated, for example, by Jean Overton Fuller in *Swinburne: A Critical Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), p. 83, Rikky Rooksby *A Poet's Life*, p. 81, and by Ronald Anderson and Anne Koval (*James McNeill Whistler: Beyond the Myth* (London: John Murray, 1994), p. 129), who embellish the story further by stating that Whistler 'offered' to take 'the wildly exhibitionist poet to Paris to meet his friends Manet and Fantin', and which, they add, shows how Whistler 'could be totally unselfish when he was genuinely interested in a fellow artist's well-being'. Milnes's letter to Fantin, however, indicates otherwise.

[20] 7 July 1875, *TSL*, III, 42: 'je fus conduit chez M. Manet par mes amis MM. Whistler et Fantin', which suggests that Swinburne had earlier met 'his friends' and gone on to meet Manet. This visit is corroborated by a letter from Stéphane Mallarmé of 28 December 1875 to Swinburne, where he

mentioned, but his absence in the story is not an indication that he was not present; Swinburne was here writing to a fellow poet and friend of Manet about two other painters. Milnes would probably have been unknown to Mallarmé. He could also have had other business in Paris that day. However, it is clear that all these men were firm friends, as later that year on 16 July, Swinburne, Milnes, Whistler, and Alphonse Legros (1837-1911) were back in London together and with D. G. Rossetti, according to Boyce's diary. On 19 July, Milnes invited Swinburne, Whistler, and Legros to lunch with him, Annabel, and their children.[21]

After visiting Manet's studio on 29 March, Whistler and Legros went on to Amsterdam – presumably the next day. In order to be in Fryston again for early April for the Easter visit of the Thackerays, both Milnes and Swinburne also returned to England – and quickly, perhaps also via Amsterdam and to a port in the north of England, presumably Newcastle.

At this time, therefore, Swinburne's experience of Blake – mediated by Milnes's collection and Gilchrist's *Life* – becomes intimately bound up with his concurrent meeting in Paris with Fantin, Manet, and his subsequent correspondence with Baudelaire. As Patricia Clements has shown, Swinburne interprets Blake through Baudelaire in synaesthetic, inter-art terms and not just those of Gautier's *l'art pour l'art.*[22] As well as being written in multiple voices, as described in the previous chapter, *William Blake* also contains moments where an older Swinburne breaks in on the writing of his younger self. The clearest example of this is when the Swinburne of 1868 announces Baudelaire's death. In the main text, Swinburne calls Baudelaire 'A living critic of incomparably delicate insight and subtly good sense, himself "impeccable" as an artist'. But a footnote adds that the writer had just heard that 'a mortal illness had indeed stricken the illustrious poet, the faultless critic', and that while we

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states that Manet remembers Swinburne's visit and hopes he will come again; see *Mallarmé Correspondance*, ed. by Henri Mondor and Lloyd James Austin, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), II, 91.

[21] Boyce, *Diaries*, p. 39. 'Dinner Diaries' (1863) in 'Personal Papers of Lady Houghton', *Houghton Papers*.

[22] Patricia Clements, *Baudelaire and the English Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 20.

> may see again as various a power as was his, may feel again as fiery a sympathy, may hear again as strange a murmur of revelation, as sad a whisper of knowledge, as mysterious a music of emotion; we shall never find so keen, so delicate, so deep an [*sic*] unison of sense and spirit […] 'Ergo in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale!'[23]

The trip to Paris in 1863 to meet with the Wagnerite painters may well be the reason why the myth of Tannhäuser is also referenced on the page immediately preceding this footnote – which links to Wagner's spectral appearance in the Baudelaire epigram at the start of the entire work. On this page (p. 89) Swinburne states, in reference to Chaucer's *Court of Love* (c.1500), that medieval poets rarely saw themselves as the moral servants of religion and he pointedly and ironically describes their 'eager nascent worship of beautiful form and external nature'. In another footnote, he then mentions that 'appalling passage', where Chaucer represents women and men 'beholding afar off with jealous regret the salvation and happiness of Venus and all her servants (converse of the Hörsel legend, which shows the religious or anti-Satanic view of the matter'. There is also 'some pity or sympathy implied for the pagan side of things', Swinburne adds, which he describes in Tannhäuser-terms of the human body and the natural world, for

> One may remark also, the minute this pagan revival begins to get breathing-room, how there breaks at once into flower a most passionate and tender worship of nature, whether as shown in the bodily beauty of man and woman or in the outside loveliness of leaf and grass.[24]

[23] Swinburne, William *Blake*, p. 91-92. He was also clearly writing his paean for Baudelaire 'Ave Atque Vale', at this point, which subsequently appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in January 1868.
[24] Swinburne, *William Blake*, p. 89. The comment 'beholding afar off' is an ironic allusion to the Great Whore of Babylon in Revelation 18:10, 'standing afar off for the fear of her torment' (KJV).

Here, then, we can see that Swinburne either saw his own 'Laus Veneris' – whether or not he had actually written the poem by this point – as an anti-religious, or even a pro-Satanic version of the story in the manner of Blake and Baudelaire.

Swinburne's interest in the medieval Tannhäuser might have partly come from Milnes. An avowed Teutonophile, Milnes may well have supplemented Swinburne's knowledge on German Romanticism. His interest began in the 1830s when he undertook a European tour, travelling extensively in Germany, during which he attended the lectures of August Schlegel, met Schopenhauer's mother (the novelist Johanna), and became intensely sympathetic towards German Romanticism.[25] For the rest of his life, he was 'ardent in his admiration for both the Schlegels […] for Heine and Schiller, but, above all, for Goethe, whose many-sidedness delighted him'.[26] Milnes was also a poet, and as Hyder points out (though quickly dismisses it), he included a version of Tannhäuser in one of his own collections, *Poems, Legendary and Historical* (1844), under the title of 'Venus and the Christian Knight'.[27] This poem is a 'free paraphrase' from 'the collection of the *Wunderhorn* [settings of German folk songs]', to quote Milnes, and he presents it within an extensive essay entitled 'The Goddess Venus in the Middle Ages' where he discusses the various sources and iterations of the Tannhäuser myth.[28] Following this translation is another poem written by Milnes – which Hyder does not note – entitled 'The Northern Knight in Italy'.[29] This contains a fleshy, sensuous, and synaesthetic description of the Venusberg, to which, through a forest, the eponymous knight is led by birdsong. Here he finds Adonis and Paris, is beguiled by Venus's 'melodious looks and words', and drawn into an inner sanctum by 'the call

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[25] See James Pope-Hennessy, *Monckton Milnes: The Years of Promise* (London: Constable, 1949), p. 32.
[26] T. Wemyss Reid, *The Life, Letters, and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton*, 2 vols. (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1890), I, 116. Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), of course, wrote a comic version of the Tannhäuser story in 1856 and 'The Fable of the Flying Dutchman' in 1833, which inspired Wagner's operas.
[27] Hyder, 'Swinburne's "Laus Veneris"', 2010.
[28] Richard Monckton Milnes, *Poems, Legendary and Historical* (London: Edward Moxon, 1844), pp. 18-30 (p. 23). Milnes's essay was originally published in 1839. See R. M. Milnes, 'The Goddess Venus in the Middle Ages', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 45.283 (May 1839), 603-617.
[29] Stoddard Martin mentions the former Milnes poem, but like Hyder, does not mention the latter, presumably because he was relying on Hyder for his information. Martin, *Wagner to 'The Waste Land'*, p. 21.

of other symphonies' and 'music's closing swell'. Once in Venus's embrace, however, the knight realizes that the Venusberg has changed from a place of 'silken flowers' to one of 'worms'. He draws his sword and – like Perseus with the Medusa – chops off Venus's head. He suddenly finds himself back in the forest alone at daybreak. Venus is now a statue and her stone head is lying 'deep in the grasses'.[30] In his essay, Milnes states that for this poem he was inspired by Heine's version as 'the facts, or rather images, of the story are very much the same as may be found in the graceful version of it by Heine in the third volume of the *Salon:* – they are but disposed and illustrated anew'.[31]

The musical details in Milnes's poem and essay should not be ignored. Pope-Hennessy comments that Milnes was not interested in music, but, as already shown, this is a common characterization of Victorian men that cannot be trusted.[32] Moreover, Pope-Hennessy's view is contradicted by his own description of Milnes's friendship with the soprano Giuditta Pasta (1797-1865), whom Milnes consulted about Donizetti's opera *Anna Bolena* (1830).[33] Additionally, in a letter written in London from 1849, Milnes writes that 'We are to have Meyerbeer's *Prophète,* which is laboriously grand, and with *my* genius, Viardot, later in the season'.[34] Clearly, Milnes knew this 1849 opera by Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864) as he appears to have seen it at least once before.[35] Here, too, we find him giving praise to the 'genius' of another soprano, Pauline Viardot (1821-1910), which directly connects him to some of the musical 'stars' and aestheticists of the nineteenth century. Shortly after this 1849 performance, Viardot went on to play the eponymous poetess in the debut of Charles Gounod's opera *Sapho* [*sic*] in both Paris and London

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[30] Milnes, *Poems,* pp. 41, 45, 46.
[31] Milnes, *Poems,* p. 30.
[32] Pope-Hennessy bases his view that Milnes 'was not particularly musical' on one letter which 'begs Milnes to interest himself in Berlioz's forthcoming concert in the Hanover Square Rooms'. See Pope-Hennessy, *Years of Promise,* p. 127; see also p. 33.
[33] Pope-Hennessy, *The Flight of Youth,* p.33. See also p. 127. Pope-Hennessy's descriptions here do not suggest dislike of music *per se,* but more with the musical events and their public rituals. As Milnes says in a letter dated February 1831, 'The opera, though good in itself, does not please me as a social assembly', and yet on the singing of the music, 'Pasta is in her full glory' (Wemyss, *Life and Letters,* I, 104).
[34] 19 May 1849, Wemyss, *Life, Letters,* I, 434,
[35] Given the date of this letter and that *Prophète* premiered in Paris on 16 April 1849, he might have seen it in Paris at its premiere only a month earlier.

in 1851, a description of which Swinburne would have found fascinating. Viardot's husband was the writer Louis Viardot (1800-1883), who wrote a treatise on the interrelation of the arts, 'Ut picture musica' in 1859, and he was closely connected with the Paris Wagnerites.

It is not surprising that Milnes was interested in opera. He possessed an extraordinary enthusiasm for being at the centre of the fashionable world and was always attempting to befriend its latest 'stars'. By the time Swinburne became part of this extensive circle, his breakfasts and dinners at Upper Brook Street had long been a fixture of English political and artistic society, and were even regularly mocked by his political rivals – which, indeed, signifies their importance. He was also drawn to controversy, both as a participant and as a close spectator – again, a habit that would have endeared him to Swinburne. In 1848, for example, he went to witness revolutionary France, both because he was unable to 'forgive himself for having missed the 1830 revolution', and because he was also personally known to France's new 'dictator', the poet Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869).[36] He returned to Paris again in 1854 (this time with his wife) to see at first-hand the Second French Empire under Napoleon III against the backdrop of the Crimean War.[37]

It would, therefore, be entirely understandable that Milnes might travel to Paris with Swinburne. They were clearly good friends by this point and all Milnes's experiences would have appealed to Swinburne's political concerns and made him an exceptional tour guide – perhaps one who was also able to open the kind of doors in the French capital that Whistler could not. Additionally, as Swinburne's letters to Milnes attest, they shared masochistic sexual interests, and so the Tannhäuser story would also have appealed to them both, and maybe it was Milnes who toured Swinburne around the Venusberg of the Louvre to view its erotic exhibits.

Swinburne in Paris

Swinburne's 1863 trip to Paris was not his first. By this time, he was probably well-acquainted with the city. He had first visited it in December 1860 while on his way to Mentone in Southern

[36] Pope-Hennessy, *The Years of Promise*, p. 281.
[37] Pope-Hennessy, *The Flight of Youth*, p. 76.

France for a holiday. In a letter to his friend Lady Pauline Trevelyan (1816-1866) on 19 January 1861, he states – having arrived in Mentone – that he is now 'in love with Paris – you know I never saw it before'. He then recounts a first visit to the Louvre and describes seeing a picture by Giorgione called *Le Concert champêtre (c. 1509)* 'that Gabriel [Rossetti] made such a sonnet on'.[38] He might also have returned to Paris on his way home from Mentone, although this went by the circuitous route of a tour to Venice, via 'Genoa, Turin, and Milan'.[39] Swinburne may again have gone to Paris the following year in April 1862 while on his way to the Pyrenees (and on his return). This was another family holiday.[40]

It was during these 1860/1 and 1862 trips to Paris that Swinburne came to hear of Baudelaire. He went on to write a review of the French poet's *Les Fleurs du mal*, which was published in the *Spectator* on 6 September 1862 along with the poem 'August' (later included in the 1866 *Poems and Ballads*). The following year, when in Paris with Milnes and latterly Whistler in 1863, Swinburne sent a copy of both the review and the poem to Baudelaire; Fantin delivered them.

With this in mind, therefore, on which trip did Swinburne acquire his copy of *Les Fleurs* for the review? As Catherine Maxwell points out, Swinburne could not have bought the book during the trip to Paris on his way to Mentone, since the book was not published until February 1861. He might, however, have bought it on his return, after his Italian tour.[41] He could have purchased it along with Wagner's *Quatre poèmes*, which also appeared in 1861, just before the

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[38] *TSL*, I, 40. The Rossetti sonnet is 'For a Venetian Pastoral' (1849), which describes the Giorgione painting, which contains images of naked women alongside clothed male minstrels. Interestingly, it is this picture which provided an inspiration to Manet for his *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), which may have been hanging in Manet's studio during Swinburne's visit in March 1863 with Fantin and Whistler; see below.

[39] Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, p. 108.

[40] Rooksby's *Poet's Life*, p. 71, states that this holiday took place in March 1862, but Swinburne sent a letter to his mother from Grafton Street on 13 March 1862 (*TSL*, I, 49). This trip happened after 10 April, as on this day Annabel's Milnes's entertainment diary has Swinburne breakfasting with her and her husband, along with Prince Frederic of Schleswig-Holstein, the artist Walter Severn, and the Revd. Charles Merivale, among others. I am grateful to Clive Simmonds and Catherine Maxwell for here supplying evidence to confirm that Swinburne was in London in March, and that he must have left for the Pyrenees in late April.

[41] Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, p. 108.

composer held three performances of *Tannhäuser* on 13, 18, and 24 March.[42] Baudelaire's *Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris* followed these, and was published on 1 April 1861 in the *Revue européenne*, and then republished over three issues of *La Presse théàtrale et musicale* on 14 and 21 April and 5 March, before finally being published as a single volume.[43] If Swinburne did not purchase *Les Fleurs* in 1861 – and there would seem every reason to believe this, given that his review of it did not appear until September 1862 – he must surely have bought it during the holiday in the Pyrenees earlier in the year. By this time, Wagner's and Baudelaire's names would have been linked, and so it is also likely that along with *Les Fleurs* he also bought *Quatre poèmes* and possibly read Baudelaire's account of Wagner's music – as Walder suggests – before the French poet sent him a copy.[44]

Precisely when Baudelaire actually sent Swinburne a copy of his *Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris* (in return for the gift of the review and 'August') is not known. According to Lafourcade, Baudelaire's pamphlet was sent much later in the year.[45] Swinburne claimed that his own version of the Tannhäuser myth had been written by this time, and that, therefore, Baudelaire's critique of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* had little bearing on the composition of 'Laus Veneris'. In his *Notes on Poems and Reviews* (1866), Swinburne says that it 'was not till my poem was completed that I received from the hands of its author the admirable pamphlet of Charles Baudelaire on Wagner's *Tannhäuser*'.[46] Given that it is generally agreed that 'Laus Veneris' was started in 1862 and, therefore, around the time of the *Les Fleurs* review was also

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[42] Edward Dannreuther, the translator of *The Music of the Future* (which prefaces *Quatre poèmes*), states that it was published 'some time previous' to the performances at the Grand Opéra. This would mean January to early March 1861. See Wagner (Dannreuther), *The Music of the Future*, p. 1. Swinburne was travelling back from Mentone on his European tour at this time. Could he have seen or heard of *Tannhäuser*? The first known letter from Swinburne after his return from Mentone is the acceptance of the invitation by Milnes to breakfast on 4 May 1861.

[43] See Coleman, *Richard Wagner in Paris*, p. 149. Baudelaire's pamphlet makes direct references to *The Music of the Future* as the preface to *Quatre poèmes* and so was probably written with this in hand.

[44] Wagner did not leave Paris until March 1862.

[45] Lafourcade says 1863, but there is no exact date, although he had definitely received it by March 1864, as Swinburne tried to deliver a book back to Baudelaire, as I will show. See Lafourcade, *Swinburne: A Literary Biography*, p. 97.

[46] 'Notes on Poems and Reviews', *Swinburne Replies*, ed. Clyde H. Hyder (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966) p. 26.

being written – I will review the evidence for this shortly – Swinburne's implication here, is that no one should believe that in composing this poem he had copied or been influenced by Baudelaire or Wagner.[47] However, as Swinburne continues in *Notes*:

> If any one desires to see, expressed in better words than I can command, the conception of the mediæval Venus which it was my aim to put into verse, let him turn to the magnificent passage in which M. Baudelaire describes the fallen goddess, grown diabolic among ages that would not accept her as divine. In another point, as I then found, I concur with the great musician and his great panegyrist.[48]

With the words 'as I then found', Swinburne is claiming that he only made these connections after he had received the pamphlet. However, the words 'I concur' strongly imply that he had absorbed the ideas in the Wagner pamphlet by other means, presumably through his readings of various works of French and German Romanticism, through his friendship with Milnes, through Baudelaire's and Gautier's poems, and possibly through the transmission of various Wagner texts during the mid-1850s and beyond, or from newspaper and journal reports and reviews. Nor does this preclude the hearing of Wagner's works prior to his correspondence with Baudelaire or the possible purchase and reading of Wagner's *Quatre poèmes*. Even if this were not the case, the *Musical World* ran an extensive article on the preface of *Quatre poèmes, The Music of the Future*,

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[47] Swinburne here is surely downplaying William Michael Rossetti's claim in his *Swinburne's Poems and Ballads* (1866) of his and Baudelaire's 'considerable affinity'; see William Michael Rossetti, *Swinburne's Poems and Ballads: A Criticism* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1866), p. 46. We should, however, note the 'considerable affinity' of Swinburne and Rossetti since the latter was managing the publication of Swinburne's *Notes on Poems and Reviews* with John Camden Hotten while publishing his own critical work on *Poems and Ballads* at the same time. See *TSL*, I, 199, where Swinburne talks of sending his proofs to Rossetti. The preface to Rossetti's pamphlet bears the date 18 October 1866, in which Rossetti claims that the opinions in the book are 'sincerely and impartially mine'. Both books appear to have been published by Hotten simultaneously. See *A Criticism*, p. vi.

[48] *Swinburne Replies*, pp. 26-27. I presume the section Swinburne is referring to contains the phrases 'The true, the terrible, the universal Venus' and that Tannhäuser is a 'man in general, universal man, living morganatically with the absolute ideal of love, with the queen of all the she-devils, the female-fauns and female-satyrs, banished below ground since the death of the great Pan; in other words the indestructible and irresistible Venus', Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings*, pp. 342, 344.

over two issues from 2 February 1861 while the Swinburne family were in Mentone. In Paris, this preface was soon taken to be 'Wagner's artistic manifesto' (rather as Gautier's preface to his 1835 *Mademoiselle de Maupin* had been seen as a declaration of *l'art pour l'art*) and, with this in mind, the *Musical World* described its basic points to its London readers.[49] Since Swinburne's brother Edward and sister Alice were able musicians, with the former later declared a Wagnerite, it seems likely that, even if he did not purchase a copy of *Quatre poèmes* while in Paris, Swinburne would have learned of *The Music of the Future* while on the trip to Mentone with his family or, alternatively, while travelling to or from the Pyrenees in April 1862.

Swinburne is also being slightly disingenuous when he comments that it was only later that he had found that his own ideas concurred with those of Baudelaire. The description of Wagner's Venus in Baudelaire's pamphlet – which Swinburne characterizes as 'the fallen goddess, grown diabolic' in the quotation above – had already appeared in various guises within *Les Fleurs*. In his review, Swinburne included selections from the poetry that focussed upon such images of diabolic women, such as that in the '*ex-voto* poem "À une Madone"'. The quotation that Swinburne cites from this in the original French clearly anticipates the imagery of both Baudelaire's Wagner pamphlet and that of Swinburne's own 'Laus Veneris' and 'Dolores': 'Your gown will be the rippling tide of my Desire, billowing at the fringes, settling in the folds, clothing your body's white and rosiness as with a single kiss'.[50] Moreover, in *Notes*, Swinburne appears to be trying to separate himself from both Baudelaire and Wagner by relegating the French poet to the role of the composer's 'great panegyrist'. Given that Baudelaire had been prosecuted on the publication of *Les Fleurs*, and that *Notes* was Swinburne's justification for the scandalous themes of *Poems and Ballads*, Swinburne might have wished readers to avoid making too strong a link

[49] Quotation from Therese Dolan, *Manet, Wagner, and the Musical Culture of their Time* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), p. 211. Ferdinand Hiller, 'The Music of the Future', *Musical World*, 39.5 (2 February 1861), 70-72, and 39.6 (9 February 1861), 86-87.
[50] *Baudelaire: The Complete Verse*, ed. and trans. by Francis Scarfe (London: Anvil Press, 2012), pp. 151-52. Lafourcade lists what Swinburne was likely to have read of Baudelaire's work for his review; see Georges Lafourcade, *La Jeunesse de Swinburne*, 2 vols (Paris: Société d'édition, les belles lettres, 1928), II, 341

with Baudelaire here.[51] In private, however, Swinburne had other ideas. In a letter written to George Powell just after he had finished the final revision of *Notes*, Swinburne links both the text of *Notes* and the whole of *Poems and Ballads* and its pro-Satanic 'Laus Veneris' to the Tannhäuser legend. Arranging a trip to Aberystwyth, he claims that he is now ready to come to see Powell 'having done with the proof of my defensive and offensive pamphlet – Laus Diabolo'.[52]

If it is true that Swinburne only discovered on reading Baudelaire's *Tannhäuser* pamphlet that his 'Laus Veneris' concurred with several aspects of Wagner's vision of Venus, then he – perhaps inadvertently or perhaps not – was also mimicking the manner of Baudelaire's own discovery of Wagner's music. In *Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris*, Baudelaire essentially discovers that he is a Wagnerite after the fact. The poem he specifically uses to draw parallels with Wagner and demonstrate his affinity to his music is 'Correspondances' and Baudelaire quotes the first two stanzas of this poem while talking about synaesthesia and music and colour.[53] However, this poem was written around 1844-6 and published in *Les Fleurs* in 1857 – some time, therefore, before he came to hear Wagner's music.[54] Baudelaire was, then, already a 'Wagnerite' in the 1840s, and so, it appears (in apparently following the French poet's lead), was Swinburne in the early 1860s. Both poets, then, claim Wagner as a person with whom they had artistic affinity before they came to understand his theories and music. With Swinburne, however, I suggest it is more complex. Given his movements in the early 1860s through to 1864, Swinburne was already being exposed to Wagnerism, and while he may not have read Baudelaire's words on

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[51] W. M. Rossetti does indeed add a moral tone to his comparison by stating, 'we must therefore class Baudelaire's influence upon Swinburne as a bad though not an uncongenial one'; see Rossetti, *A Criticism*, p. 46. Extraordinarily, Edmund Gosse claims in his *Life* that Swinburne 'did not know the [first] edition of 1857 [of *Les Fleurs*] until 1864, when W. M. Rossetti procured a copy', and that 'if he had [known of it], he could scarcely have avoided mentioning some of the suppressed pieces (p. 90). But in his review Swinburne clearly mentions the 'foolish and shameless prosecution, [upon which] the first edition [of 1857] was, it appears, withdrawn […]. The book now comes before us with a few of the original poems cancelled, but with important additions'. See, *Swinburne as Critic*, p. 28.
[52] *TSL*, I, 201.
[53] See Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Essays*, p. 331.
[54] Scarfe, *Baudelaire: The Complete Poems*, p. 67.

the matter until as late as 1864, he was already steeped in its ideas, given the company he was keeping.

Fantin, Delacroix, Baudelaire and the music of colour

'There was matter in him fit to mould into form and impregnate with colours'[55]

According to Lafourcade, it was while in Fantin's studio (presumably with Whistler on 29 March 1863 and before they went to visit Manet) that Swinburne saw

> a sketch of Tannhäuser at the Venusberg drawn at the time of the failure of Wagner's opera – just when the poet was composing at Copsham the first verses of *Laus Veneris*; he visited the Louvre and composed about the statue of *Hermaphroditus* four sonnets which reveal him as steeped in the ethics of Théophile Gautier.[56]

While Lafourcade's details about this trip must now be treated with caution, it is entirely believable that Fantin did have a picture inspired by *Tannhäuser* in his studio. As Therese Dolan describes, Fantin had been commissioned to produce lithographs in 1862 and one of the four that he created was a depiction of the scene of the Venusberg from Wagner's opera. He worked out this lithograph by means of an 'oil sketch rather than in a drawing'.[57] The resulting image from this 'sketch', seen by Swinburne, was very different from the traditional finish expected for prints of this time. As Dolan states, Fantin's smeared lithographic lines sought to follow the revolutionary, desire-laden movements of Wagner's music, 'to create a visual enactment of the

[55] A. C. Swinburne, *Lesbia Brandon*, ed. Randolph Hughes (London: The Falcon Press, 1952), p. 11
[56] Lafourcade, *Swinburne: A Literary Biography*, p. 111.
[57] Dolan, *Manet*, p. 166.

sounds that deeply moved him'.[58] This lithograph (see figure 3) is listed in Douglas Druick and Michel Hoog's catalogue of Fantin's works as *Tannhœuser: Venusberg* (1862).[59]

Figure 3: The 1876 version of Fantin-Latour's 1862 *Tannhäuser*, signed by the artist. From my own collection.

Fantin's obsession with Wagner's operas continued throughout his career. A chalk sketch of the Venusberg was produced in 1864, which led to a version in oil. This was displayed at the Paris *Salon* in May and was ultimately bought by Luke Ionides, the brother of Chariclea, who was

[58] Dolan, *Manet*, p. 169. Some may object to Fantin's print having a direct influence on Swinburne in that 'Laus Veneris', like Wagner's opera, depicts a subterranean Venus, whereas Fantin's shows the goddess within a wooded glade. However, as Dolan has shown, Fantin's image repositions itself to step back from the attacks on Wagner's *Tannhäuser* which had concentrated on the depiction of Venus as a 'starved savage or a witch on the Sabbath day', Dolan, p. 154.

[59] Douglas Druick and Michel Hoog, *Fantin-Latour* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada for the Corporation of the National Museums of Canada, 1983), p. 150.

to marry Edward Dannreuther.[60] A further *Tannhäuser* lithograph followed in 1876, while *Tannhäuser: The Evening Star* was produced in 1884, which accompanied further Wagner-inspired works at this time, including lithographs based on *The Flying Dutchman*, *Lohengrin*, and *Götterdämmerung* (1876).[61] A catalogue of Fantin's work published by his wife Victoria in 1911 amply demonstrates both her husband's Wagner obsession and his fascination with the painting of flowers.[62] These artistic needs were also clearly understood by Swinburne, who, many years after this meeting, linked both obsessions in his 1883 collection *A Century of Roundels*, which includes the poems 'A Flower-Piece by Fantin' and 'The Death of Richard Wagner'. While, as Anne Leonard points out, Fantin was much better known as a realist painter, I would suggest that his flower studies have a musical quality to them, which Swinburne was aware of.[63] As Lisa Norris has suggested, the musicality of Fantin's flowers is predominantly expressed in the placement of colour, since Fantin 'claimed a "musical" function for colour distinctly separate from the description of objects, asserting that it addresses "that region of the imagination which is supposed to be under the exclusive domain of music"', or as Fantin himself claimed:

> One paints people like flowers in a vase, happy just to depict the exterior as it is – but what of the interior, the inner life? The soul is like music playing behind the veil of flesh; one cannot paint it, but one can make it heard.[64]

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[60] See Rachel Sloan, 'The Condition of Music: Wagnerism and Printmaking in France and Britain', *Art History*, 32.3 (June 2009), 545-77 (549).
[61] See, Druick and Hoog, *Fantin-Latour*, pp. 275-319. The Iondies family also bought several of Fantin's flower paintings.
[62] Victoria Fantin-Latour (née Dubourg), *Catalogue de l'œuvre complet (1849-1904) de Fantin-Latour. Établi et rédigé par Madame Fantin-Latour* (Paris: H. Floury 1911).
[63] Anne Leonard, 'The Musical Imagination of Henri Fantin-Latour', in *Rival Sisters: Art and Music at the Birth of Modernism*, 1815-1915, edited by James H. Rubin and Olivia Mattis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 203-21 (p. 203).
[64] Lisa Norris, 'Painting around the Piano: Fantin-Latour, Wagnerism, and the Musical in Art', *The Arts Entwined: Music and Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Marsha L. Morton and Peter L. Schmunk (London: Garland Publishing, 2000), p. 163. The translated Fantin quotation is from Dolan, *Manet*, p. 161, but was originally cited by Camille Mauclair in *Servitude et grandeur littéraires* (Paris: Librarie Ollendorf, 1922), p. 158.

His work, as Anne Leonard has explored, also shows a 'primary inspiration' from music so that – to quote Germain Hédiard in a preface to Fantin's lithographs – '"he lets us hear through our eyes"'.[65]

Fantin was part of a *mélofane* group of artists centred upon Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) (who died shortly after Swinburne's visit). Their Symbolist doctrine claimed that musically-communicative powers lay within relationships of colour.[66] Given Swinburne's recent research using Milnes's various Blake manuscripts, it is not surprising that both he and Milnes visited Parisian artists working in lithography and other forms of engraving, as Swinburne's own interpretation of Blake was suffused with synaesthetic description ('a fragrance of sound, a melody of colour'), where the primacy of colour and music dominate.[67] At this point in Paris, ideas around synaesthesia were drawing renewed inspiration directly from Wagner's music.[68] It is possible that Fantin saw his *Tannhäuser* lithograph and oil painting as a 'visual counterpart' to Baudelaire's *Tannhäuser* pamphlet, along with his major painting of 1864, *Homage to Delacroix*, in which he, Baudelaire, Manet, Whistler and other Wagnerite artists appear.[69] The organization of this painting is symbolic of the mixing of artforms. The group appears before a portrait of Delacroix, and standing in front of this, between the artists, is a bouquet of flowers. Whistler had suggested D. G. Rossetti to Fantin as a possible artist to join this group, although Rossetti eventually could not commit to a time to come to Paris.[70] However, Fantin also wanted Swinburne to appear in the painting, as is made plain in a letter written several years later to the

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[65] Leonard, 'The Musical Imagination of Henri Fantin-Latour', p. 204. Germain Hédiard, *Fantin-Latour: Catalogue de L'Oeuvre Lithographique Du Maitre* (Paris: Librairie de l'art ancien et moderne, 1906), p. 28.
[66] The circle of relationships is important here. Wagner's *The Music of the Future* in *Quatre poèmes* was dedicated to Frédéric Villot, a close friend of Delacroix.
[67] Swinburne, *William Blake*, p. 9.
[68] Like Jeremy Coleman, Jean-Jacques Nattiez points out that Wagner's ideas are an amalgamation of French and German Romanticism. See, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne: A Study in Interpretation*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 111. For a thorough study of the implication of Wagner's synaesthesia, see Rasula, *History of a Shiver*, pp. 84-5.
[69] Norris, 'Painting around the Piano', *Arts Entwined*, p. 146.
[70] See letter from Whistler to Fantin, 19 February 1854, *Whistler Correspondence*, <https://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/freetext/display/?cid=11478&q=fantin%20delacroix%20rossetti&year1=1829&year2=1903&rs=2> (accessed 20 February 2020).

English painter Edwin Edwards (1823-1873). 'Swinburne devait venir poser avec Whistler autrefois, dans le tableau de Delacroix [Swinburne was to come to pose with Whistler formerly, in the Delacroix tableau]', says Fantin, before wondering if Swinburne was now too big a person to sit for him – 'mais Swinburne est trop grand personnage maintenant'.[71] In this final concern, Fantin was referring to a similar painting he was going to produce in memory and honour of Baudelaire. This painting eventually became 'By the Table' (1872) and depicted Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud, amongst others. Swinburne did not sit for it, for reasons that are unknown, but possibly because he never received an invitation to do so.

By painting these deliberate groupings or artists and poets – forming a sort of loose manifesto in terms of their subjects' aesthetic beliefs – Fantin was following the lead of Manet, who in 1862 had painted a Wagnerite grouping of artists, musicians, and painters known as *Music in the Tuileries Gardens* (but – at first glance – without a depiction of music *per se*). This painting includes a self-portrait, and those of Fantin, Baudelaire, Gautier (who also attended one of the 1861 performances of *Tannhäuser*), as well as Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880), who had satirized Wagner's music in *Symphony of the Future* (1860), presented two days after one of Wagner's own concerts in Paris (see figure 4). Offenbach appears to have been purposefully smudged onto the side of a tree trunk, although his wife, Hérminie, appears in considerable contrast. She dominates the entire painting at the centre left position and in front of all the other subjects. *Music in the Tuileries Gardens* would get its first public viewing in Paris at the Galerie Martinet during Swinburne's March 1863 visit to Paris, while Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (his comment on and pastiche of contemporary classical form in a version of Giorgione's *Concert Champêtre*) was hanging in his studio waiting to be sent for judging at the forthcoming May *Salon*.[72] Swinburne's enthusiasm for the Giorgione (that Rossetti 'made such a sonnet on') during his first trip in 1861

[71] Fantin-Latour to Edwin Edwards, 30 Dec. 1871, Fasc. 2, 'Copies de lettres de Fantin à ses parents et amis, par Victoria Fantin-Latour', R. 8867, Bibliothèque Municipale de Grenoble. For a transcription of this letter (the translation is mine), see Bridget Alsdorf, *Fellow Men: Fantin-Latour and the Problem of the Group in Nineteenth-Century French Painting* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 284, note 15.
[72] Manet had 14 works on show at the Galerie Martinet in March 1863. See Dolan, *Manet*, p, 85.

may have been one reason why he was taken to meet Manet and it is possible that he saw this painting while there. He may even have gone to the Galerie Martinet with Milnes.

Therese Dolan has given a convincing analysis of the Wagnerian nature of Manet's painting, seeing it very much as a deliberate grouping of Wagner-orientated artist, poets, and musicians, with Offenbach providing an ironic counterpoint.[73] However, I will venture a further interpretation, by suggesting that this is, in part, a wry pastiche of the Venusberg. As Offenbach

Figure 4: Manet's *Music in the Tuileries Gardens* (1862), © The National Gallery, London, licensed by creative commons agreement

had satirized Wagner, so is Offenbach satirized here with Mme Offenbach sitting side-on, like a contrary, unforgiving Venus, hidden behind a veil and completely smothered in a huge cream-coloured dress. The Tuileries gardens are her grotto (Manet, on the far-left, is waiting in line to pay court to her, it appears). Wagner is, of course, not present in the painting. He had left Paris by the time Manet had started work on it. But presumably it is Wagnerian music the people in the painting are listening to, music that is played by an orchestra invisible to anyone viewing the painting, but which is surely meant to be in the same location as the viewer – i.e. in front of the

[73] The whole of Dolan's book is essential here, but for a brief overview, see Dolan, *Manet*, pp. 200-201. For a discussion of why *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* pastiches the Giorgione painting, see Dolan, *Manet*, pp. 160-61.

painting itself. Do all the staring eyes and lines of harmony converge outside the painting on the orchestra or on the actual human being who views the image? Fantin, too, stares out from behind Baudelaire, who is under the shadow of a tree.

For his review of *Les Fleurs* and 'August', it has been claimed that Swinburne did not receive immediate thanks. Rikky Rooksby states that because of illness, Baudelaire could only thank his fellow poet later in the year, writing a letter on 10 October 1863 to Swinburne.[74] This letter was entrusted to a friend, Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (1820-1910), a balloonist and photographer known as 'Nadar', who was visiting London, although he never delivered it.[75] However, it is possible that Baudelaire did not write to Swinburne directly after receiving the review of *Les Fleurs* in March 1863 because he had, in fact, asked Fantin to convey his thanks personally, which suggests that Swinburne was staying in France or the surrounding area for a few days. Fantin – presumably not having Swinburne's address while the poet was travelling – duly wrote to Whistler in Amsterdam on 26 April, stating that he should

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[74] Rikky Rooksby, *A. C. Swinburne: A Poet's Life* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), p. 73. Edmund Gosse's *Life* is completely and possibly spitefully incorrect here. Gosse states: 'Swinburne expressed surprise to Whistler [that he had not heard from Baudelaire since their trip in March], who rallied the French poet on his discourtesy. Baudelaire expressed, in reply, "*tout mon repentir de mon oubli et de mon apparente ingratitude*," but still could not shake off his apathy far enough to write to his English admirer. At last, on the 10th October 1863, he managed to write a long and most interesting letter to Swinburne' (p. 91). However, Baudelaire's letters to Whistler and Swinburne were actually written on the same day. For Baudelaire's undelivered letter to Swinburne of 10 October, see Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Letters of Charles Baudelaire: The Conquest of Solitude*, trans. by Rosemary Lloyd (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), pp. 197-98. For Baudelaire's 10 October letter to Whistler, misleadingly cited by Gosse, see Charles Baudelaire, *Baudelaire: Correspondance*, ed. Claude Pichois, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard), II, 326. Baudelaire also wrote to Nadar on the same day (10 October) to tell him to deliver the letter to Swinburne 'by mail or otherwise, as soon as you have arrived in London' (my translation). See *Baudelaire: Correspondance*, II, 324. Presumably, Baudelaire's spoken thanks, via Fantin and Whistler, had not reached Swinburne back in April.

[75] Nadar claims to have found the undelivered letter in a drawer some time later. He later published it in his *Baudelaire Intime: Le Poete Vierge* (Paris: A. Blaizot, 1911), pp. 108-9 (credited as 'Nadar'). However, as a recent biography of Nadar has made plain, he had his mind on other matters at this time. Baudelaire wrote the 10 October letter in anticipation of Nadar going to London at once (see *Baudelaire: Correspondance*, II, 326). However, in a change of plan, Nadar instead left Paris on a second flight for his balloon *La Géant* on 18 October, during which he suffered a near-fatal, but publicity-creating crash-landing in Germany. Nadar only left for London at the end of the October, whereupon he displayed *La Géant* in the Crystal Palace, South Norwood. Presumably, Swinburne was forgotten in all this drama. See Adam Begley, *The Great Nadar: The Man Behind the Camera* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017), pp. 140-50.

> tell Mr. Swinburne that Baudelaire read his Article with great pleasure [,] that he much liked his piece of verse August [,] that if he has not written to him, he is going to write to him [,] he has asked Legros for your address. Baudelaire seemed very pleased indeed.[76]

Given the date, this letter suggests that either Swinburne was back in Amsterdam with Whistler after the visit to Fryston for Easter with the Milneses, the Thackerays and the Archbishop of York, or that Whistler was going on to London where he would be able to tell him. That both Baudelaire and Fantin were writing to Legros and Whistler simultaneously for essentially the same issue suggests that both correspondents were difficult to get hold of.[77]

However, a letter sent by Fantin a few days after that of 26 April, dated 1 May, suggests that Swinburne actually returned to Paris and saw him again. He had possibly returned to investigate the art scene under his own volition by viewing some of the entrants for the upcoming Paris *Salon* (which opened on the day the letter was sent). In this letter to Whistler, Fantin states that 'le fils' – Whistler's camp nickname for Swinburne – had described two gentlemen to him who had been standing in front of Whistler's canvas before the judging of the *Salon* entrants. ('Le fils' may not be Swinburne, but Whistler's letters attest to the nickname. In return, Swinburne's to him are addressed to 'Cher père'.) Fantin states to Whistler:

> le fils ma dit qu'il a Vu devant ta toile (avant le jujement) Mr de Chenevieres [*sic*] et Mr de Nieuwerkerke qui disaient il a exposé deja ici, et on l'a refusé son tableau était très bien' ('the son told me that he saw Mr de Chenevieres and Mr de Nieuwerkerke in front of your canvas (before the judging) who were saying he [Whistler?] has already exhibited here, and he was refused[,] his picture was very good')[78]

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[76] Letter from Fantin to Whistler, 26 April 1863, *Whistler Correspondence*, <https://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/people/display/?cid=1080&nameid=Swinburne_AC&sr=0&surname=swinburne&firstname=&rs=1> (accessed 3 October 2018).

[77] Legros settled in London in the summer of 1863 after visiting Amsterdam with Whistler earlier that May.

[78] Letter from Fantin to Whistler, 1 May 1863, *Whistler Correspondence*, <https://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/people/display/?cid=1079&nameid=Swinburne_AC&sr=0&surname=swinburne&firstname=&rs=2> (accessed 31 October 2018). The

However, Swinburne was certainly not there for the formal opening of the *Salon* itself on the date this letter was written. George Boyce's diary records him in London by 30 April, where they dined together with W. M. Rossetti, George Meredith, Burne-Jones and others in Chelsea. On 17 May, Boyce records meeting Whistler at his home with D. G. Rossetti and Fanny Cornforth.[79] Yet, if this previously unrecorded return to Paris is correct, it shows Swinburne to have had a much more independent agency in his exploration of the Paris art and literary scenes than has been appreciated before. Here is a Swinburne who is not being led or guided round by Whistler, but exploring by himself, and who is not so much 'Swinburne the Pre-Raphaelite' as Swinburne the aspiring European poet. As such, although he was still yet to publish any major poems by 1863, he was already understood to be in possession of powers that allowed him to take his place within a continental aesthetic movement.

Swinburne eventually received the Wagner pamphlet some time after Baudelaire wrote his undelivered letter of 10 October 1863, but in what manner is not known. It certainly had an effect, as its arrival prompted Swinburne to take a gift back to Baudelaire, which he tried to deliver personally during a fourth trip to Paris in 1864. Baudelaire wrote to Fantin on 22 March 1864 about this visit – a letter that has not been noted by Swinburne's biographers. Here, Baudelaire says that Swinburne had called on him while he was out and that he had left a book and a card, 'but like last year' had forgotten to give his own address:

> please tell him that I would be happy to have his address in Paris and go thank him myself. Warn him also that for a long time I had been in charge of giving him a letter which was not deposited at his place and which returned to Paris. I would not mind if Mr.

translation belongs to the website, which also identifies 'le fils' as Swinburne. Despite the date, when this event actually happened and whether the subject was Swinburne, is open to speculation.

[79] Boyce, *Diaries*, p. 38.

> Swinburne wrote a word to Nadar to claim it. However, if it might hurt this great spoiled child [i.e. Nadar], Swinburne should abstain. I will send his address to Nadar.[80]

Swinburne had stopped in Paris to meet Milnes on his way to Italy. Milnes was heading to the South of France.[81] But it also appears that Swinburne had gone to Paris to meet Baudelaire. Once in Italy, Swinburne stayed in Florence and met with Walter Savage Landor. He describes this meeting in a letter of 31 March 1864 to Milnes. However, while in Florence, both Baudelaire and Wagner were still very much at the forefront of his mind, as was the nascent *Poems and Ballads,* some of which he had just spent the latter half of 1863 composing while on the Isle of Wight. Ending his letter to Milnes with a description of a tour of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Swinburne states:

> As for Titian's Venus – Sappho and Anactoria in one – four lazy fingers buried dans les fleurs de son jardin – how any creature can be decently virtuous within thirty square miles of it passes my comprehension. I think with her Tannhäuser need not have been bored – even till the end of the world: but who knows?[82]

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[80] My translation from *Baudelaire Correspondance*, II, 351: 'M. Swinburne a depose un livre et sa carte chez moi, mais comme l'année dernière, il a oublié de laisser son adresse, de sorte que je ne sais où lui écrire pour le remercier. Voilà une imprévoyance peu anglaise.

Ayez l'obligeance de lui dire que je serais heureux d'avoir son addresse à Paris et d'aller le remercier moi-même. Avertissez-le en même temps que depuis longtemps j'avais chargé M. Nadar de lui remettre une letter qui n'a pas été déposée chez lui et qui est revenue à Paris. Je ne verrais pas d'inconvénients à ce que M. Charles Swinburne [*sic*] écrivît un mot à Nadar pour la réclamer. Cependant, si cela peut blesser ce grand enfant gâté, que M. Swinburne s'abstienne. Je ferai transmettre à Nadar son addresse'. This letter may not have been noticed before as it is not indexed in the Gallimard edition.

[81] Pope-Hennessy, *Monckton Milnes: The Flight of Youth,* p. 181. Pope-Hennessy describes an episode during this Paris trip where Swinburne was introduced by Milnes to Sir Charles MacCarthy, who heard Swinburne recite his poems and found them 'wonderful & they quite haunted him'. This is mentioned by Lang and Rooksby, but neither mentions the Baudelaire letter to Fantin. This event is also corroborated by a letter from Milnes to his wife, dated 24 March 1864 (two days after Baudelaire's request for Swinburne's address) from Hyères near Marseilles, in which Milnes describes the occasion with MacCarthy; see Wemyss Reid, *Life, Letters,* II, 121.

[82] *TSL*, I, 99. With 'the end of the world', Swinburne is surely referencing the eschatological imagery in 'Laus Veneris', which I analyze in the next chapter.

Baudelaire's undelivered letter of 1863

It must be assumed that it was during or shortly after this visit to Paris in 1864 that Baudelaire and Swinburne began corresponding.[83] The undelivered letter of 10 October 1863 (which Swinburne never saw) is, however, the most revealing as far as Swinburne's interest in Wagner is concerned. Thanking him for his 'wonderful article' reviewing *Les Fleurs,* Baudelaire then tells Swinburne an anecdote about a meeting he had with Wagner, where the composer 'flung his arms around my neck to thank me for a pamphlet I had written on *Tannhäuser*, and said to me: "*I'd never have thought that a French writer could understand so much with such ease*"'. This same thanks Baudelaire then rewords and passes on to Swinburne in thanks for the *Spectator* review, with 'Allow me, in my turn, to say to you: "*I'd never have guessed that an Englishman could penetrate so deeply into French beauty, French intentions, and French prosody*"'. That Baudelaire included this anecdote (without any introductory context) so promptly in his first letter to Swinburne, and that he blends Wagner's words into his own, shows that the French poet understood Swinburne to share his passion for Wagner (even to be a Wagnerite) and to be a kindred spirit. Given the potential burden that he foists upon Swinburne in the form of Nadar, he also strongly intimates that he considered the English poet his friend. This sudden friendship has the kind of self-explanatory exposition that one might expect in a first letter – as is shown by Baudelaire's hasty need to correct Swinburne's view of him as a 'moralist'.[84] Moreover, why would Baudelaire send a copy of his Wagner pamphlet (probably later than this letter) unless Swinburne's interest in the composer had been communicated to him? Given that Swinburne's *Spectator* review of *Les Fleurs* does not mention Wagner, Baudelaire could have equally sent a copy of his criticism of Edgar Allan Poe or of Théophile Gautier, both of whom Swinburne's review *does* mention. Baudelaire appears, therefore, to be suggesting that Swinburne was part of a network of artists, whose arts, in various ways, were bound by the idea of music, or more

[83] Swinburne mentions correspondence with Baudelaire in *TSL*, III, 201 (27 July 1876), where he also mentions Manet and Mallarmé.
[84] On Nadar as a potential burden: 'Please be kind enough to do for him [Nadar] everything you would probably have done for me, had I gone to give public lectures in your country. Information, advice, publicity – he needs a lot of things'; Lloyd, *Selected Letters*, p. 197. Baudelaire as 'moralist', p. 198.

specifically Wagner's music, in the way that Manet had suggested in his *Music of the Tuileries Gardens*. Swinburne returned the favour by placing Baudelaire's words from the Wagner pamphlet at the beginning of his *William Blake*.

George Meredith and the Copsham 'Laus Veneris'

At the centre of all these visits to France and the research into the Blake manuscripts, there is an event in Swinburne's life that also needs to be revisited – his meeting with George Meredith at Copsham Cottage. This has been discussed in terms of Wagner before, but only in order to tentatively date the writing of 'Laus Veneris'. Swinburne had discovered Edward FitzGerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* on a bookstall before visiting Meredith at his cottage. Meredith himself related this story in a letter to *The Times* on 15 April 1909, just after Swinburne's death. He does not give a date for the event. Georgiana Burne-Jones also mentions the story in her *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* (1904), but her dating of the event to around the New Year of 1861/1862 is incorrect.[85] Meredith's first-hand anecdote suggests a summer scene, even if the image is romanticized (on account of Swinburne's death) and too over-detailed to seem wholly true. Swinburne came alone to visit him, but

> being rather late I went along the road to meet him. At last he appeared waving the white sheet of what seemed to be a pamphlet. He greeted me with a triumphant shout of a stanza new to my ears. This was FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyám*, and we lay on a heathery knoll beside my cottage reading a stanza alternately, indifferent to the dinner bell […]. After the meal we took to the paper-covered treasure again. Suddenly Swinburne ran upstairs, and I had my anticipations. He returned with feather-pen, blue folio-sheet, and a

[85] Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912), I, 234. She only relates Swinburne finding *Omar Khayyám*, not the second part of the story involving Meredith, and she places the book's discovery at Quaritch's bookshop in Castle Street, near Leicester Square. She actually had to ask Swinburne himself as to when the event had taken place.

> dwarf bottle of red ink. In an hour he had finished 13 stanzas of his 'Laus Veneris', and rarely can one poet have paid so high a compliment to another as FitzGerald received.[86]

In his 1953 biography of Meredith, Lionel Stevenson gives the exact date of this event as 14 June. In this account, which is clearly more factual in tone, he (like Georgiana Burne-Jones) assigns the discovery of the volume to Quaritch's bookshop, but this time it is both Swinburne and D. G. Rossetti who visit Meredith for the weekend.[87] Looking at this date alongside *The Swinburne Letters*, however, the timing of the event becomes significant for Meredith. It was only a week after Swinburne's letter to the *Spectator* in defence of Meredith's *Modern Love and Poems of the English Roadside* (1862).[88]

Meredith's account certainly relates less to Wagner's potential influence and more to FitzGerald's on the formal aspects of Swinburne's poem, given the similarity of 'Laus Veneris' with the *Rubáiyát* stanza.[89] Its inclusion in debates over Wagner's influence, however, has been a way of trying to date how Swinburne might or might not have been influenced by the hearing of Wagner's music or the reading of Wagner's works alongside the 1863 Paris trip (hence Lafourcade's comment – cited earlier – that Swinburne saw a 'sketch of Tannhäuser at the Venusberg drawn at the time of the failure of Wagner's opera – just when the poet was composing at Copsham the first verses of *Laus Veneris*'). However, Georgiana Burne-Jones's misdating of the Meredith reminiscence may well have been inspired by Wagnerian events. Her husband's oil painting 'Laus Veneris' (1878) was actually preceded by a watercolour version. This, says Georgiana in a section unrelated to the FitzGerald anecdote, was completed sometime

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[86] George Meredith, 'Mr. Swinburne: Letter from Mr. Meredith', *The Times*, April 15 1909, p. 6.
[87] Lionel Stevenson, *The Ordeal of George Meredith: A Biography* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1954), pp. 113-4. See *UL*, III, 160 (12 August 1899), for Georgiana's letter to Swinburne asking about the details of the *Omar Khayyam* discovery. However, five years after this, Swinburne denied having discovered the FitzGerald volume at the bookshop, but says that he went to Quaritch's with Rossetti after being told of its existence. See *TSL*, VI, 187 (5 October 1904).
[88] *TSL*, I, 51, 7 June 1862. Bob Forrest discusses whether the 14 June date is correct. See Bob Forrest, 'Swinburne's "Laus Veneris" as a response to FitzGerald's "Rubaiyat": A Problem of Dates', online at <http://www.bobforrestweb.co.uk/The_Rubaiyat/Appendices/app16.htm> (accessed 29 April 2019).
[89] On the modified stanza form, see Haynes, *P&B*, p. 326.

during 1861. Perhaps this accounts for her confusion over the dates? However, why should Burne-Jones have been painting his own 'Laus Veneris' in 1861? Had it been inspired by news of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in Paris earlier in the year? Swinburne, of course, did not begin writing his own version until the following summer, if the Meredith anecdote is to be believed. But if so, it might also have had a Wagnerian inspiration – at least in part. It was started – which is not to say completed – shortly after his return from the Pyrenees in 1862 and around the time that he came to write his review of *Les Fleurs.* When the poem was actually finished can only be guessed at. But it may have remained open-ended and free-flowing for some time, until at least Swinburne got down to writing *Poems and Ballads* in earnest during the following summer of 1863. The poem was apparently in some part written by the end of 1862 as William Bell Scott romantically recalls that 'close upon Christmas of 1862' he was walking along Tynemouth beach with Swinburne and others, and Swinburne

> declaimed the *Hymn to Proserpine* and *Laus Veneris*, two of the most lovely, perfect, and passionate among the triumphs of his best period of poetic performance, never to be forgotten when recited in his strange intonation, which truly represented the white heat of the enthusiasm that had produced them.[90]

These memoirs were, of course, published in 1892, and even if the date is correct, the story does not preclude 'Laus Veneris' being revised in the light of the 1863 Paris trip. Scott, however, would have a good reason for remembering this poem, as I have discovered his name on a subscriptions list for the London Wagner Society kept in the Dannreuther Archive at the Royal College of Music. There is no date on this document, apart from 'Oct. 8', which is when the first subscription was received.[91] Unfortunately, despite this and the statement that the memory of Swinburne's recital was 'never to be forgotten', the reminiscence is possibly incorrect. Earlier, in

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[90] William Bell Scott, *Autobiographical Notes on the Life of William Bell Scott*, ed. William Minto, 2 vols (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892), II, 69.
[91] Scott donated two pounds, two shillings. 'Subscriptions' (loose sheaf), Dannreuther Archive, London, Royal College of Music (no class mark or catalogue yet available).

a letter sent to Theodore Watts-Dunton sent on 5 July 1887, Scott remembers the same moment thus: 'A hundred times I have thought of you and Swinburne, the dear and wonderful old boy who once wrote the Hymn to Proserpine and the Choruses in Atalanta, and repeated them to us by the sounding sea at Tynemouth'.[92] We may never know, therefore, when 'Laus Veneris' was actually begun or completed.

Finally, Hyder's claim that the primary inspiration for 'Laus Veneris' was not Wagner's opera but instead an English translation of 'an old German ballad' that appeared in the periodical *Once a Week* on 17 August 1861 needs to be addressed. This ballad is 26 stanzas long and is arranged in quatrains and common measure. It is printed after a short introduction that mentions Heinrich Heine and gives a summary of the triumph of Christianity over paganism. The whole piece is placed under the headline of 'Tannhäuser'.[93] The original medieval German verses can be found in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* as 'Der Tanhäuser' [*sic*], a piece which, as I have stated, is also referenced in Milnes's essay on Venus in his *Poems, Legendary and Historical*.[94] Hyder makes an interesting suggestion that the pastiche introduction in French with which Swinburne prefaces his 'Laus Veneris' possibly has this translated German ballad in *Once a Week* for its source; however, the same cannot be said for the actual poem itself. In contrast to 'Laus Veneris', the ballad in *Once a Week* is short and slight in both content and style. It certainly has none of the elaborate sensuality and synaesthesia of Swinburne's writing. 'Laus Veneris' signals its difference from its literary, medieval forerunners by its extraordinary delight in colour, smell, sound, and touch. Furthermore, its fragmented manner of narration, relates a fevered, dream-like vision of damnation that is wholly unlike these medieval depictions. While some of the medieval elements of 'Laus Veneris' may have come from these literary sources and other ballads, the texture, experience, and meaning of Swinburne's poem are different.

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[92] William Bell Scott to Theodore Watts-Dunton, 5 July 1887, 'Letters from William Bell Scott to various correspondents', London, British Library, Ashley MS 1486, fol. 7.
[93] L. D. G. (Lucie Duff-Gordon), 'Tannhäuser', *Once a Week*, 5.112 (17 August 1861), 210-12.
[94] See Ludwig Achim von Arnim and Clemens Bretano, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: Alte deutsche Lieder* (Charlottenburg: Egbert Bauer, 1845), pp. 97-98. For Milnes, see *Poems*, p. 23.

However, the publication of this 'old German ballad' in *Once a Week* also not did happen in isolation from Wagner, given that it occurred a few months after *Tannhäuser* was performed at the Paris opera and after the appearance of Baudelaire's pamphlet. Its editors certainly knew of Wagner and *Tannhäuser* since the journal had run an article the year before on 1 September 1860 in which its correspondent described a recent performance of the opera in Weimar. This he reviewed negatively, but then went on to mention the first concerts held in Paris by Wagner earlier in the year – the same that Baudelaire talks of hearing in his pamphlet.[95]

Additionally, as Hyder notes, Edward Robert Lytton (1831-91) and Julian Fane (1827-70) published their own version of the myth as *Tannhäuser; or, the Battle of the Bards* in 1861. This poem, Hyder admits, was clearly based on musical sources, since it is a 'redaction of Wagner's opera in the form of a Tennysonian idyl', but he then goes on to claim that as none of the reviewers of this work referred to Wagner 'nor to any other form of the story, [this is] a fact which shows that both Wagner and the medieval legend were unknown [in England]'.[96] I presume that Hyder states this to advance his idea that Swinburne would not have known about Wagner's opera. Hence his conclusion that 'Wagner may be ignored, then, for the present'.

Ultimately, arguments about whether Swinburne's poem contains or does not contain narrative elements from other sources are, perhaps, based on a false premise. While Wagner's opera contains a plot element that Swinburne's does not – the heroine Elisabeth and the song contest at the Wartburg – being an opera it necessarily follows the demands of dramatic form and musical performance, no matter how much Wagner was attempting to push back at these. In contrast, Swinburne's version – in spite of its length – faces radically different constraints and obligations. The pattern of the poem necessarily constrains but also concentrates the plot, and its drama comes from the alternating states of its single narrator. Nevertheless, I will now go beyond narrative similarities and differences. It is in the action of the poetry and the music, their gestures,

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[95] E. Wilberforce, 'Two days in Weimar', *Once a Week*, 3 (1 September 1860), 274-276. The three concerts conducted by Wagner in Paris, the year before his *Tannhäuser* was performed in March 1861, were given in January to February 1860. For Baudelaire, see Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings*, p. 326.
[96] Hyder, 'Swinburne's "Laus Veneris"', pp. 1203, 1204.

and their aesthetics of desire where the most startling similarities between Swinburne's cyclical verse and Wagner's music most clearly lie.

Chapter 4 – Inside the Venusberg: Swinburne's 'Laus Veneris' and Wagner's *Tannhäuser*

> 'People adore a huge musical man. Muscles and music matched will help one to bestride the world'.[1]

Swinburne's poem 'Laus Veneris' opens with an epigraph that claims to be from a medieval book called '*Livre des grandes merveilles d'amour, escript en latin et en françoys par Maistre Antoine Gaget.* 1530' ('Book of the great wonders of love, written in Latin and French by Master Antoine Gaget').[2] However, Gaget and his book are 'pure inventions', as Swinburne later admitted, even 'a youthful sin of forgery'.[3] Swinburne created this imitation of old French prose to give his poem a medieval atmosphere, but, given that it is a 'forgery', we should not trust Maistre Gaget's words.

The epigraph depicts the Christian knight Tannhäuser as damned: 'Then he said weeping, Alas, too unhappy a man and a cursed sinner, I shall never see the mercy and pity of God'.[4] Tannhäuser is returning to the lair of Venus, called the Venusberg (or the Horsel). Earlier in the story, he was lured into this lair by the goddess herself, where he tasted and enjoyed the Venusberg's sexual pleasures. But wracked with guilt, he managed to leave (as the knight also does in Wagner's version) and travelled to Rome to seek absolution from the Pope. In the Holy City, the Pope refuses Tannhäuser's request, presumably because he has consorted with a pre-Christian goddess, meaning that his sins stretch back to a time before the crucifixion and so he cannot be granted salvation. Christ's blood will not wash away his sins, a fact that Tannhäuser is well aware of when, in the text of the poem itself, he falls at the Pope's feet. 'Though the Lord's blood be right sweet', he says to the Pope, 'The spot it takes not off the panther's skin, | Nor shall

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[1] A. C. Swinburne, 'Letter from Reginald Harewood to Lady Cheyne', *A Year's Letters* ('Love's Cross-Currents') ed. by Francis J. Sypher (London: Peter Owen, 1976), p. 111.
[2] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 9.
[3] *TSL*, VI, 150, 156 (12 February & 30 December 1901)
[4] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 325. This is Haynes's translation of the original French epigraph, which is on p. 9.

an Ethiop's stain be bleached with it'.[5] He has come to Rome, therefore, to be proved wrong in the hope that the Pope might speak 'some sweet word, | Giving me cheer'. The hope is misplaced, however. '"Until this dry shred staff, that hath no whit | Of leaf nor bark, bear blossom and smell sweet"', the Pope replies, raising his papal crozier, Tannhäuser will not gain the mercy of God; he will '"be cast out from it"'.[6] The knight now has no other choice. Evoking the imagery of the Book of Revelation, or the end of time, while also expressing shame for his sinful sexual desires, Tannhäuser can now only return to the Venusberg. As he says in Gaget's epigraph:

> I shall never see the mercy and pity of God. Now I shall go from here and hide myself within Mount Horsel […], entreating my sweet lady Venus of her favour and loving mercy, since for her love I shall be damned to Hell for all eternity. This is the end of all my feats of arms and all my pretty songs. Alas, too beautiful was the face and the eyes of my lady, and it was on an evil day that I saw them.[7]

Once he has returned to the Venusberg (where he receives the 'loving mercy' of the pagan goddess rather than that of Jesus), a sign of his salvation seems to appear. The Pope sees 'fine red and white flowers and many leafy buds break forth from his staff, and in this way he saw all the bark become green again'. Now 'much afraid and moved', the Pope sends a message to Tannhäuser: he has received the salvation of God, but unfortunately, we are told, the messengers 'never saw him' and the 'poor knight remained forever beside Venus, the high strong goddess, in

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[5] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 20. Tannhäuser's suggestion that Christ's blood cannot wash away some sins is potentially blasphemous. His words reference the Book of Jeremiah, an Old Testament prophetic book that warns against the dangers of pagan worship: 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? | *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. | Therefore I will scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness', Book of Jeremiah 13: 23-24 (KJV). Tannhäuser is both turning himself into a prophet here, but also stating that his own form of pagan worship (in the form of sex with Venus) is irredeemable. Margot Louis draws similar conclusions about the references to the Book of Isaiah in 'The Triumph of Time' (1866). See Margot K. Louis, *Swinburne and his Gods: The Roots and Growth of an Agnostic Poetry* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), p. 55.
[6] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 21. The word 'sweet' used twice here suggests how Tannhäuser's view of the world has changed. He now relates to everything in sensory terms – in this case, taste or smell – which the Pope inadvertently responds to, i.e. the flowers' 'sweet smell'.
[7] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 325.

the amorous mountainside'.[8] Tannhäuser cannot be found as he is now outside earthly time and space altogether, in a mythological realm.

In Wagner's opera, the redemption that Tannhäuser receives seems to be – at least at face value – an uncomplicated and purely Christian one.[9] Elisabeth, who is Tannhäuser's betrothed (and a character who does not feature in 'Laus Veneris'), becomes concerned that the knight has not returned from his pilgrimage. She implores the Virgin Mary to intercede and turn her to dust so that her '"spirit pure and white"' may '"enter into the Kingdom bright"'.[10] She declares that there, in Heaven, she will kneel directly before God and pray for Tannhäuser's sins to be washed away (if the Pope has not given him absolution). Elisabeth then enters the Wartburg, the castle which is her home, and promptly dies just as Tannhäuser returns. On arrival, he tells his brother knight, Wolfram von Eschenbach, that his absolution was indeed denied by the Holy Father (as was the case with Swinburne's hero). Damned, he can now only return to the Venusberg. As he relates this, Venus's realm appears around them. According to Wagner's libretto, 'A confused whirl of dancing forms becomes visible' amid a 'roseate light', and Tannhäuser sings '"sweet from the bower [the Horsel] the breeze is blowing"'.[11] Venus welcomes him back, and she is accompanied by the most erotically-charged music – a repeated quivering, lingering three bars of almost static high chords that then decay in pitch, as if breaking down and reclining (a leitmotif named 'The call of the sirens'). This music contrasts with Venus's words. She rebukes

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[8] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 325-26.
[9] Wagner decried any Christian interpretation of his operas, and, as John Deathridge has demonstrated, insisted that any Christian symbolism was merely the Christian example of the 'same symbols in so many branches of myth', all of which – no matter which religion they have emanated from – reflect 'primal feelings of awesome power'. See John Deathridge, 'Wagner's "Alter Ego"', *Lohengrin*, ed. by Nicholas John (London: Overture Publishing, 2011), pp. 7-13 (p. 10).
[10] Richard Wagner, *Tannhäuser: libretto of the opera to be broadcast on October 18 and 19, 1927*, trans. Ernest Newman (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1927), p. 23 (hereafter referred to as Wagner, *Tannhäuser*). I will be using this English version (unless otherwise stated) due to the poor state of English translations of the opera and as this has both Newman's translation and the stage directions. Most translations in libretto or vocal score omit the stage directions. The more recent and standard English National Opera libretto (Opera Guide 39, Overture, 1988), which does contain the stage directions, is impaired by missing sections of dialogue (which are printed in German but not in English), and a translation that, at times, bears little correspondence to the original.
[11] Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, p. 26.

Tannhäuser for leaving her: '"false, inconstant man"'.[12] In a manner that is directly comparable to the pleasure and pain dynamics within Swinburne's 'Laus Veneris', the Venusberg is here presented as a place of dominance and submission, alternating states which are constantly played out throughout the opera. After hearing, smelling, and seeing the Venusberg ('"With rapture every sense is glowing, | The rosy light once more I see!"', Tannhäuser sings to Wolfram), Tannhäuser then blends both Venus and her realm together and imagines himself taking the goddess by force. '"We have penetrated the Venusberg!"', he cries, but then again admits his imprisonment in desire. Venus, too, is submissive. '"Oh come! Oh, come!"' she implores, but then demands, '"For ever be thou mine"'.[13]

Just as Tannhäuser is to return to Venus's arms, however, God hears Elisabeth's call in heaven. Venus vanishes and Tannhäuser, realizing he has been redeemed by Elisabeth's intercession, calls her a saint and dies. Pilgrims then arrive 'bearing in their midst a staff covered with fresh green leaves'. In their final chorus, they claim that all sinners can be saved by the redeeming power of God, singing:

> Pilgrims:
>
> […]
>
> The Lord hath shown his wondrous might:
>
> The barren staff the priest did bear
>
> With tender green is clothed again;
>
> The sinner need no more despair,

[12] Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, p. 26. See Dreyfus's discussion of this leitmotif in *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse*, p. 85.

[13] Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, p. 26. At this line all current translations tend to fail in adequately translating the German word '*drangen*', meaning 'invaded', 'penetrated', 'forced' from the line '*im Venusberg drangen wir ein!*' (Richard Wagner, *Tannhäuser, in Full Score* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1984), p. 400) presumably for reasons for propriety. Newman translates it as 'To Venus' hill come let us flee!' (*Tannhäuser,* p. 26), while *Quatre poèmes* translates it lamely as '*nous sommes entré dans le Venusberg*'. See Richard Wagner, *Quatre poèmes d'opéra* (Paris: Librairie nouvelle, 1861), p. 168. I have translated the line here myself.

For God shall cleanse him of his stain![14]

Swinburne's version, however, appears to be much more daring. It begins at the end of the story, but his French epigraph is thick with irony. In 'Laus Veneris' it is not Tannhäuser who is at fault, but the Pope. The Holy Father – being outside of the Horsel – apparently misreads the appearance of the 'red and white' flowers and the staff's green bark. He is 'much afraid and moved' at the sign, we are told. But is this because he recognizes the sign as a rebuke from God, or is it that he suspects it to have an altogether more sinister origin? Tannhäuser is surely 'redeemed' for returning to the Venusberg, not because he has gained God's forgiveness. The sign comes after Tannhäuser's return, after resuming his apparently 'sinful' activity – something that God surely knows. (There is no penitent confession in Swinburne's version, nor an intercession from a saintly woman). The flowering of the Pope's staff in red and white flowers and its green bark – symbols of Venus – are not signs for Tannhäuser but for the Pope and his Church.[15] The staff is a phallic symbol of redemption through the flesh. Having been rejected by God, Tannhäuser has given himself up to another truth instead – the truth of the Venusberg and 'Her little chambers [that] drip with flower-like red', 'Red with the bitter blossom of a kiss!'.[16] Tannhäuser receives 'salvation' not for trying to escape the Venusberg, but for returning to it and to the sensual body of its queen, so that their two bodies become entwined and blended as one. The truth of the world is not in a Christian transfiguration, but in the flesh and blood of the human body and the sensual

[14] Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, pp. 26, 29. The pilgrims here misinterpret the reason for Tannhäuser's salvation, as Wagner makes clear in his *A Communication to my Friends* (1851): 'How absurd, then, must those critics seem to me, who […] insist on reading into my "Tannhäuser" a specifically Christian and impotently pietistic drift! They recognise nothing but a fable of their own incompetence'. Wagner's salvation – like Swinburne's 'Laus Veneris' as I shall show – is in sexuality. See *RWPW*, I, 323.

[15] Green is a symbol of Venus in the Tannhäuser legend and a colour associated with pagan ritual and myth in general (see also *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*). In contrast, in the Roman Catholic Church at least, green is used only in 'Ordinary Time' during the liturgical year. Richard Monckton Milnes, in his *Poems, Legendary and Historical*, discussed in the previous chapter, states that the 'spirits of Friday' (emanating from Venus) would appear in various forms including in 'a green or white vestment' (p. 22). In 'Laus Veneris' these 'spirits' are evoked when Tannhäuser remembers a time of peace, tournaments, and his own singing outside the Venusberg: 'Wherein we sat clothed softly, each man's hair | Crowned with green leaves beneath white hoods of vair' (Haynes, *P&B*, p. 18).

[16] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 13, 19.

life that it awakens. Gaget's book, of course, celebrates the 'Great Wonders of Love' rather than the Christian God, while the poem's title – 'Laus Veneris' – translates as 'Praise of Venus'.[17]

In the chapter that follows, I first give a close-reading of 'Laus Veneris', suggesting a very different interpretation of this poem from previous critical responses. I then describe Wagner's musical techniques, both in general terms and those that he deploys within *Tannhäuser*, which will, in turn, be compared against 'Laus Veneris'. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are then discussed. Their importance for both Wagner and Swinburne will be highlighted, and this, finally, will lead into a close reading of Swinburne's poem 'Hermaphroditus' (1866), which will draw out comparisons with Wagner's aesthetics of androgyny as presented in *Opera and Drama*.

Swinburne: The erotic union of time and space in music

> A new world of symbols was required, the whole of the symbolism of the body, not only the symbolism of the mouth, the eye, the word, but the rhythmic motion of all the limbs of the body in the complete gesture of the dance. Then all the other symbolic forces, the forces of music – rhythm, dynamics, and harmony – would suddenly find impetuous expression. In order to grasp this total liberation of all symbolic forces, man must have already reached that peak of self-negation that seeks symbolic expression […]. Nothing

[17] In the song version from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1805), translated in Milnes's *Poems, Legendary and Historical*, the Pope's sign comes fourteen days after Tannhäuser leaves Rome and its final verse is a (presumably later Protestant) criticism of the priesthood, in that the Pope should not have waited for a sign from God to give absolution. The flowering staff is a divine rebuke: 'Mysterious end of good remorse! | Strong lesson to beware, | Ye priests of mercy! how ye force | Poor sinners to despair.' (p. 28). In the translation printed in *Once a Week* on 17 August 1861 (pp. 210-12), which is described as 'a quaint old ballad, written apparently shortly after the Reformation' (p. 211), fourteen days become three. This would appear to symbolize Christ's three days in Hell and Limbo before the resurrection (or the 'Harrowing of Hell'), during which he is traditionally said to have rescued those righteous pagans who died before his coming, since, otherwise, they would not be redeemed by his salvation. This version also ends on a rebuke to the priesthood. Of course, after three days, Swinburne's Tannhäuser is not 'resurrected' from the Venusberg but stays there. I suggest that in his pastiche epigraph by 'Gaget', Swinburne is not rebuking the Pope for being a bad, unmerciful priest, but is, instead, rebuking him for his Christian beliefs.

> here suggests asceticism, spirituality or duty – everything speaks of a rich and triumphant existence, in which everything is deified, whether it be good or evil.[18]

I interpret 'Laus Veneris' as a representation of the body possessed by music. In allowing this possession, the poem indicates, the body becomes whole through the transformative power of the erotic sublime. Apparently countering traditional ideas of musical purification – where music is holy, ethereal, and sends one's thoughts and feelings skywards in a metaphysical transcendence (an idea most clearly indicated by Pythagorean and Christian notions of music's heavenly spheres) – Swinburne's music (and Wagner's orchestral music) drives thoughts inwards to the body. Through this motion, which could also be interpreted as 'downward' (as it confuses notions about 'high' and 'low' art), 'Laus Veneris' suggests that music and poetry activate inner feeling, which connects the speaker or the reader to the world at large, and even universally through access to a dream world of eternal symbols. This recognition occurs not just through an awareness of the commonality of the human body that lyric poetry suggests to us, but also, through an enhanced perception of the body's erotic potential, makes plain to us the primary force of all life – sexual love. Instead of an outside force that threatens bodily integrity, the sublime, here, is an inner and feminizing power waiting to be released. Music extends the self outwards, blending all things together into a homogenous whole. While this threatens bodily integrity, to Swinburne this form of subliminal action is a consummation to be wished, as it reveals the true union of all things. Ultimately, in 'Laus Veneris', the human Tannhäuser becomes a god, as much a divinity as the Venus with whom he is sexually merged. In his mergence with her, he can see all and feel all and is reconciled with the constant process of destruction and renewal, which is the essence of life itself.

'Laus Veneris' dramatizes the contrary sensations of unity and division throughout its 106 stanzas. Even its end, which should bring a sense of unity to the text, is not actually an ending. The final, capitalized words after the concluding stanza, 'EXPLICIT LAUS VENERIS.',

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[18] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. by Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin Books, 1993), pp. 21-22.

relate to the medieval practice of printing 'explicit' to indicate the closure of a book.[19] The capitalization reinforces this sense of an ending, and it works as a visual pun, in that it makes the 'explicit' seem even more explicitly final. However, the apparent closure is also another opening. Swinburne is here punning on the idea of sexual openness in 'explicit' – in the sense of leaving something open to view – but additionally, he is also tracing the word 'explicit' back to its roots as a now obsolete verb meaning 'to cause (a flower or leaf) to open from the bud'.[20] Swinburne's ending is a re-budding, a new flowering, a spreading of the flower's sexual organs, which links together the flower imagery throughout the poem, but also circles back to the French epigraph at the poem's beginning, where the Pope's staff is described as flowering. The poem is a continually flowering bud, like the individual flowers on the green bark of the Pope's staff – an object which perhaps signifies both male and female states concurrently. The poem does not, therefore, suggest that the Pope's staff offers redemption through Christ's salvation (a redemption which Tannhäuser himself appears to doubt); salvation is offered 'explicitly' instead, through the flowering praise of Venus.

'Laus Veneris' is structured around two opposing time scales that run simultaneously. The poem has a forward motion, which is partly created by a loose plot that appears to dramatize a form of metempsychosis, in which Tannhäuser moves through a series of stages to reach a sexual communion with Venus. Working against this, however, is a constant return, a need to get back and replay events, which means that a resolution can never be reached. Indeed, the poem starts at the end of the story with Tannhäuser describing what has already happened to him. The poem is a remembrance, with the past and the present only finally coming together in the sexually

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[19] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 22. Haynes translates 'explicit' to mean, in a medieval usage, 'here ends' (p. 327).

[20] 'Explicit, v.2', OED Online, September 2019, Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/66635?rskey=JrKAYS&result=4&isAdvanced=false> (accessed 3 October 2019). The word 'Explicit' was also meant to appear at the end of Swinburne's novel *Love Cross Currents: A Year's Letters*, as Sypher's edition makes clear. This demonstrates that the term was more than just a marker of medievalism for Swinburne. See Swinburne, *A Year's Letters*, pp. 178, 165.

'explicit' ending.[21] The imagery, too, is slippery. As Tannhäuser speaks, his similes and metaphors attempt to undo themselves within the next or even the same line – an action that generates endlessly rich ambiguities. Despite the relentless metrical drive of Swinburne's verse, there is in 'Laus Veneris', as Alain Badiou says of Wagner's music, 'a hesitation regarding what it really means to conclude'.[22] The contrary motions of Swinburne's verse also bring to mind Carolyn Abbate's discussions concerning the disruption of narrative time in nineteenth-century music dramas. Within Wagner's work, for example, we are often asked to listen to and read his music in contrary directions. The repetition of leitmotifs within a music drama require us to recall their previous use, but also ask us to look towards their future deployment and resolution. As we listen and read the music, a leitmotif reminds 'us of the past of our reading, but they are not analogous to the past tense […] but can evoke pastness instantaneously'.[23]

One reason for this is that while the verse moves with an impulsive metrical beat, it also describes the mythological space of the Venusberg, which is, in itself, timeless. Tannhäuser has a sense of his own life moving forwards and yet the thought of the Venusberg's infinity makes time meaningless and threatens to undo his sense of what life is. And so Tannhäuser continually looks backwards. The real world of his former life bleeds into Venus's realm, but rather than providing consolation, this also proves devastating, as the two worlds blend and mix together.

The opening of the poem dramatizes the division between the pagan force of Venus and Tannhäuser's faltering faith in Christianity. The knight begins by looking on her body and telling us what he sees, but then he compares Venus's beauty to the body of Christ. In some respects this is a replaying of medieval and renaissance poetic tropes, where a beloved is praised through a series of comparisons against an inferior object, but here the inferior object is Christ. His bloodied feet and hands will make his believers 'grow sad with kissing Christ', we are told, while the beauty of Venus creates a sensation of erotic wonder:

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[21] Rather like the mixing of 'Memory and desire' in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. See *The Complete Poems of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue, 2 vols. (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), II, 55.
[22] Alain Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner* (London: Verso, 2010), p. 100.
[23] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 261.

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great and fair.

But lo her wonderfully woven hair!

And thou didst heal us with thy piteous kiss;

But see now, Lord; her mouth is lovelier.[24]

The rapid contrasts here do not quite fit, in that Christ is being crucified for the sake of divine salvation, whereas Venus is merely displaying her body, but it implies that Tannhäuser, in his appreciation and possession of her beauty, is also undergoing a form of 'passion' and that her body – the personification of beauty – is another route to salvation.

Tannhäuser then describes the Venusberg. This realm and its other inhabitants, however, blend into the figure of Venus herself, and, in effect, become an extension of her body. Standing 'hard by her head', for example, is the figure of 'Love' or Eros, who is 'like one labouring at a loom', where he 'Weaves with the hair of many a ruined head'. Eros is metaphorically weaving out the entire poem here. Writing and weaving are related in the Latin word '*texere*', meaning 'to weave', hence the similarity of the words 'text' and 'textile', and so Eros stands by Venus's head, issuing strands of threaded hair like lines of verse to create a web that 'reeled off, curls and goes out like steam'.[25] There is a sense, here, of the corporeal becoming ephemeral, just as a verse or a piece of music vanishes into the air once it is spoken or performed.

The horror of this image, indeed of the Venusberg as a whole – where 'Night falls like fire'– then turns Tannhäuser's thoughts back to God.[26] He calls for release, or for death, because he is aware that the Venusberg exists in eternity – a concept too terrible to contemplate. From here, he remembers life outside the Venusberg, where it 'must be winter among men' (which contrasts against the 'hot' realm of Venus). He imagines 'maidens' (instead of the weaving Eros), who 'spin and sit | Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like, arow'.[27] While this memory gives him

[24] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 10.
[25] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 10, 11.
[26] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 11.
[27] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 12.

consolation and respite, it nonetheless quickly becomes corrupted. Mythological images breaks up his thoughts. The maidens become the Fates, spinning out time, reminding him that this dimension is now denied him, and the potential scent of these lily-like women re-energizes his senses. He looks back at Venus and begins a lavish description, which centres not on his intellectual understanding of her, but rather on what he feels. His account – if it can be called that – describes near constant movement. Wrapped up into the motions of turning, kissing, laughing, and, again, weaving, Tannhäuser's words become exquisitely sensuous. Heavy with sounds, colours, and the sensation of touching, they are also loaded with similes and metaphors. Many of these words accumulate and exert a contrary gravitational force on the poem's forward motion: 'Her eyelids on her eyes like flower on flower, | Mine eyelids on mine eyes like fire on fire'. The effect becomes heavier with the excessive punctuation, which tends to chop lines into flashes of description, and conjunctions that chain these flashes together: 'Her girdles, and the chaplets of her head, | Her armlets and her anklets; with her feet | She tramples all that winepress of the dead'.[28]

This sensual description also blends everything, so that individual objects or qualities are modulated or even wholly changed, often within the same lines. 'Kisses on her lips' become sighs, 'Exceeding pleasure' comes 'out of extreme pain', blood becomes rain, and her 'gateways' – with all the sexual opportunities that these suggest – 'smoke with fume of flowers and fires'.[29] The 'steam' of desire (which recalls Eros's weaving of hair or poetic lines that go 'out like steam') is also 'sweet' between her lips, while the 'languor […] of many lyres' plays around her ears – though who can hear this sound is uncertain.[30] The rich alliteration and assonance in this

[28] Haynes, *P&B,* pp. 12-13.
[29] Haynes, *P&B,* p. 13. John Rosenberg notes this general blending of objects and qualities in Swinburne's poetry and in *Tristram of Lyonesse* in particular, where, he states, that 'Images of light, heat, florescence, and flame all fuse into a single Turnerian chord of color'. A chord suggests multiplicity within the single, but also the idea of temporality as part of a melody. See John D. Rosenberg, 'Swinburne', *Victorian Studies,* 11.2 (1967), 131-152 (pp. 136-7). T. S. Eliot's charge of vagueness in Swinburne's work is, in part, no doubt due to this action.
[30] The ear as another kind of sexual orifice is an idea to be found in Wagner's *Opera and Drama*: 'The Ear is no child; it is a staunch and loving woman, who in her love will make that man the blessedest who brings *in himself* the fullest matter for her bliss' (*RWPW,* II, 271). This moment in 'Laus Veneris' also appears to allude to Shelley's essay 'On Love' (composed 1818, published 1829), where he claims that finding love is discovering one's 'antitype', with a 'frame whose

description gives each stanza a sliding sensation, mimicking the twisting and turning of Venus's body. It also generates a cumulative sound that builds the effect of these stanzas, crescendo-like, towards the transformation of Venus into music just as Tannhäuser implies that he is both sliding into her beds (which are multiple) and into her body:

> Her beds are full of perfume and sad sound,
> Her doors are made with music, and barred round
> With sighing and with laughter and with tears,
> With tears whereby strong souls of men are bound.[31]

From this musicalization of Venus and her beds (reminiscent of Baudelaire's comment on Wagner's *Tannhäuser* Prelude: 'the whole onomatopoeic dictionary of love is to be heard here'), Tannhäuser is able to rekindle his own power.[32] As Venus transforms into music and sound, his own body re-emerges with vigour. While she can slay everyone, Tannhäuser claims, *he* is now immortal, and he takes sole possession of her body and reaffirms his bodily presence with a series of trochaic and spondaic proclamations:

> Yea, all she slayeth; yea, every man save me;
> Me, love, thy lover that must cleave to thee
> Till the ending of the days and ways of earth,
> The shaking of the sources of the sea.
>
> Me, most forsaken of all souls that fell;
> Me, satiated with things insatiable,

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nerves, like the chords of two exquisite lyres strung to the accompaniment of one delightful voice, vibrate with the vibrations of our own […] this [i.e. spiritual, sounding union] is the invisible and unattainable point to which Love tends'. See *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 504.

[31] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 13.

[32] Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings*, p. 342.

Me, for whose sake the extreme hell makes mirth,

Yea, laughter kindles at the heart of hell.[33]

But this power is short-lived. Tannhäuser quickly withers. Overpowered by her beauty, he diminishes in the next stanza as if made impotent. He recoils and his 'limbs quake | As water' in a parody of 'Eros', whom Sappho famously calls the 'loosener' or 'melter of limbs'.[34] Rather than empowering Tannhäuser through a union of bodies, this union falters, and he trembles apart and becomes watery, suggesting a climax that never quite consummates as it should – more of a whimper than a bang, as T. S. Eliot might say.[35] The empowering orgasm is, at the same time, a deflation, a remembrance of loss rather than a fulfilling gain.

This deflation causes Tannhäuser to seek eternal sleep. But a tentative desire soon returns. He wishes to paw her body but is also terrified by it – 'I dare not always touch her, lest the kiss | Leave my lips charred'.[36] His eyes wander across all the other souls that are trapped inside the Venusberg, such as kings and queens (and, in fact, the populations of whole cities), all of whom have succumbed to the pleasures of the flesh instead of worshipping God. This drives him back to thinking on the outside world again – of his life as a virtuous knight of 'Christ's choosing, I God's knight | No blinkard heathen stumbling for scant light', and his guilt returns.[37] The word 'God' now replaces the 'me' of Tannhäuser's embodied climax, and images of war follow as he remembers 'beautiful mailed men' and wielding his sword.[38] A memory of the noise of his horse's 'chiming bridle', with its 'smite and smite' sound, returns to him the sense of time

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[33] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 14.
[34] See Sappho's 'Fragment 130', where Anne Carson translates *Eros* thus: 'Eros the melter of limbs (now again) stirs me – '. See Anne Carson, *If not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho* (London: Virago, 2003), p. 265.
[35] 'Between the desire | And the spasm | Between the potency | And the existence […] *This is the way the world ends | Not with a bang but a whimper*', from 'The Hollow Men', *Complete Verse of T. S. Eliot*, I, 84. With its epigraph from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (intimating the veil behind which the horror lies), and its sexually suggestive imagery and 'multifoliate roses', the poem depicts an 'in-between' or threshold state, and suggests that the 'Hollow Men' live in a very Swinburnian and Wagnerian 'dream' world of sexual archetypes. In its ending with a 'whimper', it too hesitates over ending, or, at least, refuses a music-like crescendo.
[36] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 14.
[37] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 16.
[38] His memories of swordsmanship again underline his loss of manhood here.

passing, and as he thinks of this previous life, the poem suspends its insistent end-stops at the end of each stanza and the punctuation becomes regularized.[39] Two groups of stanzas (*ll.* 213-228 and 229-244) are linked together, suggesting that the poem has now re-entered the Christian calendar.

However, Tannhäuser is soon distracted by a memory of his first 'scent' of Venus. He describes it as if he has been hunting an animal, although she, too, appears to have been hunting him. The poem's sexually suggestive imagery here, where the land grows 'perfumed deadly grass', deliberately blurs the distinction between the knight and Venus so that the sexual hunt culminates in a bizarre, cannibalistic image of conjoined bodies:

> As one who hidden in deep sedge and reeds
> Smells the rare scent made where a panther feeds,
> And tracking ever slotwise the warm smell
> Is snapped upon by the sweet mouth and bleeds,
>
> His head far down the hot sweet throat of her –
> So one tracks loves, whose breath is deadlier,[40]

These images of conjoined bodies and the hunting of animals bring to mind Nietzsche's ideas of the Dionysiac from *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), which Nietzsche wrote almost as a companion to Wagner's music. The symbolism deployed in this work is often astonishingly similar to that of *Poems and Ballads* and 'Laus Veneris' in particular. Filled with images of *femmes fatales*, wild animals, satyrs and maenads, and apocalyptic scenes of thunder and smoke, as well as fatigue and death-longing – often within starkly sexual metaphors (which should be unsurprising, given the 'natal' meaning of the work's title) – *The Birth of Tragedy* describes Dionysian energy being released from the body during the whirl of emotional music and dance. As Frances Nesbitt Oppel has shown, Nietzsche regarded this intoxicating music as feminine, and so the power of Dionysus

[39] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 16-17.
[40] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 18.

was a potentially genderless or androgynous state (cancelling out the god's masculinity) that collapsed individuality (or the *principium individuatis* – creative control symbolized by the God Apollo) into a divinely wild, intoxicating sense of abandonment.[41] In an early section of *The Birth of Tragedy*, where he describes this musical homogeneity, Nietzsche states:

> The chariot of Dionysus is piled high with flowers and garlands; under its yoke stride tigers and panthers […]. Now the slave is a free man, now all the rigid and hostile boundaries that distress, despotism or 'impudent fashion' have erected between man and man break down. Now, with the gospel of world harmony, each man feels himself not only united, reconciled, and at one with his neighbour, but *one* with him, as if the veil of Maya has been rent and now hung in rags before the mysterious primal Oneness.[42]

As Sue Prideaux has recently described, Nietzsche saw the immediate future of artistic creation (at this time in his life) in the fusion of music and poetry, which he described as the union of the Apollonian (word) and the Dionysiac (music).[43] In this newly-synthesized artistry, in which, Nietzsche claimed, 'Dionysus speaks the words of Apollo and Apollo, finally, the words of Dionysus' (although Dionysus does not speak words, *per se*, perhaps), a primal creative force could be unlocked, which had the power to reveal a hidden, redeeming truth.[44] Swinburne's vision, of course, anticipates Nietzsche's by several years.

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[41] Frances Nesbitt Oppel, *Nietzsche on Gender: Beyond Man and Woman* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2005), p. 65. Walter Pater talks about Dionysus as being seen in classical times as womanlike or androgynous in his 1876 essay 'A Study of Dionysus'. See Walter Pater, *Greek Studies: A Series of Essays* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1895), pp. 1-48.
[42] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 17. Nietzsche is referencing Schopenhauer's interest in Maya. For an example, see Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. by E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), I, 330: 'The Maya of the Indians, the work and fabric of which are the whole world of illusion, is paraphrased by *amor*'.
[43] The rending of the veil of Maya, is, of course, reminiscent of Swinburne's comment on Blake (noted in the previous chapter): 'the veil of outer things [to him] seemed always to tremble with some breath behind it: seemed at times to be rent in sunder with clamour and sudden lightning'; Swinburne, *William Blake*, p. 41.
[44] Sue Prideaux, *I am Dynamite: A Life of Friedrich Nietzsche* (London: Faber & Faber, 2018), p. 91.

This truth is also finally revealed to Tannhäuser in ‘Laus Veneris’ as his metaphorical hunt ends. He gains his first sighting of Venus as he finds her (or is it the other way around?) amid ‘ripe tall grass’ under a ‘great elder-tree’, where she is unveiled, ‘Naked, with her hair shed over to the knee’. Their first sexual union follows, and he feels shame. Because of this ‘sin’, he claims he almost went mad and was overcome by the fumes of the Venusberg, as Venus’s hair (again, perhaps the lines of poetry) entangled his neck with a power that ‘stings’. But then he was suddenly released, an action Tannhäuser credits to God, who looked upon him when Venus’s hands were at their tightest: ‘God brake my bands | To save my soul alive, and I came forth | Like a man blind and naked in strange lands’. On reaching the Christian world, the stanzas again become linked.[45]

Tannhäuser then attempts to cleanse himself by going on his doomed pilgrimage to Rome, and he relays the Holy Father’s fateful words. Arguably the Pope’s dry staff becomes symbolic of Tannhäuser’s body. Sin has turned him into a ‘dead stem’, he says, and even if men could pluck fruit from a dry tree, now, on him no ‘sweet leaves’ will grow.[46] This moment reaches back to an earlier point in the text, near the poem’s beginning (*ll.* 53-60), where Tannhäuser calls on God to bury him under ‘long leaves’:

> Ah yet would God this flesh of mine might be
> Where air might wash and long leaves cover me,
> Where tides of grass break into foam of flowers,
> Or where the wind’s feet shine along the sea.
>
> Ah yet would God that stems and roots were bred

[45] Haynes, *P&B,* p. 19. The mythological figure of Eros would seem to be blended with Tannhäuser here (in his metaphorical blindness and nakedness), suggesting that he is not free of the potential for sin, even as he walks to Rome. Traditionally, Eros is portrayed as a cupid with covered eyes (to suggest the blindness of love). While in the Venusberg, Tannhäuser also describes himself as blind, in a typically circular image, which wraps both seeing and non-seeing into his eyes: ‘mine eyes as blind as glass’ (*l.* 62).
[46] Haynes, *P&B,* p. 21.

Out of my weary body and my head,
That sleep were sealed upon me with a seal,
And I were as the least of all his dead.[47]

This is a request for a Christian burial, but the request is immediately tainted by the presence of Venus as he wishes for vegetation to start sprouting from his head. While this could relate to the Christian idea of resurrection after death, Tannhäuser here becomes a sprouting staff – or like a Green Man, who puts out branches and leaves from his mouth. Despite his call to God, the 'foam of flowers' and the wind-touched sea also reference Venus, who was born from the foam of the sea – her Greek name, Aphrodite, includes this idea within it (*aphros* means 'foam'). The imagery of Christian salvation is here comparable to the pagan, as they both employ the same images.[48]

However, on returning from Rome to the Venusberg (which he now calls 'home'), the goddess is again metaphorically reborn from the sea. Tannhäuser sees in this renewed sexual union the creation of all things as their bodies and souls fuse:

As when she came out of the naked sea
Making the foam as fire whereon she trod,
And as the inner flower of fire was she.

Yea, she laid hold upon me, and her mouth
Clove unto mine as soul to body doth,
And, laughing, made her lips luxurious;
Her hair had smells of all the sunburnt south,[49]

[47] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 11.
[48] This seems to relate to the idea, shared by Wagner (see note 9), that Christian and pagan symbolism come from the same source.
[49] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 21.

This return ‘seals’ Tannhäuser’s fate. In the final moments of the poem he returns to an embodied power, joining with her in an apparently final climax, suggesting that Venus is now his for all eternity.

For till the thunder in the trumpet be,
Soul may divide from body, but not we
  One from another; I will hold thee with my hand,
I let mine eyes have all their will of thee,

I seal myself upon thee with my might,
Abiding alway out of all men’s sight
  Until God loosen over sea and land
The thunder of the trumpets of the night.

EXPLICIT LAUS VENERIS.[50]

This re-sealing of a sexual bond is a sexual relocation of the Christian God’s seal (as previously quoted above: ‘Ah yet would God […] That sleep were sealed upon me with a seal, | And I were as the least of all his dead’). The Christian seal is a covenant that promises resurrection after death (so that death is only a sleep to be awoken from). In these final two stanzas of the poem, however, a different kind of seal is formed, and with it a new pagan covenant. In the repeated sexually-suggestive imagery – of thunder, trumpets, and sealing – and in the final word of the poem (before the false closure of ‘EXPLICIT’) in which ‘night’ puns on ‘knight’, Tannhäuser compares himself to and rivals the power of the Christian God.[51]

In the Book of Revelation, the breaking of the seals of the book of life allows the second coming of Christ, signalling the end of earthly time. A ‘new heaven and a new earth’ are created

[50] Haynes, *P&B,* p. 22.
[51] Haynes, *P&B,* p. 22.

and there is 'no more sea' (which is time). Death is now conquered and bodily resurrection is no longer necessary.[52] Tannhäuser's 'seal myself', therefore, becomes an erotic form of salvation. Instead of breaking a seal, a new seal is created, a pressing down that turns the sexual intercourse of Venus and Tannhäuser into a parody of Christ reigning across the world and setting it to rights. Tannhauser's re-sealing, which in the sexual eternity of the Venusberg suggests constant repetition, is one of sexual love that promises to transcend life and death. Perhaps Swinburne is here thinking of the Song of Solomon:

> there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.
> Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death;[53]

In this biblical 'song' the seal is on the heart, not on a book or on the foreheads of believers (as it is in the Book of Revelation). A 'seal' can also be a sign or marker, and so this new seal of Tannhäuser and Venus could here be interpreted as a sign for a new kind of Aesthetic believer or a lover of beauty.[54] Unlike in the Christian covenant, where the soul is separated and leaves the body after death ('For till the thunder in the trumpet be [that is, the Day of Judgement] | Soul may divide from body), in this new pagan covenant offered to Tannhäuser, the soul and the body will stay together, fused ('but not we | One from another') and it is through the senses that this seal shall be maintained ('I will hold thee with my hand, | I let mine eyes have all their will of thee').[55]

However, this aggressive sexualization of New Testament imagery is also absurdly deflationary. Like the previous moment of sexual climax, where Venus is resolved into music and Tannhäuser subsequently withers in remorse ('Her doors are made with music'), this sexual and

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[52] Revelation 21:1 (KJV).
[53] Song of Solomon 8:5-6 (KJV).
[54] The word 'seal' is a diminutive of the Latin *signum*, see 'seal, n.2'. OED Online <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174199?rskey=tGDPLn&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> (accessed 5 October 2019).
[55] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 13, 120. There is an echo here of the Old Testament covenant in Psalms 73: 23 (KJV): 'Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand'.

poetic climax is also anticlimactic. The poem returns to the beginning. Tannhäuser is caught in the eternal Venusberg, where there are no beginnings or climaxes.

In *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism* Jerome McGann states that the speaker of 'Laus Veneris' is 'not really a tragic figure […] but a pathetic one', as Tannhäuser chooses to believe that his position is sinful and that he 'lives forever in a sexual hell'.[56] Contrarily, Antony Harrison has pointed out that 'important commentators' on 'Laus Veneris' have 'refused to see the poem's conclusion' as a 'rejection of orthodoxy' and an 'affirmation of the ultimate value Tannhäuser places upon his attraction to Venus' beauty and the life of sensation she has come to symbolize'. The poem demonstrates, he claims, 'the concluding affirmation of *eros* over Christian notions of *agapē*'.[57]

Are either of these positions correct? I would argue, in answer to McGann's claims that Tannhäuser continually views his position as 'sinful', that the knight actually vacillates over his Christianity and switches between piousness and self-pity, and these states are interrupted by sudden, sexually vigorous proclamations. Indeed, Tannhäuser attempts to redefine the more morally charged words he uses and questions God's judgement. 'Sin, is it sin whereby men's souls are thrust | Into the pit?' he asks, becoming confused over moral polarities: 'Yea, Lord, thou knowest I know not, having sinned, | If heaven be clean or unclean in thy sight'.[58]

While I would agree with Harrison that Swinburne is indeed endorsing *eros* over *agapē*, this is not announced at the end of the poem, however, but within the process of the poem itself. If Tannhäuser 'lives forever' in the Venusberg, the difference between pleasure and pain perhaps ceases to be meaningful ('she weaves and multiplies | Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain'), as does the idea of Heaven and Hell. Infinity has no beginning or conclusion and so Harrison's linear ideas such as 'ultimate value' and 'concluding affirmation' are perhaps less appropriate than they might seem. Indeed, the climactic moment of a sexual act becomes meaningless if you are condemned, like Tannhäuser, to perform it again and again, so that there is, in effect, no

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[56] McGann, *Swinburne: Experiment in Criticism*, p. 256.
[57] Antony H. Harrison, *Swinburne's Medievalism: A Study in Victorian Love Poetry* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), p. 60.
[58] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 15, 14.

climax – it is surely because of this that pleasure also becomes pain. Swinburne dramatizes this endlessness in the poem's circularity, and in the way that the poem appears to undo itself as it proceeds. This is why Tannhäuser is so weary, along with many other of the speakers in *Poems and Ballads*.[59] This constant openness could also be described as a proto-Modernist technique in the way that the poem refuses to wrap itself into a finished whole.

As I have shown, in narrating his story, Tannhäuser is looking backwards to tell a linear plot that, for us, moves forwards. But there is another timescale in the poem that tends towards regression. Oppositions are necessary for a sense of movement from pole to pole, but within the infinite realm of the Venusberg, these polarities collapse in upon themselves and speak of each other. They turn from objectivity and the regular flow of time to indulge in patterns of suggestiveness. Different objects or ideas fuse and become the same thing, whereas single ideas are quickly multiplied (such as Venus's 'beds'). As the poem moves on, life, death, and space and time, no longer exist in the forms that we know them in the 'real world'. They are presented, instead, in a new form, a continual present that is caught (in the second and third stanzas below, for example) in a chiasmatic recurrence:

> Ah God, that love were as a flower or flame,
> That life were as the naming of a name,
> That death were not more pitiful than desire,
> That these things were not one thing and the same!
>
> Behold now, surely somewhere there is death:
> For each man hath some space of years, he saith,
> A little space of time ere time expire,
> A little day, a little way of breath.

[59] After the frenzies of the poem 'Dolores', for example, the following poem, 'The Garden of Proserpine', dramatizes the need for a 'brief total pause of passion and thought', to quote Swinburne's own explanation, 'when the spirit, without fear or hope of good things or evil, hungers and thirsts only after the perfect sleep'. See Hyder, *Swinburne Replies*, p. 24.

And lo, between the sundawn and the sun,
His day's work and his night's work are undone;
And lo, between the nightfall and the light,
He is not, and none knoweth of such an one.[60]

In Swinburne's Venusberg, time becomes space and space, time. This action is akin to a moment in Wagner's final opera, *Parsifal*, which premiered in 1882 at Bayreuth. The scene in question – where the knight Gurnemanz takes the eponymous hero into the Hall of the Grail – essentially describes a characteristic of Wagner's music which had been noticed by some of the earliest commentators. Responding to Parsifal's awareness of the warping of time and space around him as they proceed into the hall, Gurnemanz replies: '"Thou see'st, my son, | here time is turned to space"'.[61] From this moment, the music in *Parsifal* sweeps and soars through a series of broadening and amplifying repetitions, aurally carving out the chambers of the hall in a direct demonstration of Baudelaire's comment that Wagner's music 'excels […] in *depicting* space and depth, material and spiritual'.[62]

The stanza form of 'Laus Veneris' also contributes to the Venusberg's temporal and spatial blurring. Created by FitzGerald for his translation of *Omar Khayyám*, the form, by association, lends 'Laus Veneris' an Eastern exoticism and history. Swinburne altered FitzGerald's stanza, however, by linking pairs of stanzas, with the third line of the first stanza rhyming with the third of the next – AABA becomes CCBC, then DDED to FFEF, and so on (FitzGerald's third line is unrhymed). By pairing these quatrains, a sense of a desire, either to return to the previous stanza or to reach forwards to the next, is created.

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[60] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 11.
[61] Richard Wagner, *Parsifal, in English Verse*, trans. by Alfred Forman (London: Private Subscription, 1899), p. 21.
[62] See Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings*, p. 332. While the Venusberg and the Hall of the Grail might not seem an apt comparison, the Grail's home is a place of archetypal, original love, where it waits to be united with a spear that pierced Christ's side. This love is given form and expression in the music. Space and music erotically conjoin to create love.

Swinburne related this particular stanza form to music, but saw it as a potentially dangerous 'feminine' form. Writing to the journalist John Morley in 1872 about his poem 'Memorial Verses on the Death of Théophile Gautier' (1873), he speaks of 'corresponsive quatrains like those of my "Laus Veneris"' and highlights the dangers of 'such metres' as

> diffuseness and flaccidity […] a tendency to the dulcet and luscious form of verbosity which has to be guarded against, lest the poem lose its foothold and be swept off its legs, sense and all, down a flood of effeminate and monotonous music, or lost and split in a maze of what I call draggle-tailed melody.[63]

Desire and Deferral

In its constant attempts to both solidify and liquify, 'Laus Veneris' is a text caught between states, apparently searching for a resolution. Tannhäuser, in turn, is constantly going but staying, and so 'Laus Veneris' is a poem of thresholds, or more specifically erotic thresholds and oral openings and closures. Tannhäuser constantly lingers above these, hanging on lips (which appear, in various forms, twenty-four times in the poem) and mouths (which appear nine times – and ninety-four times in *Poems and Ballads* as a whole). He waits on them opening or closing, or to 'cleave' to or from him or to devour his body. In fact the poem starts, or rather pauses, on an oral threshold. Tannhäuser's own lips, we are told, are 'shut sucking on the place' (Venus's neck), and yet he has just started speaking his story. The first phrase of the poem also halts the rhythm on a weak beat by asking 'Asleep or waking is it?'[64]

This constant cycle we might call 'desire and deferral' or the suspension of satisfaction. The line of desire in 'Laus Veneris' (carried in its 'feminine', musical verse form) is a movement from solidity to a trailing, ephemeral fluidity (as 'Love's' woven lines unravel to become 'steam')

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[63] *TSL*, II, 198-9 (21 November 1872). Swinburne calls this stanza form 'Quarta Rima', and makes the same comments about it in a letter to John Addington Symonds. See *UC*, I, 264-5 (26 December 1872). It is apt that Swinburne uses this dangerously 'feminine' stanza form for his 'Memorial Verses' for Gautier, given Gautier's androgynous heroine/hero in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835).
[64] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 9.

before the original desire is recapitulated and the process restarted. Indeed, desire and deferral might be called the keynote of *Poems and Ballads* as a whole, and Tannhäuser, being near the beginning of the collection (rather like 'Love' standing at Venus's head) appears to announce this process. This behaviour could be described as a deliberately extended representation of what Arthur Schopenhauer saw as the basic conflict within man: a state of constant '*discord and reconciliation*'.[65]

In *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer claimed that once all the outward artifices of a human being had been stripped away, life could be described as a constant movement from desire to desire. However, because no desire could ever fully satiate a man's existence, he asserted, life was, therefore, constant longing and suffering. In the first volume of his work (1818), Schopenhauer described this action by referring to music:

> Now the nature of man consists in the fact that his will strives, is satisfied, strives anew, and so and on; in fact his happiness and well-being consist only in the transition from desire to satisfaction, and from this to a fresh desire, such transition going forward rapidly. For the non-appearance of satisfaction is suffering, the empty longing for a new desire is languor […] The nature of melody is a constant digression and deviation from the keynote ['the tonic': *Grundton*] in a thousand ways, not only to the harmonious intervals, the third and the dominant, but to every tone, to the dissonant seventh, and to the extreme intervals; yet there always follows a final return to the keynote. In all these ways, melody expresses the many different forms of the will's efforts […]. The composer reveals the innermost nature of the world, and expresses the profoundest wisdom in a language that his reasoning faculty does not understand, just as a magnetic somnambulist gives information about things of which she has no conception when she is awake.[66]

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[65] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will*, II, 454.
[66] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will*, I, 260. I take the addition of the specific word 'tonic' from the latest translation of this passage: Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. by Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), I, 287. The 'tonic' is a musical term that can be taken to

In his second volume (1844) Schopenhauer expanded on this description, noting that music was an 'analogue of the satisfaction of the will', consisting of chords that excited desire and those that resolved it. There were but 'two general keys' in human existence, 'a major and a minor', where the former signalled satisfied desire or pleasure and the latter longing or pain.[67] But desire could be further excited, he noted, when the distance between desires and their satisfaction was increased, where 'longing for it [resolution] is strengthened'. This 'suspension', he believed, would reveal the truth about desire even more sharply as pleasure and pain continually conjoin.

Schopenhauer believed that it was in the nature of human beings to fight this unfortunate behaviour – hence religions that deny the body (such as Christianity) and man's constant wish for transcendence. But very few people would ever be able to close the gap between pleasure and pain, or the major and minor keys to achieve a wholeness of experience, he claimed. This would require a fusing of a divided self, and if it were achievable at all, he maintained, it would be through the work of a 'genius' – a philosopher or an artist, or more particularly a poet (such as Goethe) or most probably a composer (Beethoven), since music was to Schopenhauer – to use Bryan Magee's requisitioning of T. S. Eliot's term from his essay on *Hamlet* (1920) – an 'objective correlative […] of life in this world'.[68]

Wagner, of course, was one of Schopenhauer's most devoted followers. In some respects, even before reading Schopenhauer in the late 1850s, Wagner appears to have shared many of the same basic ideas with the philosopher.[69] As Alain Badiou has pointed out in his work on the composer, music in general exists in that threshold state between opening and closure for 'the essence of music [is] always to be necessarily an immanent proposition of its own closure […]. Or does it of necessity contain a unique interplay of the open and the closed?'[70] As Wagner in the

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denote the 'base' note, or key, of a piece of music (i.e. C Major), from which all movement away from it (to C Sharp, for example) can be described as deviations that need to be resolved.

[67] Schopenhauer (Payne), *The World as Will*, II, 456, 455.

[68] Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 208.

[69] Eric Chafe demonstrates the similarity of their philosophical positions before Wagner had discovered the philosopher. See Eric Chafe, *The Tragic and the Ecstatic: The Revolution of Wagner's 'Tristan und Isolde'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 16-31.

[70] Alain Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, p. 44.

early stages of his career had started to dispense with the formulaic adornments of modern music (what Tannhäuser in 'Laus Veneris' might have called an 'end of all my feats of arms and all my pretty songs'), by necessity he had had to pare music back to its basic structures, and in this he discovered the potential power that a representation of the interplay between desire and satisfaction could provide.[71] Nevertheless, his discovery of Schopenhauer refined this practice, and Wagner was particularly drawn to the idea of suspension, which he exploited most powerfully in *Tristan und Isolde*. Here he drew out the distance between desire and its satisfaction for the length of the entire opera, extending the sense of suffering to an almost unbearable degree (it is also prevalent in the parts of *Tannhäuser* that Wagner rewrote for the Paris performances of 1861). This same reliance on the suspension of desire's satisfaction is, I believe, also at the heart of Swinburne's poetic practice in *Poems and Ballads*, with desire and deferral expressed in patterns of erotic repetition. Swinburne certainly understood Schopenhauer's ideas. Writing to George Powell in 1869 about his reading of Auguste de Gasperini's (1825-1868) book on Wagner, *La Nouvelle Allemagne musicale* (1866), which Powell had given him, Swinburne said:

> I am very much struck by finding in Wagner a disciple in matters of thought of A. Schopenhauer. I read some extracts from his work and a condensed summary of his life and views given in a review of Fouché [*sic*] de Careil's book on the subject (cited here by Gasperini) now years ago, which impressed me unforgettably with their beautiful force, clearness, and fearless depth of truth. I quite understand their power upon the kindred spirit of a great artist, as clear-sighted, straight-minded, and heroic in his own line of spiritual work.[72]

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[71] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 325.

[72] 2 October 1869, *TSL*, II, 38. As shown in the next chapter Swinburne became more involved with Schopenhauer after befriending Francis Hueffer. See also Katie Paterson, '"Much Regrafted pain": Schopenhauerian Love and the Fecundity of Pain in *Atalanta in Calydon*', *Victorian Poetry*, 47.4 (Winter 2009), 715-731. I deal with Gasperini's book in my later chapter on Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse*.

As Foucher de Careil's book, *Hegel et Schopenhauer: études sur la philosophie allemande moderne depuis Kant jusqu'à nos jours*, was published in 1862, we can assume that 'years ago' implies 1862-3. Swinburne's reading of the Schopenhauer extracts might have come from his friendship with Monckton Milnes (whom, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, met Schopenhauer's mother in Germany), and this may have informed his growing interest in Wagner, most likely intensified through Fantin and Whistler during his 1863 visit to Paris.

Wagner: Music as erotic return

> My subtlest and deepest art I now might call the art of Transmutation, for my whole artistic woof consists of such transitions.[73]

In Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, the music of the two realms – the Venusberg and that of man, or the Wartburg – is carefully differentiated. The former is transgressive, while the latter is often conventional. However, the tension between these two polarities creates the sense that the opera as whole, like Tannhäuser himself, is unable to move on or choose between these positions. Trapped in a state of 'hovering', like 'Laus Veneris', its music is continually poised on a threshold, both going and staying.[74] Themes come back again and again to haunt the singers and the audience, and these repetitions – in their forcefulness and insistence – often suggest that they hold some sort of mystery in the way they act upon the senses. In his *Tannhäuser* pamphlet, Baudelaire noted how he had become beguiled by these musical repetitions:

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[73] Letter from Richard Wagner to Mathilde Wesendonck, Paris, 19 October 1859; see *Richard Wagner to Mathilde Wesendonck*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 184.

[74] On the musical differences between the original and 1860 score of *Tannhäuser*, into which a 'new Tristanesque harmonic and instrumental colour intrudes', see Abbate, 'Orpheus and the Underworld: The Music of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*', p. 33.

> The frequent repetition of the same melodic theme in pieces drawn from the same opera implied mysterious intentions, and a technique unknown to me. I determined to discover the why and the wherefore, and thus to exchange my sensuous pleasure for knowledge.[75]

Theodor Adorno partly offers that knowledge in his *In Search of Wagner* (1952) when he refers specifically to this remark by Baudelaire. Linking Wagner's repetitions to a deliberate 'unmaking' of time and space, Adorno claims that his music's constant need to repeat phrases and themes in ever-greater or diminishing modulations, displays a melody that resists development while simultaneously appearing to desire it: 'There is no movement at the macrolevel of Wagner's music, because it rescinds its own temporal flow'.[76] This apparent lack of direction can often be confusing to listeners who are unused to reflective musical texturing, as was clearly the case with the audiences at the first Paris *Tannhäuser* in 1861. Wagner's music does not follow 'the logicality of musical language', Adorno describes, but is instead rooted in an 'ambiguity of musical meaning' where 'nothing is unambiguous' – although this characteristic 'excited Baudelaire, the most advanced musical consciousness of his day'.[77]

Adorno is being critical of Wagner here, by implying that there is an irrational need that overpowers musical reasoning. In terms of musical logic, he is arguing from the perspective of 'absolute music', and in this he decries the emotionality of Wagner's intentions. He also conceptualizes the music's need to rescind 'its own temporal flow' in psychological terms. Although claiming that Wagner's music has a dominating, autocratic rhythm (rather like Swinburne's insistent metres), it 'does not dominate time like Beethoven, but nor does he [Wagner] fulfil it like Schubert. He revokes it' – by which Adorno means that Schubert's musical patterns and dissonances are resolved. Instead, Wagner's obsessive repetitions 'inevitably' entail

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[75] Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings*, p. 333.
[76] Theodore Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London and New York: Verso, 1981), p. 35.
[77] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, pp. 33, 34. In 'Music and Language: A Fragment', Adorno claims that in music 'The succession of sounds is like logic: it can be right or wrong'. See Theodor Adorno, 'Music and Language: A Fragment', *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 2011), p. 1.

'an element of reflection […and] the impulse to express something […] turns into an underscored commentary on itself'. Adorno's point here is that Wagner's music is narcissistic, self-adoring, and holding a mirror up to itself – a self-absorption allowed by an 'over-extension of the time-dimension', for 'many bars are needed to make up a metrical unit and in Wagner's music, as in the *Venusberg*, seven years are just one day'.[78] For Adorno, Wagner hesitates over the action of ending; the often-heard complaint over the length of his operas lends weight to this analysis. The same might be said for many of Swinburne's poems.

For a pertinent example, Adorno specifically reaches for the Overture or Prelude to *Lohengrin* (1850), a piece of music that Swinburne loved, and which, in his poem 'Two Preludes' (1883) he portrays in terms of a continual cycle of desire. I will return to this poem in chapter six to give a complete reading, however it is worth nothing that its poetic form – the 'roundel', invented by Swinburne – doubles back on itself (as the name suggests), and is, perhaps, a more formal, or mature example of the Wagnerian return.

Wagner's *Lohengrin* Prelude indeed repeats the same musical phrase over and again, ever-building in volume and in orchestral breadth and texture. The theme expands, but it is also '"hovering"', as Adorno puts it, over a possible progression that never arrives.[79] Like a flower, having opened up to a full bloom (or become 'explicit'), the music returns whence it came, diminishing and closing up. In a programme note to a performance of the *Lohengrin* Prelude in 1853 in Zurich, Wagner describes his music in just such a way, using synaesthetic, pictorial terms. He frames it as a vision of love that 'hovers down to this vale of earth' but also with 'the sweetest fragrance' that 'wells from out its wings' before, aptly, turning back on itself, and melting 'into distance as it came before'.[80]

The Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* perhaps provides a more visceral, passionate example of Wagner's constant musical return. The first four-bar phrase of this work includes the so-called

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[78] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, pp. 30, 29, 45.
[79] 'Following four introductory bars, its [the *Lohengrin* prelude] theme is expounded in an eight-bar phrase. The first half feels unarticulated: the poetic idea of "hovering" it seems, as it were, to prevent logical musical development'; Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, p. 42.
[80] 'Explanatory Programmes: Prelude to *Lohengrin*', *RWPW*, III, 232, 233.

'*Tristan* chord', which contains two dissonant notes that require resolution. But the phrase is repeated three times over twelve bars, although in modulated forms, higher in pitch. Each repetition fails to resolve the dissonances, but also opens up new dissonances instead (in a demonstration of Schopenhauer's 'suspension'). The music, therefore, appears to look backwards even as it moves forwards. Following this, the Prelude continually pushes onwards in further repetitive cycles, with a dominating, pulsating rhythm, ever expanding in volume and orchestral breadth. But just at the moment a resolution finally feels possible, the music collapses into the harmony of the sea. We, the audience, are then presented with the sight of a ship bearing Isolde to King Mark, as a sailor sings that the ship is skimming eastwards on a breeze of the west wind; the 'wild and amorous' Isolde's sighs 'fill the sails'.[81] The prelude feels like the continual crash of waves and the exhalation of bodily sighs and groans.

Adorno describes this returning action of Wagner's music as fundamentally an 'expansive gesture [that] recoils back to the body. Its collapse is like the collapse of a wave'.[82] While the latter simile neatly links to Swinburne's oceanic imagery, Adorno is also mimicking Wagner. The music is both body but also a wave; it is both a solid and liquid. However, Adorno is also suggesting here that Wagner's music (which we might compare to Swinburne's poetry) is expressed not in ethereal, spiritual terms, but through the human body as a 'gesture', though a gesture which is ultimately incomplete.

Adorno is again being critical, as he sees this movement as a 'gesture of "languishing"' (rather like the languishing of Venus in her grotto) instead of an active but finite movement.[83] The

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[81] For the music and this quotation, see Richard Wagner, *Tristan and Isolda: Opera in Three Acts*, vocal score by Richard Kleinmichel and trans. by Henry Grafton Chapman (Milwaukee, WI: G Schirmer, Inc., 1906), pp. 1, 6. In *Opera and Drama* (*RWPW*, II, 301), Wagner talks of a poet's words, born aloft by the sound of the orchestra, as in a 'trusty ship […] the conqueror of the endless floods of harmony, – *the Orchestra*'.

[82] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, p. 29.

[83] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, p. 27. Adorno's use of 'gesture' is taken from Wagner's *Opera and Drama* where Wagner builds on Rousseau's thoughts about the origins of language. The performance of a voiced, body-centred lyric is formed by a 'creative league of Gesture–, Tone–, and Word–Speech' – indicating that all these functions are able to 'speak together' and present true, unified understanding, 'only possible through feeling', which is expressed most perfectly as music. Indeed, he claims that the predominance of intellect has killed true creativity, as 'word-speech' is now merely an orphan from that 'fostering mother-melody' which is feeling or music. See *RWPW*, II, 229.

music gestures outwards with desire, but constantly turns back to prolong the sexual tension. In doing so, he adds, difference is destroyed. In the same manner that the objects and characters of 'Laus Veneris' become blurred into each other, Wagner's music has

> something like an epic totality, a rounded and complete whole of inner and outer. Wagner's music simulates this unity of the internal and external, of subject and object, instead of giving shape to the rupture between them.[84]

Despite the perceptiveness contained within this image of blurring bodies, however, Adorno ignores the eroticism that this technique implies, leaving perhaps only a hint of it in a comment that the music's eternal recurrences cause us to 'regress to a pre-ego stage'.[85]

However, in its constant returns to the body, Wagner's music could be said to be creating new forms of time and space, forms that cannot be described in neat platonic categories (whereby space is designated as intellectual, and time, feeling). Because music is felt through the senses, it appears to be taking place in the body itself. This ambiguous new music was about opening up new realms within the body, confusing categories of knowledge, and challenging our understanding. As Wagner was to claim in his essay *Beethoven* in 1871, he aimed to 'incapacitate' the senses other than hearing, so that an audience would 'have no power to receive impressions other than those of our own inner world'.[86]

An example of Wagner's attempts to blur an audience's sense of time and space through musical sensuality occurs in Act I of *Tannhäuser*. The hero attempts to leave the Venusberg, singing 'I must beg you to set me free', but Venus responds by opening up a new space within her realm:

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[84] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, p. 27.
[85] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, p. 34.
[86] Richard Wagner, *Beethoven, with a Supplement from the Philosophical Works of Arthur Schopenhauer*, trans. by Edward Dannreuther (London: William Reeves, 1893), p. 25.

Venus turns away, burying her face in her hands. (Long pause.) Venus seeks gradually to attract Tannhäuser's glance again; then she turns towards him suddenly with a seductive smile. At a sign from her a magic grotto appears, to which she points.

Venus: (*softly at first*) – Beloved, come! See yonder bower,
With rosy perfumed vapours filled:
There, e'en a god might dwell for ever,
And find his wildest longings stilled![87]

This is no ethereal grotto, but a grotto or a bower of the body which she and Tannhäuser – now also a god, she suggests – can inhabit together. This is a contradictory place that promises 'wild' desires but also 'stilled' longings.[88] In order to suggest this 'opening up' but also the sense of infinity and return, Wagner's music here turns chromatic (by which I mean that it loses all sense of formal key signature), and then tingles at high pitches as if hovering and waiting for a response. The chromaticism suggests the shimmering grotto and its wonders, but it also – as the fingers of the violinist move across the instrument's fingerboard – tantalizingly implies the fingers of desire finding their way across a sexually-charged body. At the centre of Wagner's musical phrasing there is also the languid repetition of a leitmotif that Laurence Dreyfus calls the 'The Mount of Venus', which originally appears at the start of the Venusberg music (and which Dreyfus characterizes in its fullness as a 'musical fragrance'). The leitmotif intensifies erotic suggestion by suspension but also regression as its notes form a reflective 'musical palindrome', similar to Swinburne's use of chiasmus. The notes can be played forwards or backwards by the instruments and yet still produce the same phrase.[89] By confusing intellectual categories, suspending musical satisfaction, and then replaying the suspension, both forwards and backwards,

[87] Richard Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, pp. 9-10.
[88] The opening of the erotic grotto also suggests the opening of a rose bud, since it creates new perfumes.
[89] Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse*, p. 84. For the musical example, see p. 226. For an instance of this leitmotif being used within the musical context of the whole opera, see Richard Wagner, *Tannhäuser in Full Score* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1984), p. 51.

Wagner is here essentially depicting fundamental human desires being brought to the surface – desires symbolized by Venus's grotto.[90] He was giving voice to these hidden desires, by fusing music and words together in the resulting song.

Baudelaire was very aware of the pleasures that Wagner's repetitions implied. His description of Wagner's ability to depict 'space and depth' – which anticipates Nietzsche's ideas of the torn 'veil of Maya' from *The Birth of Tragedy* – is expressed in erotic terms:

> No musician excels as Wagner does in *depicting* space and depth, material and spiritual. […] He has the art of rendering by subtle gradations all that is excessive, immense, ambitious in both spiritual and natural man. Sometimes, the sound of that ardent despotic music seems to recapture for the listener, against the background of shadow torn asunder by reverie, the vertiginous imaginings of the opium smoker.
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> From that moment, that is from the first concert, I was possessed by the desire to penetrate more deeply into an understanding of these singular works. […] I could not resist the desire to return to it again and again.

Baudelaire's language here is one of 'ardent' erotic swelling and penetration. He later describes a savage 'desire' to keep hearing Wagner's music, which led him to 'victimize' his friends who owned pianos and to seek out potentially disreputable places such as casinos, where Wagner's music could be heard by 'crowds in eager search of trivial pleasures'. There, he says, 'the effulgent majesty of this music crashed down upon them like thunder on a brothel'. It even had the power to level stations of class. 'Men of gravity and taste', he adds, would now 'rub shoulders with the malodorous crowds' to enjoy the 'solemn march of the *Guests to the Wartburg* [of *Tannhäuser*] or the majestic *Wedding Music* of "*Lohengrin*"'.[91] And yet, despite this awareness,

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[90] There are countless examples of similar repetitions and suspension throughout Wagner's works. Of course, one could also point out, psychologically speaking, that Venus's grotto implies another grotto inside it, and another, and so on. This demonstrates how desire and Romantic notions of the infinite are linked.

[91] Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings*, pp. 332-3.

Baudelaire claims that the 'mystery' of this new music left him 'powerless' – indeed, the problem is captured in the 'languishing' image (to quote Adorno again) of the 'vertiginous imaginings of the opium smoker'. While anxiously reaching for answers to the musical riddles of both the Venusberg and within *Lohengrin*, Baudelaire – like Tannhäuser himself – was unable to move on and was trapped between states.

In 'Laus Veneris' we see this Wagnerian bodily return and the bringing of hidden desires to the surface in the way that Tannhäuser's outward glances and his story are constantly interrupted by the bodily and often specifically genital and sexual allusions that proliferate, multiply, and repeat across the poem (and, indeed, across *Poems and Ballads* in general). His thoughts constantly return to the human and animal body, which is always lurking in ephemeral images, waiting to break out. So we are told, for example, that the wind has 'wet wings and fingers [that] drip with rain', an image which, because of the poem's heavy sexual texturing, goes beyond a commonplace poetic personification.[92] Sleep, too, is asked to reach out 'with flower-sweet finger-tips' but then to reach back to 'crush the fruit of death upon my lips'. The poem's vegetation, such as the 'perfumed deadly grass', appears to have intentions towards other bodies, while 'a great elder-tree' holds back its 'heaps of flowers', or veil, so Tannhäuser can have his first look at a naked Venus.[93] In short, no image in 'Laus Veneris' is simply what it seems; all images point back to the body through a web of sensually evocative language and repeated actions. The focus for all this shimmering language (or its point of emanation) is Venus herself. She is a musical being, in that her form is intangible and made out of constantly shifting suggestions and possibilities, just as she is in Wagner's opera. Underlying Swinburne's conception of the world is the Venusberg, with all its erotic pleasures, or the archetypes of love, waiting to be unveiled, just as behind the staid court life of Wagner's Wartburg, the Venusberg waits to shimmer into view as Tannhäuser's faith falters, displacing this conservative world with its sensual smells, tastes, and erotic touches. In this, both Wagner's opera and Swinburne's poem

[92] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 12
[93] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 14, 17, 19.

mirror Schopenhauer's claim that at the centre of all things is Venus – and that she is a symbol of all life conjoined. As he states in the second book of *The World as Will*:

> The excessive power of the procreative impulse is seriously and worthily expressed in the inscription that (according to Theon of Smyrna, *De Musica*, c. 47) Osiris had placed on the column erected by him to the eternal gods: 'To Eros, the spirit, the heaven, the sun, the moon, the earth, the night, the day, and the father of all that is and is to be'; likewise in a beautiful apostrophe with which Lucretius opens his work:
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> *Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divômque voluptas, Alma Venus etc.* ['Mother of Aeneas' race, delight and desire of gods and men, lovely and enchanting Venus']
>
> In keeping with all this is the important role played by the sex-relation in the world of mankind, where it is really the invisible central point of all action and conduct, and peeps up everywhere, in spite of all the veils thrown over it […]. I have called the genitals the focus of the will. Indeed, it may be said that man is concrete sexual impulse, for his origin is an act of copulation, and the desire of his desires is an act of copulation, and this impulse alone perpetuates and holds together the whole of his phenomenal appearance.[94]

Opera and Drama: music as bodily vibration and synthesis

Caught in the Venusberg of Wagner's music, Baudelaire felt he had to free himself. To gain a more detailed knowledge of what might be happening to him, and, presumably to gain some sort of intellectual absolution, he turned to Wagner's polemic *Opera and Drama*. As its title suggests, this work concerns itself with differences and how to unify them.[95] However, the question was

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[94] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will*, II, 513, 514.

[95] By 'drama', Wagner is often hazy about what he means. In terms of opera, he means the libretto, but more generally, 'drama' can also refer to dramatic or lyric poetry. Poetry and music are to be conjoined, as far as Wagner is concerned, in the manner of the Ancient Greeks, but in a

not purely artistic, but also political. I shall explore these political implications more fully in the next chapter, nevertheless *Opera and Drama* was written after a time of European political unrest during the late 1840s and while Wagner was in exile in Zurich following the Dresden uprising of 1849. The unification of the German states had become a significant and ongoing political question at this time, although this would not be 'settled' until the early 1870s, along with the unification of Italy. *Opera and Drama* was written as an act towards unification, and holds within its attacks on contemporary operatic forms larger political and social concerns. That such an important question should be wrapped up into discussions of an art form which had a limited audience and bourgeois appeal may seem surprising, but Wagner's art aimed at totalization. While his work was an answer to current musical or artistic problems, as he saw them, it was also meant as a complete aesthetic-philosophical system that could be applied to the modern world. The construction of Bayreuth was not just the foundation of a festival theatre, but a process of pulling the world back from degeneration. It was a sweeping away of the old hierarchical order, symbolized in the fall of the vengeful Gods of Valhalla in the *Ring* Cycle, and the re-establishment of a new human age. In this new world order, humans would now be earthly gods, having been redeemed by music – symbolized in the self-sacrifice of the Valkyrie, Brünnhilde, at the end of the *Ring* Cycle in *Götterdämmerung* ('Twilight of the Gods', 1876).[96] Opera was to be the synthesis of all arts, but most importantly the twin arts of poetry and music, in which all life could be combined as the art-work of the future, or the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. It is easy to see why, therefore, that Baudelaire heard in Wagner's music the 'art of rendering by subtle gradations all that is excessive, immense, ambitious in both spiritual and natural man'.

Baudelaire's comments about Wagner's subtlety of method and grandeur of effect again orientate the music in terms of a polarity, but what is important here is not just how the music

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contemporary form (i.e. opera). It is his contention that music and poetry had become artificially divided by theatrical and musical artifice that only appealed to the intellect, or pre-conceived knowledge.

[96] Bearing the ring, Brünnhilde rides her horse into Siegfried's funeral pyre with a cry that 'the end of the gods | is dawning now'. This action destroys Valhalla; see *Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung: A Companion*, ed. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), p. 350.

created its effects for Baudelaire, but where it created them. Because of its disembodied nature, music takes place not within itself but within a host human body.[97] It does not happen regardless of a human presence.[98] Unlike the plastic arts, where sculptures or paintings exist even when no one is looking at them, music has to gain form. It does not exist in itself – except if you take into account its existence as a music score, where it is only known as a code. Music needs to be born and re-born whenever its presence is desired. The same is true for poetry. Both exist in codified forms, but a performer and/or an audience needs to give them life – with poetry, the private reader is often both at the same time. Indeed, as Jean-Jacques Nattiez has described, Wagner attempted to blur the performer and the audience together, since he believed that in Greek theatre – Wagner's ideal model – the 'spectator was indistinguishable from the performer'.[99]

This may account for the 'personal' nature of music and poetry. No matter how 'public' the original work was meant to be, music and poetry play within individual human bodies, and so people often feel that a piece of music is 'their' music or 'our' music, even though they have made no contribution to its 'original' composition or to its performance (except, perhaps, in monetary terms).[100] Unlike a painting that can be passed by in a gallery, neither music nor poetry can be easily ignored when performed. (This applies to poetry when it is read to an audience. Swinburne was particularly fond of performing his own work.) Music's insistence is surely because it has an ability to 'get into' a human body, which is why in the wrong situation it can also be irritating. In fact, music only exists as a series of bodily vibrations.

Swinburne dramatizes this action in his unfinished novel *Lesbia Brandon* which contains several examples of musical performance. These initially focus on the voice of the singer before moving to the bodily reactions of the audience. During a party, for example, Lady Wariston sings

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[97] On music's demands on the body, see Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings*, p. 25.
[98] Of course, modern technology makes this possible, but a piece of music still has to be set in motion and felt by someone.
[99] Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, p. 15.
[100] In his letter to Wagner, dated 17 February 1860, Baudelaire makes a similar point: 'At first it seemed to me that I knew your music already […]. It seemed to me that the music was *my own*, and I recognized it, as any man recognizes those things he is destined to love'. See Lloyd, *Selected Letters*, p. 145. This would have pleased Wagner, as he believed his own music to be the original music of love, which is inside us all.

a ‘song made, according to tradition, by a Jacobite ancestor in 1715, the night before execution’, which suggests ancestry and genealogy, but also destruction. We are told that her voice sounded ‘with a clear brilliant melancholy […and] was impaired by no cheap obtrusion of facile pathos, and no flourish of flamboyant notes’. It is ‘clear’ – directly connected with true emotion – but it also sounds as if ‘she seemed to see into the prison and beyond’. Her voice, therefore, creates the possibility of a multi-sensory knowledge, and does so by being true to itself and not defusing its power with the kind of technical flourishes that Wagner had attacked in Italian opera. On finishing her song, the bodily reactions of the people in the room are all related in a sudden flurry of erotic desire:

> The verses had bitten and stung them sharply; they [Lady Wariston and Herbert] felt through all the nerves of body and soul the delight of mad and violent devotion, and their blood beat with the senseless and splendid rapture of martyrs conscious of a losing cause. Linley, cool towards their emotion and moved only by their physical beauty, watched both faces curiously, with his mouth and cheek quivering; Denham’s fingers compressed the cushion of the couch he sat on and the hand trembled like that of one in a palsy; Lady Midhurst, sensitive still of music and metre, felt upon her hard clear eyes a dimness without tears: the old sorrow and the valour shown long ago struck upon her senses, and she submitted herself to their touch and attraction.[101]

Lady Wariston’s voice is spatialized into a stream of doubled adjectives and nouns that cluster around the human form. Rapture is both ‘senseless and splendid’, while devotion is ‘mad and violent’. Linley’s ‘mouth and cheek’ quiver, while Lady Midhurst submits herself to the ‘touch and attraction’ of the ‘old sorrow’ that comes through the song. The most receptive – Denham (who desires both Lady Wariston and Herbert, it seems) – has his sensations expressed through

[101] A. C. Swinburne, *Lesbia Brandon*, ed. by Randolph Hughes (London: Falcon Press, 1952) pp. 72, 73-74. Herbert has waking dreams of Venus in the manner of ‘Laus Veneris’: ‘He saw the star of Venus, white and flower-like as he had always seen it […] with a reddening centre that grew as it descended liker and liker a living mouth’ (p. 97).

direct physical action as his hand compresses a cushion (and we are shown in other parts of the novel that Denham enjoys sadistic punishment). There is a sense here of Lady Wariston and her audience coming together in the present, but also in the past, and in fundamental, hidden ways through desire. The song feels personal to all, but it also focusses the characters on each other, wrapping all their desires together into one totalizing force, in the way that Sappho's song in Swinburne's poem 'Sapphics' also brings together the Lesbian singers in the 'visible song' of sexual music. These characters appear to be on the point of declaring their fervent love for each other, and in this way, the song acts out that Wagnerian process of fusing the spectator and the artwork together.[102]

In more general terms, Swinburne's language in *Poems and Ballads* is constantly attempting to activate the senses by creating a series of vibrations in the body of the reader or listener, which multiply across his texts through repetitive waves that cluster around desire. Jerome McGann has likened this doubling and proliferation of language to fractal-like patterns, which he proposes are a direct demonstration of Wagner's ideas of 'endless melody'.[103] However, fractals suggest a mathematical principle at work.[104] Yet Swinburne's music is internal, a music of emotion, which brings powerful feelings to the surface and combines them with words, which then have the ability to move the world in potentially extraordinary ways. As Swinburne says in 'The Triumph of Time' (a poem where images smash into others and break down definitions), his song is working through 'the coil of things, | In the clamour and rumour of life to be', in a mission to unify all in 'One splendid spirit, your soul and mine'.[105]

McGann's fractal form also does not explain the huge forces that Swinburne's poetry appear to summon up. Using the word 'fractal' to describe the patterns in the poem 'Anactoria' and its repetition of 'six couplets with identical rhyme words' does not do descriptive service to

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[102] Swinburne, *Lesbia Brandon*, p. 80. Lafourcade suggests that the character of Linley in *Lesbia Brandon* is a portrait of Richard Monckton Milnes. See Lafourcade, *La Jeunesse de Swinburne*, II, 307.
[103] McGann, 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne', p. 629.
[104] In his *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism*, McGann makes an equational representation of Swinburne's poetic music while discussing the Wagnerian leitmotif (p. 119). However, 'music' expressed as an equation seems at odds with what Swinburne's poetry is attempting.
[105] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 29-30.

the language involved within these repetitions, which is some of Swinburne's most visceral and memorable.[106] Spoken by Sappho, 'Anactoria' is a text in which she relates her vengeful thoughts about her lover – the Anactoria of the title. This 'song' is one of extraordinary violence and passion, and – although the rhythms carry the meaning forwards with a impetuous, primitive energy – the poem also repeats parts of itself, acting rather like the two time scales of 'Laus Veneris' that work against each other. The most skilful of these repetitions is a block of twelve lines, noted by McGann, which is followed by another twelve-line block that repeats the former's rhyme words. Sentences can be matched, therefore, across the two blocks – as Lady Wariston's song brings doubles and groups together as she sings. However, the repetition itself relates a wearied, languishing desire. It returns the focus of the poem to the speaker's own self, as opposed to the previous section (interestingly also twelve lines) where Sappho describes how she will sexually torture her lover and kill her with 'Intense device, and superflux of pain'.[107] The repeated rhyme words, then, are an illustration of a wearied desire that has returned to its own body having just expelled all its ferocious sexual energy. The dynamics of the poem, therefore, are again one of desire and deferral, and there is a sense that the repetition is almost of a lyrical body that needs to fall back on itself in order to recover what energy it can before thrusting onwards in the manner of Wagnerian musical waves.

Sappho's language in 'Anactoria' is also musically attuned. But set alongside the violent sexual passions of the poem's content, this language may seem oddly deficient, or even overly abstract so that it can appear meaningless. Phrases such as 'thy body is the song, | Thy mouth the music' and Sappho's demands for the 'shuddering semitones of death' may sound incongruous and imprecise.[108] Indeed, Francis O'Gorman has noted that the musical language of Swinburne's critical works often appears generalized.[109] However, throughout the nineteenth century, I would suggest that musical language carried with it a host of sexually suggestive and transgressive

[106] McGann, 'Wagner, Baudelaire, Swinburne', pp. 629, 627.
[107] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 48.
[108] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 49, 48.
[109] O'Gorman, 'On not Hearing: Victorian Poetry and Music', *Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, p. 757.

associations that are potentially at play here, which we – in our world of pre-packaged, commercial music – may have since lost or rationalized away.[110] As Carl Dahlhaus has stated, European music in the nineteenth century was a force that stirred and aroused the passions and took listeners in the opposite direction to that preferred by conservative Victorians. It was perhaps even a sexually threatening, ravenous artform, in that it loomed over and gobbled up every other artform in its way – as Wagner certainly wanted for his music of the future and his new world of opera. Music also suggested, with its late arrival to the ideas of Romanticism, 'an alternative world', an otherworldliness that hovered on the edge of reason, which threatened the positivist ambitions of masculine, Victorian, and indeed European culture.[111]

In 'Anactoria' we have a passionate cry of desirous music, full of images of eating and consuming, so that even the earth gives in to Sappho's chthonic ambitions as she calls on original desire (the serpent) to take its victim:

> I would my love could kill thee; I am satiated
> With seeing the live, and fain would have thee dead.
> I would earth had thy body as fruit to eat,
> And no mouth but some serpent's found thee sweet.[112]

Sappho's song in 'Anactoria' suggests a fiery, merciless operatic aria. Indeed, Swinburne's female speakers throughout *Poems and Ballads* (both in form and content) often sound emotionally baroque, even 'Rococo', in their liberated passion.[113] They are fully in the operatic tradition of *femmes fatales* (and given what I say about androgyny later in this chapter, one could include Swinburne's male speakers, too). I am thinking here of female roles in various operas by Handel, however, the sexually-dominating *femme fatale* makes a resurgence in the early

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[110] The 'newness' of popular music in the 1960s may have brought up similar fears.
[111] Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism*, p. 5.
[112] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 48.
[113] I reference 'Rococo' in *Poems and Ballads* here, which is another poem of parting and the loss of love and which is full of references to lips, mouths, 'cruel kisses', 'grapes of pain', 'steam', 'strange tears', and 'years' that 'dismantle and dismember'. Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 92-94.

nineteenth century in new ways, most notably in the work of Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) in *Lucretia Borgia* (1833) and *Mary Stuart* (1835) – which surely would have appealed to Swinburne's tastes.[114] Swinburne's musical language is not referencing the formal, patterned music of, say, Bach, or the harmony of earlier seventeenth-century polyphony (which would perhaps suggest fractals to our modern ears). For this type of music appears to confirm the ordering of the world, or the music of the spheres. Swinburne's song, however, claims the voice of God for itself. As Sappho states in 'Anactoria': 'God knows I might be crueller than God'.[115] In many nineteenth-century operas, arias sung by heroines are, at times, so powerful and extreme that they almost seem to threaten to burn up the heroine's existence as her song reaches its climax. The most obvious example of this is Brünnhilde's 'immolation scene'. In the final moments of *Götterdämmerung*, Brünnhilde – as the spirit of music – unites with the dead body of her lover Siegfried on his funeral pyre. Her death song then ignites the world – a fire which then leaps to the whole universe and brings everything to destruction, destroying the Gods themselves; but it also triggers transfiguration and brings about a new human age. Such operatic arias involve emotions that are poised on the threshold between life and death, and they can often appear to do violence to the audience as much as they can potentially damage the singer with their extraordinary demands. Sappho, then, is singing a Wagnerian aria in 'Anactoria'. Her 'shuddering semitones' are not imprecise or vague terms, for what is a semitone, but something that hangs in the interval between two 'solid' notes, a chromatic, Wagnerian aberration, a transgressive note that leaves one shuddering, waiting for a resolution to the tonic, which might never come. Sappho's semitones are the threshold spaces in which the nineteenth-century opera heroine lurks, undermining the realities of the ordered Victorian world and threatening even the musical scale.[116]

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[114] Donizetti's *Lucretia Borgia* is based on Victor Hugo's *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833).
[115] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 51.
[116] O'Gorman states that Swinburne 'is not the poet of the art made from harmonious patterning of the twelve notes of the Western scale'. See O'Gorman, 'On Not Hearing: Victorian Poetry and Music', p. 757. In *Lesbia Brandon*, Herbert (who appears to have an incestuous desire for his sister, Lady Wariston), runs by the sea and hears the 'wandering waves, all sweet and suppressed semitones of light music struck out of shingle or sand by the faint extended fingers of foam'. Venus lurks, suppressed, even in this light music of nature. Swinburne, *Lesbia Brandon*, p. 9.

Neither is Swinburne's use of the word 'harmony' as overly generalized as it may first appear. To him, it suggested a heavy, quivering sense of sexual energy. This is surely why he sent the poem 'August' to Baudelaire, and why the French poet responded with his Wagner pamphlet on *Tannhäuser*. 'August' is about apples 'half gold half red' of a garden, but this is an image that carries with it all the associations of original sexuality from the myth of the 'forbidden fruit' in the Garden of Eden.[117] But it also suggests the golden apples of the Hesperides – one of which was stolen by Eris, the goddess of strife – an event which led to the Trojan war.[118] In Wagner's *Das Rheingold* (1869), it is also the potential loss of apples belonging to the garden of the goddess Freia that subsequently leads to Wotan's losing the Ring to the giant Fafner (rather like Prometheus's stealing of fire). This, in turn, causes the events of the further three operas that complete the *Ring* Cycle. 'August' is filled with thick and intense sexual suggestions through colours, such as 'red stained through gold' and the 'split green wood, | With all its bearded lips and stains'. These colours (and odours) are directly linked with music, for 'The colour soothed me like a tune' and 'In the mute August afternoon | They [the apples] trembled to some undertune | Of music in the silver air'. But it is the 'undertune' itself, or harmony, where the most sexual music of 'August' lies – an archetypal, unformed music that is even beyond audible music itself and is 'sweet' like the food of the Gods:

> A sense of heavy harmonies
> Grew on the growth of patient night,
> More sweet than shapen music is.[119]

Swinburne's musical language may well appear vague and generalized now, but to him it was highly evocative. Indeed, as we saw in a previously quoted letter concerning the playing of

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[117] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 171.
[118] 'Hesperia' is of course the name of another poem in *Poems and Ballads*. This contains the very Wagnerian line 'Thy silence as music, thy voice as an odour that fades in a flame' – see note 139. Haynes, *P&B*, p. 140.
[119] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 172, 173.

Handel on the organ by Mary Gordon, music immediately evoked the danger of the sexual to him: 'I can hardly *behave* for delight at some of the choruses', he states. When Swinburne thought of classical music, it was not the staid performances that we are accustomed to hear in the concert hall, but something that had the potential to overturn reality – like Schubert's string quartets, with all their flashing, alternating, disruptive rhythms.[120] Indeed, it might be because of the way that we currently listen to classical music performances in a concert hall – with their pacifying rituals and pedestrian repetitions of formality – that we fail to notice the sexual adventurousness of much nineteenth-century music. That these rituals originated with the Victorians is instructive. Were the rituals subconsciously designed to tame the beast that contemporary music sought to unleash, or subdue the kind of music that Vernon Lee feared acted '"on the helpless blood direct"'?[121]

Ironically, Wagner's own musical language – set against our own exacting academic requirements – also appears vague.[122] But this is our fault. Wagner's *Opera and Drama*, written while he was living in Zurich, masquerades as a technical work, or what Jeremy Coleman has recently called one of his 'verbose quasi-Hegelian formulations'.[123] But this misses the intense, sensual proto-aestheticist nature of Wagner's prose in this work, which is, ultimately, a polemic about music releasing inner, hidden emotions, promising a sexually violent revolution both for humans and the world.[124] Wagner does not use musical language in its currently accepted form.

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[120] I am thinking here of No. 14 in D Minor, also known as 'Death and the Maiden', which alternates between vivid sexual energy and sudden, tingling pleasures.

[121] Vernon Lee, *Music and its Lovers: An Empirical Study of the Emotional and Imaginative Responses to Music* (New York: E. P Dutton, 1933), p. 129. Lee is here specifically thinking of Wagnerian music. She is also employing a quotation from D. H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* (1927). In highlighting the differences between the way we look at musical performance and the experiences of nineteenth-century audiences, I am reminded of Nietzsche's occult improvisations in 'frenzied performances at the [piano] keyboard'. In these, he and Cosima Wagner attempted to 'invoke musical "oracles"' with Nietzsche 'conjuring up the underworld at the piano'. See Joachim Köhler, *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation*, trans. by Ronald Taylor (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 56.

[122] The academic departmentalization of musicology over the past century has led to more rigorous musical definitions. Indeed, it may well lead us to define the word 'harmony' purely as a musical term, when to our forebears it suggested much more.

[123] Coleman, *Richard Wagner in Paris*, p. 157.

[124] See, for example, where Wagner sensuously describes a 'gesture' of the composer Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) in his opera *Der Freischütz* ('The Marksman', 1821) as 'a yearning for the vision of the flower itself', by which Wagner alludes to Novalis's 'blue floweret' or the ideal and strange Orphic bloom that

As Dahlhaus has demonstrated, 'melody' for Wagner was not a purely technical term, but a word that described a new kind of music where poetic semantics fused with musical feeling to produce intelligible expression, where 'every note has meaning, that the melody is language and not empty sound'.[125] This breaks apart the idea of a melody as a robust horizontal 'succession of notes, varying in pitch, which have an organized and recognizable shape', and turns it into a language of fusion.[126] As we shall see shortly in the erotically-charged arguments of *Opera and Drama*, this fusion is loaded with heavy sexual texturing. Wagner's 'melody', therefore, acts in a similar way to Swinburne's 'harmonies'. It brings up powerful emotions from the depths of the soul and gives them form through music and words. As Wagner says in his essay *Beethoven*: 'melody made a singer of the poet'.[127] However, Swinburne's 'harmony' reaches down in all its heaviness – this is perhaps why Swinburne's adjectives are deliberately loaded in 'Laus Veneris' to give a sense of gravity. As Thomas E. Connolly has described, Swinburne saw the blending of the intellect with emotional depths as a form of musical harmonics, a 'harmony' of verse, that 'goes beyond either "external" and "inner" music'.[128] 'Harmony' is a totalizing effect in Swinburne's early poetry, where his verse attempts to traverse and connect everything and seek a sense of equalizing wholeness with the same sort of ambition that Baudelaire noted in Wagner's

> drove Weber down from the sumptuous halls into the meadow; and there he saw the bloom on the brink of the rippling brook, amid odorous wood-grasses, upon a bed of wonderous crinkled moss, beneath the dreamy whispering branches of trees grown gnarled with age […]. He could not withstand the loving impulse, to bring to nerveless fellow-men this healing vision, this livening perfume […] to tear the bloom itself from the godlike nurture of the woodlands (*RWPW*, II, 51-52).

[125] Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism*, p. 56: '"endless melody" […] should by no means be treated exclusively as a technical term'.
[126] 'Melody', *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, edited by Joyce Kennedy, Michael Kennedy, and Tim Rutherford-Johnson, 6th Edition, online version (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199578108.001.0001/acref-9780199578108-e-5968> (accessed 13 March 2020).
[127] Wagner, *Beethoven*, trans. Edward Dannreuther, p. 104.
[128] Thomas E. Connolly, *Swinburne's Theory of Poetry* (New York: State University of New York, 1964), p. 73. Connolly perhaps misses the heavy sexual tone of Swinburne's harmony. In the next chapter, I discuss the idea that 'mood patterning' in both poetry and music was seen as the essence of music itself. Therefore music and poetry could be united under the idea of musical feeling, with both arts approaching this from different positions.

music.[129] But in this way, it is also a disruptive force that undermines the world's phenomenal identity and throws it into question. In the musical performance described in *Lesbia Brandon*, we see a song that has the power to open up all sorts of desires and threatens the evening with turmoil. Indeed, the performance itself wakens a sexual hunger, and later that evening, as Herbert goes to bed, his 'whole spirit was moved with the passionate motion of his senses':

> he clung to her [his older sister, Lady Wariston] for a minute, and rose up throbbing from head to foot with violent love. All the day's pleasure and pain came suddenly to flower and bore fruit in him at the moment.
>
> 'I wish you would kill me some day; it would be jolly to feel you killing me'.

His sister responds by pinching him, but once she leaves the room, Herbert is left with the 'desperate tenderness and violent submission of soul and body to her love […] and the strong fervour and spirit of love which was the fruit of it, gave in the end a new tone and colour to his life'.[130]

Swinburne described the effect or 'fruit' of this totalized harmony with the term 'the spirit of sense', a phrase borrowed from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*: 'Nor doth the eye itself, | That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself, | Not going from itself; but eye to eye opposed | Salutes each other with each other's form'.[131] As he states in his essay (quoted by Connolly) 'Wordsworth and Byron' (1884), the 'spirit of sense' gives the poet the power to speak the hitherto inexpressible. A poet's body can

> breathe, in Shakespeare's audaciously subtle and successful phrase, the very 'spirit of sense' itself, to transcend at once the sensuous and the meditative elements of poetry, and

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[129] Harmony did not always mean vertical reach in a polyphonic sense. On Swinburne's understanding of the Ancient Greek term *harmonia*, see chapter six, note 137.
[130] Swinburne, *Lesbia Brandon*, pp. 81-82.
[131] William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. by Kenneth Muir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 127 (Act III. 3. 105-8). There are two mentions of this phrase in *Troilus*; see also I. 1. 57).

> to fuse their highest, their keenest, their most inward and intimate effects, in such verse as utters what none before could utter, and renders into likeness of form and sound such truths of inspired perception, such raptures of divine surprise, as no poet of nature may think to render again.[132]

However, the phrase the 'spirit of sense' may today not suggest to us the powerful forces of 'rapture' with which Swinburne invests it, nor suggest that its effect can utter 'what none before could utter' in the sense of prophecy. But in one of the earliest uses of this phrase in Swinburne's work – in the frenzied poem 'Dolores' (1866) – it is directly linked to extreme sexual and prophetic utterance. 'Dolores' is a poem of ecstatic trances that evoke the pagan worship of the 'Lady of Pain' or an anti-Virgin Mary – who is also Cybele, the Roman 'mother of gods' who demanded ritual castration from her priests, the 'Galli', for the price of prophecy.[133] Of Dolores herself, we learn: 'Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion, | And thy limbs are as melodies yet, | And move to the music of passion'.[134] It is this music that the poem dances to, through fifty-five stanzas of apparently never-ending sexual energy. More than any other poem in *Poems and Ballads,* therefore, 'Dolores' hesitates over ending in a true Wagnerian style.[135] However, right at the heart of the poem (if such an idea is meaningful) we are told, after a particularly menstrual image of 'juice not of fruit nor of bud':

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[132] A. C. Swinburne, 'Wordsworth and Byron', *Miscellanies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1886), p. 155. Connolly, *Swinburne's Theory of Poetry*, p. 72. See also Swinburne's essay on 'John Ford', where he describes the fusion of spirit and sense in those terms described by Tannhäuser in 'Laus Veneris', where 'soul may divide from body, but not we […] I will let mine eyes have all their will of thee' (Haynes, *P&B*, p. 22): 'for that absolute fusion of the whole nature in one fire of sense and spirit […]. These [great poets] have flesh and blood, muscle and nerve […] they deal neither with soulless bodies nor bodiless souls'. See A. C. Swinburne, 'John Ford', *Essays and Studies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1875), p. 307.

[133] Galliambics was the metre used by the Galli in their prophetic chants. In reference to Blake, see chapter two.

[134] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 131.

[135] Indeed, Swinburne merely added further stanzas when he liked. See *TSL*, I, 122, where he says he has added 'four more jets of boiling and gushing infamy to the perennial and poisonous fountain of Dolores'. Note the word 'fountain', which he later associates with Wagner, in the sense of coming up from the ground. See Wagner's 'fountain forces' in 'The Death of Richard Wagner', *SCPW*, II, 550.

When the sense in the spirit reposes,
  Thou shalt quicken the soul through the blood.
Thine, thine the one grace we implore is,
  Who would live and not languish or feign,
O sleepless and deadly Dolores,
  Our Lady of Pain.[136]

The 'spirit of sense', brought about by musical harmonies of 'helpless' blood (to reference Vernon Lee again), brings forth the unseen or the unheard by pushing back the veil on our innermost desires. These desires threaten to take over the body, and, like a prophetic sibyl, who acts as a mouthpiece for the god whose words she was speaking (just as Tannhäuser becomes a mouthpiece for the 'lips' of Venus), the poem's speaker is given a language that confers the possibility of uttering 'what none before could utter'.[137]

Such prophetic abilities also opened up the self to potentially destructive forces, and *Poems and Ballads* resonates with the imagery of destruction; it is riddled with the scattered images of killing, maiming, and sacrifice. In 'Satia Te Sanguine' ('glut yourself with blood'), for example, the male speaker identifies with the suicidal Sappho and wishes, 'I wish you were dead, my dear […and] I dead at your feet like you'.[138] Phædra, in the poem of the same name, demands to be decapitated, while the male speaker of 'Les Noyades' sees a sexual potential in his impending watery execution in that he is tied to a woman he has long desired and with whom he will drown. These images are created by a prophetic poetic speaker, who, like an opera heroine waiting on the fate of her lover, is hanging between life and death. There is a sense that this position affords the greatest sensation of beauty; just as an opera singer combines the emotional limits of expression with the most rapturous song, so the most exquisite beauty is seen at the moment of its annihilation.

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[136] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 129.
[137] Certainly, there was the feeling among reviewers that *Poems and Ballads* spoke things which had never been spoken in English society before.
[138] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 71.

In *A Communication to My Friends*, Wagner describes his own form of the 'spirit of sense'. This came to him as he was about to compose *Tannhäuser*, and indeed, he claimed, it threatened to destroy him. The 'spirit of music', which he could 'conceive' as 'aught but *Love'*, was not a benign love, but an ever-yearning desire:

> Could this love-yearning, the noblest thing my heart could feel – what other could it be than a longing for release from the Present, for absorption into an element of endless Love, a love denied to earth and reachable through the gates of Death alone? And what, again, at bottom, could such a longing be, but the yearning of Love; aye, of real love seeded in the soil of fullest sentience (*Sinnlichkeit*), – yet a love that could *never* come to fruitage on the loathsome soil of *modern* sentience? […] When I reached the sketch and working-out of the *Tannhäuser* music, it was in a state of burning exaltation […] that held my blood and every nerve in fevered throbbing. My true nature – which, in my loathing of the modern world and ardour to discover something nobler and beyond-all noblest, had quite returned to me – now seized, as in a passionate embrace, the opposing channels of my being, and disembouched them both into *one* stream: a longing for the highest form of Love. – With this work I penned my death-warrant […] I now could hope no more for life'.[139]

Wagner's 'real love seeded in the soil of fullest sentience' is an original awareness (i.e. not '*modern*') of the self as an emotional force that needs shaping by 'a passionate embrace' into '*one* stream' of longing that can then flower 'explicitly'. However, there is a danger here of self-negation. The power of 'love-yearning', Wagner suggests, threatens the composer unless it is fashioned into opera through music and words (the 'opposing channels').[140] Here is an internal sublime force, like that in Swinburne's poem 'Dolores', which offers both sexual love and yet

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[139] *RWPW*, I, 305-6 and I, 323.
[140] An earlier example can be found in *The Art-work of the Future* (1849), where Wagner talks of the spirit of music as flowering and 'seeded in the whole sound man and blossomed out of him, it can never be poured into him from above'. See *RWPW*, I, 143.

destruction. The same is true for Venus in 'Laus Veneris', into whom Tannhäuser continually blends. His confession – both to Venus and to us as his audience – is that he surely enjoys this descent into the Orphic sea of harmony and melody from which she arises, even if this involves being continually broken apart and erotically scattered across the sea's lyrical body.

In one of the most extraordinary moments in *The Music of the Future*, Wagner calls on the poet to join him in music and bring the 'opposing channels' of emotion and intellect together. In doing this, Wagner enacts Sappho's death leap from the Leucadian cliff, although for him Sappho may well have been transmuted into Senta, the heroine of *The Flying Dutchman*, who throws herself from a cliff into the sea to become one with the Dutchman to release him from his curse on earth. Wagner has his ideal poet cry out to the composer:

> 'Throw yourself fearlessly into the sea of music – hand in hand with me you can never lose the connection with what is most intelligible to all men, for with my aid you always stand on the ground of dramatic action, and this action, at the moment of scenic representation, is the most immediately intelligible of all poems. Spread your melody boldly, so that it may flow through the whole work like an uninterrupted stream; with it reveal all that I pass over in silence, because *you* only can reveal it, and, silently I will reveal all, leading you by the hand'.
>
> Indeed, the greatness of the poet is mostly to be measured by what he leaves untold, so that we may silently tell ourselves the inexpressible – the musician it is who gives voice to that which has remained untold, and the infallible form of this sounding silence is *infinite melody*.[141]

Swinburne's 'The Triumph of Time' reperforms this act. Having sensed in the passion for his lover a god-like power of prophecy welling up inside him ('We had grown as gods, as the gods

[141] Wagner, *The Music of the Future*, p. 47. It is now normal to translate Dannreuther's 'infinite melody' as 'endless melody'. See the line from 'Hesperia', note 116: 'Thy silence as music, thy voice as an odour that fades in a flame'.

above'), the lover's rejection causes an overpowering libidinal flood of language and, Sappho-like, the speaker turns back to the body and the truth of desire. This Wagnerian return – surely a pivotal moment in *Poems and Ballads* – engulfs the speaker and reader in an extraordinary flux of sensual language as it proposes a form of re-birth out of love:

> 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 to her, hold her fast:
>
> O fair white mother, in days long past
>
> Born without sister, born without brother,
>
> Set my soul free as thy soul is free.[142]

Feminization and androgyny

The imagery of sexual intercourse in Wagner's *Opera and Drama* is a metaphor for the creation of opera. This is made clear when he calls 'inferior' forms of music – such as Italian opera, with all their ornamentations and recitatives – 'artificial love-titillation, without the potence of an actual taste of Love'. Inferior music, Wagner claims, is 'a wanton […] an undeveloped, wasted woman'.[143]

Wagner's own music, however, is a woman who promises 'actual' love. She is submissive, accommodating, but also productive:

> Music is the bearing woman, the Poet the begetter; and Music had therefore reached the pinnacle of madness, when she wanted, not only to bear, but also to *beget*.

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[142] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 30, 37.
[143] *RWPW*, II, 99, 112. For this reason Nattiez calls *Opera and Drama* 'an extended sexual metaphor'. See Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, p. 38.

> *Music is a woman*.
>
> The nature of Woman *is love:* but this love is a *receiving* (empfangende), and in receival (*Empfängniss*) an unreservedly *surrendering*, love.
>
> Woman first gains her full individuality in the moment of surrender. She is the Undine who glides soulless through the waves of her native element, till she receives her soul through the love of a man.[144]

Wagner believed his music to be an honest love because it came from within. It is not external, like the courtesans of Italian opera, who are dressed up in 'Rossini's vocal trills'.[145] This 'woman as music' already exists inside a man. She can be released when all the artifices of the human personality are stripped away, when man presents himself naked to world, allowing his innermost needs to surface. Wagner's 'woman as music' is a metaphor for true feeling (or desire), and in setting it free, feeling comes forth and possesses a man. In allowing this to happen, a man effectively feminizes himself. The creation of 'real' opera, therefore, involves a metaphorical form of sexual intercourse, but with the self, where the 'male' words of the libretto, formed by the composer's intellect, conjoin with the floods of feeling from within, embodied in the archetypal 'Undine', a spirit of the water. Authentic opera and music are forms of autoeroticism or self-love.

This action is at the heart of 'Laus Veneris' too, where Tannhäuser, 'like a man blind and naked in strange lands' emerges from the Venusberg (which is symbolic of the place of unadulterated feeling) and makes his way to Rome, where the Pope sees the 'naked' Tannhäuser for what he is. At the 'explicit' end of the poem, Tannhäuser's coupling with Venus is like Wagner's coupling with 'Undine', and the wedlock of words and music is a moment of primal poetic creation. Tannhäuser is feminized by this coupling – as is symbolized by the Pope's staff (which is a message for Tannhäuser) sprouting flowers and growing green bark. By this coupling – to quote Wagner – poetry and music are turned into the 'supremely mighty organ of

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[144] *RWPW*, II, 111.
[145] *RWPW*, II, 94.

expression', the highest form of art, and are able to speak to all, who, like the artist, have opened their hearts and are able to truly hear.[146]

It is surely in response to this sexualized musical aesthetics that in later Edwardian and Modernist writing, women and music are sometimes portrayed as a potentially dangerous combination – although this is often satirized. The Reverend Beebe in E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View* (1908), for example, is concerned about Lucy Honeychurch's overtly passionate nature, which shows itself most powerfully when she plays the piano. He puts her passion down to 'too much Beethoven'.[147] While at sea and on her way to South America, Rachel Vinrace in Virginia's Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915) is similarly advised by Mrs Ambrose to play less dramatic music on the piano: 'She desired that Rachel should think, and for this reason offered books and discouraged too entire a dependence upon Bach and Beethoven and Wagner'.[148] A woman, in playing Beethoven and Wagner, perhaps courts mental and emotional instability. She might, in effect, become even more 'woman' and open up the doors to hysteria and madness, or, as Emma Sutton has shown in reference to Rachel Vinrace and Wagner, there is the possibility of desire threatening 'the autonomy of female characters, for whom it has potentially fatal consequences'.[149] Or is it that by playing passionate 'female' music a woman might psychologically risk a lesbian sexuality?

In Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads,* poetry and music often appear to conjoin in lesbian love. Taking on board the Wagnerian view of music and love it would appear that femininity has much greater access to the primal creative force and the 'oneness' of Venus. Throughout *Poems and Ballads,* lesbianism is portrayed as love-making without the possibility of procreation: love for the sake of love, which could be seen as an analogy for art for art's sake. In 'Sapphics' the figure of love is Aphrodite rather than the Roman Venus. Unlike Tannhäuser, however, Sappho no longer needs to look towards Aphrodite for inspiration since in 'Sapphics' Aphrodite is

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[146] Hence, the ear, for Wagner, is also 'a woman' – *RWPW,* II, 23.
[147] E. M. Forster, *A Room with a View* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 36.
[148] Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 137.
[149] Emma Sutton, *Virginia Woolf and Classical Music: Politics, Aesthetics, Form* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 31, 34.

identified with heterosexual love. Sappho commands the powers of her own creativity and – like Schopenhauer's 'genius' – is no longer trapped by a continual dividing of the self. She has reached beyond the 'veil of Maya' and become whole. She has replaced Venus. Thus Aphrodite now

> Saw the Lesbians kissing across their smitten
> Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound of lute-strings,
> Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her chosen,
> Fairer than all men;

Music is embodied in the women of the poem. They transmit it to others through the sensations of love-making and this love-'making' is poetry and song. It is, as the poem states, 'her visible song, a marvel, | Made of perfect sound and exceeding passion'.[150] 'Visible song' is the body in a musical expression of love.

Thaïs Morgan has interpreted 'Anactoria' in a similar fashion. Sappho's monologue ends by proposing a 'fully erotic world' where the body is celebrated, God is rejected, and love is performed for the sake of love rather than for transcendental, Christian purposes. In Sappho's world, Morgan points out, 'the nightingales sing "louder for love's sake"'.[151] Here the tree 'leaves tremble like lute strings or like fire' in sympathy with the nightingales' song. Love and music resonate together, for they are both one and the same thing.[152]

Wagner's aesthetic system is based, as Baudelaire noted in his Wagner pamphlet, on the reconciliation of opposites, but also on ideas of androgyny. For

> in the *Tannhäuser* overture, in the struggle between the two opposing principles, he [Wagner] has shown himself no less subtle or powerful [than in *Lohengrin*…]. From the

[150] Haynes, *P&B,* pp. 164-5.
[151] Thaïs Morgan, 'Swinburne's Dramatic Monologues: Sex and Ideology', *Victorian Poetry*, 22.2 (Summer 1984), 175-195 (p. 183).
[152] Both Morgan's quotation from 'Anactoria' and my own can be found in Haynes, *P&B,* p. 53

> very first bars our nerves vibrate in unison with the melody; lustful memories are awakened sharply. Every well-ordered brain has within it two infinities, heaven and hell; and in any image of one of these it suddenly recognizes the half of itself. First come the satanic titillations of a vague love, soon followed by enticements, swoonings, cries of victory, groans of gratitude.[153]

While Baudelaire is interested in the satanic here, he recognizes that the demonic and angelic in *Tannhäuser* become inseparable. However, in his 'lustful memories' and erotic onomatopoeia, he is also making a silent reference to Plato's *Symposium*, a work that underpins Wagner's aesthetic system. In the *Symposium*, Plato has Aristophanes describe the origins of love to Socrates. The playwright does this by relating a myth in which the primal human being, he claims, was not originally humanoid, but spherical. In fear of usurpation, Zeus cut each of these spheres in two and dispersed them across the world. Thus divided, these halves then roamed the earth looking for each other so they could reattach and become whole again. This, Aristophanes claims, was the foundation for sexual love.[154]

Although he does not specifically reference this story in *Opera and Drama*, it is clear, as Nattiez has shown, that Wagner's aesthetics are based on Plato's 'myth of androgyny', especially in the way music and word are portrayed as halves or as lovers that seek reattachment.[155] For art, Wagner states, is 'nothing but the fulfilment of a longing to know oneself in the likeness of an object of one's love or adoration, to find oneself again in the things of the outer world'.[156] This finding and fulfilment also means fusing, and so, in Wagner's conception of composing or

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[153] Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings*, p. 342.
[154] For Aristophanes' story, see Plato, *Symposium*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 24-30.
[155] Wagner read the *Symposium* in 1847 while writing *Lohengrin*, and noted the 'deep insight' it gave him. He also read the plays of Aristophanes the same year. See Richard Wagner, *My Life* (London: Constable, 1911), pp. 415-16. See Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, pp. 120-21.
[156] *Opera and Drama*, *RWPW*, II, 155.

listening to music, the male – having been led to the feminine within him by music – becomes androgynous.[157]

In *Notes on Poems and Reviews* (1866), Swinburne defended his own study of androgyny – the poem 'Hermaphroditus' – by disparaging Aristophanes' myth (or Plato's 'retelling' of it) as an idea 'fallen into a form coarse, hard, and absurd':

> The theory of God splitting in two the double archetype of man and woman, the original hermaphrodite which had to get itself bisected into female and male, is repulsive and ridiculous enough. But the idea thus incarnate, literal or symbolic, is merely beautiful.[158]

This rebuttal may be a wish to side-line the Plato/Aristophanes story given that it comes from the *Symposium* (which some Victorian sensibilities may have found unpalatable). But Swinburne also views the story as absurd because Aristophanes reduces complexity to a simple myth. As an artistic figure, however, the image of man and woman conjoined and incarnate as one androgynous body is, for Swinburne, a figure of pure beauty, since it is unified and undivided at its core. In his *William Blake,* for example, Swinburne discusses the illuminated book *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise* (c. 1818) and highlights Blake's figure of the 'dark hermaphrodite' as a symbol of perfection:

> enlightened by the light within him, which is darkness – the light of reason and morality; evil and good, who was neither good nor evil in the eternal life before this generated existence; male and female, 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.[159]

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[157] Even if the imagery could be excused here as symbolic, Wagner does not suggest what might happen to female composers.
[158] Hyder, *Swinburne Replies*, p. 28.
[159] Swinburne, *William Blake*, p. 21.

These ideas find poetic voice within 'Hermaphroditus', a sonnet sequence related to a sculpture known as the 'Sleeping Hermaphrodite' which Swinburne saw at the Louvre during his March 1863 Paris trip, probably with Richard Monckton Milnes.[160] As previously noted, Swinburne was using Milnes's manuscript collection in order to write *William Blake*, and so this could have been a factor that drew Swinburne (and possibly Milnes) to this statue. But it is likely that he was also drawn to it because of the inter-art Wagnerian aesthetics that he had encountered through Fantin and Manet, and, perhaps, had already understood from Whistler.

In Wagner's ideas about androgyny, both the artist and the produced artwork have the characteristics of both sexes. Wagner saw himself, as Nattiez states, as 'an androgynous being, bearing within him the active male principle, in the form of the poetic seed, and the passive female principle, embodied in music'.[161] This is made clear in *Opera and Drama* when Wagner discusses Beethoven, using him to claim that the highest power the arts could attain was the true marriage of words and music. Beethoven, Wagner states, discovered his androgyny and became 'whole' during the writing of his *Ninth Symphony*, where he transformed (or perhaps in an Ovidian sense, metamorphosed) the symphonic form in a moment of wild sexual abandonment as he wedded his music to the words of Schiller's 'Ode to Joy'. Wagner depicts Beethoven as a woman who desires Schiller to impregnate 'her' with words. He and she as one, then give birth to their offspring, the final movement of the *Ninth*.

> But his [Beethoven's] most decisive message, at last given us by the master in his *magnus opus*, is the necessity he felt as *Musician* to throw himself into the arms of the Poet, in order to compass the act of *begetting* the true, the unfailingly real and redeeming Melody. To become a *human being*, Beethoven perforce must become *an entire*, i.e. a social (*gemeinsamer*) being, subjected to the generic conditionments of *the manly and the womanly*. – What an earnest, deep and yearning brooding unveiled at last to the endless-

[160] The sculpture is also known as the 'Borghèse Hermaphrodite'.
[161] Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, p. 40.

> gifted master the limpid melody where he broke into the Poet's words: 'Joy, thou fairest spark of Godhead!'[162]

'Hermaphroditus' performs the same union, although Swinburne's conception, in terms of art for art's sake, is not quite as fruitful. The sonnet sequence starts with the wonder-laden tone of 'Laus Veneris', as the speaker looks at the sculpture's body, just as Tannhäuser looks on that of Venus.[163] The sculpture is asked to 'turn round, look back for love' – while reclining on its front and side, the Louvre sculpture is also looking back over its shoulder. This immediately sets the tone of the poem as one of continual (and Wagnerian) return. In doing so, the speaker also captures the sudden flash of sexual discovery or desire and the expectation of fulfilment.

The poem then dramatizes this action in a series of erotic desires or charges that first ask the sculpted hermaphrodite to choose a sexual position for one or more partners ('Strive until one be under and one above'). It halts above the oral openings of the body – especially 'lips' – and pauses there, between mystery and knowledge (or expectation and fulfilment), and asks questions which appear to be rhetorical, since they preclude an answer ('To what strange end hath some strange god made fair | The double blossom of two fruitless flowers?'). The speaker senses that the effect of Hermaphroditus is to make him constantly linger within and explore these threshold states, or 'Where between sleep and life some brief space is', he asks, for 'is it love or sleep or shadow of light | That lies between thine eyelids and thine eyes?' All of these questions and actions are constantly reflected in the poem's teasing chiasmatic process, which alludes to the sculpture's androgyny, but also performs the constant Schopenhauerian movement between desire and discord. For we are told:

> And whosoever hath seen thee, being so fair,

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[162] *RWPW*, II, 107. Does the whole of Beethoven's *Ninth* here become a series of sexually-inspired movements towards androgyny?

[163] The relationship between the two poems is also implied in that the mythological Hermaphroditus, as Catherine Maxwell has pointed out, shares the same mother as Eros (that is, Aphrodite or Venus). Maxwell gives a full a reading of the poem. See Catherine Maxwell, *The Female Sublime*, p. 206.

Two things turn all his life and blood to fire;
A strong desire begot on great despair,
A great despair cast out by strong desire.[164]

As Catherine Maxwell has noted, patterns of chiasmus traverse the poem, and, in fact, the entire poem could be described as a performance of this movement.[165] Each sonnet, therefore, does not appear to create space and time in objective terms, but as suspended in irresolution. The pause created by this figure of speech leaves the poem's images and metaphors hovering (with many appearing to drift away from their referents), and the poem might ultimately be said to leave its impression in the body of the reader in the form of anxiety.

In the final sonnet, the speaker also senses both the infinity of love – symbolized by the androgynous statue – but also the transience of earthly, human sensations, a dual nature that is expressed in another chiasmus: 'Yea, love, I see; it is not love but fear, | Nay, sweet, it is not fear but love, I know'.[166] The sonnet sequence then ends with an allusion to the myth of the creation of Hermaphroditus as we are told that 'Thy moist limbs melted into Salmacis'. This could be taken as Swinburne's poetry passing into the statue and becoming one, fused together in a new figure that is both immortal and transient. The poem originally suggests that it will be an ekphrasis, but instead Swinburne's words almost make love to the artwork, and seek a combination of all things within a new form of sculpture and poem conjoined. (The same could be said for Swinburne's other ekphrastic poem in *Poems and Ballads*, 'Before the Mirror'.) In this union, Swinburne is also radically altering Ovid's story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in *Metamorphoses*. Ovid presents the originally male Hermaphroditus as resistant to seduction so that the nymph Salmacis

[164] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 65, 66.
[165] 'Each sonnet in the sequence contains a recognisable example of a classic chiasmus […which] ensures that lines and language engage constantly in a series of fluctuating relations'. Maxwell, *The Female Sublime*, pp. 204-5.
[166] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 67.

has to take him by force; Swinburne, however, presents androgynous union as a state that the speaker finds erotically desirable.[167]

The action of *Poems and Ballads* is constantly to achieve the fusion of opposites, which it performs, paradoxically, through the dissolution of objective form in autoerotic sexual intercourse. Androgyny, like the Pope's blossoming staff in 'Laus Veneris' (a phallus part-feminized by the flowers that cover it) becomes a symbol of fusion through the dissolution of its original form and its melting into another. This brings together both the bodily and the metaphysical at the same time and into a perfect union. Bodily desire is united with the human need for transcendence, even if this only occurs within an instant (such as one of Tannhäuser's couplings), or as a poem on a page.

In his recent work on Wagner, Alain Badiou has given this action a political reading. The ultimate aim of Wagner's musical, androgynous aesthetics, he claims, is to thrive in that tension where 'power and impotence are in equipoise, when the two are interchangeable'.[168] There is, perhaps, a masculine absolute will to power (to reference Nietzsche), but which exists simultaneously as a feminine, absolute surrender. I deal with the political implications of this idea in the following chapter, but in his essay 'Tennyson and Musset' (1881), Swinburne argues for androgyny as being a necessary condition for the creation of great poetry. Exploring Tennyson's poem 'Rizpah' (1880), he declares the

> deep truth that great poets are bisexual; male and female at once, motherly and not less than fatherly in their instincts towards little children; from the day when Homer put Astyanax into the arms of Hector to the day when Hugo found the sweetest of all cradle songs on the lips of the death-stricken Fantine. And among all these not one – not even Victor Hugo's very self – has ever touched the very deepest and finest chord on the lyre

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[167] See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 83-86.

[168] 'Wagner is all for fusion through dissolution', Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, p. 40. Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, p. 120.

> of the human spirit with a diviner power, a more godlike strength of tenderness, than Tennyson has touched it here.[169]

Swinburne's immediate point is that in order to reflect all sides of life – to depict both the motherly and the fatherly – a poet must have the perspective of both sexes. But this, in turn, also confers on a poet the ability of a concurrent will to power and a willingness to surrender, or – as Swinburne here says in reference to musical touch – 'a […] godlike strength of tenderness'.[170]

[169] A. C. Swinburne, *Miscellanies*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1895), p. 221.
[170] Swinburne's mention of children recalls his own baby poetry, some of which appears in *A Century of Roundels* alongside poetry on Wagner. It would appear that in writing these baby poems, Swinburne is expressing his feminine side, but framing it in a 'godlike strength' of verse.

Chapter 5: *Die Meistersinger*: Mazzini, European nationalism, and Swinburne's Wagnerite friends

In this chapter I explore the period of Swinburne's career after the publication of *Poems and Ballads* in 1866. I first examine the politicization of Swinburne's poetics of desire, through his contact with the Italian nationalist leader Joseph Mazzini, a meeting that led to the writing of *Songs before Sunrise* (1871). I will show how the political understanding of music and desire, as espoused by both Wagner and Mazzini, fed into the publication of this collection. I then discuss the role of three notable Wagnerite friends of Swinburne – Francis Hueffer, Edward Dannreuther, and George Powell. In discussing their interaction with Swinburne and the wider Wagnerite circles in both London and Europe, I considerably expand knowledge in this area.

In his review of Swinburne's *Songs before Sunrise*, the German émigré Francis Hueffer highlighted what he viewed as the poet's flaws. Quoting Goethe's sonnet '*Natur und Kunst*' ('Nature and Art', 1800), Hueffer decried Swinburne's

> fatal wantonness and exuberance of power, the restraint of which, as Goethe says, is the note of the true master […]. 'In vain unfettered spirits strive to reach the heights; whoever wishes to be great must hold himself in check, first must through restraint show himself the master. Only through law can we achieve freedom'.[1]

Even if he detected in *Songs before Sunrise* a 'remarkable advance in the way of self-criticism and, in a certain sense, of moderation' when compared with *Poems and Ballads*, Hueffer was keen to mark the dangerous continuities of Swinburne's verse, rather than its potential differences. Unsurprised by Swinburne's move into more overt politics, *Songs* was, he states, 'nothing else than the continuation of those eruptions of hot and unfettered passion […] applied in

[1] Hueffer's review was in the *Academy*, 2.16 (15 January 1871), 87-9, but it also appears in Hyder, *The Critical Heritage*, pp. 139-45. This translation from Goethe's poem can be found in the latter, p. 145, note 2.

this case to the great political and religious questions of our age, and modified only so far as this more serious and elevated subject required'. Such passion, Hueffer continues with an allusion to 'Laus Veneris', means that the 'idea of freedom blossoms under the hand of the poet into a variety of forms'.[2]

Songs before Sunrise differs from *Poems and Ballads* in its forthright intervention in Italian politics and in its support for a nationalist, republican cause in general. Modern critics, therefore, have tended to stress the differences from the previous collection. Margot K. Louis, for example, reads in *Songs* a need to 'develop a new poetic language' and a wish 'to repudiate his earlier work in order to be taken seriously', given how badly the poet's reputation for immorality 'had stuck to his back'.[3] In his recent edited collection of Swinburne's poetry and prose, Francis O'Gorman, too, highlights the need in *Songs* to help 'deflect, or distract from, the lingering after-effects of *Poems and Ballads*', although he shows that Swinburne's interest in *Risorgimento* politics was undoubtedly sincere.[4] While this – apparently sudden – swerve from Bacchic passion can well be interpreted in this fashion, I wish to argue briefly, like Hueffer, about the important similarities. In its exploration of desire and in its Wagnerian 'unfettered passion', *Poems and Ballads* is already revolutionary and political, although it paves the way for the more openly political voice of *Songs*.

Swinburne did not necessarily see *Songs* as a swerve, but as a natural evolution. Writing before the republication of *Poems and Ballads* in October 1866, he told W. M. Rossetti that his contemporary political aspirations had, to a certain extent, been hitherto suppressed. In *A Song of Italy* (which would be published the following year in 1867), he had finally made his passion for Italian republicanism plain:

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[2] Hyder, *The Critical Heritage*, p. 139.
[3] Margot K. Louis, *Swinburne and His Gods*, p. 86.
[4] See O'Gorman, *Algernon Charles Swinburne*, p. xxix. Evidence for *Songs before Sunrise* as a swerve away from his previous collection can be found in the 'Prelude' to *Songs* where Swinburne appears to say that he has now put away the matters of youth. On Swinburne's long-standing attraction to Mazzini, the first item in O'Gorman's collection is 'Ode to Mazzini' written in 1857, although unpublished in Swinburne's lifetime.

> it is nice to have something to love and to 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 – tête montée, as my Mother says – about this article of faith; you may ask any tutor or schoolfellow.[5]

Quite what Swinburne means by being 'frightened […] from speaking out' is unclear, however this letter does suggest that his politics, if not fully expressed within *Poems and Ballads*, was latent in the collection. Since the age of 15, Swinburne had been a supporter of the *Risorgimento* leader Joseph Mazzini. Indeed, he states in the same letter that he wished to 'lay my lips on his feet', and, in an attempt to make this happen when Mazzini was in London the following year, Swinburne sent him a copy of *Atalanta in Calydon*. A meeting then followed on 30 March 1867 at the house of the German revolutionary Karl Blind (1826-1907).[6] According to Swinburne, on this fateful evening, Mazzini entered the room in which he was standing, and, passing all the guests, came straight up to him and said, "'I know *you*'". Swinburne did not kiss his hero's feet, but, going down on his knees, kissed Mazzini's hand instead, as if he were meeting the Pope.[7] Swinburne interpreted this meeting prophetically. In order to meet Mazzini, he had missed a performance by the composer and pianist Clara Schumann (1819-1896) at the Crystal Palace with George Powell.[8] In his letter of apology to Powell for not turning up, Swinburne gives Mazzini as the reason, and, describing his feelings on the occasion, recalls a 'tradition in the Talmud that when Moses came down from Sinai he was "drunken with the kisses of the lips of God"'.[9] Even if

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[5] *TSL*, I, 195.
[6] Swinburne thanks Blind for arranging the meeting in a letter sent the following day, see *TSL*, I, 238.
[7] 31 March 1867, *TSL*, I, 237. Swinburne narrates this event to his mother. William Bell Scott confirms this story but has Swinburne falling to one knee; see William Michael Rossetti, *Rossetti Papers: 1862-1870* (London: Sands & Co., 1903), p. 230.
[8] 31 March 1867, *TSL*, I, 236. On the night in question (30 March), Schumann was to play 'Mendelssohn's Concerto in G Minor, a Nocturne and Scherzo by Chopin', see 'Advertisements and Notices: Crystal Palace', *Daily News*, 30 March 1867, p. 1. Swinburne does not indicate that this would have been his first time seeing Schumann perform.
[9] 31 March 1867, *TSL*, I, 236.

Mazzini did not actually say '"I know *you*"' and the style of greeting was purely Swinburne's invention, these first words were an implicit reference to God's 'I know you' to Moses (the prophet that led God's people out of slavery) on Sinai in Exodus 33:12.[10] By telling Powell about the Talmud tradition and fashioning himself as a prophet, Swinburne was also giving the encounter a homoerotic quality, at least in the manner of a Greek older male and younger student, or *erastes* and *eromenos.*

Swinburne's excitement had been building for some time. He had already received a letter from his hero earlier in the month, the effect of which, George Price Boyce commented, had 'thrown off his equilibrium, if he may be said to have any'.[11] In this letter, dated 10 March 1867, Mazzini thanked him for *Atalanta* before describing his own nationalist struggle as one to create a 'new Religious Synthesis, a new European World'. He then compared Swinburne's recent 'Ode to Greece' (by which he means 'Ode on the Insurrection in Candia', which had been published in the *Fortnightly Review* on 1 March and was later republished in *Songs*) with *Atalanta*, claiming that he was

> hopeful that the power which 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.

Swinburne's art, therefore, should find a purpose. 'Don't lull us to sleep with pages of egotistical love and idolatry of physical beauty', Mazzini continued bluntly, '[…] Give us a series of "Lyrics for the Crusade"'.[12] It was from this that *Songs before Sunrise* was born.

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[10] 'Yet thou [God] hast said, I know thee' (KJV). This comes in a dialogue between Moses and God after the latter has delivered the Ten Commandments to Moses for the second time. There are other biblical references in the letter to his mother, e.g. Ezekiel 37:3, 'And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest' (KJV), becomes 'He [Mazzini] is clearly the man to create a nation – to bid the dead bones live and rise' (*TSL,* I, 237).
[11] Boyce, *Diaries*, p. 46.
[12] *UL* I, 97.

Mazzini saw in Swinburne's lyrics a power that needed to be shaped by contemporary events, and it is clear – having perhaps wandered, Tannhäuser-like, on a slow pilgrimage to Rome – that Swinburne, too, felt his hour had come. But what I want to emphasize here is that Mazzini also saw in Swinburne's earlier work a powerful, if nascent, political element in its explorations of desire. Rather than continuing to look inwards, Mazzini suggests, Swinburne should now use his powers to effect earthly and political change.

'Ode on the Insurrection in Candia' – arranged musically into strophes and antistrophes – perfectly demonstrates how the poetic language of *Poems and Ballads* might now 'embody itself into Action'. In this section from Strophe 4 Swinburne is testing the limits of his images of desire and sexual union to determine whether they can also be used to directly address political concerns:

> Had I words of fire,
>
> Whose words are weak as snow;
>
> Were my heart a lyre
>
> Whence all its love might flow
>
> In the mighty modulations of desire,
>
> In the notes wherewith man's passion worships woe;
>
> Could my song release
>
> The thought weak words confine,
>
> And my grief, O Greece,
>
> Prove how it worships thine;
>
> It would move with pulse of war the limbs of peace
>
> Till she flushed and trembled and became divine.
>
> (Once she held for true
>
> This truth of sacred strain;

Though blood drip like dew
And life run down like rain,
It is better that war spare but one or two
Than that many live, and liberty be slain).[13]

This powerful poem honours and memorializes those who died in Crete (the Candia of the title), during an uprising against Ottoman rule in November 1866. In particular, it references the inhabitants of the Arkadi Monastery – which included many refugee women and children – who blew themselves up rather than submit to the Turkish military after the monastery had been stormed. The ode is, therefore, one of profound mourning, but it is also – as the third stanza above shows – one of defiance and is a passionate plea for liberty and freedom from oppression. However, its language is not of the kind normally associated with political discourse or with grief. Its imagery and symbolism (as Hueffer's review suggests) is still that of *Poems and Ballads*. The keynote is a personal desire to find a voice with which to respond to the events. Words, now, are not enough. They must form a song, a music akin to Wagner's merging of words into the melody of pure feeling, and this song is allegorically embodied in a womanly form. In *Poems and Ballads*, womanly music was symbolized by Venus. Here the figure for music is liberty, although she is described with the same imagery and metaphors as her predecessor. Sexual desire has now become a desire for liberty, although the language suggests – through its imagery of love and blood dripping 'like dew' – that this new desire also has a bodily origin.[14]

Revolutionary desire

In *Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris*, Baudelaire describes Wagner's music in revolutionary terms, although he does not use the language of political action. By exploring sexual desire,

[13] 'Ode on the Insurrection in Candia', *SCPW*, I, 862.
[14] The dedication to the entire collection – which is addressed to Mazzini himself – leads to the description of a woman, who is the focus of all personal and political desire and who reigns over all the subsequent poems. Like the mother figure of *Poems and Ballads*, she shall 'lead as a mother; | First name of the world's names, Rome.' See, *SCPW*, I, 660.

Baudelaire suggests Wagner not only encouraged audiences to question basic ideas about music, but also the social order. While the opposite is true today (currently, Wagner is taken to be the very pinnacle of a 'high art' experience), for Baudelaire, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* collapsed the categories of high and low art and blurred distinctions between sophistication and triviality. To repeat a quotation given earlier, he declares that

> Symphonic passages from Wagner were to be heard in the casinos open nightly to crowds in eager search of trivial pleasures. The effulgent majesty of this music crashed down upon them like thunder on a brothel. The news spread quickly, and we were often treated to the comic spectacle of men of gravity and taste accepting to rub shoulders with the malodorous crowds to enjoy, in the absence of a better opportunity, the solemn march of the *Guests to the Wartburg* or the majestic *Wedding Music* of *Lohengrin*.[15]

Here the revolutionary nature of Wagner's music of desire has levelled social distinctions through its sensuous forms of expression. It has, to quote Emma Sutton, turned the audience experience not into 'a matter of rational, discriminatory, genteel "taste"', but one 'of involuntary compulsion'.[16] Sexual licentiousness could, therefore, be a compulsive force behind social and political change. People of all ranks came together to hear Wagner outside of the traditional performance spaces of the opera house and the concert hall, places which demanded conformity in the ways that music was performed and experienced, and, additionally, imposed rules of etiquette. Wagner's music appeared to refuse to bend its knee to these pre-existing structures, and it cultivated, even spiritualized, the activity of the brothel, suggesting itself as an accompaniment to licentious scenes.[17] It also, therefore, set itself against the aspirations of 'absolute music', in

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[15] Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings*, pp. 332-3.
[16] Emma Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 59.
[17] In his prose writings, Wagner regularly fulminates about the conformity of the opera house and what he calls the 'opera-public', and indeed, the disaster of the Paris *Tannhäuser* was partly caused by his refusal to place a demanded ballet (which was not in the original libretto of 1845) at the conventional place (for Paris opera) in Act II. See *Opera and Drama* where he calls audiences

that its primary goal was to generate 'womanly' feeling, even in the most masculine of men. 'Absolute music' was also a reaction against the potential for mass art to overturn ideas about music's superiority, and Wagner's music embraced popularity rather than exclusivity in its dream of music as a great equalizing power.[18]

The adverse reaction in Paris to *Tannhäuser* brought into question not only the authority of Wagner's music to actually *be* music, but also suggested that he had brought a wrecking-ball to the social and political institutions that might otherwise have supported him. One of the attendees at the 13 March 1861 performance of *Tannhäuser*, for example, Princess Pauline Metternich (1836-1921) recalls audience members booing, whistling, and cat-calling until the music was drowned in an uproar, which she called a 'fiasco'. Metternich had come to the opera house to support Wagner, although (capitalizing on her social status) the notorious critic Jules Janin (1804-1874) used her presence to suggest the opposite. Describing her seated in her grand box in full view, Janin claimed in a review for the *Journal des débats* entitled 'The Fan', that she had become so disturbed by the music that she had collapsed in tears and broken her 'beautiful and costly fan' (to quote Metternich's paraphrasing of Janin's article). In the following weeks, Metternich's fan, which she had not broken (nor had she been crying), became a metaphor for the damage done to social respectability by Wagner, but also for the sorrow and outrage of the social classes who funded musical performances.[19]

An illuminating description of the Paris 'scandal', as she called it, was also given by Malwida von Meysenbug (1816-1903), who was resident in London between 1852-1860. She was a close friend of both Wagner and Mazzini (with whom she took part in political activities in London), and also, latterly, Nietzsche.[20] Attending *Tannhäuser* with Wagner's wife, Minna,

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'an unnatural growth from the Folk [i.e. the masses] which […] can only be looked on as the knot of caterpillars' (*RWPW*, II, 44-5).

[18] See Wagner, *The Music of the Future*, p. 14. 'Absolute music' was, of course, originally Wagner's terminology, which he used negatively – see Craske, 'Swinburne, Wagner, Eliot: The Poetic Legacy of *Poems and Ballads*', 545.

[19] Stewart Spencer, *Wagner Remembered* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), pp. 127-129 (p. 129). Janin's review starts with the words 'It is broken, the beautiful fan'. It appeared on 15 April 1861 (p. 129).

[20] See Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany: Exile & Asylum in Victorian London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 202-212 (p. 208).

Meysenbug violently turned the tables on the disruptive audience when she shouted from her opera box, '"So this is the audience that boasts of good taste and pretends to dictate to the world what is beautiful and excellent in art! A lot of street urchins who haven't even enough manners to let people of another opinion listen in peace and quiet"'.[21]

A review of Wagner's last concert in London with the Philharmonic Society in 1855 by James Davison of *The Times* questioned the composer's credentials in the most basic way:

> Herr Wagner has cut a sorry figure in this country, where plain common sense goes for something … We believe him to be a very clever man, one of the most subtle and specious indeed of a race of modern German system-makers; but his works present irrefutable proofs that his organization is *not* musical, and a musician, like a poet, is born, not made. Another such set of concerts would go far to annihilate the Philharmonic Society.[22]

Davison's view perhaps also implies that born musicians would be of 'good birth', in the sense of class. A well-born composer could be trusted to uphold the traditions of music, in the same way that he would uphold the accompanying system of rank and privilege. There is a war-like terminology here, too, as if Davison – in decrying the new audiences for music that Wagner had brought to the concert-halls – detected the potential for a class war under the musical surface.

Lurking behind this condemnation of Wagner's musical iconoclasm was the knowledge that Wagner was a known political revolutionary. Indeed, he had come to London and Paris precisely because he could not get work in the German states. Earlier in his career, despite being a conductor at the Royal Court in Dresden, Wagner had been an active supporter of German nationalism. A confederate of the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) and August Röckel (1814-1876, the editor of a republican newspaper *Volksblätter* and also a conductor), Wagner had

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[21] Spencer, *Wagner Remembered*, p. 125. 'Peace and quiet', of course, signals another set of expectations about how to listen to music.
[22] Quoted by Francis Hueffer, *Half a Century*, p. 56.

been involved in various political activities, including public speaking on democracy and republicanism (on one occasion calling for the eradication of '"every last scrap of aristocratic privilege'").[23] Following this, he took part in the Dresden uprising of 1849, which he describes in detail in *My Life* (1880).[24] Despite a warrant being issued for his arrest, Wagner subsequently evaded capture and fled to Switzerland to lead the life of a political exile for the next decade. He stayed in Zurich until 1858 (during which time he also conducted in London), and moved to Venice and then Paris, before leaving France after the *Tannhäuser* 'fiasco' when a royal pardon was issued in 1862.

The revolutionary nature of Wagner's music was also made perfectly clear in many of his prose works and not least in *Art and Revolution* (1849). The idea of 'revolution' is, here, conceived in a much broader sense than that of the aspirations of the Dresden uprising and naturally encompasses a revolution in art, but it directly links its aesthetic aspirations to various social and political concerns. For example, while advocating a return to original Greek forms of theatre and music (the 'tragedy' of which 'denoted the culminating point of the Grecian spirit'), it portrays this return as an antidote to the 'efflorescence of corruption, of a hollow, soulless and unnatural condition of human affairs and human relations'.[25] In his other 1849 publication, *The Art-work of the Future*, he also praises the value of the music and dance of the *Volk*, or 'folk', which he defines as a basic form of mankind, or 'those men *who feel a common or collective want*' (or desire).[26]

Malwida von Meysenbug's friendship with both Wagner and Mazzini is instructive. Her appreciation for their politics undoubtedly incorporated an awareness of their respective attitudes towards music.[27] I not need give a summary of the thesis of Wagner's *Art and Revolution* here

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[23] Quoted in James Garratt, *Music, Culture and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 145.
[24] See Wagner, *My Life*, p. 466, pp. 476-489.
[25] 'Art and Revolution', *RWPW*, I, 43.
[26] 'The Art-work of the Future', *RWPW*, I, 75.
[27] For her friendship with Mazzini, see Elsa von Meysenbug Lyons (trans.), *Rebel in Bombazine: Memoirs of Malwida von Meysenbug*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1936), pp. 242-280. In this she states that 'music was a need of my soul, I drank it like the very breath of life' (p. 39).

(beyond the basic ideas mentioned above), as many of Wagner's concepts in this work, and indeed, many of his ideas across his prose and musical works, are similar to those discussed in Mazzini's essay 'On the Philosophy of Music' (1833), which is little-known – if known at all – in Swinburne studies.

In this avowedly political essay, Mazzini laments the fallen state of music. But then – borrowing the Christian symbolism of the coming of Jesus – he predicts, like Wagner, a return to the more basic forms of musical expression that can be found in natural feeling. He embodies this new music in the form of a muse-like 'woman' (just as Wagner does in *Opera and Drama*) because

> Music (like woman) has in it so much of the sacredness of natural purity, and such promise of the future, that even when they have most prostituted and degraded it, men have failed to cancel the iris of promise by which it is surrounded; and even in this Music of our own day which we condemn, there is yet so much vitality and power as to foretell its higher destinies, and new and holier mission.[28]

Mazzini is here condemning the current operatic music of Italy. This, he says, is not a music of the Italian people, but that of royal courts and politicians. Describing the mid-nineteenth century as a period of political, social, and cultural transition, Mazzini then announces the role of music in the future, with its universal language, as an art of transition that will guide the nation states towards greater national and European unity. Startlingly akin to Wagner's own revolutionary ideas, Mazzini calls for the unification of poetry and music within the creation of single idea of civilization, a 'grand Social Unity' and 'a harmonious union, immortal and revered'. He claims that after Rossini – who, he states, restored the pre-eminence of Italian music, but did not create a new music – a composer 'will arise', who will spiritualize music.[29] There is an urgency here, akin

[28] *The Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini,* 6 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1864-1870), IV (1867), 1-55 (16).
[29] *The Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini*, IV, 15, 6. Mazzini's national pride means that Rossini is musically accommodated, in contrast to Wagner.

to the second-coming, about the arrival of this composer, who, Mazzini says, will appear in Italy, where 'there is a public of believers to reverence his creations'.[30] In the music of this composer, he continues, mirroring the language used in his letter to Swinburne, the 'fragmentary, unconnected and interrupted' nature of '"*Art for art's sake*"' will be replaced with an artwork where 'the *Ego* has disappeared', which will bring all nations together.[31] There is also the sense that the femininity of music will flood and nourish man, and, therefore, his essay also suggests the same Wagnerian ideas of unity through the feelings of the human body.

Mazzini's letter to Swinburne, given above, was certainly informed by the details of this essay, even though he had written it in his twenties. However, I also believe – given Swinburne's odd and abrupt dismissal of art for art's sake in his letter to W. M. Rossetti (i.e. 'It was only Gabriel and his followers in art (l'art pour l'art) who for a time frightened me from speaking out') – that Swinburne knew of or had possibly read this essay before he met Mazzini. The ideas found there would have been strongly consonant with what he had learnt of Wagner's works earlier in the 1860s. A translation of Mazzini's essay appeared in the fourth volume of a six-volume collection of his writings published in London between 1864-1870. This volume has the date 1867 and may have appeared around May or June of that year (as reviews of this volume are given in newspapers during and after these months). This would be too late for Swinburne's letter, unless he had seen an advance copy. However, an earlier Italian edition had been published in Milan from 1863. The first four volumes – one of which contained 'The Philosophy of Music' – appeared in this year, and these were followed by a further eight.[32] Swinburne could have acquired a copy of this edition during his trip to meet Landor in Florence in 1864, for as Edmund Gosse points out, Landor was a fervent supporter of Mazzini's cause.[33] Owing to his mother's facility in French and Italian, Swinburne was a fluent speaker of Italian, having won prizes for

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[30] *The Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini*, IV, 35. Nationalism has since led to the competing claims of Wagner and Verdi for European music pre-eminence.
[31] *Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini*, IV, 24, 30.
[32] The Milan publication is noted in 'Foreign Books', *Examiner*, 10 January 1863, p. 24.
[33] 'But he [Swinburne] followed with ardent sympathy the propaganda of the friends of "Young Italy" in London, at the head of whose executive council stood the inspiring name of Walter Savage Landor'. Quoted from Gosse's 'Preface' to A. C. Swinburne, *Ode to Mazzini* (London: Printed for Private Circulation, 1909), p. 5.

Modern Languages at Eton and Oxford, and so reading Mazzini in the original would not have presented him with any difficulties.[34] Additionally, as revealed by a 1916 auction catalogue, Swinburne owned a copy of a seven-volume edition of Mazzini's works, entitled *Scritti Editi e Inediti* (Milan, 1861). The auction catalogue describes this lot (497) as a 'presentation copy' as it is inscribed with '*Ad Alg. C. Swinburne con affecteo Guis. Mazzini*'.[35] However, it is possible that Swinburne already owned this copy and Mazzini merely inscribed it.

The *Musical Times*, in a highly detailed (but unfortunately anonymous) article of 1886, found a remarkable similarity between Wagner's works and Mazzini's essay. 'Even though he [Mazzini] was no musician', the article states with astonishment, '[there] must be something more than blind chance in the fact that Mazzini's description of specifically German music and Wagner's specific description of all music are identical'. It also noted the uncanny similarities of their ideas surrounding the role of music in national aspiration, and in wider European ideas of unity, and their comparable attacks on their respective musical worlds. Myth, the review declared, was central, as both Wagner and Mazzini saw in it a new organizing power as a national, musical, and mythic identity – one without borders or political prejudice. In relation to this, the article referenced Hegel's dictate that the 'subject for music should be some collective interest' and that this subject should be what Hegel called 'enchantment'.[36] Quoting Mazzini's essay, it concluded enthusiastically, there would soon be a time '"when poetry will no longer be the servant but the sister of music"', and that this might be a metaphor for aspirations concerning political unification.[37] The article also mentions the work on Wagner by Francis Hueffer and the translations of Wagner's works by Edward Dannreuther, which I will discuss shortly.

Unlike John D. Rosenberg, who claims that *Songs before Sunrise* 'is in all respects the opposite of *Poems and Ballads*', where 'erotic verses give way to marching songs', I would suggest that *Songs before Sunrise* is a form of politicized eroticism.[38] Swinburne's political

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[34] Swinburne would translate some of Mazzini's writings in 1869. See *TSL*, II, 29.
[35] *Sale Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons*, VI, 297.
[36] Wagner calls the collective unification of word and music, body and spirit 'wonder'. See *RWPW*, II, 213-223.
[37] 'Wagner and Mazzini', *Musical Times*, 27.525 (November 1886), 642-645 (pp. 642, 645, 643).
[38] John D. Rosenberg, 'Swinburne', 141.

method works by appealing not to existing man-made structures (as one might expect from poetry that focusses on contemporary political events) but to the human body. Sexual desire is transformed into a desire for liberty, and so he gives contemporary events the atmosphere of prophetic importance, where life and death are entwined. As Stephanie Kuduk Weiner has pointed out, Swinburne's *William Blake*, published several months after 'Ode on the Insurrection in Candia' (March 1867) and the poet's meeting with Mazzini, is not purely a poetic manifesto. Its calls to '"cleanse the doors of perception"' were, for Swinburne, she claims, both a 'poetic expression of republican philosophy and a weapon in the war against "priestcraft" and "kingcraft"'.[39]

Another powerful example of Swinburne's embodied language of politics occurs in 'The Eve of Revolution', which he called the 'centre poem and mainspring' of *Songs before Sunrise*, and at which he had 'never worked so hard at perfecting a poem into which I had put so much heart'.[40] Starting with the sound of trumpets, at which 'the night heaves, | With breasts palpitating and wings refurled, | With passion of couched limbs', the poem draws on images of the mother goddess Artemis (the sister of the god of song, Apollo) feeding the nations. But despite this nourishment, the speaker also draws on contrary images of a coming apocalypse (mirroring Tannhäuser's eschatological imagery in 'Laus Veneris') and implies that he is an amalgamation of the four angels of the Book of Revelation, whose trumpet blasts announce the end of the world. Four times the speaker sets 'the trumpet to my lips' and blows, and after each, the speaker addresses the breaking of the night and the coming of the day.[41] But the poem builds through its tentacular Alexandrine lines (based on Victor Hugo's verse) not to a day of judgement, but instead to the rhapsodic and passionate appearance of the female figure of 'Italia, the world's wonder, the world's care', to which heaven must 'bow down'. At this appearance the speaker

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[39] Stephanie Kuduk Weiner, *Republican Politics and English Poetry, 1789-1874* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 134. Weiner is here paraphrasing plate 14 of William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793).
[40] 14 February 1870, *TSL*, II, 95.
[41] *SCPW*, I, 670, 671.

cries ‘I take the trumpet from my lips and sing. | O life immeasurable and imminent love’, and so his words are transformed through the figure of Italia into a song, which

> […] gives the music swifter feet to move
> Through sharp remeasuring tones
> Of refluent antiphones
> More tender-tuned than heart or throat of dove,
> Soul into soul, song into song,
> Life changing into life, by laws that work not wrong.[42]

This is the image both of Italy and of a greater world drawn together through song and music, or music and word conjoined. As such, it acts as a poetic expression of the contents of Mazzini’s essay ‘The Philosophy of Music’. Swinburne unites this song with his ideas of the ‘spirit of sense’ or Wagner’s ‘real love seeded in the soil of fullest sentience’.[43] Italia is a natural force of endless becoming, which is, again, reminiscent of Tannhäuser’s rhapsodies in ‘Laus Veneris’ and the poem’s explicit, flowering ‘finale’ in the papal staff:

> O natural force in spirit and sense, that art
> One thing in all things, fruit of thine own fruit,
> O thought illimitable and infinite heart
> Whose blood is life in limbs indissolute
> That still keeps hurtless thine invisible part
> And inextirpable thy viewless root
> Whence all sweet shafts of green and each thy dart

[42] *SCPW*, I, 682, 683-4. Note the later echo of this line in Swinburne’s 1883 ‘Two Preludes’ on Wagner’s *Lohengrin*: ‘And the soul in it speaks and sings, A swan sweet-souled as a dove’; SCPW, II, 551.
[43] ‘A Communication to my Friends’, *RWPW*, I, 323.

Of sharpening leaf and bud resundering shoot.[44]

The political dangers of Swinburne's eroticism were noticed by his earliest reviewers. Rather in the way that Davison claimed that Wagner's music threatened the social hierarchy, the review of John Morley of *Poems and Ballads*, for example, painted its eroticism as a form of 'revolt' and a lack of 'social duty'. Writing in the *Saturday Review* on 4 August 1866, he stated that

> Mr. Swinburne is much too stoutly bent on taking his own course to pay any attention to critical monitions as to the duty of the poet […]. He is so firmly and avowedly fixed in an attitude of revolt against current notions of decency and dignity and social duty that to beg of him to become a little more decent, to fly a little less persistently and gleefully to the animal side of human nature, is simply to beg him to be something different from Mr. Swinburne […]. A rebel of his calibre is not to be brought to a better mind by solemn little sermons.[45]

The critic and poet Robert Buchanan, showed similar political concerns in his review for the *Athenæum*: 'We may safely affirm in the face of so many pages of brilliant writing', he claimed 'that such a man is either no poet at all, or a poet degraded from his high estate, and utterly and miserably lost to the Muses'. Swinburne's poetry was that of the dancers of the 'Jardin Mabile' or the prostitutes on 'Parade at Brighton'.[46]

One of the perceived dangers of Swinburne's poetry was that by pointing the goal of art downwards, like Wagner's music, he was, in a sense, democratizing art and opening it up to the masses. (This is ironic, since his poetry is now regarded as high art, like Wagner's music.) Both Wagner and Swinburne opened up the possibilities of what Alain Badiou has called the ushering in of the 'future of mass art'.[47] While the immediate subjects and characters of their art appear

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[44] *SCPW*, II, 684.
[45] Hyder, *Swinburne: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 22-23.
[46] Hyder, *Swinburne: The Critical Heritage*, p. 31.
[47] Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, p. 24.

remote in their mythological distance, by using these figures as symbols for patterns of desire common to all, Swinburne and Wagner were collapsing a previously revered symbolism into a mass experience, which all readers and listeners could feel. It is entirely appropriate then, that Matthew Arnold found Swinburne to be 'the favourite poet of the young men at Oxford and Cambridge' and that Gosse quotes an Oxford undergraduate as saying about *Poems and Ballads* '"It simply swept us off our legs with rapture". At Cambridge the young men joined hands and marched along shouting '"Dolores"' or '"A Song in the Time of Revolution"'.[48] Given its basis in embodied feeling, Swinburne's poetry would also seem equally well fitted for political songs that rouse crowds. Its use within popular song adaptations throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, is, thus, also unsurprising, given the habit of Swinburne's verse of moving from a lone voice to one of rhapsody, with a corresponding increase in volume in all senses – a method and aim (though perhaps in a more blatant form) of popular songs even today.

After *Poems and Ballads:* Francis Hueffer

While Hueffer's review certainly praises the beauty of Swinburne's verse, Swinburne's politics were perhaps rather too radical for the critic. Swinburne's idea of liberty, he states, was 'not so much the liberty which develops and constructs as that which lays low all conceivable limits which may surround the human spirit'. It is possible that he felt that Swinburne's interest in desire – which Hueffer here calls his 'Titanic volition' that leads to 'exaggerations' – somewhat weakened his political message.[49]

Despite this review, Hueffer and Swinburne were close friends. Prior to arriving in London, Hueffer had studied music in Leipzig and Berlin. Cosima Wagner mentions in her diary that Hueffer was an acquaintance of Nietzsche, and I suggest that Hueffer had known the

[48] The combination of the 'Dolores' and 'Song in the Time of Revolution. 1860' suggests the interchangeability of Swinburne's rhapsodies for moral or political eventualities. See *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, collected and arranged by George W. E. Russell, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895), II: *1848-1888,* 43. Gosse, *Life of Swinburne,* pp. 160-61.
[49] Hyder, *Swinburne: Critical Heritage*, p. 139. Interestingly, in Hueffer's 1874 book, *Richard Wagner and the Music of the Future*, there is no comment on the composer's sensuality or the musical depiction of sexual desire.

philosopher in Leipzig, as Nietzsche studied at the university there for two terms in 1865.[50] 'Good article on *Beethoven*,' Cosima writes on 4 April 1871, having just mentioned that Nietzsche had arrived for breakfast the previous day, looking 'very run down'. The article, she noted, was in 'an English periodical (*Academy*) and the author (*Franz Hüffer*) a German acquaintance of Prof. Nietzsche's and a former opponent of R [Richard Wagner]'.[51] That Hueffer was 'an opponent' of Wagner initially, shows him to have been an adaptable man, able to change his mind and enthusiastically embrace ideas that he had previously rejected.[52] This was only in professional terms, however, as his temper appears to have been easily raised, especially where his family were concerned.[53]

When he moved to London around 1869, Hueffer quickly became one of the capital's leading advocates of Wagner, along with his compatriot Edward Dannreuther. Why he moved to London cannot be answered with any certainty, although in his letters Swinburne makes a series of interesting comments about Hueffer that could suggest possible reasons. Swinburne's first mention is in a letter to his mother of 22 September 1870 in which he comments on the Franco-Prussian War (July 1870 – January 1871). He recalls talking about Europe to Karl Blind at his home, during which he had decried the 'fatal anti-German feeling in France' and that it had 'yet more of evil seed to bear'. After mentioning the bloodshed, Swinburne's letter then breaks off, but rebegins with 'I know only one German – a very able man and ardent patriot – who is utterly opposed to the seizure of Alsace and Lorraine, as worse for Germany than even for France'.[54]

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[50] Prideaux, *I am Dynamite*, p. 44.
[51] *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, trans. by Geoffrey Skelton, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978-1980), I, 353. Hueffer's article must have been his review of Wagner's essay *Beethoven*, which appeared in the *Academy* on 15 March 1871. Either Hueffer sent it to the Wagners or to Nietzsche.
[52] The surname Hueffer is, by various writers, sometimes written in its original German form, *Hüffer*, as it is in Cosima Wagner's quotation above. I will use the anglicized version of 'Hueffer' as this is the spelling he used to sign his own letters with, unless, in quotation, it is spelt otherwise.
[53] See Angela Thirlwell, *William and Lucy: The Other Rossettis* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 65. Scott's *Autobiographical Notes* gives a portrait of Hueffer as being easily led and states that 'he was lazy beyond anyone I had ever known'; see pp. 182-89 (p. 183)
[54] *TSL*, II, 130-31.

Lang identifies this 'one German' as Hueffer, which is surely correct given the detail in subsequent letters.

A later letter tantalizingly suggests that Hueffer knew some of the leading members of the Paris Commune (which had attempted to govern Paris from March 1870). Writing in October 1872 to a friend of Mazzini, the politician James Stansfeld (1820-98), Swinburne discusses Jules Andrieu (1837-82), who had been minister of finance for the Commune but had 'left Paris literally penniless' once it had fallen. Swinburne had been alerted to Andrieu's name, he states, by an article about the Commune written by the former minister himself in the November 1871 issue of the *Fortnightly Review*.[55] Soon afterwards, Swinburne spoke with

> high admiration of this essay as a political exposition of faith to Dr. Franz Hüffer, whom you may know by name […] as a man of immense learning though still young, [and] I found that he was intimate with Andrieux [*sic*], to whom he offered to introduce me.[56]

Before the Franco-Prussian War, Paris had been the centre of the European artistic world and so it would have been natural for Hueffer, with his musical training, to have gravitated there after his studies were complete. However, it is likely that Hueffer moved on to London before hostilities broke out between Germany and France in 1870, given the political violence in Paris during the previous year.[57] With his knowledge of the situation in Paris, however, Hueffer would have been valuable to journalism, and so he found work with the *Fortnightly Review*. It would have also made him extremely interesting to Swinburne and his contacts, and it was not long before Hueffer also moved in London's major artistic circles.[58]

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[55] See Jules Andrieu, 'The Paris Commune: A Chapter Towards its Theory and History', *Fortnightly Review*, 10.59 (Nov. 1871), 571-598.
[56] *TSL*, II, 187.
[57] The *DNB* states he came to London in 1869. See J. A. F. Maitland and John Warrack, 'Hueffer, Francis (1845–1889), music critic', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online version, <https://0-doi-org.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/14044> (Accessed 9 November 2019).
[58] Like Swinburne, Hueffer was a republican atheist. When he died in 1889, Madox Ford reported that no service was read at his funeral. See Thirlwell, *William and Lucy*, p. 296. On the

From these letters above, it is clear that Swinburne was critical of French anti-German feeling, and was not, as has been suggested, anti-German himself.[59] Because of his friendship with the Hueffers, the Blinds, the Rossettis, Dannreuthers, and the Ionides, it would appear that Swinburne was extremely sympathetic to European nationalism as a whole, irrespective of national borders, in the ways suggested by Mazzini's essay on music and Wagner's theories. Indeed, leading up to and after the Franco-Prussian war, Swinburne's enthusiasm for France appeared to wane.[60]

Swinburne's one pronouncement of 'hate' for Germans occurs in another letter to his mother sent two years after the war (24 July 1872) while he was holidaying in Scotland with Benjamin Jowett – another teutonophile. Clearly, there had been some discussion between him and Jowett on Franco-Prussian affairs and the post-conflict politics, and these discussions may have included Wagner, as

> I like being recognized as a French poet as well as an English, I am writing them [a French journal] one on some music of Wagner's – I hope they won't mind the musician being a German. I hate them otherwise, but I must say the one good thing the Germans can do – music – they do so much better than any other people that no one even comes

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Fortnightly Review's republicanism, see Weiner, *Republican Politics and English Poetry*, pp. 134-137.

[59] Laura Kilbride states that 'Swinburne never read Nietzsche. William Rutland affirms that as to "German … he knew not a word, and was consequently inclined rather to belittle all things Teutonic, and even all things Germanic"'. I would suggest that we cannot be certain that Swinburne did not read Nietzsche, even if there are no references to the philosopher in any surviving correspondence. If he did, it would have been much later in his life. *The Birth of Tragedy* was not published until 1872, and was met with a general critical silence. It was not until *Beyond Good and Evil* in 1886 that Nietzsche started to gain notice. Nietzsche would certainly have appealed to Swinburne, given the former's hatred of Plato, which is particularly pronounced in *Beyond Good and Evil*. See Laura Kilbride, '"A *Renouveau* of English Prosody": Rereading Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*', *Essays in Criticism*, 68.1 (January 2018), 25–53 (p. 32). Kilbride's Rutland quotation comes from William Rutland, *Swinburne: A Nineteenth-Century Hellene* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1931), p. 2. Charlotte Ribeyrol has suggested that Rutland's readings of Swinburne are problematic in various ways. See 'Swinburne: A Nineteenth-Century Hellene?', in *Algernon Charles Swinburne: Unofficial Laureate*, p. 54.

[60] Later in life, Swinburne was reported as being vehement in his feelings against French politics. See William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, 2 vols. (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1943), I: *1872-1900*, 234.

> second. Jowett talks of going to some part of Germany – I think Bavaria or some southern province – when we break up; […]. He would not go last year having too much good feeling to wish or to endure to be the witness of their rampant exultation over the plunder of France, and robbing of her provinces: which I like in him particularly, as his tendencies and connections are the reverse of mine, being much more in the German line than the French.[61]

This may suggest an abrupt *volte-face*, but it only demonstrates that Swinburne's feelings about Germany were in flux and that he had separated out the political activities of Germany from its artistic life. After all, within two days of this letter, Mathilde Blind was writing to him about the material he needed for his projected version of '"Tristan & Iseult"'.[62] That Swinburne was worried about writing for a French journal about a German musician, also demonstrates that he was aware of the sensitivities, and there is a certain bravado in Swinburne's use of the word 'hate'. His mother's feelings against Germany may have been strong. Jowett and Swinburne's relationship was also undoubtedly reflected in this letter, as it appears – given Jowett's Platonic Christianity – that they greatly enjoyed combative argument.

Swinburne's own family further extended its reach into Germany in 1879 when his brother Edward (1848-1891) married a German cousin, Olga Helene Thumann (1863-1912). She was the daughter of Jane Swinburne (1837-?) and the illustrator and painter Paul Thumann (1834-1908), who also lived in Germany.[63] Edward and Olga's wedding took place in Berlin, and Edward spent some time in Germany thereafter as Olga had not met Swinburne by 1881, since he

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[61] *TSL*, II, 182. This French Wagner poem has never been identified. It was, for a while, thought to have been discovered by Terry Meyers; he later realized this was not the case. See Terry L. Meyers, 'Swinburne on Wagner's Music: A Misattribution', *Victorian Poetry*, 37.4 (Winter, 1999), 551.

[62] *UC*, I, 231. Blind writes on 26 June 1872 'I will forward to your address what little I have noted down of "Tristan & Iseult"'.

[63] Rooksby, *A.C. Swinburne: A Poet's Life*, p.20. Jane was the daughter of Swinburne's uncle Edward (1788-1855), who was a painter who had spent time in Germany. Uncle Edward died 13 years before Jane's marriage to Thumann, indicating that the family relations must have been significant for them to have been continued long after his death.

then wrote to Watts-Dunton stating that he had heard 'good accounts of my sister in law'.[64] As I showed in chapter one, Edward was fascinated by European music, and in a letter to John Nichol (1833-1894) in 1876, Swinburne also writes 'My brother, as an ardent musician, is horrified to miss Chopin in a list which includes Verdi'.[65]

By this time, however, Germanic culture had already become a much greater part of Swinburne's life through the influence of Hueffer, who married Catherine Madox Brown (1850-1927), the daughter of the painter Ford Madox Brown, in 1872. Thereafter, he became a good friend to Swinburne.[66] Their closeness is demonstrated by the claim of Hueffer's son, the novelist Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939), that Swinburne was his godfather, although this seems highly unlikely, given Swinburne's atheism and Ford's own 'profound contempt' for facts.[67] In addition to the letters in which Swinburne signals his admiration for Hueffer, Watts-Dunton became the trustee of Hueffer's will when he died in 1889.[68]

In 1874, Hueffer's *Richard Wagner and the Music of the Future* was published, which was compiled from his articles in the *Fortnightly Review*. He followed his up with *Richard Wagner* (1881) and a translation of the correspondence between Wagner and Liszt (1888). He also appears to have translated at least part of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* as in 1874 Swinburne mentions the book in a letter to his publisher Andrew Chatto, saying that he hopes

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[64] *TSL*, IV, 239. Swinburne later became acquainted with her. When Edward died in 1891, he wrote that Olga was 'the worst of wives' and that (in terms of the funeral) 'We do not even know where the woman is now: thank heaven, she will not be present to desecrate and irritate our sorrow'. See *TSL*, VI, 14.

[65] *TSL*, III, 167. This comment is related to Swinburne's critique (in the letter) of Nichols's *Tables of European Literature and History, A.D. 200-1876* (1876).

[66] Swinburne knew Catherine extremely well – in fact, the *Manchester Guardian*, in an obituary printed on her death, stated that she would regularly lunch with him. See 'Obituaries: The Death of Mrs Francis Hueffer', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 June 1927.

[67] See *The Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. by Richard M. Ludwig (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 251. On Ford's attitude to 'facts', he states in his memoir of the Pre-Raphaelites: 'I don't really deal in facts, I have for facts a most profound contempt'. See Ford Madox Hueffer, *Ancient Lights and Certain New Reflections: Being the Memories of a Young Man* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1911), p. xv.

[68] Roger W. Peattie, *Selected Letters of William Michael Rossetti* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), p. 529.

> it is true that you are about to publish a translation of Schopenhauer by Dr. Hüffer, whose consummate mastery of English will make him the fittest man to introduce to English students the great thinker and man in person, whose fame has excited such deep interest and attention in England as well as in France.[69]

It does not appear that this translation was ever published. In a subsequently discovered letter sent to Ford Madox Brown, dated 17 July 1874, Swinburne states 'I am very glad to hear that Hueffer's projected book is to appear under Chatto's auspices, & should be more so if I c^{d} flatter myself with the hope that I might have been of any service in the matter'. Terry Meyers has suggested that this relates to Hueffer's *Richard Wagner and the Music of the Future*. However, Swinburne is here talking about the unpublished Schopenhauer book because Hueffer's Wagner work had already been advertised under the auspices of Chapman and Hall by late 1873.[70] Swinburne's 'service in the matter', again, does not suggest any belittling of German culture, but it does suggest that his knowledge of Schopenhauer had increased significantly since 1869, when he had written to George Powell about Auguste de Gasperini's *La Nouvelle Allemagne musicale* (1866), as noted in the previous chapter. This was probably due to Hueffer's influence, as for a time he had lived in Cheyne Walk next to D. G. Rossetti, who complains comically, in various letters, of Hueffer's constant talk of Schopenhauer.[71]

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[69] *TSL*, II, 299-300.

[70] For the letter, see Meyers, 'Supplementary Material to the Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne', <webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/swinburne/view#docId =swinburne/acs0000505-01.xml> (accessed 30 August 2019).

[71] See, for example, *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. by William E. Fredeman, 10 vols. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002-2010), V, 151-2 (e.g. 'Dear Hüffer, I am very glad to have you for a neighbour. I can come in and swear at Schopenhauer when I have the mind'). See also the story about Swinburne and Rossetti mocking Hueffer's 'dogmatic and emphatic' love of Schopenhauer when they '"served him up" the following doggerel' limerick: 'There's a metaphysician called Hueffer | A hypochondrial buffer, | To proclaim Schopenhauer, | From the top of a tower, | Is the ultimate mission of Hueffer'; see Clara Watts-Dunton, *The Home Life of Swinburne* (London: A. M. Philpot, 1922), p. 194. A alternative version of this rhyme is given by William Bell Scott, which also deliberately mispronounces Hueffer: 'There's a solid fat German called Huffer, | Who at anything funny's a duffer: | To proclaim Schopenhauer | From the top of a tower | Will be the last effort of Huffer'. See Scott, *Autobiographical Notes*, II, 189.

In 1876, Hueffer travelled to Bayreuth (with Edward Dannreuther and George Powell) to attend the opening of Wagner's *Festspielhaus*. Here he heard and saw the first full production of the composer's *Ring* Cycle.[72] For the Wagner Festival in the following year at the Royal Albert Hall – which Wagner attended and conducted at – he also translated parts of the libretti of various operas, which were used in the concert programmes.

As I have recently demonstrated, Hueffer was also a composer, and in the spirit of the German *lieder* tradition, set poems to music, including a version of Swinburne's 'A Match' in a collection called *Seven Songs* (1873).[73] It is highly likely that Swinburne heard Hueffer playing this before its publication, not least for the sake of courtesy. In the same collection, Hueffer included adaptations of Christina Rossetti's 'When I am dead, my dearest' (1862) and 'Twist Me a Crown of Wind-Flowers' (1872), and W. M. Rossetti's diary states that Hueffer played the former at a dinner attended by Swinburne given at Ford Madox Brown's on 15 December 1870:

> Dined at Brown's – partly in order to hear Hüffer's music, which I like much, to Christina's song, 'When I am dead, my dearest' […] Gabriel read the plan he has laid out for his proposed lyrical drama of *The Sirens* [*The Doom of the Sirens,* but never completed]. He wishes to have music composed for it, and seems to think of Hüffer. […] Brown, Hüffer and Swinburne, who was also present, all raised some questions as to details, though generally approving.[74]

On this same evening, Swinburne consulted W. M. Rossetti about the contract from the publisher F. S. Ellis to publish *Songs before Sunrise,* and Rossetti appears to have acted for Swinburne in

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[72] For his report on this, see Francis Hueffer, *Musical Studies* (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1880), pp. 188-200 (originally published as 'The Wagner Festival' in the *Examiner* on 26 August 1876). It is possible that he also met up again with Nietzsche, who was also in attendance.
[73] See Michael Craske, 'Swinburne, Wagner, Eliot, and the Musical Legacy of *Poems and Ballads*', *Journal of Victorian Culture,* 23.4 (2018), 542–555 (p. 548). This music can be heard on my own website. See Michael Craske, 'Roses, pleasure, and pain: "A Match" (1873) by Francis Hueffer', *verseandmusic.com,* <https://verseandmusic.com/2018/06/08/a-match-1873-by-francis-hueffer> (accessed 30 August 2019).
[74] William Michael Rossetti, *The Diary of William Michael Rossetti, 1870-1873,* ed. by Odette Bornand (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 36.

this matter. Therefore, despite Hueffer's objections to the 'eruptions' of Swinburne's poetry, the two men were together at various dinners and events well before Hueffer's *Songs before Sunrise* review of 1871 was written. It is also probable that at one or more of these dinners, in addition to his Swinburne adaptation, Hueffer played Wagner to the dinner guests.

Edward Dannreuther

Dannreuther was also a leading Wagnerian in London and another friend of Swinburne. He appears to have wanted – with Hueffer – to suggest parallels between Wagner and the poet, or, at the very least, an artistic kinship. Also a music student at Leipzig – though prior to Hueffer or Nietzsche – he came to London in 1863, earning fame by performing Chopin at the Crystal Palace.[75] His family connections are of especial importance with regards to Swinburne's early career and Wagnerism. Around the middle of the 1860s he acquired Chariclea Ionides (1844-1923) as a music pupil and they were later engaged in 1870 and married. Chariclea was a daughter of the Turkish/Greek art patron and merchant Alexander Ionides (1810-1890) and the sister of Luke, Constantine, Aglaia, and Alecco (sometimes spelled 'Aleco'). The Ionides family lived at 1 Holland Park in London, which had been remodelled by Philip Webb (1831-1915), the designer of William Morris's 'Red House' in Bexleyheath, which Swinburne had visited on occasions in the early 1860s. They were also close friends with Whistler, whom Luke, Chariclea's brother, states in his memoirs he met in 1855.[76] Chariclea's cousin Helen Euphrosyne Ionides (Alexander's brother's daughter) became especially close, finally marrying Whistler's brother, William, in 1877. In 1862, Whistler brought D. G. Rossetti to Luke's house, and shortly afterwards Luke was introduced to Joanna Hiffernan (c.1843-1903), who modelled for Whistler's *Symphony in White No. 1: The White Girl* and later for *Symphony in White No. 2: The Little White Girl*, for which Swinburne wrote his poem 'Before the Mirror'. Swinburne's close friendship with the Ionides family was lasting, as he corresponded with Chariclea's mother early in 1883

[75] 'Edward Dannreuther', *Musical Times*, 68.668 (1 October 1898), 645-654 (p. 649).
[76] Luke Ionides, *Memories, with an afterword by Julia Ionides* (Ludlow: Dog Rose Press, 1996), p. 7.

thanking her for her 'beautiful new year's gift' and asking whether she would come to see him at The Pines.[77] Members of the Ionides family bought works by Fantin-Latour, including some of his flower pictures, and Luke Ionides bought Fantin's oil painting *Scène du Tannhäuser*, known in English as *Tannhäuser: Venusberg* (1864). This painting – see figure 3 for the lithograph with a similar scene – was displayed in the Paris *Salon* of 1864.[78] It is likely that if he had not seen this painting before it was purchased, Swinburne may later have seen it at the Ionides home.

In his memoirs, Luke Ionides relates an incident involving a mesmerist at Rossetti and Swinburne's house in Cheyne Walk at which both Dannreuther and Whistler were present. No date is given, however it may have taken place during or after 1864 as Rossetti first mentions the mesmerist called 'Bergheim' in a letter of this year.[79] Swinburne did not move out of Cheyne Walk until 1865, although his residence there was erratic. Ionides remembers the story in this way:

> One evening after dinner we went into a tent he [Rossetti] had raised in the garden, and Bergheim, a powerful mesmerist, was asked if he could mesmerize any stranger, and as he said, 'Yes', Rossetti sent out into the street to find two stray women, who would not mind submitting to the experiment. Both Jimmy and Willy Whistler were there, Edward Dannreuther, the musician, and Lord Lindsay, and each one was asked to tell Bergheim what he wanted each woman to do. […] Dannreuther put them both to the severest test. When Bergheim had made passes over them, Dannreuther asked him to start one of them singing and to stop her at a certain note, then to start the other, and stop her in the same way, Dannreuther noting the note on which each had left off. Then after a few minutes interval Bergheim restarted the first girl, and she went on exactly where she had left off,

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[77] *TSL*, V, 1.
[78] See Ionides, *Memories*, p. 64. For the painting's provenance, see Druick & Hoog, *Fantin-Latour*, p. 160. Luke Ionides also knew Fantin-Latour and Legros, although he does not state when he first met them, as well as Mazzini's confederate Garibaldi, whom he first met in England in 1860.
[79] *Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, V, 402 (64.29).

> and the second girl also restarted on the note on which she had left off; a feat which Dannreuther declared was impossible to the most accomplished singers.[80]

In his memoir of Rossetti's life at Cheyne Walk, Henry Treffry Dunn (1838-1899) also describes an evening of mesmerism. This was clearly around the same time, as the tent is now described as a 'lordly pleasure marquee' but the party included Theodore Watts-Dunton, William Morris, and the 'Master of Lindsay' (rather than 'Lord' Lindsay), who told the guests a compelling story about a mesmerist floating out of windows.[81] The editor of Rossetti's *Correspondence*, William Fredeman, wonders who Bergheim might be, suggesting 'J. S. Bergheim [born 1844] , a civil engineer, mentioned in the report of the *Spiritualism Committee of the London Dialectical Society* in 1871'.[82] However, it appears that the event was more than a mesmerism gathering. As Chariclea Dannreuther notes in her unpublished memoir, the London Wagner Society was formed in 1871, with Lord Lindsay as 'president and Bergheim the Treasurer'.[83] On society documentation concerning the 'Richard Wagner Testimonial' fund from 1877 – set up to ensure that the composer received money for his appearances at the Royal Albert Hall – 'J. S. Bergheim' is listed as 'Treasurer'. His name also appears on an 1874 communiqué requesting money for a series of concerts at St. James's Hall.[84] Rossetti's mesmerism evenings, then, were peopled by Wagnerites, and possibly held for Wagnerites, who all – as I will show in the following chapter – had musically-orientated interests in dream interpretation and trances. William Bell Scott, who, as I have indicated, was a member of the London Wagner Society, also attended these events at which, he claims, Rossetti attempted to '"call up the spirit of his wife"'. W. M. Rossetti, who quotes Scott on this in his edition of Rossetti's family letters, notes that there were many such

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[80] Ionides, *Memories*, p. 49-50.
[81] Henry Treffry Dunn, *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and His Circle (Cheyne Walk Life)*, ed. Gale Pedrick (London: Elkin Mathews, 1904), pp. 56-57. Later in his life, Dunn moved in and lived with Watts-Dunton and Swinburne at The Pines; see, Gale Pedrick, *Life with Rossetti or No Peacocks Allowed* (London: Macdonald, 1964), p. 228.
[82] *Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, V, 402.
[83] Quoted in Stewart Spencer, 'Wagner's Addresses in London', *Wagner*, 26.1 (2005), 33-51 (p. 45).
[84] Both items can be found at in the Dannreuther Archive, special collections, Royal College of Music (no class mark or catalogue yet available).

evenings, but that those with Bergheim 'astonished me not a little'.[85] That Rossetti was hosting these evenings suggests that ideas about Rossetti's lack of interest in music may well be misplaced.[86]

Dannreuther was, therefore, probably a friend of Swinburne's from the mid-1860s, either from 1864 or the year he left Cheyne Walk. Certainly, it gives context and a time-scale to Swinburne's comment about Dannreuther in a letter to George Powell of 14 February 1873: 'I see in the "Guardian" of the twelfth a musical article announcing great things in the Wagner direction, as forthcoming from our friend Dannreuther and others – I suppose you are in the thick of the movement'.[87] Swinburne is here referring to a series of concerts that would be held at the Hanover Rooms and St. James's Hall from the end of February to raise money for the building of Wagner's theatre in Bayreuth. The second concert, said the *Pall Mall Gazette*, was 'numerously attended'. Conducted by Dannreuther it included the overtures from *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin,* and *Die Meistersinger*.[88]

During the 1877 Wagner Festival, Chariclea and Edward Dannreuther hosted the Wagners throughout their stay in London at their home at 12 Orme Square and Dannreuther acted as a rehearsal conductor for the festival.[89] While various members of Swinburne's circle are reported to have met Wagner during this time – Luke Ionides introduced Wagner and his wife Cosima to William Morris, for example – there is, currently, no evidence that Swinburne too met

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[85] W. M. Rossetti claims 'I myself witnessed some [clairvoyant sessions] in 1865, '66, '68, and '70. I will not enter into details, but will only say that now and again demonstrations occurred (especially some in which a Mr. Bergheim was concerned), which astonished me not a little, and for which I was and am unable to account'. See *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family Letters, with a Memoir by William Michael Rossetti*, 2 vols. (London: Ellis and Elvey, 1895), I, 255. See also Scott, *Autobiographical Notes*, II, 235.

[86] D. G. Rossetti mentions Bergheim again in a letter of 1870 to William Bell Scott: 'I had 2 mesmeric séances here which were tremendous larks and very surprising. They came off in the tent. The operator was one Bergheim who is a "wunner" at it, and the patients 2 girls brought by him who certainly afforded fine sport'. See *Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, IV: II, 514 (70.200).

[87] *TSL*, II, 231.

[88] See 'Some Recent Concerts', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 March 1873, p. 12.

[89] Dannreuther had been corresponding with the Wagners since March 1872; see, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, I, 463.

with Wagner, or attended performances at the Albert Hall.[90] There is also no evidence that he did not.[91]

In addition to the many concerts that Dannreuther conducted across London throughout the 1870s and beyond, he also held salon concerts at his Orme Square home in which he promoted the latest musical fashions to a more select audience. Because of these concerts, as Michael Allis and Jeremy Dibble have shown, the Dannreuthers' home became one of the centres of London's musical life.[92] Dannreuther sometimes performed his own compositions at these concerts. A few months before the Wagners' visit, on 18 January 1877 (and a few months after his return from Bayreuth) he held an evening of *Specimens from a Cycle of English Songs and Lyrics*. This concert included his own adaptations of Swinburne's 'A Match' and 'An Oblation' [*sic*] and 'A Ballad of Burdens'. I have discussed this concert in more detail in my article on Swinburne song settings, but it is worth stating here that although these pieces do not appear to have been published, I have recently discovered in the Dannreuther archive at the Royal College of Music a manuscript sheet of the last verse of 'A Ballad of Burdens', which has only survived as the paper had been reused overleaf for a fair copy of an earlier instrumental piece, also by Dannreuther.[93]

Also in the Dannreuther archive, kept together with a draft of his contribution to the *Oxford History of Music: The Romantic Period* (1905), are several cuttings of Swinburne's articles from issues of the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Fortnightly Review* published between 1887-8. These have probably been kept as indicators of style, as I have also recently shown that

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[90] Ionides, *Memories*, pp. 22-23.
[91] Burne-Jones and his wife Georgiana, for example, attended a concert. Cosima Wagner came to Burne-Jones's studio on 'two or three visits' and sat for a drawing, but 'they did not meet' the composer himself. See Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, II, 79-80.
[92] Allis, 'Performance in Private', pp. 139–171. Jeremy Dibble, 'Edward Dannreuther and the Orme Square Phenomenon', in *Music and British Culture, 1785–1914*, ed. by Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 275–298.
[93] A full concert programme survives at the British Library (Music Collections, shelf mark: d.488.d.(1.)), giving the lyrics of the poems, and one of the audience members has annotated it, stating that the Swinburne adaptation was 'one of the best but badly sung'. For a review, see 'Mr. Dannreuther's Concert', *Musical Standard*, 12.652 (27 January 1877), 47.

Dannreuther mimicked and borrowed from Swinburne's work in his own writings.[94] His 1872 essay 'Notes on the Text of Beethoven' for the *Monthly Musical Record*, for example, contains several 'borrowings' of phrases and metaphors. These are not plagiarism, but adaptations, as one of the essays that Dannreuther has borrowed from is Swinburne's 1869 essay 'Notes on the Text of Shelley', published in the *Fortnightly Review*. Dannreuther has clearly copied Swinburne's rather functional title, as both essays have essentially the same administrative task, this being to ascertain the textual authority of previous versions of their subjects' works. But Dannreuther then signals much more obscure intentions. After quoting Swinburne's earlier essay at the start of his own (as if to alert readers who might be aware of what was to come – one of these presumably being Swinburne himself), he then drops in 'Swinburnianisms' unannounced at various points in his own text.

I will not restate my argument in any detail here, as it is available elsewhere, but Dannreuther is making two main points. The first is that he is following Swinburne's demand for 'authority' of voice (in this case a musical voice, in terms of Beethoven's), but secondly, he is responding to two oblique references to Wagner in Swinburne's essay on Shelley, neither of which have previously been noticed. These occur in the first paragraph and the final sentence. In the former, Swinburne calls Shelley 'the master-singer of our modern poets', while in the latter, he again calls him 'the master-singer of our modern race and age'.[95] These are references to Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, which had been premiered in Munich the year before Swinburne's essay in 1868. This opera's overture was particularly important to Dannreuther, as he had heard its first performance as a stand-alone piece, with Wagner conducting, while a student in Leipzig in 1862.[96]

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[94] Michael Craske, 'Dannreuther's Hidden Swinburne References Signal Artistic Kinship', *Notes and Queries*, 66.2 (June 2019), 300–302.
[95] A. C. Swinburne, 'Notes on the Text of Shelley', *Essays and Studies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1875), pp. 184, 224.
[96] A performance of the overture to *Die Meistersinger* was given at the Crystal Palace on 2 December 1868: 'Crystal Palace Music', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 December 1868, p. 10.

By way of digression we might note that in a letter dated 13 July 1867, Swinburne tells John Nichol about his potential travel plans for 1868. Nichol had suggested a walking tour in Spring, however:

> In the autumn [of 1868] I have some thoughts of going to Munich (of all places) with an old schoolfellow and friend [George Powell], to see the opening of Wagner's Theatre and the performance of his yet unknown opera which is to take four nights to represent, and embody the whole of the Nibelungen.[97]

In his article on 'Swinburne and Wagner', Francis Sypher is puzzled by this letter's date. Quoting it, he suggests that 'It would be surprising if neither Swinburne nor Powell knew in 1867 that the construction for the projected Wagner theatre at Munich had never been begun, and that the *Ring* was still quite incomplete. The passage seems more suitable to 1875 or early '76'.[98] What appears to have happened here is that Swinburne, in writing to Nichol, has muddled up the opening of Wagner's new opera *Die Meistersinger* in Munich, which premiered at the state opera house on 21 June 1868, and the *Ring* Cycle, which did not get performed until 1876 in Bayreuth. Clearly, after a conversation between Powell and himself, Swinburne confused both works, the two opera houses, and the probable date. Powell surely did know that Wagner's theatre had not been built and that the *Ring* Cycle had not been completed. Additionally, the confusion may also have arisen from the fact that before Wagner's general exile from Bavaria in late 1865 (for political reasons and his continual reliance on state funds), Wagner was indeed meant to have had his theatre built in Munich. He had envisaged that the *Ring* Cycle would be first performed there and that the theatre would be completed by 1867. However, even before his 1865 exile, as Christopher McIntosh describes in his biography of Ludwig II, this plan had become impossible, and not least

[97] *TSL*, I, 250.
[98] Sypher, 'Swinburne and Wagner', p. 174.

because of tensions that led to the Austro-Prussian war in 1866, into which Bavaria was dragged.[99]

Interestingly, for June 1868, there appear to be no existing letters from Swinburne, and so I wonder, speculatively, whether it is possible that he might have travelled to Munich with Powell during June 1868 for the premiere of *Die Meistersinger*. The first letter written by Swinburne after this month is to Matthew Arnold on 3 July, in which he states 'I ought to have answered your letter of May 11th long since, but have been here and there – and in London chronically (*not* in Mr. Pecksniff's sense – à Dieu ne plaise!) ill – since receiving it'.[100] It is possible that Powell invited Swinburne to a further Wagner premiere in Munich in 1870. On 30 November 1869, Swinburne wrote to Powell stating 'it would be a delight to me to hear the Valkür [*sic*], as you well know'. *Die Walküre* was premiered in Munich on 26 June 1870. If this was an invitation from Powell to the premiere, Swinburne did not go, as we have a letter from London to W. M. Rossetti written by him three days before the *Die Walküre* opened.[101]

However, returning to Swinburne's essay on Shelley, we might note that by making references to Wagner and *Die Meistersinger*, Dannreuther could also be refashioning Swinburne into a version of the opera's hero, Hans Sachs, who is a shoemaker and one of the mastersingers of the title. In the opera's story, Sachs is in love with Eva Pogner, but she, unfortunately, is in love with a visiting knight Walther von Stolzing. However, Eva's hand in marriage has been offered by her father to the winner of a song-contest (just as in *Tannhäuser*, where Elisabeth is the prize for the singers of the Wartburg). Walther intends to win her, but having no experience of singing or poetic composition, however, he has to turn to Sachs for help. After much soul-searching, Hans resigns his own love for Eva, and so teaches Walther the art of singing and poetry so that he can win Eva by singing the *Meisterlied*, or the winning song. In doing so, he also sets himself apart from the earthly expression of love to pursue a continual self-sacrificial

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[99] See Christopher McIntosh, *The Swan King: Ludwig II of Bavaria* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 63-7.
[100] *TSL*, I, 300. The first letter after June in *UL* is dated tentatively as 27 July.
[101] *TSL*, II, 60 and *TSL*, II, 114. Given the information in Murray's *A Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany* (1871) it would seem highly unlikely for anyone to be able to reach Munich within three days.

love that is involved in the creation of song and music. As Alain Badiou point out, he also retains his position of *Meister* – even though Walther wins – since Sachs brings about the 'synthesis between old and new'. He unites all of time in his song.[102] As in *Tannhäuser*, there is a sense of divinity in Sachs's self-sacrifice, an idea that Swinburne, too, invokes, when he calls his 'master-singer' Shelley – in the last sentence of 'Notes on the Text of Shelley' – divine: 'to the poet [Shelley] beloved above all other poets, being beyond all other poets – in one word, and the only proper word – divine'.[103] This divinity is the divine love of Venus, or the creative power of Schopenhauer's musical will, which is unleashed in music and song.

Swinburne's essay offers nothing else to explain his references to Wagner here, but Dannreuther, by using Swinburne's own sentences, is, in a sense, repeating the Sachs-Walther relationship. He is implying that Swinburne is the mastersinger from whom he has learned. Additionally, as with his song adaptations of Swinburne's poems, Dannreuther is locating Swinburne's work and criticism within Wagnerian aesthetics and, by doing so in this essay, highlighting the importance of Beethoven's *Ninth* to the origin of the underlying ideas. He outlines these ideas more fully as well as Wagner's desire for the 'union' of poetry and music, which he calls the 'supreme art of expression' in his *Richard Wagner: His Tendencies and Theories* (London, 1873), a book in which he mentions Swinburne with regard to dramatic poetry. Like Hueffer's book, Dannreuther's is a republication of various essays in which he discusses Wagner's wish to reform dramatic poetry by placing the words of the poet at the service of opera.[104] He claims that by blending words with music, the power of both would be extended. As he would later state in his *Oxford History of Music*, published in 1905:

> It was not until after Beethoven's time that musical resources were sufficiently developed to allow of a composer attempting so difficult a task as the complete absorption and adequate reproduction of a poem of some length. Nowadays, and since Schumann set the

[102] Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, p. 109.
[103] Swinburne, *Essays and Studies*, pp. 223-4.
[104] Edward Dannreuther, *Richard Wagner: His Tendencies and Theories* (London, 1873), pp. 41, 47.

> example, any poem that is musical in its nature may be aptly treated, and presented in conformity with the poet's intention. It has been proved that the sequence of moods which makes a good design in poetry will also make a good design in music.[105]

Poetic music, here, is being seen as a progression of moods within and across the stanzaic form, and not necessarily in the prosodic technicalities of the poems themselves. It is perhaps for this reason that both Dannreuther and Hueffer chose to adapt Swinburne's 'A Match', given its process of layering moods as it proceeds. The poem moves from separation to intimacy and then back again, with each stanza portraying an emotional modulation through the blending of opposites, with the final verse uniting pleasure and pain.

Hueffer was clear about his objective in composing these adaptations. In his preface to *Seven Songs*, he discusses translating 'as closely as possible the "poetical idea" of each song', which achieves this, he claims, by transposing a poem's emotional or 'sentimental keynote' and demonstrating 'the emotional changes in the single stanzas'.[106] This idea of mood/emotional changes as a form of music is, essentially, a Schopenhauerian idea (discussed previously in relation to 'Laus Veneris') in which melody is created by a constant interplay between '*discord and reconciliation*'.[107] In its first standalone musical phrase, Hueffer's rhapsodic version of 'A Match' creates a leitmotif (which, presumably, is meant to mean, literally, a 'match'). This is then repeated across the rest of the song, in modulated forms, and appears to be inviting comparison and union. The emphasis of the piece is on '*con expressione*', and within this expression, alternating states of 'sweetness' and 'sorrow' are played out.[108] See Appendix 2 for the music.

I suspect that Hueffer and Dannreuther were consciously using Swinburne in a Wagnerian effort to demonstrate a new kind of aesthetic power through the combination of text

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[105] Edward Dannreuther, *The Oxford History of Music: The Romantic Period*, ed. by W. H. Hadow (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1905), p. 164.
[106] Francis Hueffer, *Seven Songs* (London: S. Lucas & Weber, 1873), p. 1
[107] Schopenhauer, *World as Will*, II, 454.
[108] Hueffer, *Seven Songs*, p. 19.

and music as an expression of feeling. As Hueffer states in his own work on Wagner, Beethoven's *Ninth* signalled the

> death-knell of music in its separate condition, and the rise of a new epoch, in which music and poetry can be severed no more. […] Music and poetry, therefore, by both their powers and weaknesses are referred to each other's aid; and the results of their combination will be of a higher order than is attainable by either of them in their separate state.[109]

Song music is, to these composers, the arrangement of feeling into sequential forms (into balance, discord or dissonance, etc). Words and their contingent emotions are brought into contact with music and so blend with it.

By creating musical examples of Swinburne's work, Hueffer and Dannreuther were also trying to link British artists, notably Swinburne and William Morris, with Wagner as if to suggest that Wagner's new kind of music was not as alien as critics might have believed. It was not a German import, but something common to all – a European idea – which they, as émigrés, and Swinburne, and painters such as Whistler, with his Franco-German poetic outlook, appeared to epitomize. This attempt to link Swinburne's name to Wagner certainly had an effect. For example, *The Orchestra*, on 1 August 1873, spoke of two men who 'immediately present themselves as representatives of this modern school, Swinburne and Wagner'.[110] By 1879, the *Musical Standard*, still wary of Wagner's influence, decided to describe Wagner's works in moral terms, as 'not good; the Swinburne, as it were, not the Shakespeare of music'.[111]

The Wagner society, which was founded by Hueffer and Dannreuther in 1873, was also keen to link names and make comparisons. In 1884, it sponsored the translation of a guide to

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[109] Francis Hueffer, *Richard Wagner and the Music of the Future: History and Aesthetics* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874), pp. 16–18.
[110] 'Swinburne and Wagner', *The Orchestra*, 20.514 (1 August 1873), p. 284.
[111] 'Wagner and Schumann: or, the Logic of Criticism', *Musical Standard*, 17.800 (29 November 1879), 343-344 (p. 343).

Wagner's *Tristan* by the librettist, critic, and editor of Wagner's newsletter *Bayreuther Blätter* (founded 1878), Hans von Wolzogen (1855-1934). This guide was published in Leipzig (possibly, therefore, through Hueffer), but translated by B. L. Mosely, a Wagner Society member, who also interpolated Wolzogen's text with considerable and significant extracts from Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse*.[112] The translation as a whole was headed by the 'Tristan and Isolde' section of Swinburne's 'Two Preludes' from *A Century of Roundels*. Underneath this is the statement that the poem and the following extracts were printed with 'the author's kind permission'. Swinburne, therefore, allowed his epic poem to be used as an illustrative comparison with Wagner's music (despite the considerable differences in plot). The extracts are first given by Moseley to illustrate versions of the myth in general, but then they introduce the descriptions of each act, alongside key musical examples, although Moseley's text does not compare the two with regard to technique.

Noting Hyder's inclusion of Mosely's translation of Wolzogen in the bibliography of his *Swinburne's Literary Career and Fame* (1933), Francis Sypher states that the *Tristram* quotations 'are, as the subtitle [to Wolzogen's book] implies, merely illustrations; the translator does not specifically compare them with Wagner's text. But he chooses passages which are quite in keeping with the spirit of Wagner's version'.[113] However, the Wolzogen text also indicates how much Swinburne's work was thought of as akin to Wagner's by this date – something that Sypher does not emphasize.

Swinburne also came to be used for Wagnerian advertising. In 1882, Harry Buxton Forman (1842-1917), who had corresponded with Swinburne on many occasions about Shelley, sent a copy of his brother Alfred's translation of Wagner's *Ring* Cycle (approved by the composer himself and the first full translation of the *libretti* into English). Swinburne replied, saying that he would bind it with his copy of *Quatre poèmes*, adding that he did 'not wonder at the cordiality of

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[112] See Hans von Wolzogen*, Guide to the Legend Poem and Music of Richard Wagner's 'Tristan and Isolde' (translated and illustrated with extracts from Swinburne's 'Tristram of Lyonesse', etc.)*, trans. by B. L Mosely (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1884).
[113] Sypher, *Swinburne and Wagner*, p. 165.

commendation bestowed by the Master [Wagner] on such a version of his great work'.[114] This sentence was used to advertise the reprint of this work in various Wagner publications, such as Forman's 1899 version of Wagner's final opera *Parsifal* (1882). In the advertisement's list of supportive endorsements for Forman's work, Wagner's own praise comes first, but Swinburne's is second and Theodore Watts-Dunton's third. Twenty-six endorsements and review extracts follow these names, including words from Edward Dannreuther himself, who claims – debatably – that Forman's translation 'was a labour of love. He never departs from the form or spirit of the original'.[115]

George Powell (1842-1882)

Powell was a very close friend of Swinburne. The owner of Nanteos, a large house near Aberystwyth, his family wealth came from the profits of mining in West Wales. A man of leisure, Powell was widely travelled and culturally omnivorous: his extensive art collection, now housed at the School of Art at Aberystwyth University, is eclectic and surprising in its variety. He collected works by John Constable, J. M. W. Turner, Lord Leighton, and several Pre-Raphaelite painters, including Burne-Jones and D. G. Rossetti, and owned three paintings by Simeon Solomon, with whom he was a close friend until Solomon's arrest in 1873. He was also an occasional poet and a writer of short stories and, with Eiríkr Magnússon (1833-1913), published two volumes of translated *Icelandic Legends* (1864 and 1866), the 'second series' of which was dedicated to Swinburne.[116] A prominent member of the Wagner Society, Powell was interested in all the latest music trends, collecting whatever he could of composers' lives and works, including

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[114] *TSL*, IV, 266. His brother Alfred Forman (1840-1925) also translated other Wagner works and published his own poetry.

[115] The quotation appears on the first to third pages of the advertisements at the back of the 1899 edition for the publishers Schott & Co.

[116] See Miölnir, Nanteos (George Powell), *Poems* (Aberystwyth: J. Cox, 1861); and G. E. J. P. (George Powell) *Quod Libet* (Aberystwyth: J. Cox, 1860); *Icelandic Legends collected by Jón Arnason*, trans. by George Powell and Eiríkr Magnússon (London: Richard Bentley, 1864); *Icelandic Legends collected by Jón Arnason: Second Series*, trans. by George Powell and Eiríkr Magnússon (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1866). In 1871, Magnússon toured Iceland with William Morris, and in 1870 they published a translation of the Icelandic sagas. The original sagas were used by Wagner in his *Ring* Cycle.

signatures and autograph manuscripts; he even owned a plaster cast of one of Mendelssohn's hands.[117]

Swinburne and Powell appear to have met at Eton, although Powell attended a little later. Their adult friendship seems to have started around the beginning of 1866, just before *Poems and Ballads* was published.[118] Their experiences of corporal punishment at Eton clearly fuelled their sexual interests in flagellation, as a great deal of their considerable correspondence is taken up with this subject. But as Harry Heuser has recently pointed out, Powell's role in Swinburne's life has often been unfairly questioned, and it is possible that critics have allowed this flagellation correspondence to colour their impressions of Powell's character.[119] Cecil Lang, for example, calls Powell 'Not an altogether appealing figure', adding that 'he accumulated a reputation of which the odor lingers in this small community [Aberystwyth] seventy-five years after his death'. Powell was also a 'rebellious son' and 'by no means the best possible influence on Swinburne […] It is fair to surmise that if Powell's premature death had not terminated their friendship, Watts [-Dunton] would have intervened, tactfully, firmly, finally'. This description paints Swinburne as a child easily prey to the influence of others, a man-boy without agency, who needs guidance from surrogate fathers. And yet Lang's comments are given without evidence apart from a 1926 source, which claims both Swinburne and Powell '"loved to haunt a certain low-

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[117] The list of subscriptions for the Wagner Society shows Powell to have paid £20, well above the subscriptions given by other members – which include Ford Madox Brown, G. H. Lewes, William Bell Scott (noted in chapter three), as well as Hueffer, Forman, and Mosely. The only date on this document is '8 Oct.', with no indication of year. The subscriptions may well be donations for the construction of Wagner's theatre in Bayreuth. See 'Subscriptions' (loose sheaf), Dannreuther Archive, Royal College of Music (no class mark or catalogue yet available).

[118] Swinburne's first letter to Powell is dated 12 November 1865; *TSL*, I, 134.

[119] For Heuser's extensive and revisionary essay, see Harry Heuser, '"Please don't whip me this time", the Passions of George Powell of Nant-eos', *Queer Wales: The History, Culture and Politics of Queer Life in Wales*, ed. by Huw Osborne (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), p. 45-64 (p. 45). Heuser's account much improves on that given by Gerald Morgan in 'The Aesthete of Nanteos: George Powell, 1842-1882', *Nanteos: A Welsh House and its families*, ed. by Gerald Morgan (Llandysul: Gomer, 2001), pp. 91-116. An earlier Powell profile written by David Lewis Jones quotes a great deal of Powell's poetry but ultimately belittles Powell as 'a sad figure. If he had applied himself more in the field of music, he might have become influential'. See David Lewis Jones, 'George Powell – Swinburne's "Friend of Many a Season"', *Anglo-Welsh Review*, 19.44 (Spring 1971), 75-85 (p. 84).

class inn in [*sic*] Aberystwyth"'.[120] Such anecdotal accounts written long after both subjects' deaths should be viewed with caution, not least because, in general, Powell's own correspondence reveals a deeply humane, passionate, and reliable friend, a patron and critic of discernment, who was often self-deprecating and conscious of his own faults.

Lang adds that Swinburne expressed some anxiety about Powell preserving his letters, the implication being that, like Solomon, Powell might later have used this correspondence against him. Actually, Powell kept a great deal of his correspondence. He was an inveterate collector, even a hoarder to the point of obsession, and the care with which he pasted into notebooks his correspondence from many famous people was clearly for his own benefit (which could not have been pecuniary, given his social standing and wealth).[121] These letters also give a strong impression of a man who was well-liked and admired. He was a close friend of the composer John Stainer (1840-1891), who writes warmly on many occasions to Powell, including about his new post as the organist of St. Pauls. The same is true of the composer and organist, Frederick Gore-Ouseley (1825-1889), who was clearly very fond of him. However, his relationship with the illustrator Johann Zwecker (1814-1876) is particularly interesting. Powell was Zwecker's patron, and Zwecker's letters show great affection for Powell and are peppered with very fine *ad hoc* illustrations and portraits of the two men. Zwecker writes about Swinburne on occasions, and in one letter there are two sketched versions of an intended final illustration, which may be pictures of the poet. In both (which are caricatures), a naked man sits on a rocky peak (see figures 5 and 6). Zwecker identifies as him 'the poet', and with his long hair, he may well be a stylized, classical figure of Swinburne. 'The poet' is also being bothered by wasps while trying to pluck a lyre. 'Which,' asks Zwecker, referring to the different poses of this figure, 'is the one you would

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[120] *TSL*, I, xl. Lang quotes Herbert Vaughan, *The South Wales Squires: A Welsh Picture of Social Life* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 83: 'They especially loved to haunt a certain low-class inn at Aberystwyth, kept by a disreputable old woman whose Rabelaisian talk owned a special attention for Swinburne'.

[121] *TSL*, II, 167: Swinburne to D. G. Rossetti, 10 November 1871: 'I told Powell that his fashion of binding my epistles to him in small volumes with leather covers *might* be compromising – and he promised to take every care to prevent their falling into Philistine hands'. Jones states that Swinburne was 'alarmed' by Powell's preservation of the letters, but this does not appear to be the case; see Jones, 'George Powell – Swinburne's "Friend of Many a Season"', p. 81.

prefére [*sic*] for the picture? Please let me know!'[122] Whichever Powell preferred is not revealed – if it was a serious request for a preference – and no 'final' version of the illustration appears to exist in the Powell art collection.

There may well be a clue to the subject of these pictures in a letter to Powell sent a year later in 1867. Here Swinburne states that he would like to visit Aberystwyth if he can get the time, but this is followed by an odd, disconnected comment: 'We also have had infinite wasps here. You will see a song of mine in the *Fortnightly* and next month an essay'.[123] Does 'wasps' relate to critics and Swinburne is complaining about them? Or is 'wasps' a code-word between him, Powell, and Zwecker? In Swinburne's only completed novel, *Love's Cross-Currents: A Year's Letters*, which is written in epistolary form, Lady Midhurst (who also appears in *Lesbia Brandon*) writes to her grandson Reginald Harewood. She directly relates wasps to being flagellated:

> Now I tell you [,] you had better have put that hairbrained absurd boy's head of yours into a wasps' nest; do you remember a certain letter of yours to me nine years ago about wasps, and what a *jolly good swishing* you got for running your head into a nest of them against all orders? […] Neither the sting of wasps nor the sting of birch rods is one quarter so bad as the hornet's stings and viper's bites you are running the risk of.[124]

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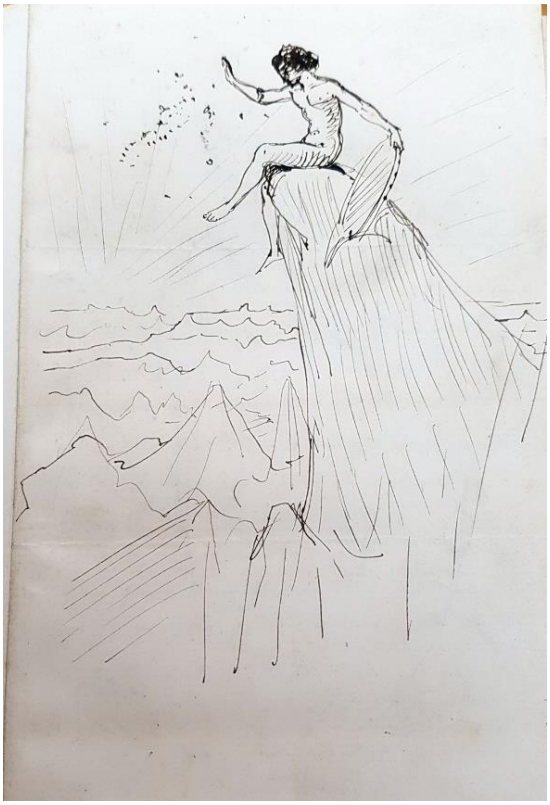
[122] Letter from Johann Zwecker to George Powell, 8 May 1866, 'George Ernest John Powell: Letters', NLW MS 6734C 1404 A, National Library of Wales. All further quoted Powell correspondence is from this archive unless otherwise stated.
[123] *TSL*, I, 261. The poem mentioned is 'Regret', later republished in *Poems and Ballads, Second Series* (1878) and the essay 'Matthew Arnold's "New Poems"', later republished in *Essays and Studies* (1875).
[124] A. C. Swinburne, *A Year's Letters*, pp. 52-53.



Figures 5 & 6*:* Possible caricatures of Swinburne? Ink sketches by Johann Zwecker, sent in a letter from Zwecker to George Powell on 8 May 1866. 'George Ernest John Powell: Letters', NLW MS 6734C 1404 A, National Library of Wales

While Swinburne's novel was not published until 1877 (and then in monthly parts under the pseudonym of Mrs. Horace Manners), the manuscript was ready for publication a decade before. Swinburne sent it to the writer Joseph Knight (1829-1907) for comment in 1866, where he implies that his current publisher, Moxon, has rejected it.[125] In relation to flagellation, Swinburne often uses the word 'sting' in terms of the pain, and so the wasps in the pictures by Zwecker are possibly a humorous reference to the inspiration that flagellation gave to Swinburne's poetic abilities. Certainly, in other letters, Swinburne talks to Powell about how the practice encouraged him. As the figures in each sketch hold a lyre, they would also suggest that pain and music were dual inspirations to poetry. Additionally, the use of code-words or ciphers is not uncommon in

[125] See, *UL*, I, 55. Swinburne completed this novel sometime in 1862, see Rooksby, *A Poet's Life*, p. 78.

Swinburne's letters, especially to the people he was fond of. His letters to Mary Gordon, for example, which also talk of flagellation, contain many such examples.

Other correspondence that mentions Swinburne also demonstrates the esteem with which Powell was held – particularly letters by Solomon and Sir George Grove (1820-1900). The latter clearly thought Powell a good influence. In a letter dated 1 October, which must date from late 1866 as it appears to refer to the publication of *Poems and Ballads*, Grove confirms that Powell had counselled caution to Swinburne. Opening by stating that he will send Powell various letters from Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Handel, and Schumann – thus feeding Powell's collecting habit – he then talks about a forthcoming concert at the Crystal Palace, before stating bluntly:

> glad that Swinburne is to be with you as he must want [to] come out after all these botherations – not quite undeserved I think. I have the greatest admiration for his poetic power + genius and therefore am all the more sorry that he should have gone out of his way to do what must inevitably obscure it for a long time, by frightening people off his works. It's all very well to like to lie with your head between a woman's legs, but that's no reason why you should tell the world [...] and what is more he would not listen to you.[126]

Ten days later, Swinburne was on a train to Aberystwyth to stay with Powell. Swinburne's father also wrote to Powell concerned about his son's health. It appears that Powell had written to John Swinburne after his son's accident at the British Museum, in which Swinburne had collapsed, presumably due to heat exhaustion. Powell had suggested Étretat, where he had a home, as a possible place of recuperation. However, in his response dated 25 July 1868, John Swinburne thanks Powell for his letter and for the 'promise to take care of him' but replies that the best thing for his son to do at the moment would be 'to come here [Holmwood] and vegetate for some time'.[127]

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[126] Letter from George Grove to George Powell, 1 October (1866), NLW MS 6734C 1403 A.
[127] Letter from John Swinburne to George Powell, 25 July 1868, NLW MS 6734C 1401 A.

Powell's reputation was also unfairly damaged by Edmund Gosse. In his 1912 collection of biographical essays, *Portraits and Sketches*, Gosse suggests moral improprieties by repeating parts of Guy de Maupassant's gossipy story about Swinburne's stay in Étretat with Powell in September 1868.[128] He also claims that Powell knew very little of the musicians he talked of and that he had heard next to nothing of their work:

> During the course of their life at Étretat the conversation of the friends continually turned on art, on literature, even on music, about which Powell was then greatly exercised. Swinburne did not recognise one tune from another, but he took a cerebral interest in music. The friends were entranced by the fame of Wagner and of Berlioz, who was much discussed in art circles; it is to be doubted whether either of them had heard any of the compositions of these musicians performed in public or in private. It was the attitude of Wagner which attracted and delighted them.[129]

Unfortunately, Gosse is here being guided by something other than evidence. Powell's letters from various musical correspondents, such as Grove, Stainer, or Gore Ouseley attest to quite the opposite. Powell wrote to Swinburne from Étretat in 1868 describing a production of Gluck's opera *Iphigenia in Tauris* as 'magnificently performed' adding that, although some critics had found fault, 'I was far too overwhelmed by that gigantic music to be in a censorious mood'. This is clearly genuine musical appreciation and not affectation.[130] Powell was able to read music very well indeed and played the organ.[131] Both Stainer's and Gore-Ouseley's letters contain musical

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[128] On Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) meeting Swinburne and Powell at Étretat, see Julian Barnes, 'An Unlikely Lunch: When Maupassant met Swinburne', *Public Domain Review*, 24 January 2012, <https://publicdomainreview.org/2012/01/24/an-unlikely-lunch-when-maupassant-met-swinburne/> (accessed 30 August 2019). There is an undated letter from Maupassant in the Powell letters apologizing for being unable to accept an invitation.
[129] Gosse, *Portraits and Sketches*, pp. 29-30.
[130] *UL*, I, 139.
[131] A letter from an unknown writer (P. R. Carter?), is amongst the letters to George Powell dated '28 July' but with no year, stating, 'I forgot to say to you that we have in the Rectory an organ, a very nice one of Bishop's […] you should be very welcome at all events to play on this'. Letter from P. R. Carter? to George Powell, NLW MS 6734C 1398 A.

problems or puzzles for him to solve. The letters of Clara Schumann also make his musical passion and knowledge clear. Most telling of all, however, is that Zwecker's letters constantly refer to the painter and amateur singer Wilhelm Kümpel, a friend to himself, Powell, and Swinburne.

Kümpel was a member of 'The Working Men's Society'. While, as previously mentioned, the society was perhaps not as influential as has been suggested by others, its records, kept by A. J. Hipkins, show an extensive programme of weekly meetings, filled with works by Wagner, Liszt and Schumann (and others) dating from a period at least eighteen months before Swinburne and Powell went to Étretat. While Kümpel's name does not appear in the short list of members of the Working Men's Society placed at the front one of Hipkins's notebooks, this list possibly includes only the founding members, since on 4 July 1868, Kümpel is recorded by Hipkins as singing Walther's *lied* from *Die Meistersinger*.[132] On this same evening, the photograph was taken of the society members, and it includes Kümpel (see figure 1).[133] Swinburne asks after Kümpel in a letter to Powell of 1872, and Kümpel was clearly a favourite of Powell and Zwecker, as the latter's correspondence also contains many caricatures of him.[134] While it is not known whether Powell or Swinburne attended any of these society recitals, I take issue with Michael Allis's suggestion that the society's membership was exclusive to those named in the front of Hipkins's notebooks.[135] Hipkins has noted other attendees if they performed a particular piece of music, but it is highly likely that others attended who did not perform. Given that Powell was regularly in London and had a home near Windsor, it would seem probable that he attended one or more recitals.

Powell's importance in the London musical scene is suggested by the fact that Dannreuther appears to have occasionally relied on his musical contacts. This is shown by a letter

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[132] If Swinburne did not go to Munich with Powell, did he – on this or another occasion – hear Kümpel singing Walther's song, which then led to the *Meistersinger* references in 'Notes on the Text of Shelley'?

[133] These notebooks contain a complete list of the society's performances. See '6 notebooks', Alfred James Hipkins Papers, MS943 (943 1/2), Senate House Library. The list of these performances can be seen in Bache, *Brother Musicians*, pp. 198-201.

[134] See *TSL*, II, 183.

[135] Allis, 'Performance in Private', 140.

of 5 October (possibly 1877) where he asks Powell for Swinburne's address and whether he knows of any 'competent amateur singers […] for the choir'.[136] Dannreuther formed a choir in 1874 to perform forgotten choral works. Dannreuther, Hueffer, and Powell also appear to have travelled to Bayreuth together for the opening of Wagner's theatre and the first performance of the *Ring* Cycle in 1876. Dannreuther wrote to Powell in February of that year to enquire about seats for the opening and also to recommend how the tickets should be divided up amongst the group.[137] After the festival, while still in Bayreuth, Powell wrote to Swinburne on 11 September 1876, stating:

> I have just had a long conversation (over tea at Wagner's house) with Madame Cosima Wagner, about your works, w^{h} has resulted in my offer to send her all your writings. I dine with them today (*Great Master*, Cosima, Big dogs & all).
>
> I must *tell* you by word of mouth all about this *wonderful* time, I am too nervously upset to write fully to *anybody* – even to *you* my most intimate friend – on the subject. I hope to arrive in London, early on Sunday next, & shall assuredly pounce upon you on the earliest day.

Powell enclosed a photograph in this letter to Swinburne in which he was posed wearing a '"Nibelung" hat'.[138] While he, Dannreuther, Hueffer, and the other members of the Wagner society were just a few of the hundreds of attendees (which included four monarchs, not least King Ludwig II), there can be no doubt that this conversation happened, given that Wagner came, at Dannreuther's behest, to London the following year and that the London Wagner society had

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[136] 'Letter from Edward Dannreuther to George Powell, 5 October (1877?), NLW MS 6734C, 1404 A.

[137] The letter could be dated 15 February 1872 or it could be 1877, although this latter date is impossible as the Bayreuth theatre opened in 1876, and the former is far too early. Given the slapdash style of Dannreuther's handwriting, his habit of barely writing a legible date, and that the group must have been planning their trip in early 1876, I have taken this as one of Dannreuther's idiosyncrasies and dated the letter 1876 accordingly.

[138] *UC*, II, 87. This 'hat' is presumably the 'Tarnhelm' or Alberich the Nibelung's magic helmet.

given money for the Bayreuth theatre (with Powell possibly one of the main London donors).[139] It is therefore perhaps unfair to claim, as Meyers does in a footnote to this letter, that Powell and Cosima's conversation 'seems to have made little impact on the Wagners'. They had been overwhelmed by the festival and at the start of the week following the departure of these guests, were preparing to leave Bayreuth on holiday. Cosima Wagner's diary conflates four days – including Powell's dinner date – into one short paragraph (10-14 September).[140] Secondly, Powell was still corresponding with Cosima five years later, as he wrote to Swinburne in early 1881 to say 'I sent a copy of "Studies in Song" to Md^{me} Cosima Wagner, who has acknowledged its receipt in a delightful letter'.[141] The absence of any intervening correspondence between Powell's initial meeting with the Wagners and this letter in 1881 is no indication that a correspondence did not take place, or that Powell did not meet them again. The fact that we do not have a response to Powell's letter about sending Cosima *Studies in Song* (1880), also does not preclude Swinburne's possible enthusiasm for what Powell told him. Edward and Chariclea Dannreuther were still meeting Wagner around this time.[142]

Powell may well have talked with other guests in Bayreuth about Swinburne, such as Judith Gautier (1845-1917), with whom Wagner was infatuated. Shortly after Powell's return to London, Swinburne wrote to Watts-Dunton saying that 'Catulle Mendès, who married the daughter of Théophile Gautier [Judith], has sent me a splendid edition of his Poems'. The connection has not been noted before, but putting the two dates together, I suggest that it is possible that this book was delivered by Powell from Bayreuth or that Powell inspired Mendès to send it after a conversation at the festival.[143]

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[139] On Wagner's interest and gratitude to Dannreuther, see Cummings, 'The Pivotal Role of Hans Richter in the London Wagner Festival of 1877', 395-447. For a description of the attendees, which Nietzsche labelled as '"the entire loafing riff-raff of Europe"', see Prideaux, *I am Dynamite*, pp. 147-155 (pp. 149, 150).
[140] See *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, I, 922.
[141] 3 February 1881, *UC*, II, 247.
[142] 30 July 1882: 'The Dannreuthers have lunch with us'. See *Cosima Wagner's Diaries,* II, 895.
[143] 2 October 1876, *TSL*, III, 204.

Offenbach and Schuré

While in Étretat with Powell in 1868, Swinburne met the composer Jacques Offenbach. Powell's letters contain one from Offenbach written in 1868 from his own Étretat residence, *Villa Orphée*, presumably accepting or thanking Powell for the invitation.[144] Gosse describes the event in the following manner:

> Rapturous appreciation of music which he had never heard did not preclude, on Mr. Powell's part, enjoyment of music which he shared with all the world; and Offenbach, then laden with the laurels of 'La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein', was an honoured guest at the Chaumière while Swinburne was there.[145]

Why Gosse should dismissively claim that Powell knew little about music, but then mention that he had received composers at Étretat is peculiar, but it was perhaps an opportunity for him to show his own musical knowledge by mentioning one of Offenbach's works. However, the composer's visit to Powell's would surely have stirred Swinburne's memories of his trip to Paris with Monckton Milnes in 1863, not least because Offenbach had appeared in Manet's *Music in the Tuileries Gardens* with Swinburne's friend Fantin, along with Baudelaire and Gautier. At the time of Offenbach's invitation, the composer would still have been thought of opposing Wagner's new music, and with this in mind, it might seem odd for Powell to have extended the invitation. However, Offenbach would have been able to give Powell and Swinburne a unique insight into the context of Wagner's reception in Paris.

After Wagner's first concerts in Paris in 1860 (held the year before the *Tannhäuser* production), Offenbach capitalized on opposition to the German composer by satirizing him in *Carnaval des revues* (1860). This contained a section called the 'Symphony of the Future' during which a composer – clearly meant to be Wagner – came onto the stage to lambast other

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[144] The text is practically illegible, although it does appear to refer to Wagner at one point. Letter from Jacques Offenbach to George Powell, ? October 1868, NLW MS 6734C, 1400 A.
[145] Gosse, *Portraits and Sketches*, p. 30.

composers (such as Gluck and Mozart), to proclaim both the death of harmony and that the time had come for a '"strange, unknown, vague, indefinable music!'"[146] The composer then conducted a cacophonous piece of music played on timpani and cymbals, before being attacked and beaten up. Offenbach's 'symphony' was received rapturously by both critics and audiences, and it not only set the scene for the critical savaging of *Tannhäuser* the following year, but in the popular imagination also set up the idea of Wagner and Offenbach as being musically opposed. This idea certainly formed in Swinburne's mind, for in a work defending his own poetry called *Under the Microscope* (1872), he mentions a similar opposition, although he replaces Wagner with Beethoven – Wagner would have approved.

Primarily a response to Robert Buchanan's 'The Fleshly School of Poetry', *Under the Microscope* attacks the methods and prejudices of critics in general. Swinburne points out that such critics, if they lacked musical knowledge, would demur from offering up a judgment on a composer's work. And yet, he continues, these same critics – despite a similar lack of poetical knowledge – happily and cynically evaluate poetry's musical qualities:

> A man whose ear is conscious of no difference between Offenbach and Beethoven does not usually stand up as a judge of instrumental music; but there is no ear so hirsute or so hard, so pointed or so long, that its wearer will not feel himself qualified to pass sentence on the musical rank of any poet's verse [...]. I have always thought it some-what hasty on the part of Sir Hugh Evans to condemn as 'affectations' that phrase of Pistol's—'He hears with ears'; to hear with ears is a gift by no means given to every man that wears them.[147]

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[146] Quotation from Dolan, *Manet*, p. 185.

[147] Hyder, *Swinburne Replies*, p. 54. Swinburne's quotation concerning 'Sir Hugh' and 'Pistol' is from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I, 1, 127. *Under the Microscope* also provided Dannreuther with some of his Swinburnianisms. This *Merry Wives* quotation turns up in his 'Notes of the Text of Beethoven' (p. 167), in his *Richard Wagner: His Tendencies and Theories* (1873), in his 'Beethoven and his Works: A Study' (1876).

Swinburne's observation may well have had its origins in this meeting with Offenbach in Étretat. The opposition between this composer and Wagnerism, which, in truth, is perhaps less pronounced than it may have originally seemed, must surely have been on Powell's mind during the visit and may well have been a topic of conversation. As I have shown, Powell was not just a Wagnerite but a serious musician in his own right. Offenbach was far more than a visiting curiosity for an uninformed, pretentious host – as Gosse depicts Powell – but was the guest of a man who was well-informed and passionate about music. Even if Offenbach was anathema to many Wagnerites at the time, Powell clearly did not mind.

Swinburne's enthusiasm for Powell's Wagnerism can also be seen in a letter written from London to Powell in Étretat in late April 1869. This was the year after the première of *Die Meistersinger* in Munich, but also the month before 'Notes on the Text of Shelley' appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, in which Swinburne makes his *Meistersinger* references:

> I am moved to write just now because I have fallen in with a world's wonder – an article on Wagner, careful and appreciative, in French! and in the Revue des Deux Mondes!! of all tongues and of all reviews! Something good has come not out of Nazareth but out of Philistia. Perhaps you have seen it, but I write on the chance you have not. The author's name is Edouard Scharé [*sic*] – did you ever hear of him? the number is of April 15th. Of course the editor heralds it with a judicious disdain, reserving his right to abuse Wagner in the next number.[148]

We can again see a certain irritation with France here. The following year would see the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, but it seems that the antipathy that the Parisian critics had shown Wagner during his time in the city between 1860-1862 had already influenced Swinburne. 'Philistia' refers to Paris, and in Edward Dannreuther's 'Notes on the Text of Beethoven', he, too, mentions 'Philistines' in relation to Paris and the critic François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871), who

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[148] *TSL*, II, 11-12.

had often labelled his detractors as Philistines.[149] Édouard Schuré (1841-1929), like Dannreuther, was a Wagnerian from Alsace, who also became a friend of Nietzsche and had heard the first performance of *Tristan und Isolde* in 1865 in Munich. His article, 'Le Drame musical et l'œuvre de M. Richard Wagner', is an extensive piece on Wagner's life and work.[150] However, most importantly – considering Swinburne's 'Shelley' article the following month – it also provided Swinburne with an in-depth description and critique of *Die Meistersinger*. In fact, in describing the effect of Wagner's music in the opera's final scene, where a crowd of townsfolk sing in joy on the arrival of the hero, Hans Sachs, Schuré states 'the effect is so powerful that it can be compared to that of Schiller's famous 'Ode to Joy', placed by Beethoven at the end of his Ninth Symphony'. Thus Schuré describes *Die Meistersinger* as the summit (so far) of Wagner's ambitions to unite poetry, where 'the poem is of prime importance', and its music, which is 'to express the poetic idea in all its richness', is the new art form of combined forces.[151]

In October 1882, Powell died only a year after he had married. The event clearly affected Swinburne greatly and led to an outpouring of grief into poems that became part of *A Century of Roundels*, published in June the following year. Wagner, too, died shortly after Powell in Venice on 13 February 1883. Swinburne – in depressed and lonely terms – reflected on Powell and on both music and Wagner in a letter at this time to Joseph Knight, which also mentions the composer and collector Julian Marshall:

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[149] See, Craske, 'Dannreuther's Hidden Swinburne References Signal Artistic Kinship', 300. Swinburne's use of 'Philistia' is inspired by Matthew Arnold. This use appears in 'Notes on the Text of Shelley' and is picked up by Dannreuther from there, where he then attaches it to Fétis.

[150] See Édouard Schuré, 'Le Drame musical et l'œuvre de M. Richard Wagner', *Revue des deux mondes*, 15 April 1869, pp. 948-991, <https://www.revuedesdeuxmondes.fr/article-revue/avril-1869-2/> (accessed 30 August 2019). This was followed by another article, extending the first, in 1875 which examined *Tristan* and talked about its erotic musicality. Schuré claims to have been possessed by Wagner's music, rather as Baudelaire does in his pamphlet, and that the music feminized him so that 'everything that occurred within Isolde also occurred within me'. Translation from Dreyfus, *Wagner and the Erotic Impulse*, pp. 28-30 (p. 29).

[151] Schuré, 'Le Drame musical', pp. 986, 991. The translation is my own: 'L'effet est si puissante qu'il peut se comparer à celui du fameux Hymne à la joie de Schiller, placé par Beethoven à la fin de sa neuviéme symphonie. […] Le poème est de première importance. […] Quant à la musique, elle est la non-seulement pour charmer l'oreille, mais surtout pour exprimer l'idée poétique dans toute sa richesse'.

> It is odd that I – who have lately lost the one dear friend [Powell] through whom I ever saw or heard anything of the musical world – should have received a letter [from Marshall] concerning music on the very day when we all have been reading or hearing the news that the gigantic & colossal genius who represented that art to our age has been suddenly withdrawn from us.[152]

By this time, of course, Swinburne was living in Putney with Watts-Dunton. While he suggests that his contact with musical friends had waned dramatically, this is perhaps more the effect of mourning for Powell. He had certainly not lost touch with Hueffer. A letter from Hueffer dated 9 December 1888 among the Watts-Dunton papers at the British Library, is an acknowledgement that Watts-Dunton and Swinburne were coming to dinner at his house the following week.[153] Moreover, as mentioned in chapter two, Clara and Theodore were also enthusiastic musicians. As John Lawrence Lambe recalled during his many visits to see both Swinburne and Watts-Dunton: 'The hospitality of The Pines is an agreeable reminiscence, for our long talks were varied by much music on piano and violin, and also on Watt-Dunton's huge gramophone, which was a source of deep joy to him. Sometimes we danced to please him'.[154] Given that he became 'steeped in German music' and that he became a 'thorough Wagnerian' through his own friendship with Hueffer, it is likely that Watts-Dunton's gramophone often played Wagner's music.[155] That Watts-Dunton was a Wagnerian, is, in fact, suggested by his attendance in the 1860s at one of Rossetti's mesmerism events, led by J. S. Bergheim.

Having started his epic poem *Tristram of Lyonesse* in the 1860s, we must assume that during part of the following decade Swinburne set it aside. Throughout the 1870s, however, Swinburne was

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[152] *UL*, II, 326.
[153] Letter from Francis Hueffer to Theodore Watts-Dunton, British Library, Watts-Dunton Papers: 1845-1939, Add MS 70627 f. 60.
[154] Thomas Hake and Arthur Compton-Rickett, *The Life and Letters of Theodore Watts-Dunton: including some personal reminiscences by Clara Watts-Dunton*, 2 vols. (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, Ltd., 1916), II, 244.
[155] James Douglas, *Theodore Watts-Dunton: Poet, Novelist, Critic* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), p. 89.

surrounded by enthusiastic Wagnerites. This undoubtedly had an effect on *Tristram* when he came to finish the poem in the early 1880s. Unlike 'Laus Veneris', which appears to have been influenced by Wagner but does not necessarily see itself as commenting or in competition with Wagner's opera, *Tristram* can be seen as a direct response to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, and perhaps even signals Swinburne's move away from the composer's ideas.

Chapter 6 – The *Tristram* Accord: the relationship between Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse, A Century of Roundels*, and Wagner's music.

Swinburne responds to market demand

Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* received its British premiere on 21 June 1882 at Drury Lane Theatre. It was only one of a host of Wagner performances during 1882-3. The equally important premiere of *Die Meistersinger* had taken place just three weeks earlier at the same theatre. In fact, the two premieres were part of a 'Grand German Opera Season' at Drury Lane, in which Hans Richter (who had been a rehearsal conductor – with Edward Dannreuther – for the '77 Wagner Festival at the Royal Albert Hall) was conducting 'eighteen fully-staged performances', which also included *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*.[1]

This was not the only Wagner season in London. *Der Ring des Nibelungen* also received its British premiere as a cycle over May and June of 1882 at Her Majesty's Theatre. The cycle was performed four times, and alongside the production – using the same performers – Charles Hallé (1819-1895), conducted a series of 'Symphony Concerts' of Wagner's works, the profits of which were used to fund the opening of the Royal College of Music.[2] Her Majesty's Theatre also staged *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and *The Flying Dutchman* during the same season.[3] Additionally, the Saturday concerts at the Crystal Palace played a plethora of Wagner pieces between 1882-3, featuring selections from *Die Meistersinger*, *Lohengrin*, *Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung*, and even the overture to *Parsifal* in October '82 and June '83.[4]

In 1882, London audiences were demanding Wagner's works, and the opera houses, theatres, and concert halls were happy to oblige. As Paul Cummings has claimed, pro-Wagner

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[1] Cummings, 'The Pivotal Role of Hans Richter in the London Wagner Festival of 1877', 438. For the list of these operas staged during the season, see 'German Opera at Drury Lane Theatre', *Morning Post*, 16 February 1882, p. 6.
[2] 'The German Musical Season', *Standard*, 1 May 1882, p. 3.
[3] 'Der Ring des Nibelungen' *Standard*, 8 May 1882, p. 3.
[4] See *Crystal Palace: Catalogue of the Principal Instrumental & Choral Works Performed at the Saturday Concerts, from October 1855 to May 1886* (London: Charles Dickens and Evans, Crystal Palace Press, 1886), pp. 26, 48.

critics and musicians had finally 'achieved their aims'.[5] The performances also led to the reignition or the intensification of the arguments that had always surrounded Wagner's theories and ideas. Responding to *Die Walküre* – the second part of the *Ring* Cycle – at Her Majesty's, the *Standard* reviewer, for example, stated that *Die Walküre* was full of 'revolting incidents' and that 'it ought never to have been licensed for representation', while a syndicated article entitled 'Our Ladies Column by One of Themselves' also wearily noted the fashion for attending Wagner's concerts, although it claimed that 'many go because it is the correct thing to go in for the "music of the future", as it is to appear to appreciate Whistler's "Harmonies in Blue", or the pre-Raphaelite school of paintings'.[6] The premiere of *Tristan und Isolde*, in particular, inspired a flurry of articles and reviews, not least a scathing riposte from the *Musical World*, which condemned Wagner's 'principles as false to art and nature', while also mentioning that Swinburne, too, was to publish a treatment of the story in his 'forthcoming volume'. Despite its animosity to Wagner, the *Musical World* was constantly filled with Wagner-focussed articles. In the same issue as this review, for example, several caricatures also appeared, one of which capitalized on the mystification caused by the so-called 'Tristan Chord'. It also ran an article on the composer's *Parsifal* and was in the middle of serializing Wagner's anti-Semitic pamphlet 'Judaism in Music' (1850).[7] It had previously serialized this in 1869.[8]

Swinburne must surely have been aware of the Wagner fever that was gripping London at this time. Within days of the *Tristan* premiere in June 1882, *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* was published, and I speculate that this was not an accident. Swinburne had been writing the poem on and off for years, and perhaps the impending premiere of Wagner's opera finally made him finish it. William Bell Scott wrote to Swinburne about his projected *Tristram* on 29

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[5] Cummings, 'The Pivotal Role of Hans Richter in the London Wagner Festival of 1877', p. 438.
[6] 'Der Ring des Nibelungen', *Standard*, 8 May 1882, p. 3. 'Our Ladies Column by One of Themselves', *Leicester Chronicle*, 3 June 1882, p. 3.
[7] See '*Tristan und Isolde* at Drury Lane', *Musical World*, 60.25 (24 June 1882), 379-381 (p. 381), and 'At the German Opera' (p. 385). The *Musical World* had, in a previous Wagner article, already labelled Baudelaire as 'morally a sort of Algernon Swinburne in convulsions' – see 'Wagner interviewed by a Frenchman', *Musical World*, 58.4 (24 January 1880), 58.
[8] The serialization ran from 20 May until 8 July. This was preceded by an article on Wagner's 'Judaism' pamphlet by Eduard Hanslick – see, 'Richard Wagner's "Judaism in Music"', *Musical World*, 60.18 (6 May 1882), 273-5.

November 1881, seven months before the opera's premiere, in which he stated that he had been 'delighted' to 'hear that you [Swinburne] are seriously setting about finishing *Tristram,* another, I may say the other long cherished intention in your poetical life'.[9] This discussion and Swinburne's original letter informing Scott of his news – which was sent two days earlier – may well have been inspired by press notices they had both seen over the previous weeks. These had announced Drury Lane's 'German Opera Season' and the premiere of *Tristan* in the coming year. That *Tristram* was published at this time suggests a much more proactive Swinburne than his biographers have previously suggested. This is not a Swinburne who has been exiled to The Pines with Watts-Dunton and been cut off from the flow of life. On the contrary, this is a Swinburne who was responding to the market and its latest cultural trends.

Swinburne must also have been aware of the *Ring* Cycle at Her Majesty's. Some of his friends appear to have been taking advantage of this production to publicize their own writing. When Alfred Forman published a 'verbatim re-issue' of his 1877 translation of 'The Nibelung's Ring' in April 1882, he sent a copy to Swinburne via his brother Herbert (as noted in the previous chapter). Lang suggests in *The Swinburne Letters* that this gift was the 1877 edition (which was privately circulated and coincided with that year's Wagner festival). However, the book Swinburne received was almost certainly the new 1882 edition. Did Swinburne receive this gift because Forman anticipated that he would be attending one of the cycles at Her Majesty's?[10]

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[9] William Bell Scott to Swinburne, 29 November 1881, British Library, 'Letters from William Bell Scott to various correspondents', Ashley MS 1482 f.9. The letter continues: 'The portion you published [of *Tristram*] is as fine as anything you have done, perhaps. The remainder must not be inferior'. For the notices, see, for example, 'Theatrical Intelligence', *Morning Post,* 31 October 1881, p. 2. Swinburne's letter to Scott, sent on 27 November 1881, states 'I am now re-engaged on my long narrative poem, "Tristram of Lyonesse", of which I have written rather more than a third part. I wish you would come and hear some of it'. See *TSL,* IV, 246.

[10] *TSL*, IV, 266 (17 April 1882): 'Many thanks for your brother's translation of Wagner's text. I must have it bound up with my copy of the "Quatre Poèmes d'Opéra" published by Wagner in French'. I say April for Forman's translation as the *Musical Standard* and the *Musical World* both reviewed its reissue in May 1882. See '"The Nibelung's Ring"', *Musical Standard,* 22.927 (6 May 1882), 280, and 'Wagner's *Tetralogy* in English', *Musical World,* 60.90 (13 May 1882), 290. The translation's reissue was surely also the reason why Cosima Wagner mentions it in her diaries on 5 March 1882: 'We [i.e. her and Wagner] discuss the affair of the *Ring* translation (the English one) – Forman's is being very severely criticised; we have to admit that all these things seem to us of very little account'. *Cosima Wagner's Diaries,* II, 819.

Wagner's death in February 1883 led to a similar amount of interest in the composer, and Swinburne both memorialized his passing and capitalized on it with the publication of 'The Death of Richard Wagner' in the *Musical Review* on 24 February.[11] This was republished in *A Century of Roundels* in June 1883, in which Swinburne also included three poems concerning the death in October 1882 of his Wagnerite friend, George Powell, 'A Dead Friend', 'Past Days', and 'Autumn and Winter'. Swinburne commemorated both men's lives in these poems, and, indeed, calls Powell Wagner's 'herald' in the afterlife. Powell was the 'most unselfish, generous, gentle and kind and affectionate of men', but he died before Wagner in order 'to announce his [Wagner's] coming [in death]'. In 'Autumn and Winter', Powell would be immortalized as a 'A herald soul before its master's flying'.[12]

I will now examine both *Tristram of Lyonesse* and the Wagner-inspired poems of *A Century of Roundels* and, in so doing, demonstrate that the former is directly influenced by Wagner's own version of the Tristan legend, and not just in textual terms, but also by its music. However, I also suggest that Swinburne's *Tristram* ultimately aspires to move away from Wagnerian/Schopenhauerian metaphysics. Finally, discussing *A Century of Roundels,* I suggest this whole work as a musically-inspired collection, within which Swinburne places Wagner in a Romantic tradition that includes Shelley.

The *Tristram* Chords: Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*

The influence of Wagner's opera on *Tristram of Lyonesse* is implied by Swinburne's claim in a letter to Edward Burne-Jones that the 'thought of your painting and Wagner's music ought to abash but does stimulate me'.[13] Francis Sypher interprets this to mean that Swinburne felt 'stiff

[11] See A. C. Swinburne, 'The Death of Richard Wagner', *Musical Review*, 24 February 1883, p. 128. The *Musical Review* was edited by Francis Hueffer. See Leanne Langley, 'Novello's "Neue Zeitschrift": 1883, Francis Hueffer and the Musical Review', available on leannelangley.com, <http://leannelangley.com/site/assets/files/1103/novellosneuezeitschrift.pdf> (accessed 20 April 2020). It later appeared on 8 April 1886, in French, in *La Revue wagnérienne*. See 'La Mort de Richard Wagner', Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Online Catalogue, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k19996p/f79.image> (accessed 10 January 2020).
[12] *TSL*, V, 16 (24 April 1883). *SCPW*, II, 546. See also *TSL*, IV, 311.
[13] *TSL*, II, 51. This letter is dated 4 November, but has been tentatively given the year 1869. This is probably incorrect and more likely it dates from the early 1870s. Burne-Jones's painting of

competition from the "great musician"' but was undeterred. Sypher then traces Wagner's possible influence on *Tristram* by turning to other biographical sources and discussing the similarities between the opera and poem. He concludes his comparison, however, by stating that the 'influence of Wagner's music is harder to trace in Swinburne's *Tristram* [than in *A Century of Roundels*]'.[14]

On the contrary, *Tristram of Lyonesse* makes an unequivocal statement about the presence within itself of Wagner's opera and its pervasive *Tristan* Chord. In doing so, it also deliberately invites comparison between poem and opera.[15] The statement is made at the poem's end, in the opening lines of the final 'movement', 'The Sailing of the Swan':

> And one deep chord throbs all the music through,
> The chord of change unchanging, shadow and light
> Inseparable as reverberate day from night;
> Fate, that of all things save the soul of man
> Is lord and God since body and soul began;
> Fate, that keeps all the tune of things in chime;
> Fate, that breathes power upon the lips of time;[16]

Wagner's "'yearning" motif', created out of the so-called *Tristan* Chord (F, G, D♯, G♯), does indeed throb 'all the [opera's] music through' and is a 'chord of change unchanging'. While it is,

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Tristram and Iseult was begun in 1871-2 and was unfinished, subsequently lost, and only reappeared in 2012. See Roya Nikkhah, 'Rediscovered Edward Burne-Jones painting reveals artist's love-triangle angst', *Daily Telegraph*, 9 September 2012, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturenews/9530102/Rediscovered-Edward-Burne-Jones-painting-reveals-artists-love-triangle-angst.html> (accessed 25 November 2019). The painting is also mentioned by Georgiana Burne-Jones as being worked on in 1872 along with a painting called *Merlin and Nimuë* – presumably *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1872-7); see Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, II, 30.

[14] Sypher, 'Swinburne and Wagner', pp. 176, 183

[15] The following explanation of the action of *Tristram* should be read as a refutation of Elliott Zuckerman's comment that 'The similarity between Swinburne and Wagner is a sign of affinity rather than influence'. He does not define what this similarity might be – other than 'lushness' – or what constitutes affinity or influence. My definition of 'influence', however, contains ideas of both answering and rejecting the Wagnerian. See Zuckerman, *The First Hundred Years of Wagner's 'Tristan'*, pp. 184-5.

[16] *SCPW*, II, 133.

as Jürgen Maehder has said, 'difficult to classify with the categories of traditional harmonic theory', this chord initially appears in the second bar of the opera's Prelude, announcing itself as open and dissonant, and constantly re-appears in modulated forms throughout the opera's length.[17] The chord is only resolved in the final moments of the third act, when, as Eric Chafe states, Isolde's *Liebestod* 'completes the long-awaited cadence, replacing transition with closure'. Having arrived in Brittany and found Tristan, Isolde moves from the 'finite to the infinite', and is submerged in 'feeling, intuition, and ultimately unconsciousness'. Thus she dies shortly after Tristan, and is irrevocably united with her lover in death.[18]

Like Wagner's *Tristan* Chord, Swinburne's chord is also actually first presented in the poem's own prelude, announcing 'yearning' for love and death. It, too, stands open, dissonant, and awaiting closure. It sounds here not as a single unified chord, but is 'twain':

> Through the great heart of the earth strikes life and death,
> The sweet twain chords that make the sweet tune live
> Through day and night of things alternative,
> Through silence and through sound of stress and strife,
> And ebb and flow of dying death and life.[19]

The 'great heart of the earth' is surely the 'world's great heart, whence all things strange and rare | Take form and sound', or Wagner himself, from the roundel 'The Death of Richard Wagner'.[20]

Swinburne only uses the word 'chord' in *Tristram* in the first and last cantos. In so doing, he is making a direct reference to the importance of the *Tristan* Chord in the Prelude and Isolde's *Liebestod* – the pieces that begin and end Wagner's opera. But it is also a visual and sonic pun

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[17] Jürgen Maehder, 'A Mantle of Sound for the Night: timbre in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*', *Cambridge Opera Handbooks: Tristan und Isolde*, ed. by Arthur Groos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 95-119 (p. 99).
[18] Eric Chafe, *The Tragic and the Ecstatic: The Musical Revolution of Wagner's 'Tristan und Isolde'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 27. Chafe means 'unconsciousness' in a psychoanalytic sense, or a dream world, as she sings.
[19] *SCPW*, II, 5.
[20] *SCPW*, II, 549.

that plays on the very first words of his own poem: 'Love, that is first and last of all things made'. Here, as in 'Laus Veneris', 'Love' is the truth under the 'temporal veil' – the centre of all things that time moves us away from. 'Love' is the 'blood within the veins of time'.[21] These 'veins', however (with their allusion to returning blood to the heart), are 'Fate' – a process of continual change within time – which eventually returns us back to the heart, or 'Love', through death. 'Fate', is the first word of the last canto (as 'Love' is the first word of the entire poem) and so it carries back all of love's offspring – Tristram and Iseult, and us, as readers – to the beginning of the entire poem:

> Fate, that was born ere spirit and flesh were made
>
> […]
>
> A raiment of eternal change inwrought
>
> With shapes and hues more subtly spun than thought,
>
> Where all things old bear fruit of all things new[22]

The pair of chords struck in Swinburne's prelude could be interpreted as a single chord that has been made double at the 'birth' of the poem through time's movement away from 'Love'. As fate brings Tristram and Iseult together in death in the final canto, this chord becomes one. The chord is then submerged and muted in the final word of the poem, which is 'sea', for here, all life and death and its sounds and lights are incorporated into 'The light and sound and darkness of the sea'.[23]

As Swinburne brings these 'twain chords' together in the opening part of the final canto, he also puns the idea of a 'chord' with a clear allusion to Schopenhauer's philosophy. For 'life', we are told, now has 'no discord in the tune with death, | But all things fain alike to die and live | In pulse and lapse of tides alternative'.[24] Everything is now one, or perhaps we might say –

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[21] *SCPW*, II, 5.
[22] *SCPW*, II, 133.
[23] *SCPW*, II, 151.
[24] *SCPW*, II, 133.

unpoetically – that the Schopenhauerian 'suspension' between '*discord and reconciliation*' has been finally closed.

Swinburne had certainly heard the Prelude to *Tristan* played, and in a letter to Joseph Knight from February 1883, written after and partly in response to Wagner's death, he implies that he has heard it more than once. 'I read today with delight that his "Tristan & Isolde" was his [Wagner's] favourite work', he states, 'for nothing ∧ in music ever did produce upon me the effect produced by the first hearing – on the piano only, in private – < ∧ home > of the overture or prelude to that opera'.[25] Clearly subsequent hearings of the Prelude did not quite produce the same response – as is the case with many people, who – through later hearings – try to regain the impact of an initial response. His reminiscence, here, is also poignant in that despite the great feeling that this music evoked, Swinburne's introduction to the Prelude was a relatively small affair, in a private home and without orchestration.

I will not go into musicological detail concerning the *Tristan* Chord as such studies are available elsewhere.[26] It is unlikely that Swinburne would have been interested in its technicalities and his own version of Wagner's *Tristan* Chord certainly cannot be described as a poetic copy of a piece of musical grammar. It is, however, a transformation of the idea behind these chords into poetry and it shows that he had some understanding of what the *Tristan* Chord and its related musical gestures represented. He undoubtedly gained this knowledge in 1869 from the book given to him by George Powell: *La Nouvelle Allemagne musicale: Richard Wagner* by Auguste de Gasperini. What he learnt from this work may have been supplemented by Powell himself. On his death, Swinburne still owned this book.[27]

While much of Gasperini's work is taken up with an account of Wagner's life, it also acts as a form of primer on his operas by discussing their themes and the musical techniques that drive them. The work first discusses Wagner's earlier operas, including *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* and some of the lesser known works, such as *Rienzi* (1842). In starting his analysis of *Tristan*,

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[25] *UC*, II, 326.
[26] See the exhaustive study in Eric Chafe's *The Tragic and the Ecstatic*, particularly chapters five and six, pp. 85-120.
[27] See *Sale Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent People*, VI, 275.

however, Gasperini immediately makes comparisons with Beethoven's *Ninth*, stating that both works represent each composers' 'last word' on matters aesthetic, although while he calls *Tristan* 'a supreme blooming, this last bloom of his [Wagner's] life', Wagner had yet to produce *Die Meistersinger* (which tonally comments on *Tristan*), the *Ring* Cycle, and *Parsifal*.[28] Gasperini then tackles the origins, meaning, and structure of *Tristan* in detail, talking through the Buddhist elements of the opera – which, he says, 'preach extinction, annihilation, and the power of the will, a will without limits' – and discussing how the opera dramatizes man's imprisonment in desire.[29] He also describes the opera as a musical form of Schopenhauer's philosophy, pointing out, for example, that Tristan and Isolde both reference the first words of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will* just before they make love in the garden of Act II, and as Isolde's handmaiden, Brangäne, starts singing her 'watching song' from the Tower that stands over the lovers.[30]

Gasperini also places the opera within a wider theoretical context, making reference to Wagner's *The Music of the Future*, and performs a nascent musicological reading, since *Tristan*'s music, he claims, is an 'unknown country', a 'new language', 'strange', 'elusive', and 'a flood of changing tones', where 'harmony and melody are merged'.[31] Such music can cause confusion, he adds, as audiences sometimes find the constant transformations 'of the melody belong more in a

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[28] Auguste de Gasperini, *La Nouvelle Allemagne musicale: Richard Wagner* (Paris: Heugel et Cie, 1865), p. 143, 144. The translation from the French is mine and I am grateful to Chris Wright for assisting me in this: 'Wagner a dit son dernier mot dans Tristan'; 'cette éclosion suprême, cel épanouissement dernier de toute une vie, c'est *Tristan et Iseult*'.

[29] Gasperini, *La Nouvelle Allemagne musicale*, pp. 145, 146: 'le bouddhisme, qui prêche l'extinction, l'anéantissement, proclame la puissance de la volonté, et glorifie cette volonté *sans limites*'. For the importance of Buddhist and other Eastern writings to Swinburne's poetry, see Jerome McGann, 'Swinburne, "Hertha", and the Voice of Language', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 36.2 (2008), 283-97.

[30] Gasperini, *La Nouvelle Allemagne musicale*, p. 149. See Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, trans. by Andrew Porter and ed. by Nicholas John (London: Overture, 2011), p. 72: 'Both [i.e. Tristan and Isolde sing together]: […] "I, myself, | Am the world: – | Love so pure and holy, | Love so true and noble, | No more to awaken | Dreamless | Long awaited joy"'. See Schopenhauer, *The World as Will*, I, 3: '"The world is my representation": this is a truth valid with reference to every living and knowing being, although man alone can bring it into reflective, abstract consciousness. […] he does not know a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world around him is there only as representation, in other words, only in reference to another thing, namely that which represents, and this is himself'.

[31] Gasperini, *La Nouvelle Allemagne musicale*, p. 159: 'c'est une langue nouvelle qui nous frappe; des formes mélodique, étranges, insaisissables pasent devant nous [...] des rhythmes bizarres surgissent et s'évanouissent aussitôt; un flot de tonalitiés changeantes […]. Dans un sens élevé, harmonie et mélodie se confondent'.

symphony than a lyric work'.[32] Turning specifically to the opera's Prelude, Gasperini expands on the problem:

> Listening to the Prelude, you only meet with dissonances, alterations, and delays, with no perfect chords. Rays of sunshine, at times, throw light on these painful shadows. The seventh dominant chord is – at very few intervals – the only refuge, the only respite in this long series of anxieties and confusions; everywhere else on this tormented sea of music, there are moans and desperate cries.
>
> Wagner is particularly fond (and no one as much as he) of the chord that [the composer] Reicha designates as a major seventh modified by third and minor fifth. He invests this chord with feelings of pain and severe disturbance that are increasingly unexpected; he lets this terror fall on those chords which follow, connecting them with an uncertain sense of distant tonalities which fade away, so that having made us hope for light and peace, he just as soon withdraws it. When a dominant chord arrives, our soul is relieved of this immense anxiety, our feet have touched the ground and we are men again. […] There is no immediate or traditional resolution of this dissonance, but the resolution, I think, is entirely moral in nature.[33]

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[32] Gasperini, *La Nouvelle Allemagne musicale*, p. 162: 'C'est qu'en effet cette transformation inépuisable de la mélodie première semble appartenir à la symphonie plus qu'à l'œuvre lyrique'.

[33] Gasperini, *La Nouvelle Allemagne musicale*, pp. 163-4: 'Parcourez toute l'introduction; vous n'y recontrez que des dissonances, des altérations, des retards, sans qu'un *accord parfait*, un plein rayon de soleil, jette temps à autre quelque lumière dans ces ténèbres douloureuses. L'accord de *Septième de dominante* est – à de très-rare intervalles – le seul refuge, la seule détente, dans cette longue suite d'angoisses et d'obscurités; partout ailleurs, sur cette mer tourmentée, passent gémissements et des cris désespérés.

Il est surtout un accord que Wagner affectionne, et dont personne, je puis le dire, ne s'est servi aussi heureusement que l'auteur de *Tristan*: c'est celui que Reicha désignait sous le nom de *septième de troisième espèce*, l'accord de *septième majeure* avec *tierce et quinte mineures*. Il donne à cet accord si profondémont troublé et douloureux les résolutions les plus inattendues; il le précipite sur celui qui suit, les rattachant l'un à l'autre par le plus vague sentiment d'une tonalité lointaine qui s'évanouit, comme si, après nous avoir fait espérer la lumière, l'apaisement, il nous les retirait aussitôt. Quand un accord de dominante arrive, il semble que l'âme soit soulagée d'une immense anxiété, que notre pied ait touché terre, que nous soyons redevenus des hommes. […] Ne cherchez pas las *résolution* immédiate et classique de cette dissonance; cette résolution est toute morale, si j'ose ainsi dire'.

From this, Swinburne would have been aware of how dissonance in chords acted as a primary force within Wagner's orchestration and how it represented the flux of emotion. I have no doubt that this passage influenced the writing of *Tristram of Lyonesse*. Swinburne's own prelude was first published in a Christmas annual, called *Pleasure: A Holiday Book of Prose and Verse* (1871), as 'Tristram and Iseult: Prelude of an Unfinished Poem'. However, a draft had been completed on 21 December 1869, as a letter to D. G. Rossetti confirms. While his initial inspiration to write the prelude was a reaction to the 'Tennysonian seed' (i.e. Tennyson's *The Holy Grail and Other Poems*, published in 1869), it was written in the wake of Gasperini's book, which Swinburne stated to Powell he was reading in October 1869, as stated in the previous chapter.[34] His 'twin chords' and 'one deep chord' were written into the poem as a result of this, even if the final canto was written some years later.

However, Swinburne's chords might also be understood to refer to the distinctive rhyme scheme of the first and last cantos of *Tristram*. The opening 45-lines of its prelude rhyme with the first 45-lines of 'The Sailing of the Swan'. They are joined with each other in what Simon Jarvis has called 'long-distance rhyming', for it is 'not compulsory for a rhyme to be adjacent to its partner, nor even relatively close to it'.[35] These 45-line units also constitute a single sentence for both cantos. Taken together, this patterning suggests an overarching structure of considerable magnitude, with a span of more than 3,900 lines. Jarvis does not discuss the Wagnerian tropes at work here, nor the implications I wish to set out, and perhaps rather too quickly he sets aside this rhyming structure to favour a theoretical reading, where *Tristram* is a narrative at 'war with rhyme'. Sounding remarkably like Gasperini's point that Wagner's work is an opera masquerading as a symphony, Jarvis states that at its opening, *Tristram* starts as a lyric poem, but the reader feels 'mingled relief and disappointment' when 'the opening invocation to Love turns

[34] See A. C. Swinburne, 'Tristram and Iseult: Prelude of an Unfinished Poem', *Pleasure: A Holiday Book of Prose and Verse* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1871), pp. 45-52.
[35] Simon Jarvis, 'Swinburne: The Insuperable Sea', *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 521-35 (p. 525). That is, 'The Sailing of the Swan', *ll.* 1-45, uses the same rhyme words of the prelude, *ll.* 1-45.

out not to be a hymn but only the start of a story'.[36] Swinburne's rhymes, therefore, have 'a double character: full and exact within the couplets, over the entirety of the poem they are only identical rhymes. Fate's narrative does not rhyme with the vanishing lyric addresses to Love, but blanks it with a story'.[37] This is an odd reading, given the importance Swinburne placed on rhyme in English verse. In his review, 'Matthew Arnold's New Poems' (1867), Swinburne states that 'Rhyme is the native condition of lyric verse in English', and that 'To throw away the natural grace of rhyme from a modern song is a wilful abdication of half the power and half the charm of verse'.[38] With this in mind, I would suggest that in *Tristram*, rhyme is a powerful form of 'returning' motion, for, as Swinburne states in the prelude, the sea of love is circumnavigated 'from heaven' and back to the same 'heaven' by rhyme:

> From heaven to heaven with thunder of wheels and wings
> And antiphones of motion-moulded rhyme
> Through spaces out of space and timeless time.[39]

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[36] The similarity of Jarvis's point with Gasperini's suggests another way in which Swinburne's poem echoes Wagner's orchestration. Both versions pull at their own forms, attempting to cross boundaries and challenge perceptions.

[37] Jarvis, 'Swinburne: The Insuperable Sea', p. 526. S. J. Sillars has also noted these rhymed repetitions, but unlike Jarvis, does characterize them in Wagnerian terms. The rhymed sections, he states, are reminiscent of Wagner's opera, in that they are given a 'great sonorific and structural emphasis', and that in both works 'death is implicit in love and love in death'. To pursue the possibility of influence, Sillars does not look at the poem's text in detail, but returns instead to biographical sources. Weighing up the possibility that Swinburne had heard a performance or extracts of *Tristan*, he unfortunately repeats Gosse's story about Swinburne's 'musical insensitivity', and like Sypher, concludes that there is 'currently insufficient evidence for conclusive proof' that Wagner's opera influenced Swinburne's poem. See S. J. Sillars, '*Tristan* and *Tristram*: Resemblance or Influence', *Victorian Poetry*, 9.1 (Spring 1981), 81-86 (pp. 82, 86). Herbert Tucker implies a Wagnerian aspect for these rhymed sections when he says, 'In the prelude and last canto, Swinburne invokes the dialectical imperatives behind his *Liebestod* plot under their authoritative names Love and Fate'. Presumably, he is alluding to Isolde's *Liebestod*. Tucker makes no more of this allusion, however. See Herbert F. Tucker, *Epic: Britain's Heroic Muse, 1790-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 528-9.

[38] A. C. Swinburne, 'Matthew Arnold's New Poems', *Essays and Studies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1875), p. 162. In this review, Swinburne also mentions John Milton's 'intermixture of assonance and rhyme with irregular blank verse', which, he continues, 'did not obey the laws of the choral scheme, and so forfeited the legitimate condition of its music' (p. 163). *Paradise Lost* starts with a similar 16-line invocation to a 'Heav'nly Muse' and refers to beginning of the world.

[39] *SCPW*, II, 9-10.

Love and fate are brought together in sound, 'a motion-moulded rhyme' – in the way that sea might carve out shapes in a cliff – and in that motion they become one.

If each 45-line section is also a 'chord', then these sections could also be thought of, or 'felt', as a tonal blast, rather than something that makes logical, unfolding narrative sense. They are not necessarily meant to be understood in linear terms or in any ordered sense, but registered in the body as a 'throb' that sounds 'all the music through'. The first 45-line throb, or 'pulse', is initially unresolved or hovering. This demands a journey through the entire poem, or a 'lapse of tides', back to the poem's lyric root for its resolution – which is love, or music, or the 'native condition'. In the way that Fiona Sampson suggests we might imagine hearing the whole of Wagner's final opera *Parsifal* in an instant or 'crushed into simultaneity', each 45-line 'pulse' or 'throb', could be read as a flash or reverberation of heart-shaking feeling, or a sounded chord that contains both agony and ecstasy in an instant.[40] This denial of linearity could be seen as a proto-Modernist technique.

Tristram as response to Schopenhauer and Wagner

Swinburne's *Tristram* opens with the same scene as Wagner's opera. Iseult is being carried by sea to Tintagel for her marriage to King Mark and Tristram is accompanying her. As it crosses the Irish Sea, their ship, the *Swallow*, also appears to be sailing a figurative sea of harmonies in 'About the middle music of the spring'. As well as sailing, it is said to be 'flying sunward' as if heading for a union with Apollo. The air is also 'singing', as is love, and so this opening narrative canto seems as if it is riding the currents produced by the wake of the prelude, or, to quote Wagner talking about the role of a poet's words, Swinburne's canto appears to be born aloft like a 'trusty ship […] the conqueror of the endless floods of harmony'.[41]

Iseult, we are then told, is 'more fair than foam' and she is compared to a variety of flowers in a chain of similes that links her directly with Swinburne's perennial imagery of Venus.

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[40] Fiona Sampson, *Lyric Cousins*, p. 25. The image of *Parsifal* as a black hole captures the idea of music caught in its own gravitational pull, returning to itself, again and again in a constant turning back.

[41] *SCPW*, II, 13. Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, p. 301.

While Swinburne makes no reference to the scallop shell from which Venus has been born in Botticelli's painting 'The Birth of Venus' (1485/6), he clearly means the reader to think of the image and is also referencing the Homeric hymn on which Botticelli appears to have based his work. As Homer states, Venus was born in Cyprus, 'where the wet-blowing westerly's force brought her across the swell of the noisy main, in soft foam'.[42] Botticelli's painting adds to this description by personifying the west wind in the form of Zephyrus, whose breath is blowing roses onto the risen Venus. Swinburne's version, however, tells us that Iseult is being carried on the sea, where the sun's breath moves the sea (and so Zephyrus becomes Apollo, the god of music) and a 'Sweet gale shook all the foam-flowers of thin snow | As into rainfall of sea-roses shed'.[43] Iseult's body is described to us, and we are told that her 'Clear cheeks and throat and tender temples had | Such maiden heat as if a rose's blood | Beat in the live heart of a lily bud'. Iseult also has 'flower-soft lips', while her hands are 'regent lilies of reflowering lands'. Indeed, her whole body is 'flower-like' and her soul is 'one great mystical red flower' which 'Burst, and the bud of her sweet spirit broke | Rose-fashion'.[44]

In Wagner's libretto, Isolde does not get such fulsome literary treatment, although her relationship with Venus is implied by the fact that it is she who administers the love potion, while the potion itself was concocted by her mother. In Act II, this relationship becomes clearer as she awaits Tristan in a garden. Here she invokes 'Love's Goddess' to her handmaiden Brangäne, stating that it is Venus who controls everything, 'weaving spells from joy and grief | True love she weaves from hate'. This sounds rather like Venus's and Love's textual and figurative weaving in 'Laus Veneris'.[45] In the final act of the opera, when Tristan lays grieving and dying as he awaits Isolde's arrival in Brittany, his song transforms her into Venus when he asks his vassal, Kurwenal, if he sees Isolde 'Moving o'er the paths | Of ocean? The waves are like | Flow'ring

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[42] *Homeric Hymns, Homeric Apocrypha, Lives of Homer*, trans. and ed. by Martin L. West (London: Harvard University Press – Loeb Classical Library, 2003), p. 183.
[43] *SCPW*, II, 26
[44] *SCPW*, II, 14, 15, 27. Venus is described in 'Laus Veneris' as 'Making the foam as fire whereon she trod, | And as the inner flower of fire was she'. The female figure of 'Madonna Mia' (1866), who is another iteration of Venus, also has flower-like hands. See Haynes, *P&B*, p. 221.
[45] Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, p. 66. Weaving is also in the German text: 'die sie webt aus Lust und Leid'.

fields before her'.[46] Tristan's image of Isolde as Venus on flowering waves of the sea makes metaphorical and musical sense here, in that the opera is about to return to the textures of the Prelude and its own originating notes, and, therefore, to its own birth as music.[47]

It is also in this first scene in both versions that we are told of Tristram's original meeting with Iseult in Ireland and also where the lovers drink the love potion – an act which ends both the opera's first act and 'The Sailing of the Swallow' in a moment of passion. There are, of course, differences. Tristan's killing of Morold – Isolde's former betrothed – is changed in Swinburne's poem into the killing of Iseult's uncle. Isolde is enraged at Morold's death, wanting vengeance and death for Tristan, while Iseult, in contrast, is contemplative, which perhaps makes her passion seem even more extraordinary when the poem's canto reaches its final line: 'And their four lips became one burning mouth'.[48] In both, however, it is clear that each pair of lovers is already in love; the potion is merely a confirmation of this, and drinking it is an erotic form of the holy eucharist.

The versions then diverge. Wagner's is a pared-down retelling of the legend, while Swinburne's ranges over several episodes across nine cantos. As with the comparison of *Tannhäuser* and 'Laus Veneris', the differences are partly due to the demands of the respective artistic forms. However, the divergence is also due to the differing aims in narrative method. As Wagner states in *The Music of the Future*, with *Tristan* he had not sought to create a drama in the sense of external actions conflicting with characters' desires, but instead a drama that portrayed the conflict and 'workings of the soul':

> out of this most intimate centre of the world I shaped their external form [i.e. in music]. A single glance at the bulk of this poem will show you that I ventured to apply the same

[46] Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, p. 85.
[47] Tristan's image of Isolde as Venus was, of course, translated into French for the libretto of *Tristan* in *Quatre poémès d'opera*. If Swinburne gained his own copy early in the 1860s it is possible that Wagner's flowery, Venusian imagery may have led to nearly identical similes and metaphors throughout *Poems and Ballads*. See Wagner, *Quatre poèmes*, p. 306: 'Comme elle traverse en souveraine, majestueuse et douce, les champs de la mer? Elle vient sur de nobles vagues de fleurs enivrantes, doucement portée vers la terre'.
[48] *SCPW*, II, 38.

> detailed distinctness which the poet of a historical subject must give to the external connection of his action to the detriment of a clear representation of the inner motives, to the latter only. Life and Death, the whole signification and existence of the external world, in this work depends entirely on the emotions of the soul.[49]

Swinburne, however, had more space to work within. He saw his own version as working backwards through all the previous versions to find what he hoped would be the original, mythical truth of the legend – a return to its 'notorious facts'. In the same letter to Edward Burne-Jones where he talks of being stimulated by Wagner, he wishes *Tristram* to be:

> a tithe of the various incidents given in the different old versions: but I want to have in everything *pretty* [much all] that is of any importance, and is in keeping with the tone and spirit of the story – not burlesque or dissonant or inconsistent. The thought of your painting and Wagner's music ought to abash but does stimulate me: but my only chance I am aware will be to adhere strongly to Fact and Reality – to shun Fiction as perilously akin to lying, and to make this piece of sung or spoken History a genuine bit of earnest work in these dim times. Ahem.[50]

Swinburne here hints at Wagner's method before mentioning him, suggesting that this dissonance may well be stimulating in the opposite direction. By 'Fact and Reality', he surely means as near to the original version of the legend as possible, and for this reason he recruited Mathilde Blind in 1872 to translate some of its German sources. Swinburne had clearly been asking her for material on 'the white-handed Iseult' (who does not appear in Wagner's version of the story).[51] However, one could see in his attempt to work through all the previous versions that Swinburne's aim was, in some ways, analogous to Wagner's, in that he was attempting to get at the soul or 'spirit' of the

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[49] Wagner, *The Music of the Future*, p. 40.
[50] *TSL*, II, 51.
[51] *UL*, I, 231.

story itself, or the essential drama of its soul. This is surely the difference between 'Fiction' and 'Fact'. Reality for Swinburne is not the external, solid facts of the story in terms of its events, but the metaphysics underlying it. This would also account for the narrative technique of the poem, in that, like Wagner, Swinburne prioritizes the emotional life of the protagonists over the events themselves – many of which are repetitions rather than isolated episodes in the manner of, say, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Indeed, the beginning and end of events that Swinburne describes within the poem are often difficult to ascertain, because reporting the external facts is of much less importance than the emotions they evoke.

In this emotional priority, both opera and poem are very similar in one major aspect – their Schopenhauerian dynamics. As Gasperini points out, *Tristan* is Schopenhauer's philosophy made into an opera.[52] Swinburne's *Tristram* could – in part – also be described as Schopenhauer as poetry, since the poem's characters, too, are keen to identify the world as themselves. As they sail on the *Swallow*, Tristram's first songs to Iseult foretell a union before the couple finally declare their bodily love at the end of the canto, and, in this way, his songs assume Iseult as an extension of himself.[53] As he sings, the whole world becomes an expression of the self and the lovers are absorbed into each other. His song reconfigures time and space into a pattern of each other combined:

> 'Art thou not I as I thy love am thou?
> So let all things pass from us; we are now,
> For all that was and will be, who knows why?
> And all that is and is not, who knows how?

[52] This point has been authoritatively argued by Eric Chafe, see Chafe, *The Tragic and the Ecstatic*, p. 16.
[53] It is noticeable that Iseult gets little to do in the poem, except wait, or be receptive to Tristram. The poem's title does, after all, name only Tristram as of importance. In this way, Iseult could be seen as a receptive figure of music waiting for the poet to add his words, as Wagner describes in *Opera and Drama*.

Who knows? God knows why day should live and die'[54]

The claim that the world is a product of our senses is made even more explicitly in 'The Last Pilgrimage' just as Tristram is about to plunge into the sea to swim. Here Swinburne tells us: 'And round him all the bright rough shuddering sea | Kindled, as though the world were even as he, | Heart-stung with exultation of desire'.[55] The sea enacts Tristram's desire, as if it were a correlative of his emotions. Indeed, the whole poem could be described as a continual pathetic fallacy, where the patterns of similes – which Herbert Tucker has noted in the prelude as 'arriving at the dizzying rate of nearly a simile per line' – constantly weave both the subject and the object together to the point that they become indivisible.[56] Iseult's flower imagery, for example, is so cumulative that it takes over her body, as if Iseult were actually metamorphosizing. Her 'flowers' are often more present than her skin. We are told, for example, that her eyelids 'shone | As snow sun-stricken that endures the sun', so that Iseult's eyelids actually have the properties of sun-stricken snow (presumably they glitter as they shine in reflection, but are also unmelting).[57] The sun is also referenced twice so that the phrase reflectively shimmers in sympathy with the images (and the one word, 'sun', loses its dominance to become two). The boundaries between Iseult's body and the rest of the world, therefore, become indeterminate, which is an odd way of representing a heroine within an epic poem, where typically the bodies of heroines, and the qualities they suggest are described in detail. Boundaries, here, for Swinburne, are less real than the sensory 'facts'. Swinburne's reality lies elsewhere – apparently under Schopenhauer's veil of Maya – or Blake's 'rent veil' under which can be seen his 'dark hermaphrodite'. When we 'see' Iseult, it is not as a perfectly formed human being, as her 'bright flesh' is but a 'very veil'.[58]

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[54] *SCPW*, p. 33. I will return to Tristram's questions concerning 'why', shortly – although he is disregarding this question; life happens as it does, and we are merely part of the cycle of life and death.
[55] *SCPW*, II, 128.
[56] Tucker, *Epic*, p. 526.
[57] *SCPW*, II, 14.
[58] *SCPW*, II, 14.

Instead, in a very Shelleyan idea, we are meant to see through this flesh the shining of an eternal symbolism.[59]

Wagner's Isolde, too, hangs in a balance between solidity and music. In *Tristan*, the poetic imagery that activates the imaginative faculty of the listener, is not primarily a product of the libretto, but an action of the music. As she sings, Isolde's form constantly threatens to turn into music – as if she might vanish, or burn up on her own breath, although this (like Swinburne's Tristram and Iseult's tomb or chapel being dissipated by the sea) does not occur, with her death, until the final moments of the opera. For both Wagner and Swinburne, the characters of their respective versions of the legend, are more like "'chromatic beings'", to quote Peter Conrad, where such beings are 'moods that modulate like notes or like light passing through a prism'.[60] Conrad's description is apt, in that through a prism one gains a sense of the whole. Musical chromaticism also gives a sense of a true tonal centre of a piece of music through divergence.

In both versions, it is only the actions of other characters or the end of a canto or act that generates any sense of boundary. Boundaries are weak as both Swinburne and Wagner are artists who tend to haunt thresholds, or a betweenness, which allows, as McGann states, the possibility of 'seeing into two worlds at once' as Swinburne is 'always pursuing the point where multiple worlds of life are felt to impinge upon each other'.[61] The secondary characters of both versions are also similarly ghost-like. These should give the reader or the audience a sense of the social or moral boundaries that the protagonists want to traverse, but while this morality is indeed suggested by some in word and deed – such as in King Mark's sentence of banishment – these strictures are rapidly set aside, and in the final moments, even King Mark renounces his previous judgements when he realizes the true nature of the lovers' plight.[62]

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[59] See Shelley's sonnet 'Lift Not the Painted Veil' (1824).
[60] Peter Conrad, *Verdi and/or Wagner: Two Men, Two Worlds, Two Centuries* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011), p. 198. Conrad is here paraphrasing the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'who honoured Wagner as an amateur anthropologist'.
[61] McGann, *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 172.
[62] In Wagner, King Mark not only absolves the lovers of any blame but wishes to unite them. See Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, p. 91. In Swinburne's version, see *SCPW*, II, 150.

However, while in Wagner's version the secondary characters are ghosts, *Tristram of Lyonesse* is, if anything, more radical, in that some of Swinburne's secondary characters are projections or (fac)similes of the lovers' own desires. Tristram's first double appears in the name of 'swart Palamede', although, paradoxically, Palamede is also called 'a knight unchristened yet of unknown name' as if he might take the name of Tristram afterwards.[63] King Mark promises Palamede for 'guerdon of his harp and song' what his heart 'might crave', and so, betraying the King's trust, he claims Iseult as his prize and takes her away from Tintagel.[64] Within moments, however, Tristram rescues her during a fight in which the knights are 'lashed together' as if they become one. Tristram, of course, defeats Palamede, but he then takes the vanquished knight's place by leading Iseult farther into the forests around Tintagel so they can be alone once more. Technically-speaking, this episode allows Swinburne to separate his lovers from the royal court again (after they have drunk the potion in the previous canto) but it also creates a sense of Palamede as an actualization of Tristram's anxieties concerning his own conduct. Later on, Tristram also meets another knight called Tristram, who appears in the section entitled 'The Last Pilgrimage'. This doppelgänger requires the help of his namesake as his own lover has been stolen by another (if unnamed) version of Palamede, or 'A felon masked with knighthood').[65] Such repetitions generate an odd, dream-like compulsiveness within the whole poem – as if something emotional is being released and simultaneously repressed – a feeling akin to the mystical atmosphere of such medieval tales as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

The most overt doppelgänger is Iseult of the White Hands, who could perhaps be described as a failed version (or a fantasy) of the true Iseult. Tristram – having gone into exile in Brittany – projects his lost love onto the second Iseult and weds her. This Iseult becomes a representation of his true desire, although on his wedding night Tristram cannot consummate the marriage. Swinburne depicts this impotence as the result of Tristram battling with his own will, which, unfortunately, seeks the true Iseult for expression. While 'Spirit and flesh' are 'vassals to

[63] Presumably, this is because Palamede has not yet made a name for himself as a knight.
[64] *SCPW*, II, 44.
[65] *SCPW*, II, 122.

his will' and this Iseult cannot destroy his original desire (or to use Swinburne's Nietzschean phrase, turn 'his will to death'), she does, however, frustrate matters. She has the same 'flower-soft' touch as her namesake, for example, but despite these similarities, his 'will' ends up entangled in verse:

> But all his young blood's yearning toward his bride,
> How hard soe'er it held his life awake
> For passion, and sweet nature's unforbidden sake,
> And will that strove unwillingly with will it might not break,
> Fell silent as a wind abashed, whose breath
> Dies out of heaven,[66]

While apart from the true Iseult, Tristram does, briefly, find a way to assuage his will or his desire. Unable to reach her after their reunion in Lancelot's castle of Joyous Gard, Tristram instead finds a fulfilling moment of extraordinary joy when he swims in the sea.

> but with a cry of love that rang
> As from a trumpet golden-mouthed, he sprang,
> As toward a mother's where his head might rest
> Her child rejoicing, toward the strong sea's breast
> That none may gird nor measure.[67]

Like the speaker of 'The Triumph of Time', Tristram cannot join with his lover, and so he turns back to the mother element instead, the centre and originator of all love, the sea. In doing so, he becomes a joyful child once again, like one of William Blake's children of innocence, although in

[66] *SCPW*, II, 74-75. The poem returns to the 'genuine' Iseult in the next canto, where she fights with her own desire or will.
[67] *SCPW*, II, 127.

Tristram the image is also erotic. Here is a man, emblematic of mankind in general, who is constantly longing for love. He is not just longing for a sexual union with Iseult – or the perfect lover – but also a life-long yearning for the originating love that prefigures this, and which creates the need for the love of another person during life. This is a union with the mother that is left behind at birth, or the 'Mother and lover of men, the sea'.[68] It is for this reason that 'mothers' in Swinburne's poetry, often have an erotic sense to them. Tristram's swim in the sea is one of innocence but also of sexual vigour. He is

> as a boy
> That leaps up light to wrestle with the sea
> For pure heart's gladness and large ecstasy,
> Up sprang the might of Tristram; and his soul
> Yearned for delight within him, and waxed whole
> As a young child's with rapture of the hour
> That brought his spirit and all the world to flower,[69]

This Schopenhauerian idea, that yearning or desire is the fundamental truth of being, is made plain in the final canto, 'The Sailing of the Swan'. Shortly after the section that rhymes with the prelude (where 'Fate' brings the reader back to 'Love', like Tristram returning to the waves), Swinburne speaks on the certainties of life and death and describes how the life of the soul and its desires is a dream 'trustier than the truth of day'. Desire, and the dream world where it lives – underneath the conscious world – explains all human actions:

> But all unconquerable by noon or night,
> Being kindled only of life's own inmost fire,
> Truth, stablished and made sure by strong desire.

[68] From 'The Triumph of Time'. See Haynes, *P&B*, p. 37.
[69] *SCPW*, II, 125.

Fountain of all things living, source and seed,

Force that perforce transfigures dream to deed.[70]

Here is the answer to the question that Tristram asks of Iseult in his songs from 'The Sailing of the Swallow', in which he ponders 'why?' (see note 54, earlier). Under the veil, in a dream world of the mind and body, desire directs everything, indeed it 'transfigures' those dreams of desire into actions.

Swinburne's dreamscapes

Laura Kilbride has recently commented that the hypnotic quality of Swinburne's verse can sometimes create a sense of 'redundancy, *ennui*, trance-like states'.[71] I would suggest that these states could be differentiated, however. Baudelaire describes 'trance-like states' when he talks about Wagner's music, which he describes as 'the vertiginous imaginings of the opium smoker'. 'Trance-like states' suggests all sorts of sensual pleasures – a 'trance' being, in effect, a concentration of the attention into the body and not towards outward reality.[72] There is also an ecstatic form of trance, exemplified in a poem like 'Dolores'. This form, too, requires a loss of objective self with a return to the body and its senses, as is suggested by the adjective 'ecstasy'. But these trance-like states also suggest dreams, and these dreamscapes are where Swinburne invites us to enter at the start of both *Tristram of Lyonesse* but also *Poems and Ballads*. The latter's first line is 'I found in dreams a place of wind and flowers' and this is the reader's initiation into the dreamscapes that follow.[73] Indeed, *Poems and Ballads* could be read as a collection of dream poems, given the insistence in its 'Dedication, 1865' that 'dawn' drives his

[70] *SCPW*, II, 135. It is useful to compare 'Fountain of all things living' with 'The Death of Richard Wagner', quoted later in this chapter, where we are told that Wagner's music activates 'Fountain forces', see *SCPW*, II, 550.
[71] Laura Kilbride, *Swinburne's Style: An Experiment in Verse History* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2018), p. 80
[72] Charvet, *Baudelaire: Selected Writings* p. 332.
[73] 'A Ballad of Life', Haynes, *P&B*, p. 3.

leaves or verses ‘before her like dreams’, that he is addressing the ‘daughters of dreams and of stories’ and, at the collection’s close, that ‘they are past as a slumber that passes’.[74]

The same mesmeric quality has also been noted as an effect of Wagner’s music – which, given the composer’s intention of incapacitating the intellect to draw the listener’s attention to the inner life and its ‘sounding silence’ is entirely understandable.[75] In *Die Meistersinger*, the hero Hans Sachs describes the source of his song-making abilities. Singing is giving voice to that ‘madness’ of Venus, Eros, and desire, which is felt in dreams, he says. A poet brings these dreams to the light and interprets them, for, as he then states, ‘man’s truest madness | is disclosed to him in dreams: | all poetry and versification | is nothing but true dream interpretation’.[76] A failure to accept or to disregard Swinburne’s ‘trance-like states’ then, may cut the reader off from a different kind of reality than that proposed by more outwardly facing poetry.

Wagner’s beliefs here, as Eric Chafe, has shown, draw heavily on Schopenhauer’s ‘Essay on Spirit Seeing and Everything Connected Therewith’ (1851), which links the world of dreams to daily actions in a proto-psychological manner, a method that which Freud would later take up and formalize.[77] Edward Dannreuther – whose interest in trances, hypnotism, and clairvoyance (seen in his attendance at Rossetti’s house in the 1860s) was undoubtedly inspired by Wagner and Schopenhauer – translated part of this essay as ‘On Visions’ and included it in his 1870 translation of Wagner’s essay, ‘Beethoven’.[78] In *The Music of the Future* – also translated by Dannreuther – Wagner also invokes the dream world, where he explains the mythic-method behind *Tristan*. The mythic world of symbols, we are told

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[74] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 234-5. The repetition of ‘past’ with ‘passes’ is one of those Wagnerian returns in miniature. The words ‘dream(s)’ appears over fifty times in *Poems and Ballads*.
[75] Wagner, *The Music of the Future*, p. 47.
[76] Richard Wagner, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, trans. by Peter Branscombe and ed. Gary Khan (London: Overture Publishing, 2015), p. 253.
[77] See Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. by E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), I, 225-309. For Eric Chafe’s discussion of this, see *The Tragic and the Ecstatic*, p. 34.
[78] See ‘Supplement I: On Visions’, in Richard Wagner, *Beethoven, with a Supplement from the Philosophical Works of Arthur Schopenhauer*, trans. by Edward Dannreuther (London: Williams Reeves, 1893), pp. 117-53.

> immediately serve[s] to throw the mind into that dreamy state in which it soon arrives at a perfect clairvoyance, perceives a new connection in the phenomena of the world – a connection of which the waking perception can never become aware, and thus constantly recurs to the 'Why?' as if desirous of conquering the terror of what is incomprehensible in the world – the world which has now become so perfectly clear and intelligible. You will comprehend easily how music is destined to finally achieve and complete the charm by which this state of *clairvoyance* is brought about.[79]

Here, in *The Music of the Future*, is the possible origin of Tristram's questions when he asks 'For all that was and will be, who knows why? And all that is and is not, who knows how?'. I must add in relation to this that Wagner's words here, and in many other places, remind one of W. B. Yeats's essay 'The Symbolism of Poetry', especially in part III, on the purpose of rhythm, where Yeats talks of meditations, trances, and of 'those things that came from beyond the threshold of waking life'.[80]

Herbert Tucker's comment that 'Swinburne's plot [in *Tristram*] is a flimsy construct', essentially misses the point.[81] Dreams do indeed have flimsy plots in a conscious sense, but in a dream-world the plot is not one of events but of symbols.[82] *Tristram*, hanging as it does between a dream-sleep and the phenomenal world (which is why the 'action' always appears to be occurring at sunrise or sunset), is not mapped out in linear plot but in repetitions, or waves. In the same way that Eric Chafe states about Wagner's *Ring* Cycle, that it is 'injurious to understanding the work'

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[79] Wagner, *The Music of the Future*, pp. 38-39. Leading up to this point, Wagner asks the 'Why?' question several times.
[80] W. B. Yeats, 'The Symbolism of Poetry', *Poetry in Theory: An Anthology 1900-2000*, ed. Jon Cook (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), pp. 29-34 (p. 32).
[81] Tucker, *Epic*, p. 528.
[82] In contrast, T. S. Eliot did notice how Swinburne's work emulates dreams. Talking of the second chorus to *Atalanta*, he states 'This is not merely "music"; it is effective because it appears to be a tremendous statement, like statements made in our dreams; when we wake up we find that the "glass that ran" would do better for time than for grief, and that the gift of tears would be as appropriately bestowed by grief as by time'. Of course, the 'waking up' here is disingenuous. Swinburne does not want us to 'wake up', since true reality lies in dreams. Presumably, Eliot would describe himself, in contrast, as an 'awake' poet, ever straining towards objectivity. See Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, pp. 148-9.

to think of its 'world' in terms of conscious reality, so it is with *Tristram*. To require the poem to stay within what we might characterize as the narrative norms of plot and development is to demand the impossible. Like *Tristan*, which Wagner imagined as the '"dream of the deepest sleep"', *Tristram*, too, to quote Chafe on Wagner's art, 'constitutes a dream world in which ordinary motives and causality apply only in the most limited circumstances'.[83] In applying motives or plot-defined ideas to Swinburne's poem and its characters, we would be like 'the white-handed Iseult', applying a human framework – in her terms, one of morality – to a situation that exists, effectively, beyond (or rather before) such structures.

The prelude of *Tristram* invokes a range of mythical lovers, such as Hero and Helen. This is an initiation for the reader into Swinburne's dream world – as with the first poem of *Poems and Ballads* – as it layers myth upon myth in a deliberately entrancing fashion. It is trying to evoke a trance-like state through which certain eternal symbols might become more visible or real than they might be within the waking world, which the reader is meant to leave behind. The prelude is a descent into the underworld, or into night, so that – as the prelude states – 'We, from the fetters of the light unbound, | Healed of our wound of living, shall sleep sound. | All gifts but one the jealous God may keep | From our soul's longing, one he cannot – sleep'.[84]

The mythical world and its dreaming symbols are also the reason that both Tristram and Iseult, within the poem itself, keep recalling the story of Merlin and Nimuë. This tale, in which Merlin is seduced and set into a trance by the nymph Nimuë (which – as stated earlier – Burne-Jones was painting at the time Swinburne was writing to him about his epic), becomes a founding myth, or an archetype for Tristram and Iseult's own love.[85] Merlin's bewitchment by Nimuë is described as a 'holier sleep' and gives him power to see all things in the world, to understand the cosmos, and it is a sleep that Tristram and Iseult know that they should emulate. For the heart of both Merlin and Nimuë are one, joined together into a Wagnerian 'world's heart':

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[83] Chafe, *The Tragic and the Ecstatic*, p. 34.
[84] *SCPW*, p. 11.
[85] In this way, both Wagner's *Tristan* and Burne-Jones's *Beguiling of Merlin* become mythical archetypes for *Tristram of Lyonesse*.

Yea, heart in heart is molten, hers and his,
Into the world's heart and the soul that is
Beyond or sense or vision; and their breath
Stirs the soft springs of deathless life and death,
Death that bears life, and change that brings forth seed
Of life to death and death to life indeed,
As blood recircling through the unsounded veins
Of earth and heaven with all their joys and pains.
Ah, that when love shall laugh no more nor weep
We too, we too might hear that song and sleep![86]

On not 'waiting in vain'

While *Tristram of Lyonesse* presents a Schopenhauerian view of the cosmos, it also moves away from it, rejecting its fatalistic core beliefs. It accomplishes this through an argument that bears similarity with the core tenets of Nietzsche's 1886 work *Beyond Good and Evil*. The rejection of Schopenhauer's fatalism, also gives Swinburne's poem a markedly different outlook from Wagner's opera, which deliberately stalls its own plot, and becomes, as Alain Badiou has described, a plot of 'waiting in vain'.[87] In a Schopenhauerian world, a 'plot', or the actions and events that make up the total 'life' of a story (whether episodic or arranged to achieve some form of unity), is essentially irrelevant. Actions and events are illusory, or part of a scenic waiting room that provides amusement, or otherwise, until death. However, while Swinburne's *Tristram* also recognizes the illusory state of the world, it also attempts to find solace, meaning, and unity of being – or moments of redemption – amidst these illusions.

One of the odd characteristics of the Tristan legend is that its plot is essentially the wrong way round. The drinking of the love potion by the protagonists is both the beginning and the climax of the story, the alpha and omega of all that occurs within the tale. Both Wagner and

[86] *SCPW*, II, 99.
[87] Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, p. 43.

Swinburne appear to acknowledge this, when, at the end of their respective versions, they tie up the 'ending' with the beginning of the story, and so make the story circular. They also indicate this by suggesting that the love potion is also a form of poison. As the potion is drunk in 'The Sailing of the Swallow', we are told by Swinburne: 'And all their life changed in them, for they quaffed | Death'.[88] In Wagner's version, there are supposed to be two potions, or rather one of love and the other 'a death draught', but it is open to interpretation as to whether these are shown to be separate or the same potions.[89] Nevertheless, from the moment that they drink the potion, our protagonists are, in a sense, waiting for bodily death and the redemption of their love.[90]

However, the 'waiting' is most keenly felt in Wagner's version, where post-potion, Tristan and Isolde do little except sing of love and death. They are, as Badiou has succinctly described them, like the characters in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, who are 'waiting in vain', and doing their 'waiting as pure waiting, rather than as something fulfilled by an end result'.[91] It is important to point out that death is not the end-result of this waiting. Death has already happened; post-potion, Tristan and Isolde can already see beyond the flesh, past the veil, and into the cosmos beyond, but, although the fatal blow has been struck, they are – as the opera cliché goes – singing until they finally stop two acts later when their physical bodies follow their souls into death.[92] They must wait until bodily death catches up with their souls and consecrates their redemption as the phenomenal and noumenal worlds become one. Until that time, Tristan and Isolde are like birds, singing their last song, before heading south – an image Swinburne uses

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[88] *SCPW*, II, 37.
[89] Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, p, 57. Brangäne substitutes the love potion for the poison, but it releases the protagonists' love, which is also death. The poison is supposed to be given to Tristan by Isolde in vengeance for the death of Morold. In Act II, Brangäne admits the mistake, but Isolde questions this, pointing out that Venus controls everything and, in so doing, implies that the goddess may have turned the poison into a love philtre (p. 66).
[90] As the narrative is so skewed, it also calls into question attempts to categorize or define the tale's genre. It is often claimed, for example, that Wagner's *Tristan* is a tragedy, but there is no fatal flaw, nor a villain as such (unless those who wield morality as a defence can be called villains) and both the protagonists get what they want – which is death. They are also both forgiven by King Mark when he is told the truth, and so their death is not a form of nemesis or retribution.
[91] Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, p. 120.
[92] On the difficulties and ambiguities of this point, see Karol Berger, 'A Note of Tristan's Death Wish', *Richard Wagner and His World*, ed. by Thomas S. Grey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 136-145.

at the end of the first canto, 'The Sailing of the Swallow', where, having drunk the potion and with the sun still 'unsunken', both lovers now

> hovered as a bird,
> Wounded, and each mouth trembled for a word
> […]
> And they saw dark, though still the unsunken sun
> Far through fine rain shot fire into the south;
> And their four lips became one burning mouth.[93]

As the sun is still 'unsunken', the lovers must, therefore, wait for the final closure of death, and in the interim much of the story remains to be told before they die.

This is not the case in *Tristan*. In the second act of the opera, Isolde waits for Tristan and sings about love, while Tristan, in turn, waits for an all-clear from Brangäne to approach. Eventually, he arrives, and they sing about death and love in apparently irresolvable terms to the point that they expect to die at that moment. Then they make love while danger is nearby. Brangäne watches, or waits, in a tower above them and is supposed to warn them of the approach of King Mark. The lovers are hoping for a double apotheosis with both orgasm and death, and Brangäne's watching song is interrupted by Tristan crying 'Let me die now!'.[94] But wait for death they must, as King Mark and his followers then arrive to catch them (thus reaffirming the

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[93] *SCPW*, II, 38. Jarvis complains about this last couplet here, stating that Swinburne was 'determined' to have 'mouth' at the end of the canto, and so chose 'south', so 'why into the south, particularly, rather than the west, we might otherwise ask' (Jarvis, 'The Insuperable Sea', p. 525). The answer is, again, that the images in a dream world are symbolic not literal. Literally, however, birds tend to fly south for winter (where the sun lasts longer in the sky) and then return until they can make this journey no more and they die. This image is reversed in 'the Last Pilgrimage', for winter is where Iseult of the White Hands lies in wait. While for Tristram it 'Blew summer, kindling from her mute bright mouth; | But winter breathed out of the murmuring south' (p. 118). See also the moment in 'The Queen's Pleasance', where the couple make love and 'bright words | Break flamelike forth as notes from fledgeling birds | That feel the soul speak through them of the spring. | So fared they night and day as queen and king | Crowned of a kingdom wide as day and night'. (p. 49).

[94] Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, p. 72.

boundaries, as the phenomenal world, or life, is wont to do where love is concerned). Tristan is wounded, although the fatal blow is merely confirmatory it seems, and he flees. The final act is then nearly all taken up with Tristan, on the point of death, waiting for the arrival of Isolde, a pause that Badiou calls 'the lengthiest wait in the entire history of art'. Indeed, as Tristan sings, he knows that physical death will not actually release him from a wish for all things to end; it will merely be a translation of the physical into the eternal realm of sleep and symbols, where he will become one with 'yearning' and be released as a single being.[95] This sleep is a form of self-oblivion (akin to Swinburne's 'The Garden of Proserpine') as 'The boundless realm | of endless night, | And there we know | One thing only | Endless god-like | All forgetting!'[96]

Swinburne's world, however, moves on, even if, in its symbolic realm, it works in repetitions and echoes. Tristram and Iseult are parted, reunited, but are then parted again until the final canto. But during this time, Tristram fights Palamede, marries, and then fights and kills Urgan, 'an iron bulk of giant mould'.[97] We also gain psychological insight through various monologues, during which the characters clearly develop. The clearest example of this is where Iseult is left waiting for Tristram ('Iseult at Tintagel') just prior to their reunion at Joyous Gard. She is alone, but rather than merely reflecting on the world as it is, Iseult battles with her Christian beliefs and her own natural, sexual will in a poetic *tour de force* of psychological and symbolic description. She first renounces her will, asking God if she should repent and to '"let him [Tristram] love not me, | Love me not any more"'. But thinking too much on Tristram, however, causes her passions to reignite. She then calls on God to '"Give him back"', and suddenly the two lovers are together in spirit, as 'All their past came wailing in the wind, | And all their future thundered in the sea'. Iseult feels the natural world running through her veins once

[95] Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, pp. 120, 121. In Act III, Tristan sings about how the love potion was poison, although its effect was to release feeling to overwhelm his brain: 'The dark fatal drink! | Ah, from heart to brain | How wildly it flowed. | No healing cure | Not death itself | Can set me free | From the yearning pain'. See Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, p. 84.
[96] Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, p. 81. See the second stanza of 'The Garden of Proserpine', Haynes, *P&B*, p. 136.
[97] *SCPW*, II, 114.

more and, perceiving that it is the Christian doctrine that makes her unhappy, starts to rail at '"Lord God"' for '"Dost thou know | O happy God, how men wax weary of woe"' and

> 'What profit have we though thy blood were given,
> If we that sin bleed and be not forgiven?
> Not love but hate, thou bitter God and strange,
> Whose heart as man's heart hath grown cold with change,
> Not love but hate though showest us that have sinned'.[98]

This is not a 'waiting in vain', but a moment of self-realization and experience. Her passions have been dulled by the royal court and here she awakens to her true self once more. There is a sense that after drinking the potion, Iseult has much to learn in order to understand her plight. Wagner's protagonists, however, gain an immediate knowledge that they can never escape from.

Iseult's plight is in stark contrast to her double, Iseult of the White Hands. Initially silent, her fury at her husband, who is absent both from Brittany and her bed, creates in her a thirst 'for judgment given of God's own mouth | Against them'. How long must she wait, she cries. A 'slow cloud of envious will' rises within her and turns her thoughts to destruction. She now feels 'hardening hate' and it is her Christian belief and the moral superiority it gives her – with its contingent ideas of good and evil – that provides the fuel for this fury.[99] Iseult's mistake is to apply morality to the Schopenhauerian conception of love, which is, as Swinburne says in the very first words of the poem, 'first and last of all things made'. Love, therefore, comes before morality.

Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* starts with a famous question about 'truth' that echoes Wagner's ideas of 'womanly' emotion and music from *Opera and Drama*. 'Assuming that truth is a woman – what then?', Nietzsche asks in his preface, and in doing so, signals his attempt in the

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[98] *SCPW*, II, 79, 81, 82, 84. This is reminiscent of 'Laus Veneris' where Tannhäuser complains that 'All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ'. See Haynes, *P&B*, p. 10.
[99] *SCPW*, II, 106, 107.

following chapters to dismantle philosophy's relationship with truth and suggest it to be something always unknowable or beyond the limits of human perception.[100] In a later section of 'Epigrams and Interludes' comes a statement that could be tailor-made both for Wagner and for Swinburne's version of the Tristan legend (indeed, in Wagner's case, it probably was): 'What is done out of love always takes place beyond good and evil'.[101] The presentation of this pithy epigram belies its importance. Lost amongst a number of epigrams, the sentence takes on the appearance of an aside, but it is, in effect, a central tenet of Nietzsche's work. In the chapters surrounding this, Nietzsche prioritizes human emotions above the work of intelligence, first in an extraordinary attack upon Plato and his denial of the 'rabble of the senses', but then by destroying Plato's idea of objective 'truth', which Nietzsche politically christens as the Greek philosopher's 'aristocratic method'.[102] Truth is, instead, to be found amongst the senses, with the caveat that, despite this, there is no such thing as truth, for the senses only provide access to myriad versions of it.

Nietzsche then turns his attack upon systems that claim to tell the truth, but which, he claims, are actually self-serving doctrines and meant to enslave those who follow them. The chief system here is morality, which, he states, has gained enormous power over human life in its guise as Platonic-Christian doctrine. Here, Nietzsche radically diverges from Schopenhauer and so from Wagner. While both the philosopher and his disciple composer also denied Christianity, Nietzsche claims that their brand of fatalism, is, in effect, a product of the same 'enslaved' thinking. The 'waiting' for death, which marks Schopenhauerian metaphysics could also be read as the same state as 'waiting for heaven'. The problem, as Nietzsche sees it, is that Christian fatalism is parasitic on man's constant metaphysical needs, which turn him away from happiness to look for something unknown, or beyond mankind itself, rather than into the substance of life.

While Swinburne's poetry also clearly betrays a metaphysical need, his is not a metaphysics that promises transcendence through a denial of the body, or a metaphysics of a

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[100] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. by Marion Faber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 3.
[101] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 69.
[102] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 15.

Hegelian absolute. It is, instead, a metaphysics of sensual appreciation that leads through the body not to heaven or an objectified state, but to a Venusberg, which, having thrown off the Christian shackles of morality, one might be able to enjoy – hence Tannhäuser's faltering, but occasionally successful love-making in 'Laus Veneris'. Wagner's similar dynamics, however, lead ultimately, to a denial of life – and in this, we might say that Swinburne's earlier *Poems and Ballads* is more truly Wagnerian in its constant demands to reach outside of time with a 'death-devotion', or to embrace oblivion; for are not many of the poems in that collection about 'waiting in vain' for death?[103] *Tristram* however, radically departs from this need. Instead of a fatalistic death-drive, *Tristram* instead identifies the source of potential misery and turns what could be defined as a tragedy into a song of joy.

The Christian doctrine, however, distorts the life of Iseult of the White Hands to one of misery and leads her to demand blood, which, hypocritically, 'held itself no sin'.[104] Christian morality transfigures the lonely Iseult into a being of hate, not love. Her moral codes demand ideas of good and evil and she herself is strengthened, but is not simultaneously submissive or 'soft' as Swinburne's aesthetics might demand (and which Tristram himself exemplifies, in that he is strong in his knightly duty, but also emotional and 'feminine' in his musical prowess). Ultimately, the morality of Iseult of the White Hands demands that she becomes a vengeful version of Christ, and she takes up his 'sword' or an instrument of division, with a '"hand as lightning"' and a tongue a '"fiery brand"'.[105] As Nietzsche says of moral codes, they are intended either to 'soothe' their 'author and allow him to be content' or to 'nail him to the cross' or to 'exact vengeance for him […] or transfigure him above and beyond'.[106]

Iseult's moral self-satisfaction – born of loneliness and waiting – is, however, radically contrasted with the outcome of Tristram's own loneliness and waiting, which occurs whenever he is separated from his lover. The psychological space he finds himself in, allows a realization that

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[103] 'The Triumph of Time' is the obvious example here, but also 'Satia Te Sanguine', 'Rococo', 'Dolores', 'The Garden of Proserpine', 'Hesperia', etc.
[104] *SCPW*, II, 106.
[105] *SCPW*, II, 109.
[106] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 76.

love is beyond morality, beyond boundaries, even beyond the normal 'matter' of time and space, since his love is '"As the dawn loves the sunlight"'. It rises, it falls, vanishes and comes again, and he claims that man should not seek to explain the world, but seek comfort in the cycles of life and '"Let that which is be"'. Although sad during his three-year parting from Iseult, his true love, when he 'could not choose but yearn for that set sun', he is also able to keep 'all the summer of his strength in leaf | And all the rose of his sweet spirit in flower', because he knows that 'his great heart' is 'greater than his grief'.[107] Because he trusts in the rise and fall of the seasons and the natural world, Tristram knows that on some day he will gain Iseult again, even if that moment is in death. In the meantime, there is no point in grieving, since the universe will not help him. It is indifferent to human suffering. It knows nothing of 'time nor space' for it is not 'good nor evil, wise nor mad | Not just or unjust, neither glad nor sad'; it is beyond good or evil.[108] Indeed, it is the repetitiveness of the world's desire that Tristram must place his trust in, for it assures him of his reunion with Iseult and that love will be constantly reborn. In contrast to his vengeful wife, Tristram repudiates the very idea of a Christian God, moreover refusing to believe that such a being would – at the behest of one believing man or woman – damage his own creation.[109]

After the events of Joyous Gard, Tristram again finds himself lonely, but he also finds 'joy' in this acceptance of fate. Although love is about constant loss (since one is always moving away from the moments of heightened being that love confers) by reconnecting with the natural world, the joy of love can be regained. Tristram's swim is both an affirmation and a negation – it implies a loss of self, but also a regaining of a larger self, as part of the natural world. In this he finds joy and peace by communing with things as they are, or by becoming what Nietzsche would call 'homo natura', a man who celebrates life, free of all systems that seek to control or limit his nature.[110] In this state of being and negation, Tristram truly understands the

> world's half heavenly face,

[107] *SCPW*, II, 53, 58, 56.
[108] *SCPW*, II, 59.
[109] *SCPW*, II, 59.
[110] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 123.

The music of the silence of the place,
The confluence and the refluence of the sea,
The wind's note ringing over wold and lea
Smote once more through him keen as fire that smote,
Rang once more through him one reverberate note,
That faded as he turned again and went,[111]

Even though this moment fades, we are told that Tristram is contented. For this brief moment, which takes the form of a series of comings and goings – confluence/refluence, but also music/and silence – he has joined with the world's eternal repetition, becoming one and many at the same time and he has found redemption. For as he swims in this sea of love, he also becomes a musician, where 'each glad limb became | A note or rapture in the tune of life'.[112] As Wagner states in *The Music of the Future*, it is the musician 'who gives voice to that which has remained untold, and the infallible form of this resounding silence is *infinite melody*'.[113]

'A ROUNDEL is wrought as a ring'

Swinburne returned to the Tristan legend and the action of fate and love in his poem 'Two Preludes'. This was published the following year in *A Century of Roundels* with the first roundel called 'Lohengrin' and the second 'Tristan und Isolde'. In the collection, the poem appears directly after the roundels entitled 'The Death of Richard Wagner', as if, by being there, it is enacting Wagner's own return to the origins of love, through fate, or death, and serving as a musical epitaph.

It is worth highlighting that Swinburne's love of Wagner's *Lohengrin* Prelude dates from at least 1867. In that year he wrote to John Nichol, a professor of English literature, about the possibility of hearing Wagner's 'Nibelungen' complete, stating enthusiastically, 'Conceive – if

[111] *SCPW*, II, 129.
[112] *SCPW*, II, 128.
[113] Wagner, *The Music of the Future*, p. 47.

you know the [*sic*] *Lohengrin* – what a divine delight it will be'.[114] He also wrote to George Powell on 17 April 1868, saying, 'So we are promised *Lohengrin* this season at last and after all! Will the promise be kept? tell me', and on 27 July 1875, he wrote to Powell again, stating 'I should have liked to hear *Lohengrin* but far more of course, were it possible, to hear the later works'.[115] This final quotation even suggests an over-familiarity with the Prelude, or even the opera. As *Lohengrin* premiered in London at Covent Garden in May 1875, this letter to Powell appears to be in response to that.

Swinburne's treatment of the *Lohengrin* Prelude shows a far more sophisticated response to the opera than it at first appears. Here is the roundel in full:

LOHENGRIN.

LOVE, out of the depth of things,
As a dewfall felt from above,
From the heaven whence only springs
Love,

Love, heard from the heights thereof,
The clouds and the watersprings,
Draws close as the clouds remove.

And the soul in it speaks and sings,
A swan sweet-souled as a dove,
An echo that only rings
Love.[116]

[114] 13 July 1867, *TSL*, I, 250.
[115] *TSL*, I, 295 and III, 48.
[116] *SCPW*, II, 551.

In Wagner's *Lohengrin*, the eponymous knight arrives in Act I in a boat drawn down the River Scheldt (near Antwerp) by a swan. Lohengrin has come to save the reputation of Elsa von Brabant (another pure maid pulled from the same mould as Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*). She has been accused of murdering her brother Godfrey, the Duke of Brabant, who has gone missing. However, through a trial by combat, Lohengrin restores Elsa's reputation. He also agrees to marry her, but on the condition that she never asks his name (so that the story could be seen as a form of the Cupid and Psyche myth). Through the machinations of the witch Ortrud, however, Elsa does indeed ask for Lohengrin's name, and he reveals himself to be a grail knight. Now that his secret is known, he must return to the grail chapel and leave Elsa behind. In the final moments of the opera, the swan reappears drawing a boat on the river to bear Lohengrin away, but it then turns into Godfrey (who had been transformed into the swan by Ortrud before the action of the opera). A dove flutters down from the heavens to draw the boat instead. Lohengrin leaves and Elsa dies, presumably transported in spirit to a place of love where the mystical knight resides.

At a first reading Swinburne's 'Love' does not appear to sit well with the opera's plot, given Elsa's rather self-serving marriage to Lohengrin in order to save herself from future machinations of Ortrud and her husband. Moreover, since its premiere in 1850, the opera has been continually interpreted in the light of its apparent Christian symbolism, yet Swinburne's presentation of 'Love' appears to avoid this reading.[117] As ever, Wagner denied the Christianity of the opera and was ambivalent towards productions that interpreted it in this way. As John Deathridge has noted, the symbolism of *Lohengrin* has also dulled over time, so that we no longer think of the swan that draws the knight across the water as the sexually-aggressive figure that it then was. Yet, as Swinburne's roundel makes clear, in this image of the swan as 'Love', is

[117] The story's relationship with the myth of Cupid and Psyche would have certainly interested him.

encapsulated the heart of the Prelude and the opera as a whole, a combination of both sexual and spiritual senses (the spirit being denoted by the 'dove').[118]

Swinburne's poem is an abstract recasting of both the Prelude and the opera. 'Love' is drawn in circular motions (in the way that 'Laus Veneris' turns back on itself) and is carried through to the end of the first stanza. Here it arrives from both 'the depth of things' and 'from above', showing that Baudelairean interest in the depiction of space that the French poet noted in Wagner's music. A comma then separates the first stanza from love's next appearance, which is heard (again from both the high 'clouds' and the earthly 'watersprings'), and, at the 'clouds remove', it 'draws close'. This arrival is surely both Lohengrin himself and the music of the Prelude reaching its height. Swinburne's 'watersprings' here may relate to the Scheldt river, and so love has a chthonic origin as much as it also comes from 'the clouds'. In the final stanza we are told that 'Love' has a soul, which both 'speaks and sings', and so love is possibly both poetry and music, which are both sexual and spiritual in origin (though not in a Christian, platonic sense). The 'swan' is as 'sweet-souled as a dove', blending the erotic power of the swan with the dove's sanctity and peace.

'Love' is then immediately connected to 'Fate' in the second roundel 'Tristan und Isolde'. This 'prelude' enacts the whole process of life within eleven lines. After leaving the realm of 'Love', time takes hold of man, although, at first, in 'a man's heart's pride grows great', with no sense of death to come – a feeling of immortality. But 'Fate' then draws close, obscured by 'clouds that loom' – again we have a pun on threads and textiles, as in 'Laus Veneris' – before the 'tomb' appears. Fate returns us, but also takes us beyond the origin of birth, to a region before all things, for it is 'more deep than the wide sea's womb'.[119] In relating the world's 'tomb' to the 'womb', the poem is re-enacting Tristram's swim in the 'mother' sea, and thus the whole roundel doubles back on itself to the initial announcement of 'LOVE' at the start of the 'Lohengrin' section. While 'Lohengrin' and 'Tristan und Isolde' function as separate lyrics, they combine to

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[118] Deathridge, 'Wagner's "Alter Ego"', p. 7. Deathridge suggests that the dove is also a symbol of the immaculate conception. The swan's transformation into Godfrey could therefore be further interpreted as the creation of art in the processes of love, as with 'Laus Veneris'.
[119] *SCPW*, II, 551.

form a whole. As a complete poem, 'Two Preludes' also plays on the musical motif of the chords of *Tristram of Lyonesse*, where fate as a chord leads us back to the chord of love where they are combined, although here the action is accomplished across two operas. The poem's title 'Two Preludes' suggests a simple description of each piece of music, but the second roundel resolves the first. While the 'roundel' form might suggest a constant return to the same thing, the end of the poem is, therefore, different from the first, but it still returns the reader to the first point of the poem as a whole. In this way, as Herbert Tucker has noted, the roundel 'unrolls its curriculum between a beginning and an end that coincide but are not therefore identical'.[120]

A manuscript draft of the roundel held at the British Library aptly suggests that the roundels of 'Two Preludes' started life as one poem.[121] It appears to be a first draft as the opening stanza of the 'Tristan' section starts the poem and is followed by its second verse. But the first stanza of 'Lohengrin' then interrupts the poem, starting with 'Love, out of the heart of things' rather than the 'depth of things'.[122] On the verso of the manuscript, the final two stanzas of 'Tristan' appear with the final two of 'Lohengrin', although they are written alongside. This suggests that Swinburne was untangling the two sections in his thoughts as he wrote them down, wondering whether they could work as a whole or as separate roundels within one poem.[123]

The roundel form is the Wagnerian return made perfect. It is a deliberate unwillingness to end, or even an admission that a poem can never truly end. For Swinburne, the roundel is a continual return or 'an echo that only rings | Love' (to quote 'Two Preludes'), which puns on the perfect Wagnerian 'ring', or that owned by the Nibelung, Alberich (and – for a while – Wotan), in the *Ring* Cycle. But it is also a star that is 'wrought' – the past participle of 'worked' – as if

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[120] Herbert Tucker, 'What Goes Around: Swinburne's *A Century of Roundels*', *Algernon Charles Swinburne: Unofficial Laureate*, p. 133.
[121] '*A Century of Roundels*: Autograph draft of thirty six poems', British Library, Ashley MS A4384 ff.121-122.
[122] This may have been an initial thought about linking the roundel with 'The Death of Richard Wagner' which comes before it, given that poem's second section which begins 'The world's great heart'.
[123] A draft of the final verse of 'Babyhood' from *A Century* also occupies the same manuscript sheet.

Alberich/Wotan/Swinburne is hammering out a roundel 'with cunning of sound unsought' to illuminate a world. As Swinburne states in the poem 'The Roundel':

> A ROUNDEL is wrought as a ring or a starbright sphere,
> With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,
> That the heart of the hearer may smile as if to pleasure his ear
> A roundel is wrought.[124]

In the form of a ring, the roundel also contains a 'jewel of music', and so it is a ring of sound, or an earring, which – evoking the 'spirit of sense' – hangs 'in the ear of thought'. It is a circular music, containing the extremes, and therefore, the whole of life: 'Love, laughter, or mourning – remembrance of rapture or fear'. The roundel also returns the speaker or listener to the body, for while it sounds 'As a bird's quick song runs round', it also returns us to our own heartbeat:

> and the hearts in us hear
> Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,
> So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,
> A roundel is wrought.[125]

The ideas in this final stanza are rich and compelling. An answering heartbeat creates a pause like a music rest. The 'same strain' surely alludes to *Twelfth Night's* 'That strain again!' from the opening speech 'If music be the food of love, play on'.[126] The musical rests and answers do

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[124] 'The Roundel', *SCPW*, II, 575. In Forman's Swinburnian translation of Wagner's *Siegfried,* Wotan states, 'Alberich […] caught by his curse | the glancing gold of the Rhine, | and reached to measureless might. | The ring that he [Alberich] wrought | I craftily wrested'. See Alfred Forman, *The Nibelung's Ring: English Words to Richard Wagner's Ring Des Nibelungen in the alliterative verse of the original* (London: Schott & Co., N.D. (but 1882)), p. 120.
[125] *SCPW,* II, 573.
[126] 'That strain again! it had a dying fall: | O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound, | That breathes upon a bank of violets'. William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. J. C. Dent (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p.17, I. 1. 4-6.

indeed ‘play on’, and it is in musical sound that the ‘ring’ or ‘device’ (which also implies design, or form, as well as desire) turns or ‘moves’ to become a spiritual ‘pearl’ (found at the bottom of the sea?) or a bodily ‘tear’. ‘A roundel is wrought’ in this fashion, created while continually turning or being worked in sound into expansive music – and this may be where T. S. Eliot got his idea about Swinburne’s ‘working’ his words.[127]

Of course, Alberich the Nibelung’s ring gives power only to those who forswear love and so the ring is a source of evil and works as a symbol of earthly greed. However, I make the allusion to Alberich both because of the Wagner allusions throughout this collection, but because Wagner’s ‘ring’ can also be seen as a symbol of the lonely, lovelorn life of the poet, who is able to describe, even recreate love and life, but must, by necessity be apart from it. (Thus ‘love’ is also a continual source of pain as much as it is also a source of pleasure.) *Lohengrin* can also be read in this way: the knight must return to the grail chapel once his identity has become known. He is an artist, retreating to the realm of love, or the world of art, which is separate from the affairs of men, and Lohengrin’s wife, Elsa, must die as the opera ends, if she wishes to be with him – the masculine and feminine are then conjoined.

The ringing chord is also heard in the roundel called ‘A Singing Lesson’, where we are told that words in musical sound also gleam like ‘wrought’ gold from the sea: ‘As the turn of a wave should it sound, and the thought | Ring smooth, and as light as the spray that disperses | Be the gleam of the words for the garb thereof wrought’.[128] (Wagner’s ring originates as the Rhinemaiden’s underwater gold in *Das Rhinegold.*) In ‘Dead Love’, a trumpet is sounded, although it does not sound as a trumpet should, but, instead, sounds as a ‘ring’ (of a bell?) which brings all the dead back to life – although love in earthly terms can never be revived like a Christian resurrection, but perhaps by art.[129]

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[127] ‘Now, in Swinburne the meaning and the sound are one thing. He is concerned with the meaning of the word in a peculiar way: he employs, or rather “works,” the word’s meaning […] it is emotion reinforced, not by intensification, but by expansion’, see Eliot, *The Sacred Wood,* p. 147.

[128] *SCPW,* II, 579. A draft manuscript shows the phrase ‘sound trumpets’ replaced with ‘rings the trumpet’, Ashley MS A4384 f.111.

[129] *SCPW*, II, 594. See also how Swinburne’s roundel about Powell’s death ‘Autumn and Winter’ anticipates the ‘The Death of Richard Wagner’ and ‘The Lute and the Lyre’ with images of a

There are many other Wagner allusions and relationships within *A Century of Roundels*. The most obvious of these is 'A Flower-piece by Fantin' (i.e. Henri Fantin-Latour), which – as I suggested in chapter three – highlights the way that Fantin's flower paintings are suggestive of musical compositions in the arrangement of flower and colour. In this ekphrastic roundel, flowers are also another ring, since the 'Flower-piece' has been 'wrought' by hand with 'The heart impelling the hand that wrought | Wrought comfort here for a soul's disease'. Fantin's flowers are 'Heart's ease or pansy' which puns on *pensée* or 'thought', and so the pansy is both a flower creating pleasure and a thought. The poem opens by asking 'pleasure or thought | Which would the picture give us of these?'. Both, it appears – as together they become another iteration of Swinburne's 'spirit of sense' in the union of sense and intellect, body and soul.[130]

'The Lute and the Lyre' immediately follows 'Two Preludes' and, again, strikes a Wagnerian pose by linking music with 'Desire' – which is the keynote of the entire roundel. In fact, the poem almost cries out for a rhyme between 'lyre' and 'desire' at its outset, and this actually reverberates if the title is read just before the poem's first line – 'The Lute and the Lyre | Deep Desire'. In fact, the rhyme is not actualized within the roundel itself until the final three lines, and so this longed-for rhyme creates a sense of desire in the reader.

However, 'Desire' is also being given here a distinctly 'lovelorn' Elizabethan flavour, in the manner of Swinburne's explorations into Renaissance song described in chapter one, as well as being directly tied to Ancient Greek ideas about music and love. The 'lute' and the 'lyre', paired together as musical instruments within the poem, unite the different poetic periods in one. Both instruments engage desire or love and give rise to 'reluctant voice'.[131] As John Hollander

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sinking star, 'All heaven rings back' and 'O sweet single heart whose work is done' (*SCPW*, II, 548).

[130] *SCPW*, II, 591.

[131] 'Reluctant voice in verse' in the second line of this roundel is not be misunderstood as meaning a voice that resists the music of desire, but 'reluctant' in the sense of awakening, extending, or becoming personified. See 'reluctant, adj. and n.', *OED Online*, <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy2.londonlibrary.co.uk/view/Entry/162016?redirectedFrom=reluctant> (accessed 31 December 2019). Stoddard Martin makes this mistake and so misreads this roundel as a contrast, so that within it 'Swinburne eagerly declares that music is the superior art – at least in the evocation of "deep desire"'. This seems unlikely. See Martin, *Wagner to 'The Waste Land'*, p. 27. Swinburne uses 'reluctant' with this alternate meaning on several occasions. See, for example, *Tristram of Lyonesse*, where 'and bade | His face [Tristram's] turn west and shoreward through

has pointed out, the lute became an Elizabethan metonymy for both poetry and music in the way that the lyre had been for those poets who were influenced by Greek culture.[132] In this poem, these musical instruments set fire to the voice, and make it exultant. Their music releases the 'deep desire', as music or voice 'sounds the secret half unspoken ere the deep tones tire'. A voice joined by music raises words to a fever, slow to abate, for 'Slow subsides the rapture that possessed love's flower-soft lute, | Slow the palpitation of the triumph of the lyre'.[133] Poetic music here – since the lutes and lyres are metonyms – is both soft and yet rapturous, just as Swinburne suggests in his essay on 'Tennyson and Musset', that true poetic music touches the 'very deepest and finest chord on the lyre of the human spirit with a diviner power, a more godlike strength of tenderness'.[134]

A more figurative play on instruments and musical strings is suggested in other roundels such as 'Discord' and 'Concord' (these immediately follow 'Dead Love'). Both poems pun on the etymologies of their titles with '*chorda* ("string") and *cor, cordis* ("heart")', which, as Hollander points out, was a common strategy within Elizabethan lyrics where music often is meant to play on ideas about heartstrings.[135] Hence 'Discord' starts with a 'changeful clang of pinions' while its opposite 'Concord' (rather in the manner of Blake's 'innocence and experience') suggests chordal harmony. Despite the fears and hatred that exist on earth, we are told in 'Concord' that reconciliation is achieved by 'death's mild hand' (playing a chord?), which is 'not more strong than mild'. After death reconciles these contraries, 'each alike had heaven at heart, and smiled'.[136]

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the glad | Swift revel of the waters golden-clad, | And back with light reluctant heart he bore | Across the broad-backed rollers in to shore'. *SCPW*, II, 128. Aphrodite, in *Atalanta in Calydon*, is said to be the 'holiest, | Flower the whitest of all things, | With reluctant lengthening tresses'. See Haynes, *P&B*, p. 291.

[132] The clearest case of this is Shakespeare's 'Orpheus with his Lute'. Why does Orpheus not have a lyre? In both eras, of course, the lute and lyre were more than metonyms. Greek poetry automatically implies music (though not in our sense), and many Elizabethan lyrics were designed for singing and only subsequently became detached from the music with which they were originally associated. See John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of English Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 46. For a discussion about Orpheus's lute, see Hollander, p. 165.

[133] *SCPW*, II, 553.

[134] A. C. Swinburne, *Miscellanies*, p. 221.

[135] Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky*, p. 42.

[136] *SCPW*, II, 595, 596.

In ‘The Death of Richard Wagner’, the blurring between a chord and a heart is heard again. Wagner and his music, we are told, are

> The world’s great heart, whence all things strange and rare
> Take form and sound, that each inseparate part
> May bear its burden in all tuned thoughts that share
> The world’s great heart –

Wagner’s ‘great heart’, or *cor*, is also alluding to a great ‘chord’, or the *Tristan* Chord. From the moment of its sounding (thus ‘whence’ describes it as a source), it combines all things ‘strange and rare’. Each ‘inseparate’ part then bears the musical ‘burden’ (punning on the poetic burden in troubadour poetry), into which ‘tuned thoughts’ come together again, as they do symbolically in the repetition of ‘The world’s great heart – ’ at the end of the stanza.[137] The final dash suggests that the poem is about to be ruptured, and so ‘fountain forces’ follow in the next line. This rupture closes three lines later when speaking is fused with music.[138] In the final moments of the second section of the poem, the reason for bringing words and music together is made manifest. Music is given the power of speech, speech given music, for all

> Spake and were turned to song: yea, all they were,
> With all their works, found in his mastering art
> Speech as of powers whose uttered word laid bare
> The world's great heart.

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[137] *SCPW*, II, 549. The use of ‘each inseparate part’ here is very interesting as it suggests Swinburne had an essentially Ancient Greek way of describing ‘harmony’ or *harmonia*. Modern music uses harmony essentially to mean corresponding notes sounded in polyphony, i.e. the result of notes sung together. The Greeks did not mean this when referring to *harmonia*, as there was apparently no such musical form as polyphony. *Harmonia* meant the ordered relationship of intervals, so that all the notes on a scale created harmony. Harmony is, therefore, the ratio, not the sound. For more on this, see Hollander, *Untuning the Sky*, p. 28.

[138] The ‘fountain forces’ is clearly meant to presage the similar image in the ‘Two Preludes’, where it is love that is heard from the ‘watersprings’.

Wagner's 'master*ing* art' (my italics) fuses all things together, a phrase which puns on Wagner's ring and the man himself, as if the 'ring', as an opera, brings all things together, or acts as the primary example of the power that music has over words and *vice versa*. In a letter written at the same time as this poem, on 15 February 1883, Swinburne calls Wagner the 'master': '[I am] very susceptible <of> to the enjoyment of such music as appeals to me – that, for instance, of 'the mighty master' just now gone from us'.[139]

In the final, magnificent section of 'The Death of Richard Wagner', the metre suddenly leaps forward from the iambic pentameter of the first six stanzas (which make up the preceding two roundels) and breaks into a wild and galloping anapaestic heptameter for the final three. 'Watersprings' reappear yet again:

> From the depths of the sea, from the wellsprings of earth, from the wastes of the
> midmost night,
> From the fountains of darkness and tempest and thunder, from heights where the soul
> would be,
> The spell of the mage of music evoked their sense, as an unknown light
> From the depths of the sea.[140]

In 'the mage of music' Swinburne is invoking Wagner's nickname as the 'Sorcerer of Bayreuth'. The long but bounding anapaestic lines are perhaps Wagner's spell gathering their power – and so Swinburne ties his own poetic method to the composer's art. This magic, we are told, is able to summon the 'wellsprings', the roll of the sea, but it also gives these elemental forces a 'sense' as 'an unknown light'. Thus combined, the artwork gains a quality akin to a 'vision from heaven', although this comes from 'the hollows of the ocean'. Here is a prophetic message, full of endless

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[139] *UC*, II, 325. The *Ring* Cycle does indeed bring all things together in that it charts the history of the entire universe, from birth to destruction.
[140] *SCPW*, II, 550.

melody but which rises 'out of the silence of things unknown' to become 'a form, a might' – that is, a god-like power which we cannot block out as it comes from inside us: 'As we heard as a prophet that hears God's message against him, and may not flee'.[141]

The punning on '*cor*' resurfaces in the final stanza, where it is specifically the ear and the heart that together open up the possibility of this divine vision. This takes the form of a waking or a 'sundawn' dream that rises to sight:

> Eye might not endure it, but ear and heart with a rapture of dark delight,
> With a terror and wonder whose core was joy, and a passion of thought set free,
> Felt inly the rising of doom divine as a sundawn risen to sight
> From the depths of the sea.[142]

I also want to suggest here that the play between chords, concordance in word and music, and in divine visions in 'The Death of Richard Wagner' (and other poems of *A Century*) reach backwards in Swinburne's career to a poem from his 1871 collection, *Songs before Sunrise*. It is worth giving this particular sonnet in full to make the mass of connections in imagery, phrase, and even in titles between it and *A Century* more apparent:

> COR CORDIUM
>
> O HEART of hearts, the chalice of love's fire,
> Hid round with flowers and all the bounty of bloom;
> O wonderful and perfect heart, for whom
> The lyrist liberty made life a lyre;
> O heavenly heart, at whose most dear desire
> Dead love, living and singing, cleft his tomb,
> And with him risen and regent in death's room

[141] *SCPW*, II, 550.
[142] *SCPW*, II, 550.

All day thy choral pulses rang full choir;
O heart whose beating blood was running song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be free,
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's sake strong,
Till very liberty make clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.[143]

This sonnet commemorates the death of the poet Shelley and takes for its title the words inscribed on Shelley's tomb in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome: '*Cor Cordium*' or 'Heart of Hearts'. It also references Shelley's real heart, which was apparently not burned on his funeral pyre at Viareggio in 1822 but kept by Mary Shelley until her death.[144] Underneath the inscription on his tomb, evoking Shelley's death by drowning, are lines from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: 'But doth suffer a sea-change, | Into something rich and strange'. These lines are remodelled in 'The Death of Richard Wagner' to become 'The world's great heart, whence all things strange and rare | Take form and sound'. With this in mind, Wagner's casting of spells that evoke 'the fountains of darkness and tempest and thunder' as 'the mage of music', also refashions the composer into a new version of Prospero with his spirit Ariel, who sings this song in Act I, scene 2 of *The Tempest*.[145] Wagner's 'ring' music also connects to Swinburne's roundels of 'pearl' within this relationship. Retroactively, therefore, Shelley's heart in *Cor Cordium* – with its hearts and ringed 'O' at the start of five lines – can now also be read as a 'grail' in that it is (in the poem's first line) a 'chalice of love's fire'. In this love, resurrection is possible, where his loving song clefts 'his tomb' and perhaps Wagner's (and indeed Swinburne's) 'womb' of the sea, to offer up prophecies in song that transcend life and death.

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[143] *SCPW*, I, 831.
[144] The irony is, therefore, that the tomb does not contain Shelley's heart.
[145] Additionally Ariel's song is about a father (or Swinburne's progenitor) who is now under the sea, like a mythological being that is constantly changing with the action of a ringing bell, for 'Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell: | Hark! Now I hear them, – ding-dong, bell'. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), I. 2. 401-4, p. 123.

Shelley's own ideas of music and poetry are not those of Swinburne or Wagner. In Shelley's poem 'To Constantia, Singing', music is given a clear Platonic, spiritual sense, and it lifts the hearer to commune with the musical spheres of perfect harmony. Although the speaker of this poem initially feels music within the body – 'within thy breath, and on thy hair, like odour, it is yet, | And from thy touch like fire doth leap' – the body is suddenly freed from its earthly domain. The singing voice soars 'in fast ascending numbers' and, just as in Blake, Swinburne, and Schopenhauer – in their images of rent veils – here 'the cope of heaven seems rent and cloven'. This, however, is orientated out from the body ('in fast ascending numbers') rather than to within. Shelley's speaker grows Platonic wings as he listens – in a direct reference to Socrates's beliefs about the nature of love in *Phaedrus* – which lifts the lover (and in this case Shelley's speaker) from earthly matters to commune with the musical spheres. He is taken 'Beyond the mighty moons that wane, | Upon the verge of Nature's utmost sphere | Till the world's shadowy walls are past and disappear'. However, even though this representation of music has a Platonic effect, in that the speaker is taken to some transcendent realm and presumably to some point of absolute perfection, he feels his heart 'quivering like a flame' and his body 'is dissolved in these consuming ecstasies' – an image in which Shelley is evoking Sappho.[146] Music, therefore, still combines intellect and sense in Shelley's poem (even if the body seems to be ultimately transcended). It also turns readerly attention to 'like one in a trance' albeit 'upborn' and has divine vision as its release.

In making these connections across his own poems, between poets and composers, and artistic mediums, Swinburne is placing Wagner and Shelley together within a tradition of artists who have access to a music that transcends the visible world. As the roundel 'Plus Intra' states – a poem that is also mixed in with the text of 'The Death of Richard Wagner' in the British Library Manuscript:

All that may pass, and all that must endure

[146] 'To Constantia, Singing', *Shelley: Poetical Works*, p. 539. On Socrates's 'wings of love' see Plato, *Phaedrus*, p. 40.

Song speaks not, painting shows not: more intense
And keen than these, art wakes with music's lure
Soul within sense.[147]

[147] *SCPW*, II, 554.

Chapter 7 – Eliot *contra* Swinburne: Fleeing Feminine Music

This chapter examines T. S. Eliot's dismissal of Swinburne in his 1920 essay 'Swinburne as Poet'. In this essay, Eliot identifies a number of attributes of Swinburne's poetry that he dislikes, and it is fair to say that all these features are what he considers unnecessary for the poetry of the future. He makes this clear at the end of the essay where he generalizes his argument with the statement that Swinburne's language is no longer significant, for 'the language which is more important to us is that which is struggling to digest and express new objects'.[1] Eliot's position here has always struck me as intimately bound up with the ideas explored in the preceding chapters of this thesis. All of the attributes of Swinburne's poetry that Eliot deems to be problematic, he groups together around a continual – and odd – use of the word 'music'. Swinburne's music, Eliot appears to be claiming, is out of tune with the needs of the modern world.[2]

I will first examine why Eliot may have been anxious to divert attention from Swinburne and then look at Eliot's complex relationship with Wagner and how his argument against Swinburne makes use of a nineteenth-century debate on the nature of music. Finally, I highlight how parts of 'Swinburne as Poet' bear striking similarities with Max Nordau's attack upon Pre-Raphaelitism and Wagner in his infamous work *Degeneration* (1892).

Eliot in the Venusberg

In his recent biography of Eliot, Robert Crawford notes the possible influences on his undergraduate poems:

> Greek scholar Tom [Eliot] contributed to the 25 November 1908 *Advocate* a poem with a

[1] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 150.
[2] I say 'odd' in that Eliot's arguments could still be deployed without using the word 'music', unless he is fundamentally – like Swinburne – relating poetry and music as equivalents, where music means 'poetic music'. And yet poetic music appears to have something to do with 'real music', in that Swinburne's poetry, he claims, cannot be attached or adapted to instrumental music, and cannot 'possibly associate itself with music' (p. 146).

> Homeric title, 'Circe's Palace'. Its subject is the *Odyssey*'s famous seductress who turns men into beasts. Possibly owing something to Tennyson's 'Lotos-Eaters' and Swinburne's 'Hymn to Proserpine' and 'The Garden of Proserpine', […] in language that it is tempting to read as sexual, [the narrator] finds around Circe's 'fountain which flows | With the voice of men in pain' […] 'flowers'. These however, are blooms that 'no man knows' – a phrase used several times by Swinburne. 'Their petals are fanged and red | With hideous streak and stain'. Alarming, maybe menstrual, they are associated with a terrifying female enchantress who reduces her suitors to mindless animality. They become panthers, a 'sluggish python', 'peacocks' with the eyes of lost men.[3]

Here is the complete text of 'Circe's Palace':

> Around her fountain which flows
> With the voice of men in pain,
> Are flowers that no man knows.
> Their petals are fanged and red
> With hideous streak and stain;
> They sprang from the limbs of the dead.—
> We shall not come here again.
>
> Panthers rise from their lairs
> In the forest which thickens below,
> Along the garden stairs
> The sluggish python lies;
> The peacocks walk, stately and slow
> And they look at us with the eyes

[3] Robert Crawford, *Young Eliot: From St Louis to 'The Waste Land'* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2015), p. 103.

Of men whom we knew long ago.[4]

The bloom that 'no man knows' in Swinburne's verse is the carnivorous sundew from his poem 'The Sundew', originally published in the *Spectator* in 1862: 'If life taste sweet to it, if death | Pain its soft petal, no man knows: | Man has no sight or sense that saith'. Despite the apparent difference in subject between these poems by Eliot and Swinburne, the erotic elements are exceptionally similar. Like Eliot's red-fanged petals, Swinburne's sundew has a 'red-lipped mouth', and by evoking the narrator's love, the plant gains a sensual, feminine, but malevolent quality. The carnivorous sundew is both vegetable and animal and, as it can re-flower year on year, despite its simplicity, it is somehow greater than anyone who looks upon it: 'more than we | Is the least flower whose life returns, | Least weed renascent in the sea'.[5] In Eliot's poem, the power of Circe seems to be to turn men into this animal state, which is also sexually feminine.

The phrase 'no man knows' also appears in Swinburne's 'Madonna Mia' (1866). The poem – a courtly vision in an Italian early Renaissance style – presents the speaker's lady as an earth goddess, whose house under green apple boughs is ringed with 'Red roses full of rain', and she has for 'bondwomen | All kind of flowers'. There is 'dew' on the flowers and 'vines', which also appear in quick succession in Eliot's 'A Lyric' (1905), a poem which also has the sound of a Renaissance ballad, as it is, says Crawford, an imitation of Ben Jonson.[6] Increasing the mystery and distance, Swinburne's speaker says of his lady that 'none knows, none understands' the flowers suggested by her hands, and of the snows that 'are like her feet, […] no man knows'.[7]

In *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), the phrase again describes a woman and the natural world. Atalanta, a virgin huntress with a 'forest holiness', rejects a life subordinate to men and hunts a wild boar, which Artemis has sent (in anger for not receiving sacrifice) to waste the realm of

[4] T. S. Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot: The Annotated Text*, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue, 2 vols. (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), I, 231-2.
[5] Haynes, *P&B*, p. 149.
[6] Crawford, *Young Eliot*, p. 74.
[7] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 220, 221.

Oeneus, King of Calydon. Like Eliot's forest palace of Circe, Calydon's forest is tainted by animality and Atalanta seeks to clear this garden-realm back to a purity, where she can commune

> with the intermitting reed
> And streams that murmur of the mother snow –
> Me these allure, and know me; but no man
> Knows, and my goddess only.[8]

In spite of Eliot's 'oft proclaimed aversion from nineteenth-century poetry', claims Graham Hough, 'his juvenilia are quite obviously based on Swinburne and the *fin de siècle*'.[9] A brief look at some of Eliot's earliest poetry will confirm this. 'Before Morning' (1908), for example, not only sounds as if he has been reading Swinburne's 'Before Dawn', but shares Swinburne's (and Baudelaire's) love of flowers and scents: 'This morning's flowers and flowers of yesterday | Their fragrance drifts across the room at dawn, | Fragrance of bloom and fragrance of decay'. 'Song' (1909) talks of 'scarlet lips' and 'brighter tropic flowers', reminiscent of a number of Swinburne's verses.[10] The 'Panthers' of 'Circe's Palace' appear to originate in 'Fragoletta' (1866) and, of course, 'Laus Veneris' which, as I will show, was a poem Eliot read and loved.[11] Circe's 'limbs of the dead', from which her flowers spring, appear in various guises in 'Hymn to Proserpine' (1866), 'Satia Te Sanguine' (1866) and *Atalanta*.[12] In addition, Eliot scatters fragments of Swinburnian vocabulary throughout much of this early work. We are told of 'petal

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[8] Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 278, 279.
[9] Graham Hough, 'The Poet as Critic', *The Literary Criticism of T. S. Eliot: New Essays*, ed. David Newton-De Molina (London: The Athlone Press, 1977), pp. 42-64 (p. 56).
[10] Both quotations from *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, I, 231.
[11] 'Fragoletta': 'like the panther's feet | The feet of love', Haynes *P&B*, p. 69; 'Laus Veneris' (which Eliot appears to have taken his image from) 'Smells the rare scent made where a panther feeds'; p. 17. Swinburne also uses 'panther's fangs', 'black pantheress', and 'queen of panthers' in 'At a Month's End', which was originally published in the *Dark Blue* in 1871 'The End of a Month' before being retitled for inclusion in *Poems and Ballads, Second Series* in 1878 (*SCPW*, I, 328, 329).
[12] 'Hymn to Proserpine': 'dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!'; 'Satia Te Sanguine': feverish limbs | Of the Lesbian Sappho, adrift | In foam where the sea-weed swims'; *Atalanta*: 'dead limbs of Eurytion'. Haynes, *P&B*, pp. 57, 71, 288.

on petal' ('Before Morning'), of 'wild roses in your wreath' ('Song', 1907), of 'lips' disturbed and 'slender hands' ('On a Portrait', 1909) and of fields that lie 'sterile and blind –' ('Second Caprice in North Cambridge' dated 1909), and of 'The withered leaves | Of our sensations –' ('First Debate between the Body and Soul', dated 1910).[13]

'The Love Song of St. Sebastian' also serves up a very Swinburnian form of masochism with references that appear to have been plucked straight out of 'Laus Veneris'. Suppressed by Eliot so that it was unpublished in his lifetime, the 'love song' was originally included in an either naïve or defensive letter of 1914 to Conrad Aiken (1889-1973) sent from Marburg in Germany while Eliot was travelling in Europe a few weeks before the outbreak of war. Eliot was obviously worried about the poem enough to preface it with an explanation as to its origins: 'I have studied S. Sebastians – why should anyone paint a beautiful youth and stick him full of pins (or arrows) unless he felt a little as the hero of my verse. Only there's nothing homosexual about this […] but no one ever painted a female Sebastian, did they?'[14]

Bizarrely, Eliot here denies the homoeroticism of his own depiction, despite knowing that previous artists have partly set out to paint a 'beautiful youth' for homoerotic purposes. Perhaps out of shame, having knowingly written a transgressive poem that refers to a homoerotic tradition (and sending it to Aiken to share in his shame?), Eliot wanted to deny the poem's meaning and his own expression. Given the masochistic depiction in the poem, this behaviour was – inadvertently, it appears – quite apt.

In a letter sent to Aiken six days before this, Eliot reveals his study of paintings of St. Sebastian and crucifixions while in Antwerp. But he was clearly neither distressed nor disturbed by them, but rather excited. He mentions his St. Sebastian poem, says he might send it to Aiken if he 'can improve it at all', but instead then provides Aiken with a short, bawdy lyric for amusement concerning a man called Columbo, who is depicted in a quasi-Jacobean tragedy feasting scene with his men and 'King Bolo's big black queen':

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[13] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, I, 231, 232, 235, 239.
[14] *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Valerie Eliot, Hugh Haughton, and John Haffenden (gen. ed.), 8 vols. (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), I (revised edition): *1898 – 1922*, 49 (25 July 1914).

Just then they rang the bell for lunch

And served up – Fried Hyenas;

And Colombo said 'Will you take tail?

Or just a bit of p(enis)?'[15]

All of these allusions – castration, oral sex, bodily contortion, flesh and blood – find their way into the St. Sebastian poem, as does a delight in torture. But their origins go beyond the paintings to Swinburne, as earlier in this same letter, Eliot writes about his arrival in Marburg and excitedly describes to Aiken the German landscape, quoting 'Laus Veneris': 'The houses have beautiful unkempt gardens, with great waves – "where tides of grass break into foam of flowers"! – of roses, in terraces looking out over the hills'.[16] As Eliot does not reference the quotation, Aiken is clearly supposed to know the poem well enough to be able to get the reference and understand that Eliot is relating the German landscape to the Venusberg and its environs.[17]

The speaker of Eliot's Sebastian 'Love Song' is similarly enslaved to an undefined Venus. She is described in fragments, such as her 'braided hair' and her white gown. Like Tannhäuser, Eliot's speaker both hates and adores this enslavement, a conflict that finds its expression in a self-harming ritual – surely a sign of impotence – that can only be broken by what appears, at the end of the poem, to be oral rape and then strangulation. The metre of each poem may be different, but the opening of Eliot's is markedly Swinburnian in its initial anapaests. These immediately break down and then reform before the poem splits into a range of rhythms, suggesting a falling apart and a breaking away from Swinburne's regular whip-crack style:

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[15] *Letters of T. S. Eliot*, I, 46 (19 July 1914). Eliot includes the brackets as a pretence that the original word was deleted but has been restored by an imaginary editor, Dr. Hasenpfeffer, and his assistant, the poet Hans Frigger. This is reminiscent of Swinburne's bawdy letters.

[16] *Letters of T. S. Eliot*, I, 45. The quotation from 'Laus Veneris' can be found in Haynes, *P&B*, p. 11. Was he travelling with a copy of Swinburne's poems?

[17] Vincent Sherry also notes Eliot's Swinburne quotation, stating that 'Laus Veneris' is 'the proximate muse' for Eliot's poem: Vincent Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 244.

I would come in a shirt of hair
I would come with a lamp in the night
And sit at the foot of your stair;
I would flog myself till I bled,
And after hour on hour of prayer
And torture and delight
Until my blood should ring the lamp
And glisten in the light;[18]

The boundaries between narrator and subject are blurred – who is speaking and to whom? – as is gender (despite Eliot's claim that no one 'ever painted a female Sebastian'). Moreover the poem exults in the marriage of 'torture and delight'. Like Tannhäuser in the opening of 'Laus Veneris', the speaker observes the details of the body he is caressing. His song is supposed to be a 'love song', but where murder, submission, and self-harm (as in Swinburne's 'Satia Te Sanguine': 'I wish you were dead my dear […] I dead at your feet like you') become a part of the sacrificial act of loving:

You would take me in without shame
Because I should be dead
[…]
You would love me because I should have strangled you
And because of my infamy;
And I should love you the more because I had mangled you
And because you were no longer beautiful
To anyone but me.[19]

[18] *Poems of T. S. Eliot*, I, 265.
[19] *Poems of T. S. Eliot*, I, 266. Haynes, *P&B*, p. 71.

Swinburne's sapphic masochism and his love of threshold space also reappears in Eliot's early poem 'The Death of St. Narcissus' (written 1912/13, published in 1950), where the speaker 'walked once between the sea and the high cliffs | When the wind made him aware of his limbs smoothly passing each other'.[20]

Eliot appears to have imagined himself as Swinburne on various occasions. Late in his career, he borrowed and adapted one of Swinburne's stories as his own when talking about the origins of his poetic voice. While initially claiming in a letter to Ezra Pound, dated 22 December 1924, that Swinburne and the poets of the 1890s had been 'entirely missed out of my personal history', in his notes for the Harvard Lecture series of 1932-33, Eliot requisitions the anecdote about Swinburne discovering FitzGerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* in order to then admit that the poet had been an integral part of his youth.[21] This anecdote, given by various people (including George Meredith and Georgiana Burne-Jones) is about the origins of 'Laus Veneris'. Eliot's retelling includes a hint of the serendipitous nature of Swinburne's 'discovery' of the FitzGerald volume at Quaritch's bookshop in 1862:

> I can recall clearly enough the moment when, at the age of fourteen or so, I happened to pick up a copy of Fitzgerald's [*sic*] Omar which was lying about, and the almost overwhelming introduction to a new world of feeling which this poem was the occasion of giving me. It was like a sudden conversion; the world appeared anew, painted with bright, delicious and painful colours. Thereupon I took the usual adolescent course with Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rossetti, Swinburne.[22]

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[20] *Poems of T. S. Eliot*, I, 270. Compare this with Swinburne's 'A Forsaken Garden' (1876) or his 'On the Cliffs' (1880).
[21] *Letters of T. S. Eliot*, II: *1923-1925*, 557.
[22] T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), p. 33. It sounds like Eliot has also read Swinburne's essay 'Matthew Arnold's New Poems' (1867), where FitzGerald's *Omar* is described as 'faultless in form and colour of verse, which gives to those ignorant of the East a relish of the treasure and a delight in the beauty of its wisdom'. Swinburne, *Essays and Studies*, p. 132.

Eliot's early poetry smells of Swinburne, and the odour, most of all, hangs around Eliot's depictions of female sexuality. But while in Swinburne's poetry, the feminine creates the possibility of prophetic voice – as it does in Wagner's works – the feminine makes Eliot want to flee. Catherine Maxwell has noted Eliot's fear of the '"hearty female stench"', a quotation from the original drafts of *The Waste Land* (1922). She adds that with this, Eliot 'suggests women cannot transcend their biological sex and its limitations'.[23] The phrase was originally included in the third section of *The Waste Land*, or 'The Fire Sermon', and was linked to French 'cunning' (a coarse pun?). The facsimile edition of the poem reads: 'Odours, confected by the ~~cunning~~ (artful) French, | Disguise the good old ~~female stench~~ / hearty female stench'.[24] Also cut from this section was a reference to Decadent writers and an image of Venus rising from the sea: 'Fresca was ~~baptised in~~ (born upon) a soapy sea | Of Symonds – Walter Pater – Vernon Lee. […] From which, a Venus Anadyomene | She stept ashore to a more varied scene'.[25] The published section of 'The Fire Sermon' section, from where these phrases were removed, also contains a pastiche of the song of the Rhinemaidens from Wagner's *Das Rheingold*: 'Weialala leia | Wallala leialala'.[26]

Ideas about contorted love similar to those found in 'St. Sebastian' are also found in Eliot's early response to Wagner, 'Opera' (dated 1909), in which the speaker reacts to *Tristan und Isolde*. In this poem, love, and indeed emotions in general, are, as Peter Ackroyd has noted, 'satirized; the mood is one of scepticism and weariness. Such a tone could only be called "adolescent" if Eliot outgrew it – but he never did'.[27] The speaker of this poem finds the opera's emotional shows distasteful and dismisses them:

> And love torturing itself
>
> To emotion for all there is in it,

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[23] Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, p. 168.
[24] T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*, ed. by Valerie Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), p. 23. Within the brackets in this quotation are Ezra Pound's marginalia.
[25] Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile*, pp. 27-28.
[26] 'The Waste Land III: The Fire Sermon', *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, I, 65. See also 'Das Rheingold', *Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung*, p. 57.
[27] Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), p. 38.

Writhing in and out
Contorted in paroxysms,
Flinging itself at the last
Limits of self-expression.

We have the tragic? oh no!
Life departs with a feeble smile
Into the indifferent.
These emotional experiences
Do not hold good at all,
And I feel like the ghost of youth
At the undertakers' ball.[28]

Such attitudes stayed with Eliot well into adulthood, with him labelling Wagner 'pernicious' in his 1928 'Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry'.[29] It also led him to state in a lecture on Jules Laforgue in 1933 that Wagner's 'critical intelligence' seems to have set about 'drugging itself with emotion'.[30] Eliot set his own aesthetics against emotional art, and interpreted such work – in this case Wagner's operas – as having a detrimental effect. I suggest that, for Eliot, Swinburne, too, falls into this category.

However, Stoddard Martin has shown how Eliot's attitude to Wagner was deeply conflicted, as Wagner's music greatly affects Eliot's earlier poetry. *The Waste Land*, Martin states, reveals a 'latent taste for the "magician of Bayreuth"', adding that while Eliot had a 'passion for Wagner in his youth', this adoration was at war with his 'celebrated admonitions against "extreme emotionalism", and his espousal of Classical values and Anglo-Catholic

[28] *Poems of T. S. Eliot*, I, 236.
[29] 'Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry: With the Original Preface', *Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, III, 406.
[30] 'Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry, Lecture III: Laforgue and Corbière in our Time', *Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, IV: *English Lion, 1930-33*, 744.

morality'.[31] Martin's evidence for *The Waste Land* is clear and unequivocal, but I would suggest that the greatest similarities lie in technique and structure. In its mixing of 'memory and desire' *The Waste Land* hesitates to close, drawing itself out in Schopenhauerian patterns of '*desire and reconciliation*', which centre on a constant cycle of decay and rebirth. 'Will it bloom this year?' the poem asks in a section that explores imagery of green men and paganism, but which also ends by mixing in Baudelaire – 'You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!'. It also references Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*: 'keep the Dog far hence that's friend to men | "Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!"', and thus Eliot manages to unite several Swinburnian passions in one section – paganism, English renaissance drama, and Baudelaire.[32] The 'Unreal city' sections of *The Waste Land* are, of course, based upon Baudelaire's '*cité pleine de rêves, | Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant!* ['city full of dreams, where ghosts accost the passers-by in broad daylight!']', and this section also works in a manner similar to the dreamscapes of Swinburne's and Wagner's narratives, where plot is not driven by events, but by symbols and modulated repetitions.[33] While the style of *The Waste Land* is undoubtedly different, the similarities of the underlying structure and its points of reference make the poem resonate with Swinburnian and Wagnerian correspondences.

Emma Sutton has also highlighted Eliot's considerable debt in *The Waste Land* to Wagnerian scholarship. A major source for his poem was *From Ritual to Romance* (1920) by Jessie L. Weston, who also published *The Legends of the Wagner Drama* in 1896. The fact that this work and that a 'considerable proportion' of Wagnerian scholarship 'from the 1880s and 1890s onwards was by women', must also have coloured Eliot's attitudes. Indeed, as Sutton demonstrates, Wagner's music in general had become entwined with larger issues surrounding femininity in general, women's professional independence and ideas about 'feminine aesthetic

[31] Stoddard Martin, *Wagner to 'The Waste Land'*, pp. 194-5. With regards to 'extreme emotionalism', Martin is quoting Eliot's essay on Hardy in *After Strange Gods* (1934).
[32] *Poems of T. S. Eliot*, I, 57.
[33] Translation from *Poems of T. S. Eliot*, I, 613, note to line 60. The text is from Baudelaire's *Les Sept vieillards* (1859).

consumption', and this, surely, played into the conflicting forces of attraction and repulsion that feature in *The Waste Land* and in Eliot's other early poetry.[34]

Eliot's hesitation over ending may well spring from his sense of the nineteenth century being left unclosed, compelling him to go over it again and re-do parts in his own image. As Catherine Maxwell and David Riede have pointed out, Eliot's poetry and criticism find themselves dealing with the same subjects as Swinburne, possibly in an attempt to overwrite Swinburne's contribution. Perry Meisel in his *The Myth of the Modern* (1987), has shown a similar tactic of Eliot's with regards to his hidden Paterianism, something that Lesley Higgins has also discussed in *The Modernist Cult of Ugliness* (2002). Eliot appeared to want to delete the work of his recent forebears, she states, for 'Pater's special role as interlocutor is silenced, and any possibility of his writings having a place in the "simultaneous order" of the acknowledged "tradition" eliminated'.[35]

Eliot's renaissance-inspired and Greek verse dramas were preceded by Swinburne's experiments in the same areas, as was his 'myth-making' in poems that often include the same characters as Swinburne's – such as 'Philomela and Tiresias'.[36] Eliot's essays on Blake (1920), Baudelaire (1930), and on the Jacobean dramatists such as Philip Massinger (1920) and John Ford (1932), all trail in Swinburne's wake, and so much so that in an introduction to an edition of Baudelaire's *Intimate Journals*, Eliot felt the need to state that Baudelaire had suffered in England 'the misfortune to be first and extravagantly advertised by Swinburne, and taken up by the followers of Swinburne'.[37] This is a rewriting of Baudelaire's reception – a correction or perhaps an editing-out of the nineteenth century so that everything valuable to Eliot can be reset and merged into a Modernist creation myth.

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[34] Emma Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s*, pp. 94-95.
[35] Lesley Higgins, *The Modernist Cult of Ugliness: Aesthetic and Gender Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 104. See also Emma Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s*, pp. 194-199.
[36] Maxwell, 'Atmosphere and Absorption', *Swinburne: Unofficial Laureate*, p. 219. See also David G. Riede, *Swinburne: A Study of Romantic Mythmaking* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), p. 161.
[37] Charles Baudelaire, *Intimate Journals*, ed. and trans. Christopher Isherwood and with an introduction by T. S. Eliot (London: Black Spring Press, 1989), p. xi.

While ‘Opera’ displays Eliot’s distaste of Wagner’s emotionalism, in other early poems written at around the same time, extreme emotions are celebrated in the manner of Swinburne with a sexual delight both in the body and in violence. It is only later that Eliot manifests a vehement turning away from the body and a growing disgust towards emotionalism, and, in an attempt to create a solid, Classical aesthetic system in his critical essays of 1920, he tried to shed his debt to Swinburne once and for all. Even so, by 1922 and *The Waste Land*, he had still not been able to wrest himself away from Wagner. Eliot wrote ‘Swinburne as Poet’ as part of an attempt to differentiate his own poetic voice, not only from Swinburne, but from all the *literati* of the late nineteenth century who still dominated London’s world of letters. This he admitted much later in life in a 1946 essay on Ezra Pound, where he spells out how much Browning, Poe, and Whitman hung over the endeavour of new poets. But ‘the question was still’, he states, ‘where do we go from Swinburne? and the answer appeared to be, nowhere’.[38]

Given the intense interest of ‘Swinburne as Poet’ in poetic music, Eliot’s essay was also an attempt to reclaim the idea of music for his own version of Modernism. However, his argument is actually built upon a nineteenth-century anti-Wagner debate about the merits of ‘programme music’ and the supremacy of ‘absolute music’. It is for this reason that his essay concentrates on Swinburne’s ‘music’, although he never defines what exactly he means by this.

Eliot’s demand for the absolute

In ‘Swinburne as Poet’, Eliot appears to feign a technical knowledge of music. This he repudiates in a much later essay, ‘The Music of Poetry’ (1942), where he discusses sound values within a poem, the similarities of poetic production to music-making, and states that ‘a poet may gain much from the study of music: how much technical knowledge of musical form is desirable I do not know, for I have not that technical knowledge myself’.[39] He also repeats a fairly common argument within poetic discourse – particularly within the long nineteenth century – about a

[38] T. S. Eliot, ‘Ezra Pound’, *Ezra Pound*, ed. by Peter Russell (London: Peter Nevill Limited, 1950), pp. 25-35 (p. 25).
[39] *Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, VI: *The War Years, 1940−1946*, 321.

return to the latent music of common speech. Indeed, Wagner makes much the same argument in *The Music of the Future* and other works.[40] In another essay, 'Apology for the Countess of Pembroke' (1932), Eliot also reveals his lack of knowledge about how verse and music might intersect when he references a book by John Murray Gibbon, *Magic of Melody* (1933). In a footnote concerning John Drinkwater, Eliot states that Gibbon's work is 'a curious book on the relation of poetry to music, intended for readers with no technical knowledge of music'.[41] However, *Magic of Melody* is no such thing. Instead, it describes a strange kind of automatic writing, where poetry – Gibbon's own – is inspired by listening to pieces of music; the result is not stand-alone poetry, but what he calls 'translations' or '"Gramo-poems"' of the music. Gibbon's method – which involves following composers' 'musical phrasing, observing the slurs' and so forth – was designed not only to increase musical appreciation, but also to create poets, for 'Given a musical ear, a sympathetic mind, and some skill in verbal expression, and the listener can become a creator of poetry'.[42] This practice surely has its roots in late-Romantic ideas of divinatory poetic performance which is akin to the dream practices of Swinburne and Wagner, as well as psychoanalytic ideas contemporary with Gibbon's book. Indeed, Swinburne hints at this kind of experience in his December 1863 letter to Alice, where he tells her that he had heard Mary Gordon playing Handel on the organ. While he could 'hardly *behave* for delight at some of the choruses', the music also 'crams and crowds me with old and new verses, half-remembered and half-made'.[43] Gibbon's trance method implies that one is, as in the Romantic tradition, translating music into verse with a sort of 'magic', as suggested in his title *Magic of Melody*. Such verse makes explicit a meaning in the music that 'none before could utter', for 'music is a

[40] See, for example, Wagner, *The Music of the Future*, pp. 29-31.
[41] Eliot, *The Use of Poetry*, p. 39. Eliot's essay was given as one of the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard during the winter of 1932-3. Was Eliot 'plugging' Gibbon's book, which he presumably received before its 1933 publication? The *Complete Prose* states that Eliot 'read Gibbon's *Magic of Melody* (1933) upon his return to the United Kingdom'. Had he not read it then, despite mentioning it in his lecture, or did he add the reference into his lecture later when revising it for publication? *Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, IV, 608.
[42] John Murray Gibbon, *Magic of Melody* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1933), pp. 9, 10.
[43] *TSL*, I, 93.

language more subtle than any spoken language, conveying its meaning by tones and harmonies'.[44]

To return to 'Swinburne as Poet' where Eliot implies that he has technical understanding about the relationship between words and music:

> I am inclined to think that the word 'beauty' is hardly to be used in connection with Swinburne's verse at all; but in any case the beauty or effect of sound is neither that of music nor that of poetry which can be set to music. […] What we get in Swinburne is an expression by sound, which could not possibly associate itself with music. For what he gives is not images and ideas and music, it is one thing with a curious mixture of suggestions of all three.[45]

In answer to this, the words of a shopping list could be set to the music of, say, Handel's 'For unto us a child is born' and be just as easily performed as the original. Their suitability for music has little to do with something inherent in the words or their combination, but whether they are appropriate or acceptable to the context.[46] Is Eliot's objection to Swinburne's lyrics moral, then, rather than technical, or is there another, unspoken argument being made that is reliant on a certain understanding of what music might be?[47]

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[44] Swinburne, 'Wordsworth and Byron', *Miscellanies*, p. 155. Gibbon, *Magic of Melody*, p. 2. Gibbon shows an astonishingly perverse attitude to Swinburne when he claims that the poet believed that poetry should become music – i.e. the antithesis of Gibbon's method. He also states: 'Like so many literary men of his time, Swinburne maintained a patronizing attitude towards musicians – as evidenced in a letter to his eldest sister'. An extract from his letter to Alice about Arthur Sullivan then appears (quoted in chapter one), which is entirely misunderstood. Gibbon clearly did not know that Alice was a musician (p. 21).

[45] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 146.

[46] Within the context of comedy, for example, 'For unto us' as a shopping list might seem to be 'musical'.

[47] This does not preclude choosing words for particular musical contexts. Words with lots of initial consonants might be useful for a composer of fast-paced, plosive melodies – such as in a Gilbert & Sullivan operetta – or assonance for a dreamy love-song, but certain words, in themselves, are not unmusical. There are all sorts of views about certain words being more apt for music than others. I tend to disregard such arguments for they all appear to depend on what you understand by 'music', and whether you mean such music to be pleasant to listen to or otherwise. There is, underneath this view, a prejudice that claims something is musical if it is beautiful and pleasurable.

Eliot's comment about Swinburne's poetry being 'a curious mixture of suggestions of all three' – set along his use of 'music' – marks his argument out as an anti-aestheticist position. Eliot does not like mixtures nor suggestions, all of which were part of the practice of the musical, *mélofane* aesthetics of Swinburne and his associates, and that of their predecessors, Hoffmann and Schlegel.

Eliot's argument, however, is actually formed out of the anti-Wagner debates of the nineteenth century – which is ironic for an argument that tries to reposition music for Modernism. I have set out my views concerning the relation of the content of 'Swinburne as Poet' to the 'absolute music' theory of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (*On the Musically Beautiful*) by Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904) in detail elsewhere.[48] However, in essence, Eliot's argument against Swinburne centres around music and emotion and their attachment to words. He does so by comparing an 'ayre' by Campion – which was specifically written for music, though Eliot does not state this – with Swinburne's poetry in general, for in Campion is found 'the kind of music that is not to be found in Swinburne'.[49] Presumably, Campion's 'music' of verse is direct, clean, and pure, while the music of Swinburne is not beautiful because it is mixed with other elements, for 'in Swinburne there is no *pure* beauty – no pure beauty of sound, or of image, or of idea'.[50] It is not musical or beautiful, Eliot appears to be saying, because Swinburne's poetry lacks precision – the right word for the right object or emotion. Is it also because – given the common use of 'musical' as a synonym for 'pleasurable' – that Swinburne's poetry is, for Eliot, unpleasant to read?[51] Leaving behind Campion, Eliot then quotes Shelley's 'Music, when soft voices die' which has a 'beauty of music and a beauty of content; and because it is clearly and simply expressed, with only two adjectives'. Swinburne, however, blasts his object or emotion with words, for his

[48] See Craske, 'Swinburne, Wagner, Eliot, and the Musical Legacy of *Poems and Ballads*', 543-6.
[49] Contrasting Swinburne's whole *oeuvre* to two lines of one Campion poem is clearly unfair.
[50] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 146.
[51] On this prejudice in general, see Fiona Sampson, who wonders if 'a "poetic" musical passage, or a "musical" passage of verse, is just one that the speaker considers beautiful'. Sampson, *Lyric Cousins*, p. 5.

words are never in 'direct line of vision, never focused; it is emotion reinforced, not by intensification, but by expansion'.[52]

Eliot's need for objective music is highly suggestive of Hanslick's essay 'On the Musically Beautiful'. Hanslick believed that only pure, absolute, or ideal music – which only appealed to the intellect – could be described as 'musically beautiful'. Hanslick ascribes to music a beauty of its own kind; the 'musically beautiful' is objective, unsullied by other aesthetic categories. It is 'self-contained and in no need of content from outside itself, that consists simply and solely of tones and their artistic combinations'.[53] Hanslick is here taking a specifically anti-Wagner stance, because Wagner, as we have seen, saw all music as emotional, with its essence as love or desire. But Hanslick's argument is also anti-aestheticist, or against what 'aestheticist' came to mean through Swinburne. For Hanslick, music was separate from emotion, a language of objective relations, 'a purely aesthetical effect [which] addresses itself to a healthy nervous system and does not rely upon any degree of psychological abnormality'.[54] Emotional responses to music were irrelevant for Hanslick. Music that tried to invoke feelings, therefore, was a siren song, diseased, or morbid.

It is important to point out that Hanslick is here talking about what he regards as true music, which is certainly not the music of the masses. This he would not have categorized as music, but a method – to use Vernon Lee's comment again – of '"acting on the helpless blood direct"'.[55] Popular music was a form of enslavement, and it also meant a hazy, homogenous vagueness. Absolute music, on the contrary, addressed a healthy mind, because when healthy, the mind demands precision.

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[52] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 147. Eliot then quotes Swinburne's 'The Triumph of Time'
[53] Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution to the Aesthetics of Music*, trans. by Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1986), p. 28.
[54] Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, p. 50. This surely requires an absolute, Platonic, separation of the mind and body.
[55] Lee, *Music and its Lovers*, p. 129.

Michelle Witen has noted the presence of Hanslick's ideas about 'absolute music' in Eliot's later poem *Four Quartets*.[56] However, I would argue that Eliot was already exploring these ideas many years before. His interest in music, as a concrete component of all those parts that make up a unified poem, is akin to Pound's demands for musical precision in his 1918 essay, 'A Retrospect'. Eliot met Pound in 1914, and he may well have learnt about Hanslick at this time, or, at least, gained a knowledge of similar arguments. Certainly, Pound's attitude to poetry appears to be a reformulation of Hanslick's argument. For example, Pound states that 'I believe in an "absolute rhythm", a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed' (thus objectifying it, since he says, this rhythm will be 'uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable').[57] He also demands that the writing attends to form, not content, with a 'direct treatment, economy of words, and the sequence of the musical phrase', for one must 'compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome'. On the ability of poets to grasp this point, Pound complains that 'at times I can find a marked metre in "vers libres", as stale and hackneyed as any pseudo-Swinburnian, at times the writers seem to follow no musical structure whatever'.[58]

It is worth noting that Eliot's argument concerning Swinburne and the poets of the 1890s also possibly owes something to Nietzsche. As Emma Sutton has shown, Nietzsche's alignment of Wagner's work with the 'over-affective, the sentimental, and the emotional' is partly indebted to the 'corpus of critical and fictional accounts of the debilitating effects of Wagner's music', including Hanslick's critique.[59] In a section in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* (1889) entitled 'A Music without a Future', in which Nietzsche repeats Wagner's dictum that 'music is a *woman*', Eliot would certainly have found material to bolster his anti-Swinburnian argument. In this essay, Nietzsche also employs imagery that would have appealed to Eliot's sense of the Swinburnian:

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[56] Michelle Witen, '"A Musical Pattern of Sound": Absolute Music and *Four Quartets*', in *The Edinburgh Companion to T. S. Eliot and the Arts*, ed. by Frances Dickey and John D. Morgenstern (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 179–188 (p. 181)
[57] Although emotion does not feature in Hanslick's system, both Eliot and Pound appear to want to objectivize feelings, turning them into absolute tones, concrete states, or objective correlatives.
[58] Ezra Pound, 'A Retrospect', *Poetry in Theory: An Anthology 1900-2000* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 83- 90 (pp. 87, 85, 84).
[59] Emma Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s*, pp. 96, 77.

"'infinite melody", can be clarified by an illustration. One walks into the sea, gradually loses one's secure footing, and finally surrenders oneself to the elements without reservation: one must *swim*'.[60]

Swinburne as degenerate

Eliot's argument also comments that the language of Swinburne is 'morbid'. He extends this argument by stating – with a back-handed compliment – that Swinburne's poetry has its own world, an 'independent life of atmospheric nourishment', having nothing to do with a 'world it simulates'. Swinburne's world is not solid, but an ambient place of vague emotions, and which generates further emotion under its own volition, rather like the weather. It does not reach out to the solid world to focus its desires or demands. Therefore, Swinburne's poetry 'is not erotic', Eliot claims, since it has nothing to do with the real world.[61] This is a patently false position, as many people have found and continue to find Swinburne's poems erotic. Additionally, the 'erotic' is surely, in part, inspired or activated *not* by what is present but by what is missing, or what is being merely suggested or occluded. Eroticism is not necessarily about seeing what *is*, but what *might* be. Erotic objectivity is, perhaps, an oxymoron.

Eliot then appears to perform a *volte-face*, stating instead that Swinburne's morbidity is not true morbidity either, because these ('eroticism' and 'morbidity')

> are adjectives which can be applied to the material, the human feelings, which in Swinburne's case do not exist. The morbidity is not of human feelings but of language. Language in a healthy state presents the object, is so close to the object that the two are identified.[62]

[60] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (London: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 661-683 (p. 666).
[61] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 149.
[62] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 149.

How language can be unrelated to the real world and yet also be unhealthy is hard to determine, but ultimately, Eliot is surely suggesting that Swinburne's language has headed into a rush of sound, without form and so without meaning, or maybe it has turned into a form of hysteria. It leaves the real world – whatever that may be – behind it.[63]

In declaring Swinburne's language to be 'morbid', Eliot claimed to be making a new argument against Swinburne, for 'none of the obvious complaints that were or might have been brought to bear upon the first *Poems and Ballads* holds good [i.e. that it is morbid]'.[64] However, Hanslick's arguments about absolute music and emotionalism, and Eliot's on Swinburne are actually mirrored in Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892), a work that links Swinburne to Wagner, with the latter being charged with 'a greater abundance of degeneration than all the degenerates put together. […] The stigmata of this morbid condition are united in him in the most complete and most luxuriant development'.[65] In using the word 'morbid', Eliot must have known that he was accessing certain reactionary views against Swinburne, in the way that Gosse, too (in his essay 'Swinburne: Personal Recollections'), knew that he was invoking the 'stigmata of degeneration' whilst simultaneously denying Swinburne bore such marks.

Nordau does not approach his subject from a lack of knowledge. He is well versed in those that he attacks and his knowledge of music and poetry springs from some authority. It is in the area of vagueness and emotionalism that Nordau brings most of his arguments to bear on Swinburne and Wagner. Symbolist poetry, Nordau claims, is a poetry of 'emotional colouring' and 'moods' – which immediately brings to mind the discussions of the mood patterning of poetry and music made by Francis Hueffer in his *Seven Songs*. However, Nordau also declares that such poetry allows the reader 'to dream, and hence brings about no intellectual processes'. He illustrates this by attacking the poetry of Verlaine, whom, he states, did not aim at naming objects, since "'to name an object means to suppress three-quarters of the pleasure of the

[63] It is ironic that an essay so demanding of the objective should fail to define its terms and leave so much 'hanging' and in need of translation.
[64] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 149.
[65] Max Nordau, *Degeneration: Translated from the Second Edition of the German Work*, 7th edition, (London: William Heinemann, 1895) p. 171.

poem'".[66] On the Pre-Raphaelites, he goes a step further, and even brings Hueffer into his argument to lay out his own position.[67] Here, Nordau could almost be Eliot himself. Taking the Pre-Raphaelites to task for their musical poetry, he attacks their nebulosity for 'the brain of the ignorant elaborates presentations that are nebulous, because they are suggested by words, not by the thing itself'.[68] Nordau is here talking generally about the group of artists, but he eventually names D. G. Rossetti and his confederates, whom he criticizes for their 'places of dreams, where all unreal figures and actions may be conveniently bestowed'.[69] Unsurprisingly Swinburne also comes in for attack for his constant need to impress his own psychological states upon the world via pathetic fallacy. He is, says Nordau, a '"higher degenerate"' (like Wagner), who, walking in 'Baudelaire's footsteps […] tries to distort his face to a diabolical mien' by presenting 'unnaturally loved' women in 'Anactoria'.[70] Nordau follows this with attacks on Wagner, whose musical habits and need for redemption through love mark out his operas as suffering from an '"erotic madness"'. In doing so, Nordau shows himself to be an advocate of 'absolute music'. He quotes Hanslick's horror at Wagner's 'shameless […] "bestial sensuality" in *Rheingold*' and extols the value of the symphony over programme or emotional music.[71] The symphony, he claims, is 'the highest differentiation of musical art […] the most musical of all that music can produce'. In contrast, Wagner's 'dazzling' but 'unnatural' spectacles, are but 'a straying from a native to an alien element'.[72] Like Swinburne's worlds to Eliot, Wagner's, too, are not of this planet.

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[66] Nordau, *Degeneration*, p. 115. Nordau is here quoting Jules Huret's *Enquête sur l'Évolution littéraire* (1891).
[67] 'An Anglo-German critic of repute, F. Hüffer, […] says: 'I myself call this movement the renaissance of medieval feeling'. Nordau, *Degeneration*, p. 70.
[68] Nordau, *Degeneration*, p. 68.
[69] Nordau, *Degeneration*, p. 70.
[70] Nordau, *Degeneration*, pp. 94-5. Eliot's introduction to Baudelaire's 'Intimate Journals' suggests that Swinburne, too, tried to affect Satanism. Eliot distances Baudelaire's interest in such things as indicative of hidden Christian belief. True Satanism (which is an 'attempt to get into Christianity by the back door'), is impossible for an atheist, however; it can only be an affectation. See Baudelaire, *Intimate Journals*, p. xiii.
[71] Nordau, *Degeneration*, pp. 182, 181.
[72] Nordau, *Degeneration*, pp. 203, 204.

Ultimately, Eliot's 'Swinburne as Poet' should not really be read as an essay solely about Swinburne. Its arguments were not new, and its critical intent was less to do with tackling Swinburne's poetry through a process of critical evaluation and much more about consolidating Eliot's own place as a new kind of modern poet and critic. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood* was a call for change, a slaughtering of the old gods for the creation of the new. The late Victorian and Edwardian *literati* still dominated the world of letters and poetry during Eliot's early career. All these people and their works needed to be swept away for Modernism to be heard.

While Eliot claims at the start of this essay that 'we do not (and I think the present generation does not) greatly enjoy Swinburne', it was not actually the case that Swinburne was out of fashion; Eliot only wished him to be.[73] As can be seen from Appendix 3, during 1910-1920 (the latter date being the year *The Sacred Wood* was published) more Swinburne poetry was adapted into music and song than at any other time. In addition, Edmund Gosse and Thomas Wise were constantly publishing Swinburne or Swinburne-related material, including Gosse's own biography of the poet in 1917. Eliot wrote his essay from a place of continual opposition, not from a position of strength. It was natural, that in a post-war period – for which Virginia Woolf had already noted a sense of change at the decade's outset – that Eliot sensed a need for change from literature's old-guard. Eliot chose the ground of music and poetry because this was the area in which the old-guard claimed pre-eminence. Eliot had a crown to snatch. However, in a time of such change, Eliot's own position was changing. While he felt the need to attack the emotionalism of the past and institute a post-war stoicism of the present – a war that he oddly does not mention in his essays of the time – his own understanding of this area was also conflicted. While he aggressively sets aside the poetic music of the past in 'Swinburne as Poet' (and in the other essays of *The Sacred Wood*), Eliot was concurrently inviting analogies between his own poetry and Wagnerian music, a music that had grown from the same Franco-German Romantic roots as Swinburne's poetry.

[73] Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 145.

These same Romantic roots also nourished Eliot's earliest verse, and continued to show their influence long into his career in his later poems' threshold imagery – an imagery born not of objectivity, but of the space between 'memory and desire' or caught between those very Wagnerian motifs: 'the desire | And the spasm'.[74]

As Jed Rasula has recently noted, music 'became the Trojan horse that smuggled Romanticism into Modernism'.[75] But in Eliot's case, the shape of this Romanticism was more than Wagnerian. Extending Stoddard Martin's claim that Eliot retained a hidden adoration for Wagner long after his admonitions against emotionalism started to appear, I would suggest that Eliot nursed a latent love of the erotically charged verse of Swinburne too, and that 'Swinburne as Poet' is a self-harming, flagellatory ritual to wrest himself free of his influence and possibly his earliest poetic love.

[74] From 'The Hollow Men'. See Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, I, 84.
[75] Rasula, *History of a Shiver*, p. 59.

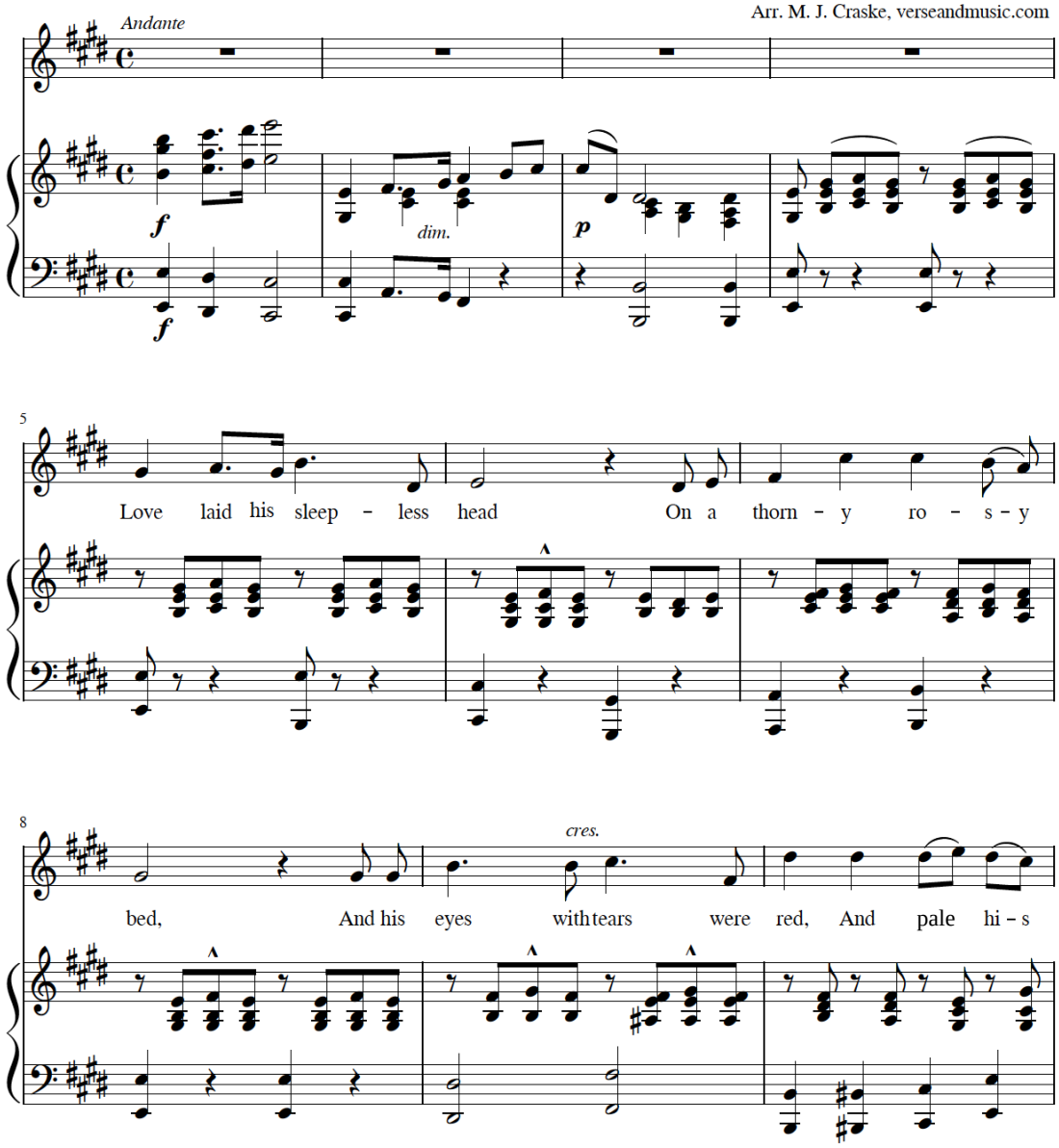
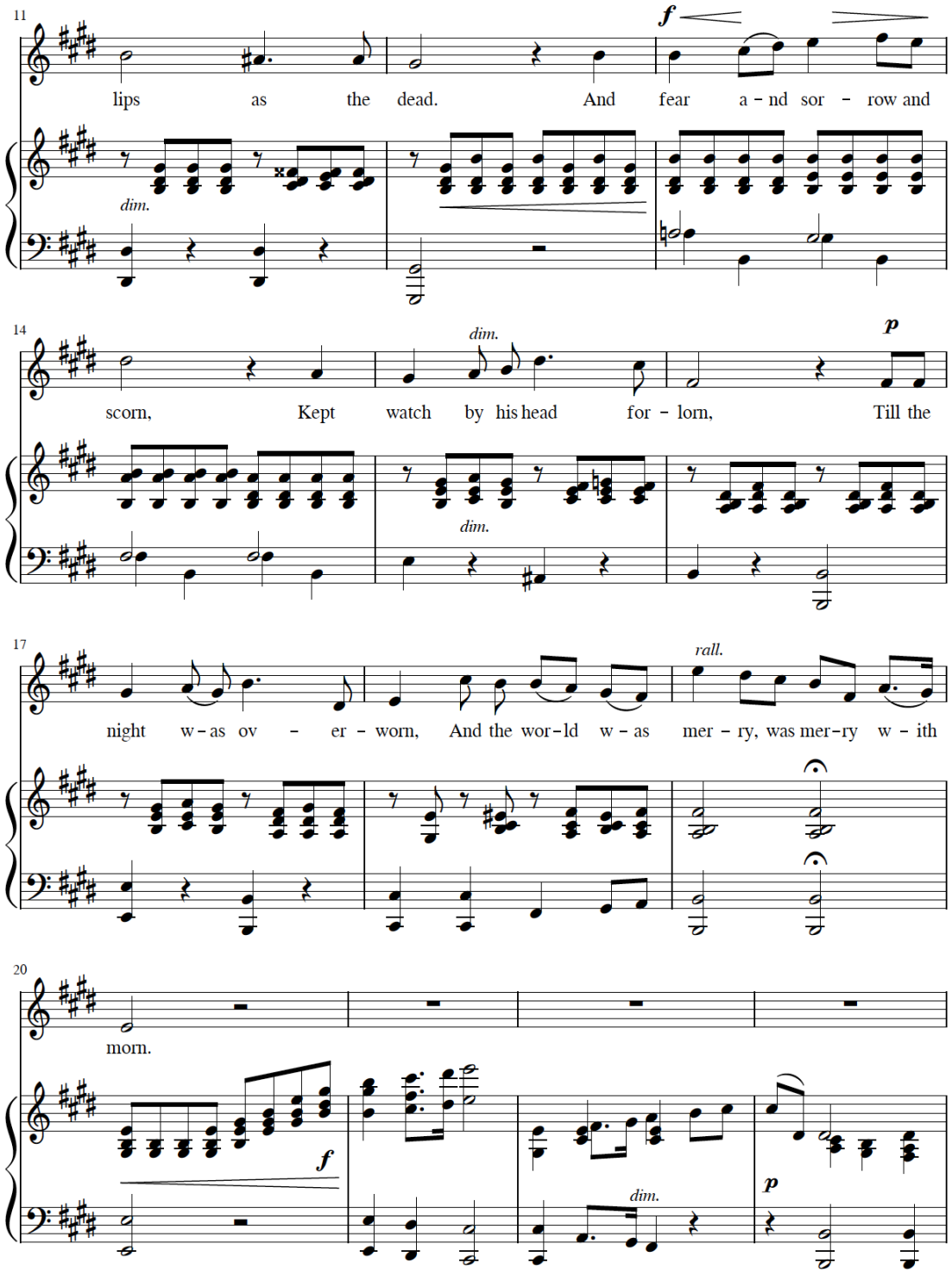
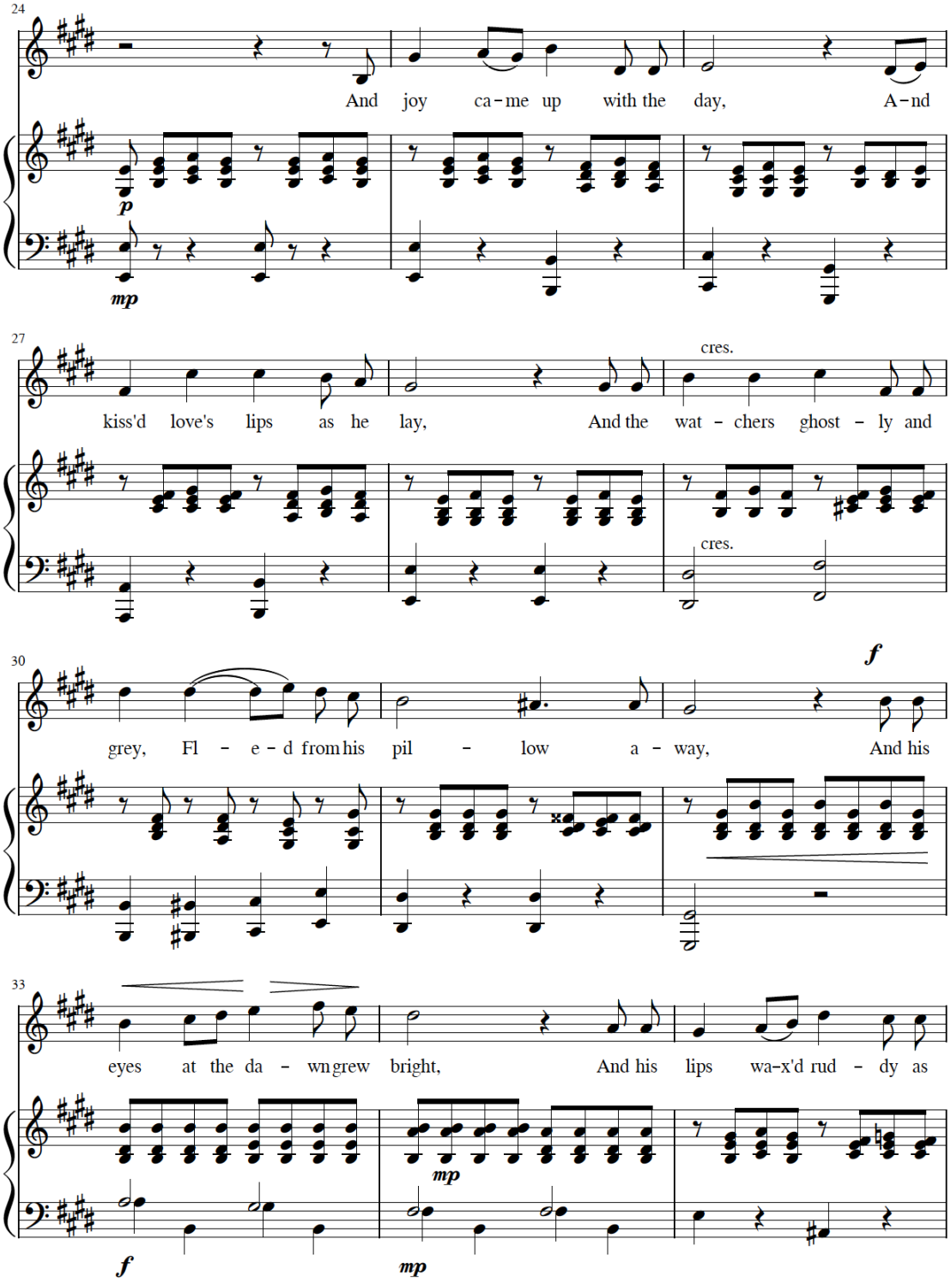
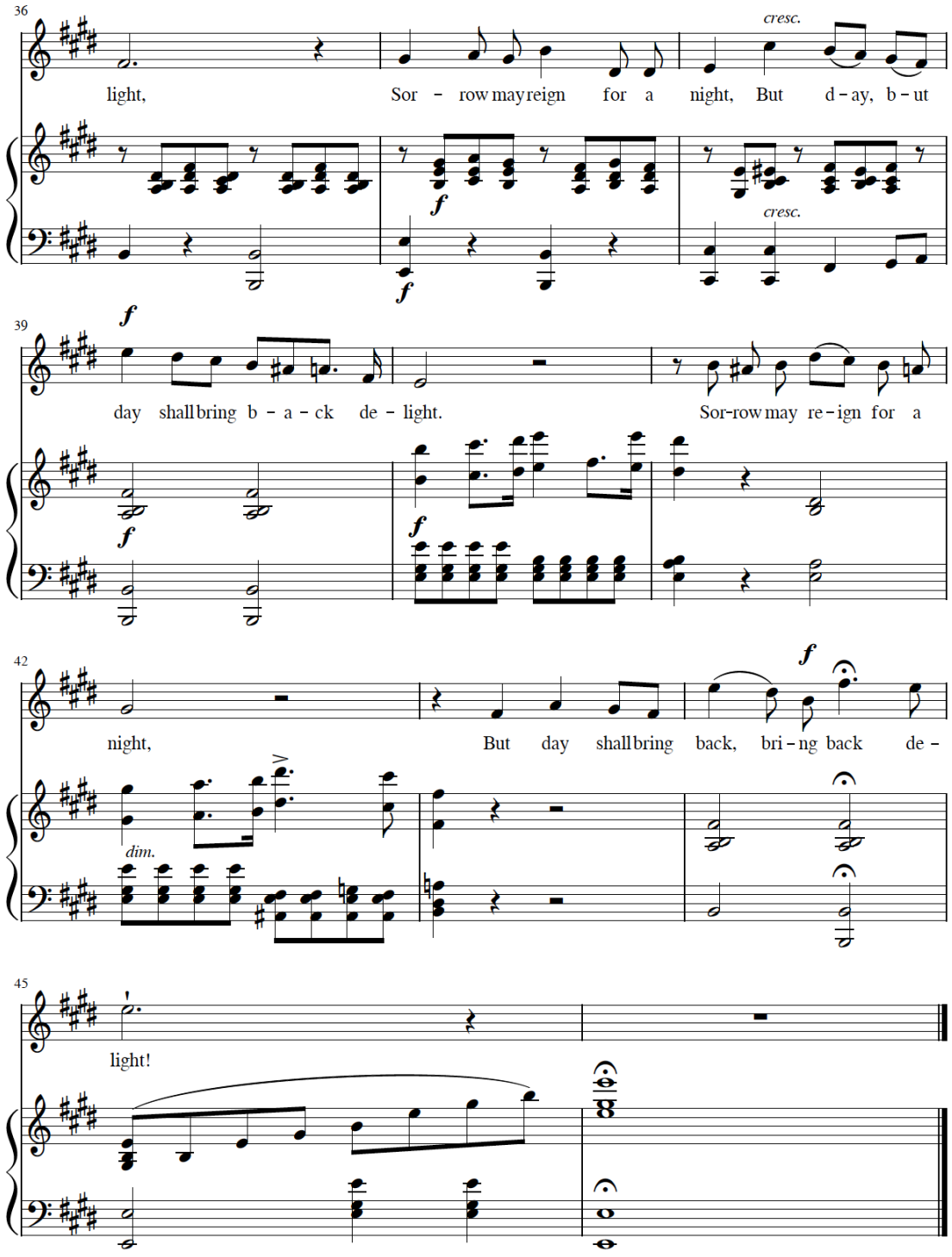
APPENDIX 1

Love Laid his Sleepless Head, by Arthur Sullivan and A. C. Swinburne (London: Boosey & Co, 1875), arranged by Michael Craske.

'Love Laid His Sleepless Head'

A. C. Swinburne

Arthur Sullivan

Arr. M. J. Craske, verseandmusic.com

11
lips as the dead. And fear a - nd sor - row and
dim.
14
scorn, Kept watch by his head for - lorn, Till the
dim.
dim.
17
night w - as ov - er - worn, And the wor - ld w - as mer - ry, was mer - ry w - ith
rall.
20
morn.
dim.

24
And joy ca-me up with the day, A-nd
p
mp
27
cres.
kiss'd love's lips as he lay, And the wat - chers ghost - ly and
cres.
30
f
grey, Fl - e - d from his pil - low a - way, And his
33
eyes at the da - wn grew bright, And his lips wa-x'd rud - dy as
mp
f
mp

36
light,
Sor - row may reign for a
night,
But
d - ay, b - ut
cresc.
cresc.
39
day shall bring b - a - ck de - light.
Sor-row may re - ign for a
42
night,
But day shall bring back, bri - ng back de -
dim.
45
light!

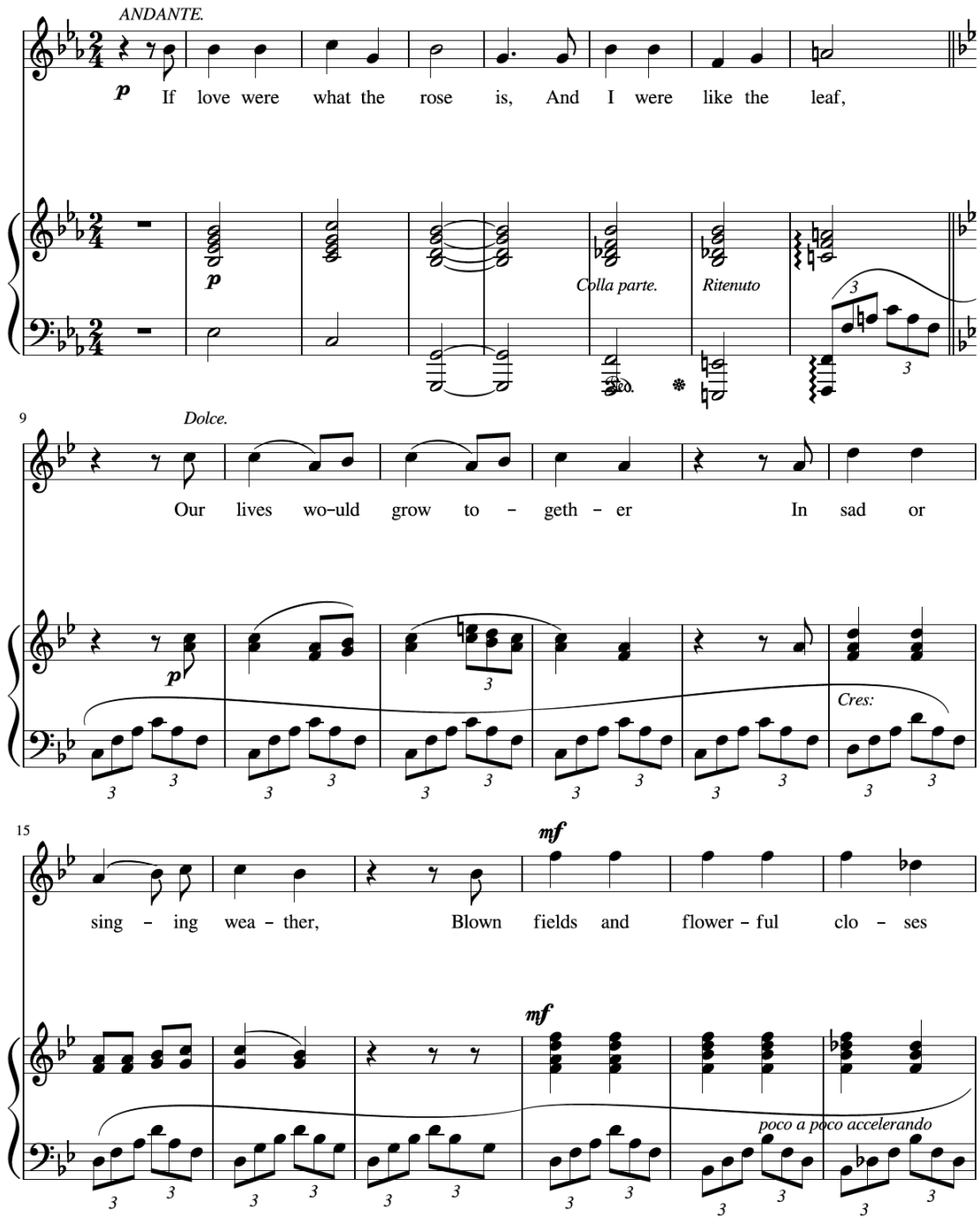
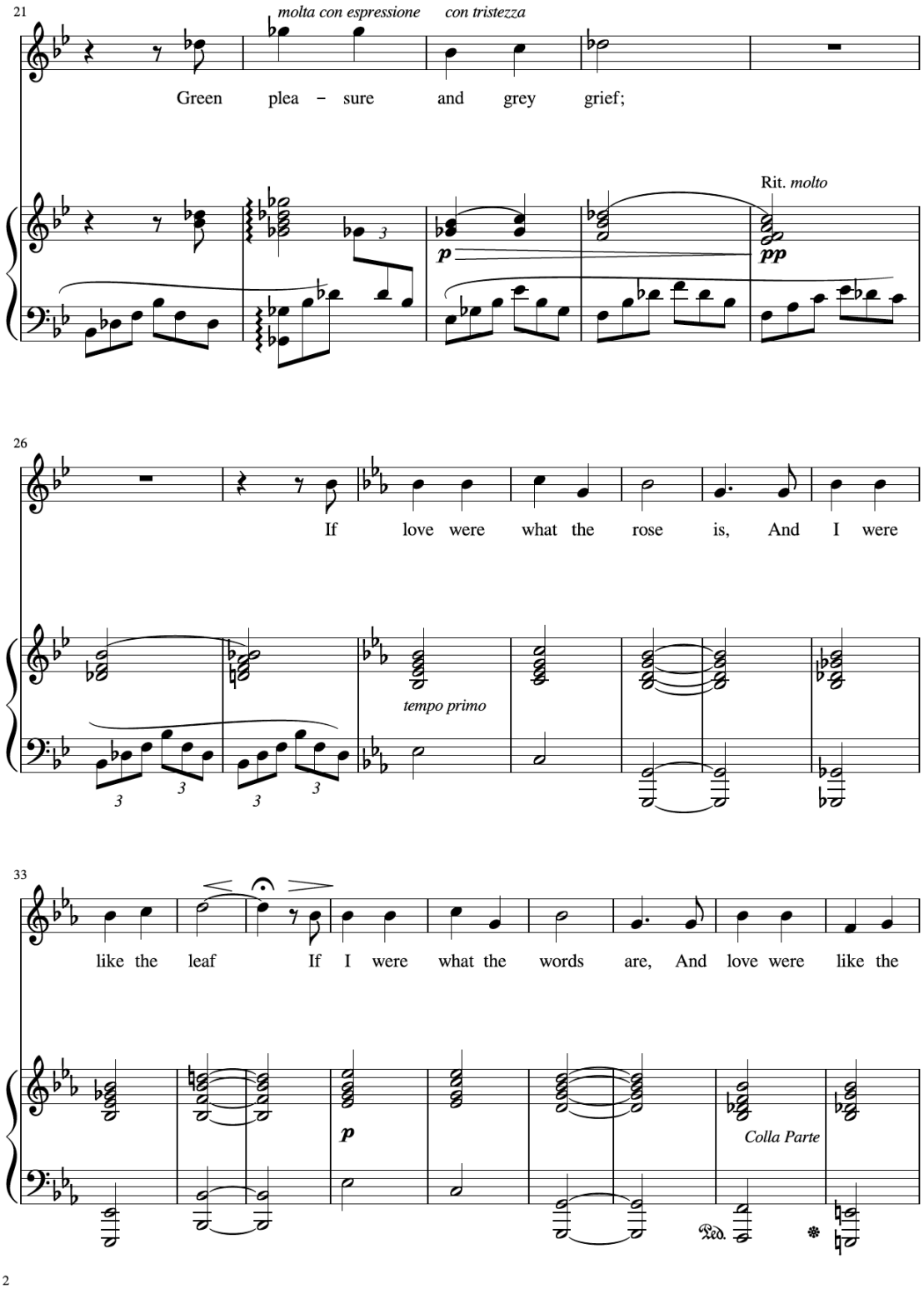
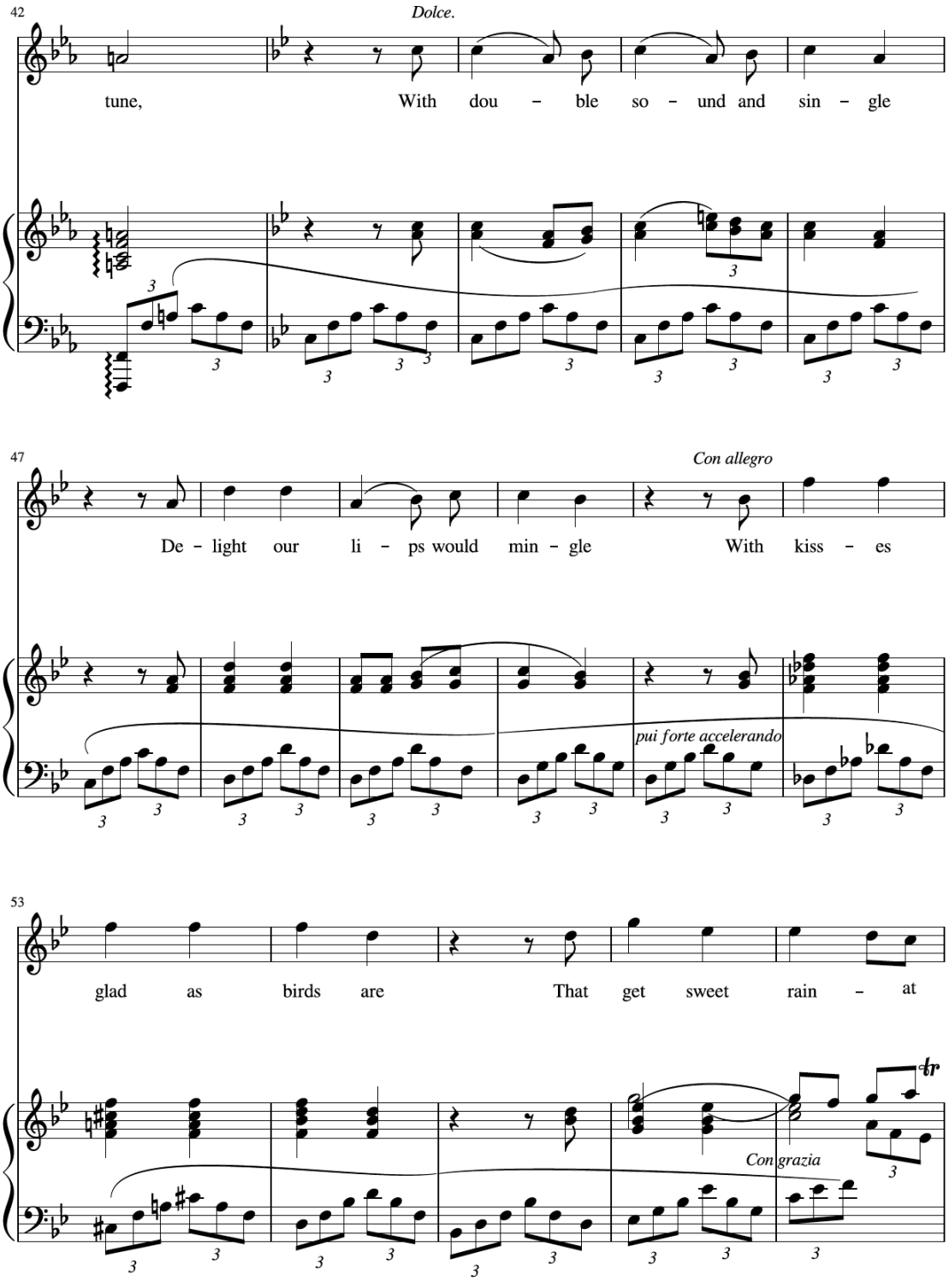
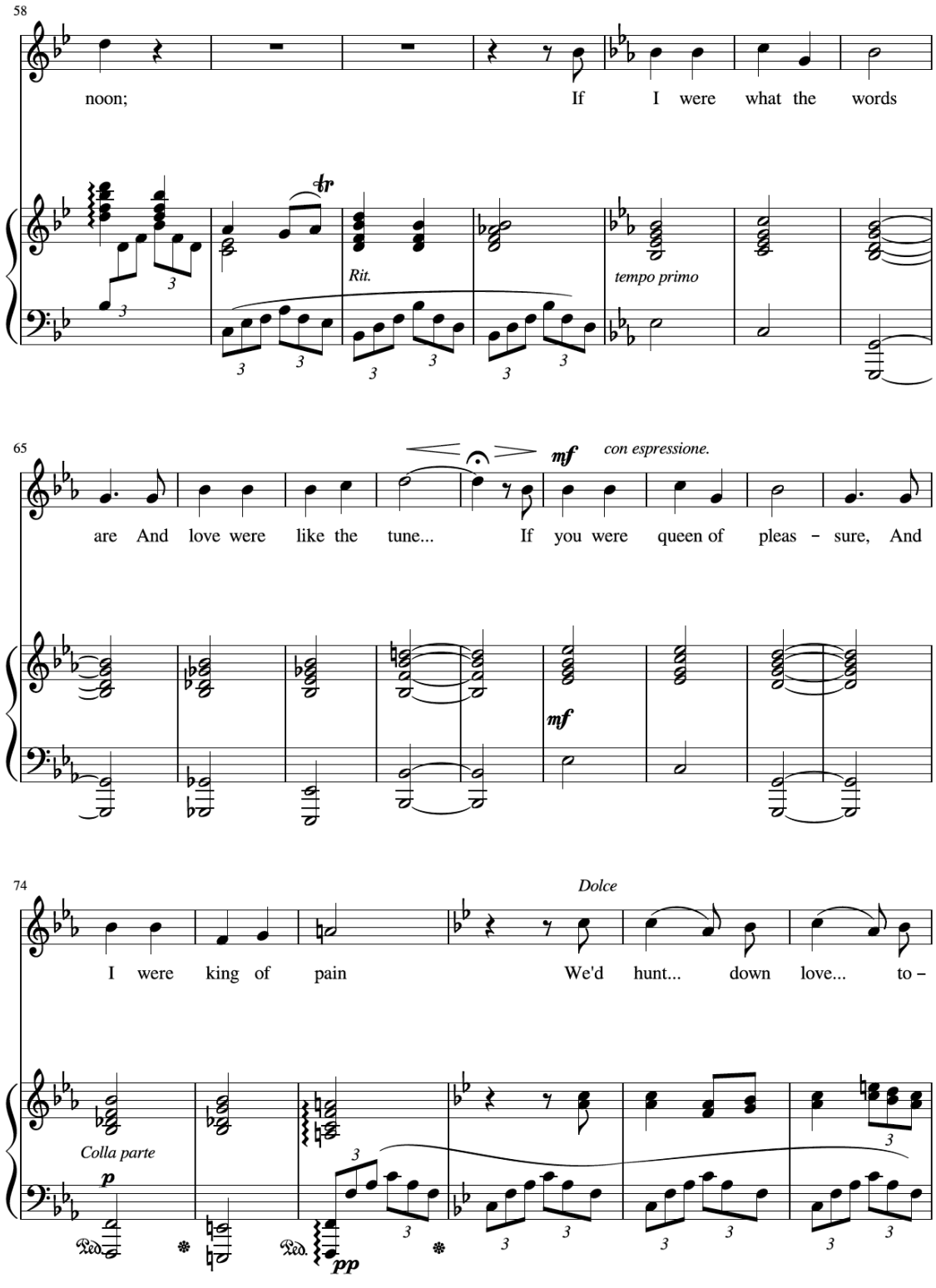
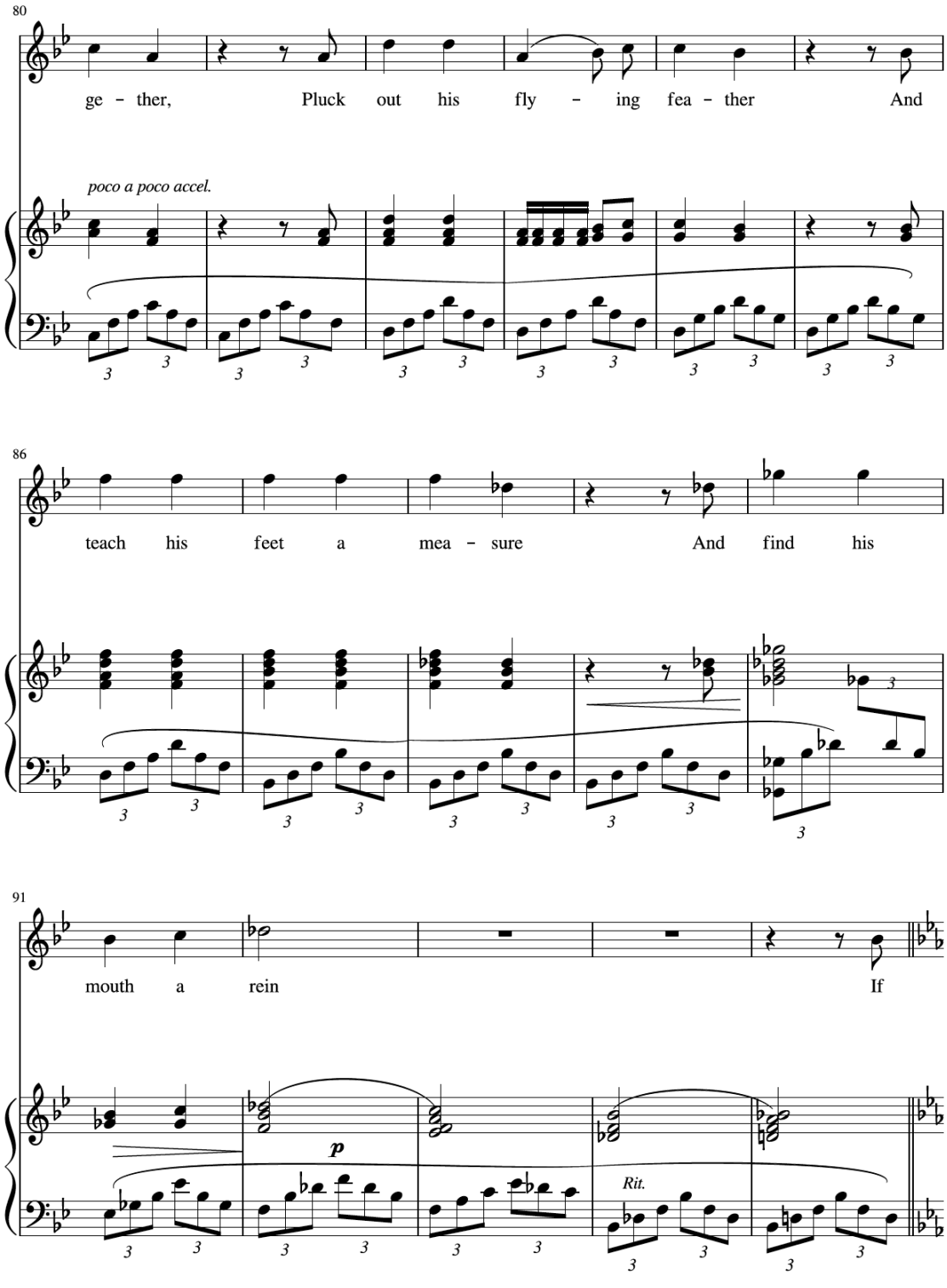
APPENDIX 2

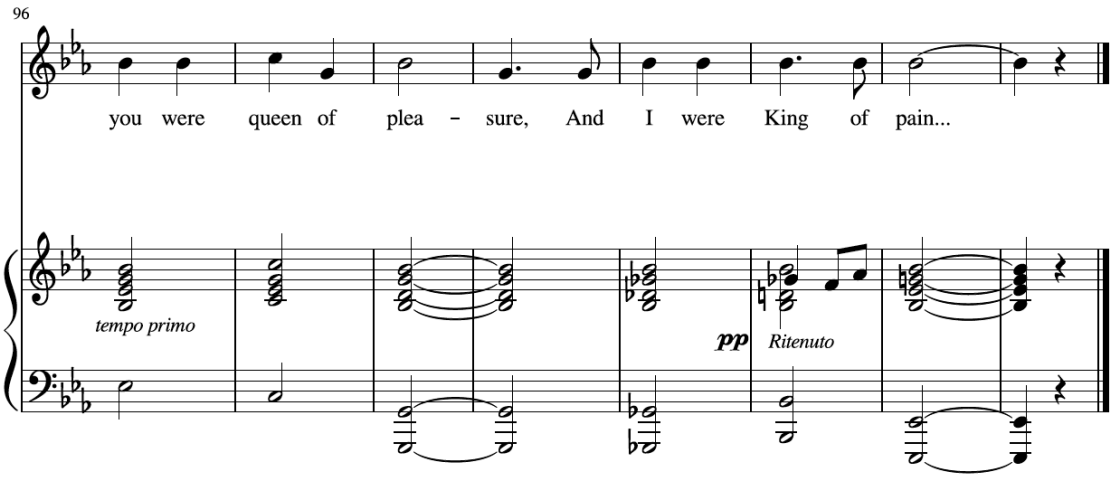
‘A Match’, by Francis Hueffer and A. C. Swinburne, from *Seven Songs* (London: S. Lucas & Weber, 1873), arranged by Michael Craske

A Match

No. 5 from *Seven Songs* (1873)

Words by A. C. Swinburne

F. Hüffer (Francis Hueffer)

21
molta con espressione
con tristezza
Green plea – sure and grey grief;
Rit. molto
p
pp
26
If love were what the rose is, And I were
tempo primo
33
like the leaf If I were what the words are, And love were like the
p
Colla Parte
Ped.
2

42
Dolce.
tune, With dou - ble so - und and sin - gle
47
Con allegro
De - light our li - ps would min - gle With kiss - es
pui forte accelerando
53
glad as birds are That get sweet rain - at
Con grazia
tr

58
noon;
If I were what the words
Rit.
tempo primo
65
are And love were like the tune...
If you were queen of pleas - sure, And
mf
con espressione.
mf
74
I were king of pain
We'd hunt... down love... to -
Dolce
Colla parte
p
pp
Ped.
4

80
ge - ther, Pluck out his fly - ing fea - ther And
poco a poco accel.
86
teach his feet a mea - sure And find his
91
mouth a rein If
p
Rit.


96
you were queen of plea - sure, And I were King of pain...
tempo primo
pp
Ritenuto

Appendix 3: Swinburne poems set to music, 1866-1920

Where incomplete information is given (e.g. no publisher), the title is known to exist but a copy has yet to be seen. A setting's title is occasionally different from the published Swinburne poem, and where this is the case, the poem's title is given in a footnote. Other adaptations may exist in addition to those listed but are currently unknown.

1860s

Kissing Her Hair[1]	Walter Maynard (pseud. of Thomas W. Beale)	London: Cramer & Co., 1867
Kissing Her Hair, Rondel	James Lynam Molloy	London: Ashdown & Parry, 1868
A Match[2]	Jeremiah Rhodes	London: Charles Jeffreys, 1868

1870s

A Match[3]	Francis Hueffer (Franz Hüffer)	London: Stanley, Lucas & Weber, 1873
Before Sunset	Albert Orlando Steed	London: Stanley, Lucas & Weber, 1873
Après tant de jours: Song from 'Chastelard'	Virginia Gabriel	London: Stanley, Lucas & Weber,1873
J'ai vu faner bien des choses[4]	Mayda Creyke	London: J. B. Cramer & Co.,1874
Love Laid his Sleepless Head[5]	Arthur Sullivan	London: Boosey & Co., 1875
Love at Sea[6]	Lady Louisa Caroline Lamb	London: Lamborn Cock, 1876
Ilicet: A Song for Contralto[7]	U. C. Burnap	San Francisco: M. Gray, 1876

[1] See *Rondel: Kissing her Hair*.
[2] Inscribed to the Rt. Hon Lady Houghton (Annabel Milnes).
[3] In *Seven Songs* which includes poems by Christina Rossetti and William Morris. See *Roses, pleasure, and pain: 'A Match'* also *My Love, Mine Own*.
[4] 'Song of Queen Mary' – *Chastelard.*
[5] See *Love Laid his Sleepless Head*. Both words and music were written for John Hollingshead's 1874 production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at the Gaiety Theatre, see *The Swinburne Letters* (hereafter *TSL*) ed. by Cecil Y. Lang, 6 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959-1962), II, 354. *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 27 December 1874, reports that the performance did not go well: 'we cannot compliment her [Miss Furtado] on the rendering of an original song written by Mr. Swinburne, with music composed by Mr. Arthur Sullivan, which, on the first night, she sang sadly out of tune and, as it appeared to me, considerably through her nose'.
[6] Stanzas 1, 4 & 5
[7] Digital score available on Library of Congress website.

A Leave Taking[8]	Charles Salaman	London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1877
If[9]	Ciro Pinsuti	London: Chappell & Co., 1878
Félise[10]	Theophilus Marzials	London: Stanley, Lucas & Co., 1878
Love Laid his Sleepless Head	Hastings Crossley	London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1879
If Love were what the Rose is[11]	Harrison Millard	New York: Spear & Dehnhoff, 1879

1880s

A Match[12]	Louis Napoleon Parker	London: A Cox, 1880
A Match[13]	Fredric W. Clarke	London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1880
Le Navire, Sarabande, paroles de A. C. Swinburne	Lionel Benson	London: Stanley, Lucas, Weber, 1880
Le Navire Passe (*Chastelard*)	Francesco Tosti	London: Ricordi & Co., 1880
J'ai vu faner bien des choses: Romance	Hamilton Aidé	London: Boosey & Co., 1881
Mary Stuart: A Dramatic Cantata[14]	Joseph Roeckel (lib. Frederick Weatherly)	London: Patey & Willis, 1881
If Love were what the Rose is ('A Match')	Frederic Cowen	London: Chappell & Co., 1883
Ask Nothing More ('The Oblation)[15]	Theophilus Marzials	London: Boosey & Co., 1883
A Match	Clara Kathleen Rogers	New York: Schmidt & Co., 1884
Song Before Death	Catherine Adelaide Ranken	London: Davison & Co., 1885

[8] See Salaman's letter on this piece in *Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (hereafter *UC*), ed. by Terry L. Meyers, 3 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005), II, 122.
[9] 'A Match'.
[10] See *Félise*. Lines 115-125. Swinburne mentions Marzials wanting to set 'four chosen pieces' of his poetry to music and writes to Edmund Gosse, 'I should like to see and hear them'. 'See' implies that Swinburne had a greater understanding of musical notation than otherwise thought – *TSL*, III, 214. The date of this letter leads me to believe that 'Félise' was one of the four poems. 'The Oblation' may have been another, see below. I cannot trace the other two, if they were ever composed.
[11] 'A Match'. Peculiarly entitled 'Mated: If Love…' etc. Digital score on Library of Congress website.
[12] See *A Match, 1880*.
[13] In *An Album of Songs* (no. 4).
[14] Adaptation of *Chastelard*. Swinburne wrote to Weatherly to state that he had read the libretto Weatherly had sent him: 'I think you have made the story entirely your own […] and I think the introduction of the sea and hunting scenes very happily conceived.' Weatherly proudly reprints this letter at the front of the score, although the printer has given 'A. E. Swinburne' for ACS's name. The letter is not in *TSL* or *UC*.
[15] See *Original score for Marzials's 'Ask Nothing More'* and *Ask Nothing More*. Performed at the Queen's Hall Proms on 30 September 1899, Prom 31.

Maytime in Midwinter[16]	A. M. Wakefield (Augusta Mary)	London: S. Lucas, Weber, 1885
Love at Sea	Percy Reeve	London: Ricordi & Co., 1886
If Love were what the Rose is[17]	A. C. Mackenzie	London: Novello, Ewer & Co, 1888
Rococo, A Song[18]	Adela Maddison	London: Metzler & Co., 1888
For a Day and a Night[19]	Adela Maddison	London: Metzler & Co., 1888
If you were Life[20]	Adela Maddison	London: Metzler & Co., 1889

1890s

Eton: An Ode[21]	Charles Hubert H. Parry	London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1891
As I Love Thee	Jacques Blumenthal	London: Chappell & Co., 1892
Song of May ('Maytime in Midwinter'?)	Lord Henry Somerset	London: Ricordi & Co., 1893
Music: An Ode (sop., chorus, orchestra)[22]	Charles Wood	London: Augener & Co., 1893
East to West: An Ode[23]	Charles Villiers Stanford	London: Novello, Ewer & Co, 1893
Butterflies ('Fly, white butterflies')[24]	Felix Corbett	London: Boosey & Co., 1894
Ask Nothing More ('The Oblation')	Frederic Cowen	London: J Williams, 1894
An Interlude	Adela Maddison	London: Metzler & Co., 1895
Stage Love	Adela Maddison	London: Metzler & Co., 1895

[16] See *'The world, what is it to you, dear': Mary Wakefield's 'Maytime in Midwinter'*.
[17] 'A Match'. In *Eighteen Songs*, 3 vols., I.
[18] Stanzas 1, 3 & final.
[19] 'At Parting'. All verses complete, except for the line 'Spirit and flesh growing one with delight', which presumably was cut out for reasons of taste?
[20] 'A Match', stanzas 3, 4 & 5.
[21] Written for the school's 450th anniversary. See *TSL*, VI, 5-7.
[22]Commissioned by the Royal College of Music from Swinburne to celebrate the opening of its new building, for which a competition was held to choose a composer. Charles Wood won, and the building received a royal gala opening in 1894, a year later than originally planned and more than a year after the poem's original publication.
[23] See *'East to West' by Charles Villiers Stanford*. Written and composed for the 1893 'Chicago Celebration', says The Times on 29 April 1893. Performed by the Royal Choral Society at the Albert Hall on 10 May 1893.
[24] Sung at the Proms at the Queen's Hall (where the Proms were initially held) on 9 September 1895, after the interval. The first half of the programme, conducted by Henry Wood, was a Wagner recital, with music from *The Flying Dutchman*, *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Die Walküre*.

The Triumph of Time[25]	Adela Maddison	London: Metzler & Co., 1895
Before Sunset	Adela Maddison	London: Metzler & Co., 1895
A Leave Taking (part-song)	Archibald Wayet Wilson	London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1895
A Leave Taking[26]	Charles Paston Cooper	London: Chappell & Co.(?) 1895
Mabel's Song[27]	Frances Allitsen (pseud. Mary Bumpus)	London: Boosey & Co., 1896
Love shall be Lord[28]	Felix Corbett	London: Boosey & Co., 1896
In a Garden	Emily M Lawrence	London: Weekes & Co., 1896
Baby Songs[29]	Florence Gilbert	London: J. B. Cramer, 1896
For If, Beyond the Shadow and the Sleep[30]	William Simpson Hannam	London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1896
The Oblation	William Simpson Hannam	London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1896
If Love were what the Rose is[31]	Paul Ambrose	Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1896
A Match	Frederick Westlake	London: Gale & Speer, 1897
Before the Beginning of Years (Choir and Orch.)[32]	Archibald Wayet Wilson	London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1897
We are not Sure of Sorrow[33]	Charles Paston Cooper	London: Chappell & Co., 1898
Ballad of Dreamland	Bernard Rolt	London: Enoch & Sons, 1899

1900s

If Love were what the Rose is[34]	Bothwell Thomson	London: Publisher? 1900
April's Lady[35]	Maud Valérie White	London: Chappell & Co., 1902

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[25] See *The Triumph of Time*. Stanzas 1, 2 & final.
[26] Performed at the Proms, 20 October 1902
[27] 'There's nae lark loves the lift', from *The Sisters.*
[28] 'Before Sunset'.
[29] 'In a Garden', 'Baby Bird'.
[30] 'In Memory of John William Inchbold'
[31] 'A Match'.
[32] *Atalanta in Calydon*, lines 314-361.
[33] 'The Garden of Proserpine'. See *Song, scandal, and a princess: We are not Sure of Sorrow*.
[34] 'A Match'.
[35] 'A Match'.

Come Back, Sweet Love[36]	William Augustus Barratt	London: Boosey & Co., 1902
If Love were what the Rose is[37]	Arthur Foote	New York: Arthur P. Schmidt, 1902
As I Love Thee[38]	Charles A. Lidgey	London: Boosey & Co., 1903
As I Love Thee[39]	Harvey Worthington Loomis	Boston: O. Ditson Co., 1903
There Lived a Singer[40]	Christopher Wilson	London: ?, 1903
Rococo	Cecil E. Banbury	London: Weekes & Co., 1904
Take Hands, Touch Lips[41]	Clarence Lucas	Cincinnati: J. Church Co., 1904
A Match	Cecil E. Banbury	London: Weekes & Co., 1904
Springtide: An Interlude	Inez C. Evers	London: Elkin & Co., 1904
Dear in Death[42]	Charles Harford Lloyd	London: Novello & Co., 1904
A Baby's Feet, Like Seashells Pink[43]	Charles Harford Lloyd	London: Novello & Co., 1905
A Match	William F. Sudds	Philadelphia: T Presser, 1905
A Match	Henry T. Fleck	Boston: O. Ditson Co., 1906
An Interlude	Landon Ronald	London: Enoch & Sons, 1906
A Match	Victor Herbert	New York: Witmark & Sons, 1907
A Prayer of Thanksgiving[44]	Louise Llewellyn	Cincinnati: J. Church Co., 1907
Resignation[45]	Nicholas Douty	Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1907
A Leave Taking	Charles Fonteyn Manney	Boston: O. Ditson Co., 1907
Love Laid his Sleepless Head	Victor Herbert	New York: Witmark & Sons, 1907
Music: An Ode	Arthur M. Friedlander	London: Novello & Co., 1908
An Interlude, a Spring Song	F. Gambogi	London: J. Williams, 1909

[36] 'Song Before Death'. Performed at the Proms, 23 September, 1902 – Prom 27.
[37] 'A Match'.
[38] 'Erotion'.
[39] 'Erotion'.
[40] 'The Triumph of Time'.
[41] 'Rococo'.
[42] 'A Dead Friend'.
[43] 'Étude Réaliste'.
[44] 'The Garden of Proserpine', lines 81-88.
[45] 'Rococo'.

1910s

My Queen and Star	Lady Annie Fortsecue Harrison	London: Chappell & Co., 1910
Dear in Death[46]	Rose Mesham	London: Vincent Music Co, 1910
Un jour, une nuit – A Day, A Night[47]	Victor Harris	New York: G. Schirmer, 1910
If Love Were What the Rose is[48]	John Lilley Bratton	Phil: T. Presser Co., 1911
White Laurustine[49]	Emmeline Brook	London: Chappell & Co., 1911
Atalanta in Calydon[50]	Sir Granville Bantock	Leipzig: Breitkopf & H., 1911
A Reiver's Neck Verse	Percy Grainger	London: Schott & Co., 1911
The Oblation	Harriet Ware	Cincinnati: J. Church Co., 1912
Cradle Song	Leo Smith	Toronto: L. Smith. 1912
Atalanta in Calydon (Choral & Incidental Music)[51]	Muriel Elliot	London: No publisher indicated, 1912
Küss' ich ihr Haar: Rondel[52]	Kurt Schindler	New York: G. Schirmer, 1912
Let us Go Hence[53]	Harold P. Brown	New York: H. W. Gray, 1912
A Baby's Epitaph	John Hopkins Densmore	Boston: Boston Music Co, 1913
Fly, White Butterflies[54]	Harvey Bartlett Gaul	Boston: White-Smith, 1913
April's Lady[55]	W. Harling	New York: C. Fischer, 1913
A Song of Love[56]	G. Pitner	Chicago: C. F. Summy, 1913
Night[57]	Leo Smith	New York: G. Schirmer, 1914
On Dante's Track[58]	Leo Smith	New York: G. Schirmer, 1914

[46] 'A Dead Friend'.
[47] 'At Parting'.
[48] 'A Match'.
[49] 'Relics'.
[50] A 'choral symphony' for twenty parts, unaccompanied in four movements.
[51] Written for Elsie Fogerty's production. See 'The Hounds of Spring' and *Atalanta in Calydon*.
[52] 'Kissing Her Hair'. See *Küss' ich ihr Haar*
[53] 'A Leave Taking'.
[54] 'Envoi'.
[55] 'A Match'.
[56] 'Love Laid his Sleepless Head'?
[57] Unaccompanied men's chorus.
[58] 'In Guernsey'.

Beloved and Blest[59]	Leo Smith	New York: G. Schirmer, 1914
My Mother Sea[60]	Leo Smith	New York: G. Schirmer, 1914
The Bride's Tragedy[61]	Percy Grainger	London: Schott & Co., 1914
The Oblation	Bartley Currie	London: West & Co., 1914
If Love Were What the Rose is[62]	Amy Hare	London: Escott & Co., 1916
Like April's Kissing May[63]	Bainbridge Crist	Boston: Boston Music Co., 1916
Take Hands and Part[64]	Pedro de Zulueta	London: Keith, Prowse, 1917
Rondel[65]	Percy Lee Atherton	Boston: Boston Music Co., 1917
The Oblation	Charles Fonteyn Manney	Boston: O. Ditson Co., 1918
The Oblation[66]	Walter Butler	London: Boosey & Co., 1919

1920 only

If Love Were What the Rose is[67]	Reginald Billin	New York: John Church Co., 1920
Somewhere Safe to Sea[68]	William Harold Neidlinger	Cincinnati: J Church Co., 1920
Rondel, Song[69]	Vivian Hickey	London: Escott & Co., 1920
Joy, Song[70]	Francis Moore	New York: Ricordi & Co., 1920
Before Sunrise[71]	Edgar L. Bainton	London: Stainer & Bell, 1920
England: An Ode[72]	Ernest Macmillan	London: Novello & Co., 1920

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[59] 'In Guernsey'.
[60] 'In Guernsey'.
[61] Choral & Piano score.
[62] 'A Match'.
[63] 'Félise'.
[64] 'Rococo'.
[65] 'Kissing Her Hair'?
[66] Duet.
[67] 'A Match'
[68] 'The Garden of Proserpine'. Mistakenly states 'C. A. Swinburne' as lyricist.
[69] 'Kissing Her Hair'?
[70] 'Love Laid his Sleepless Head'
[71] For contralto, chorus, and orchestra
[72] For soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra

Instrumental only (including unpublished in period)

Before Dawn[73]	Edmonstoune Duncan	London: Augener & Co., 1902
Before Dawn[74] (Ballet Music)	Norman O'Neill	London: Boosey & Co., 1927
Spring Fire: A Symphony for Orchestra[75]	Arnold Bax	Composed 1913 (performed 1970)
A Nympholept[76]	Arnold Bax	Composed 1912 (performed 1961)

Others: unpublished but performed, unpublished during date period, and oddities.

Edward Dannreuther

1877 salon concert programme:

> 'If Love were what the Rose is' (Tenor song): 'A Match'.
> 'Ask nothing more of me sweet': 'The Oblation' (described in the programme as *An Oblation* [*sic*]).
> 'The Burden of Bright Colours and much Sadness': 'A Ballad of Burdens'.[77]

William Walton

'Child's Song'.
'Song'.
'A Lyke-Wake Song'.
'The Winds'.

Published in *Four Early Songs*, William Walton, (Oxford: OUP, 2002).

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[73] Has Swinburne epigraph: "Where silence is more than all tunes', a misquote not from 'Before Dawn' itself, but 'Hymn to Proserpine'. In *Musical Pastime: Six Short Pieces for the Pianoforte*, op. 60.
[74] Performed at the Royal Albert Hall, Prom 31, 29 September, 1917, and at the Queen's Hall in the same year. Score for full orchestra, also pianoforte version (1927)
[75] See *Bax: Orchestral Works, Vol. 2*, Chandos Classics, 2003.
[76] See *Bax: Orchestral Works, Vol. 5*, Chandos Classics, 2003.
[77] Manuscript fragment traced at the Dannreuther Archive at the Royal College of Music. Programme available at the British Library.

Vaughan Williams:

The Garden of Proserpine (composed 1899, performed and recorded 2011)[78]
Kissing Her Hair (composed 1895, recorded 2008)[79]

Ella Dietz

'Chastelard's Song' and 'Love at Sea', see *Lesson in Harmony* programme, 1875, unpublished?

Marie Corelli

'Madonna Mia', 1885, unpublished?

Edward Elgar, 1897

The little eyes that never knew light – Rondel: A Baby's Death (1)

Hart, Fritz

The Winds, 1917

Norman O'Neill, 1898

A Match
Love at Sea[80]
Roundel – 'In Guernsey' Autograph manuscript, unpublished? In RCM catalogue - 7362

[78] See *Ralph Vaughan Williams & Patrick Hadley: The Garden of Proserpine, In the Fen Country, Fen and Flood*, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Albion Records, 2011.
[79] See *Twenty Early Songs of Ralph Vaughan Williams: Kissing Her Hair*, various, Albion Records, 2008.
[80] This and 'A Match', mentioned in Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, Critical Studies of Early Twentieth Century Song (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

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