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SOME SWINBURNE MANUSCRIPTS

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CECIL Y. LANG, *Assistant Professor of English at Yale, has edited an edition of nearly two thousand letters of Swinburne which is about to go to press.*

THE SWINBURNE manuscripts in the Library's Symington Collection, full of a 'charming variety and disorder,' can be of enormous interest to any Swinburnian scholar, no matter what his special interest or point of view, and this article, in an effort to augment their charm by particularizing their variety and eliminating their disorder, aims at an informal identification, description, or transcription of nearly every piece.¹ The manuscripts include both prose and poetry, both serious and frivolous; first drafts, intermediate versions, and fair copies; complete works, parts of works, and mere hints of works; published pieces and unpublished. At least one piece is of great length and others are very, very short, one being only a couplet. Their dates range over virtually the whole span of Swinburne's career, and there is material here for the biographer, for the student of abnormal psychology and (to make a nice distinction) of Swinburne's verses on children, for the investigator of classical influences at work on him or of his political interests and activities, for those most interested in his formative years at Oxford and shortly afterwards, or for those (if they exist) concerned with his decline, as well as for scholars concerned with the period in between.

For the sake of brevity, I shall refer when possible to one of

¹ The Librarian has kindly made available to me, for the purpose of this article, a microfilm of almost the entire Swinburne collection, and Professor Leslie Marchand has generously sent me vital statistics (about color of ink, size of paper, and other matters) that a photograph will not yield. I have not seen, even on microfilm, the holograph of Swinburne's novel *A Year's Letters* (republished as *Love's Cross-Currents*) or of the early draft of his essay 'Note on the Character of Mary Queen of Scots.'

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the two most indispensable works on Swinburne ever published—Georges Lafourcade's *La Jeunesse de Swinburne* (1837-1867), published in two volumes in 1928. Lafourcade was privileged to rummage through T. J. Wise's Swinburne collection before Wise stooped to using it as millionaire-bait, and his book is therefore a compendium that today could not easily be duplicated. He has been curiously maligned (since his death) for errors of fact and judgment that are somehow represented as the monstrous depravities and desecrations of a perverted mind intent on the proliferation of error, and, the laws of literary inertia being what they are, this hideous injustice may, sooner or later, succeed in obscuring the truth. Lafourcade's achievement, in view of the quantity, complexity, and disarray of his raw materials, is a great triumph, and one ought to marvel at his dexterity in keeping the incidence of error so low, a casualty rate far lower, as a matter of fact, than that of most of his successors, all of whom have worked in an incomparably narrower and more specialized field.

Several of the manuscripts in this collection were printed (not always complete) by Lafourcade, among them a dramatic fragment on Lucrezia Borgia (II, 143); what seems to be a dramatic monologue in the Browning mode (II, 160 f.); two five-line satiric stanzas that he rightly calls (II, 163) 'un véritable chef-d'oeuvre'; and a translation (II, 14) from the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus. Lafourcade also refers (II, 65) to a long early poem titled 'Letters' of which the manuscript, sixteen pages containing over 240 lines of verse, is now once more available, still completely unpublished. Three other pieces were specified or printed by Lafourcade in another work, *Swinburne's Hyperion and Other Poems* (1927): a fragment of blank verse beginning 'O thou all-bearing mother' (noted, p. 153 n.); 'Song' (printed, pp. 154 ff.); and 'Epicurus' (printed, pp. 159 ff.).

Still other poems, or fragments, are definitely in the Pre-Raphaelite vein that Swinburne, finding the mode too restrictive and fragile for his voluble temperament, abandoned early (but not early enough) in his career. This brief interval of a proselytism so alien to his own sensibility is discussed in general terms by Lafourcade, who, however, either did not see or did not choose to mention the Rutgers manuscripts, with the possible exception of 'Qui bien ayme tard oublie,' of which the Library has, in all, over fifty lines on three

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Calculated for the Meridian of BOSTON, NEW-
ENGLAND, Lat. 42 Deg. 25 Min. North.

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Eclipses; Ephemeris; Aspects; Spring-Tides; Judgment
of the Weather; Feasts and Fasts of the Church;
Courts in *Massachusetts-Bay, New-Hampshire, Con-
necticut, and Rhode-Island*; Sun & Moon's Rising &
Setting; Time of High Water; Roads, with the best
Stages or Houses to put up at. — A brief CHRO-
NOLOGY of Remarkable Events in the present WAR.
Of the Settlement & Increase of NEW-ENGLAND.
Of Raising FLAX-SEED.

By Nathaniel Ames.

PLENTY three Years our crowded Graneries fill'd
'Ere SOL's fierce Beams the blighted Pastures kill'd.
When Drought for Rains suppress the *Nilus* flow
In *Aegypt's* Plains no Fruit nor Herbage grow:
When seven full Streams had seven large Harvests crown'd
Then seven long Years with Famine corst the Ground:
If Nature save this Contrast still maintains,
One Year of Drought and Scarcity remains.

BOSTON. Printed & Sold by *J. Draper*, in Cornhill. *R. Draper*, in Newbury-street; *Green & Russell*, and *Edes & Gill* in Queen-street; and *T. & J. Fleet* at the Heart and Crown in Cornhill. Sold also by the Book-sellers

Price Half-a-Dollar per Dozen, & Six Coppers single.

separate pages. Lafourcade (II, 53) quoted nine lines from a manuscript that seems, for various reasons, *not* to be the one here described, and Swinburne may have written another version of the same poem, or one very similar, in the same octosyllabic triplets *without* the refrain (see the six lines quoted by Lafourcade, II, 181), of which about forty lines, on two different pages, are in this collection. Yet a third version (or a third poem) was begun in octosyllabic interlocking couplets, of which about forty lines are here and part of which is, though not identical, remarkably similar to a passage printed in T. J. Wise's *A Swinburne Library* (p. 247). That Swinburne actually attempted three or four versions of one poem in different meters is by no means certain, but the speculation is tempting and the evidence suggestive. Like much of his early work, these verses could pass for a parody of Pre-Raphaelite mannerisms—motivation is undefinable, yearning ineluctable, pain unassuageable, solace unattainable, rimes are often unpronounceable, and the imagery, which is limited to gold and lilies, pleasance bowers and three great towers, is unspeakable.

From 'my lady in her flowers, In the paven gold of her pleasance bowers' to *The Cyclops* of Euripides is a leap that would startle no student of Swinburne, though I believe that his translation of portions of the drama has never before been noticed. What his ultimate purpose was I do not know, but a blind man could see that impatience with Shelley's ludicrously discreet and timid rendering of the same play was lurking in his mind, and that, at least once, Swinburne had swooped with malicious mirth upon a passage that must have made Shelley shudder. The verses, sprawling chaotically over both sides of a single sheet, include the following (and other) lines, as numbered in The Loeb Classical Library: 63-66, 166-182, 494-502, 511-518, 585-589.

Some of the manuscripts are easily connected with Swinburne's published work, and in order to facilitate identification I have noted in each case here the volume and page reference in the twenty-volume Gosse-Wise Bonchurch Edition of *The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, which, for better or worse, is now standard. These pieces include the third stanza of 'Vos Deos Laudamus' (VI, 27 f.); a fair copy, here entitled 'Rome and Mola,' of the second of the two sonnets 'The Monument of Giordano Bruno' (VI, 176 f.); an early draft of lines 6-14 in 'A Year After' (II,



DER HOCH DEUTSCHE AMERICANISCHE CALENDAR CONTAINED
EXTENSIVE ILLUSTRATION OF WHICH THIS IS AN EXAMPLE

348); some memoranda to be used in writing *A Study of Victor Hugo* (XIII, 13 ff.); an early draft, very likely the first, of 'The Ride from Milan' (II, 92 ff.), which contains nearly two dozen canceled lines, mostly recoverable, and, in the usual desperate disarray, these lines from the published version: 1-16, 19-44, 61-64; an early version, with many canceled readings, of 'Burd Margaret' (III, 353 ff.); the first draft of twenty-five lines of the peerless *Atalanta in Calydon* (VII, 343, the three stanzas beginning 'What thing wilt thou leave me,' and, on the next page, the two beginning 'When thou dravest the men'); ten pages containing an early version of lines 1-146 of 'Iseult at Tintagel' (IV, 94 ff.) in *Tristram of Lyonesse*; the first draft of most of 'A Rhyme' (III, 209 f.), as well as a fair copy of the last eighteen lines; and, finally, a most interesting page containing assorted stanzas of poems used in *Lesbia Brandon* (pp. 149 f.). Two of these stanzas, beginning 'The cockle-shells to be my bed,' do not appear in the Bonchurch *Works*, though they do appear in *Lesbia Brandon* (pp. 149 f.). The others can be identified as 'The Witch-Mother' (III, 257 f.), II. 4-7, 21-28; 'A Reiver's Neck-Verse' (III, 256), II. 1-5; and 'Chanson de février' (VI, 341 f.). The concluding lines of 'Chanson d'avril' (VI, 343 f.) are strongly suggested by an incomplete stanza on the same page:

Tu veux que je sorte;
Je m'en vais sortir.
Tu m'as voulu morte
Je suis[.]

The manuscripts of unpublished work are of course the most attractive of all, and in the hope of making them readily available I transcribe here, in full, with a minimum of comment, as many as space allows. (The numbers in square brackets represent nothing but editorial convenience and a separate manuscript.)

[1]²

(Picquart studying Dante in prison)

In vain

The priestlings of the Church of hell, whose foam

² Blue paper, 20.8 x 20.3 (all measurements are in centimeters). —Two prose pieces are too long for inclusion in this catalog. One, entitled 'Life after death,' may be part of an undergraduate essay. The other seems to be part (though not the beginning) of a tale. The opening sentence is: 'This Dama[?] had the fierce narrow mouth, and dull chin common to other slave Christians.'

Pollutes with poison still the shrines of Rome,
This heaven with all their cloven tongues of praise.

[2]³

Corinna

Each like his dam, each brazen as his brother,
Sad Satan and Barabbas hug their mother.

[3]⁴

A mateless heifer, magnificent-browed,
A virgin wedded to deathly peril,
An unloosed girdle, a lamp unbroken,
An unsown garden, a field unploughed?

[4]⁵

St. Paul

Behold the Jew's God and the world's: and lo,
The man was gone whom love was fain to know:
The lips were harsh whence only peace was shed,
The frail pure hands omnipotent—and red.

[5]⁶

Métempsychose.

C'est la fête du grand Homère.
Eh! c'est donc toi qui rôdes là,
Bouche fétide, langue amère,
Zoïle?

—Présent! dit Zola.

[6]⁷

Underneath these stones
Are deposited the remains of a tender Virgin
Who in the 19th year of her age
After the sharpest struggles
In which she manifested
Not only resignation but joy
Breathed her last in those arms
Where all her wishes were centered;
And having discharged as became her
The debt of nature
Rests at last in the pleasing hope of
The Resurrection of the Flesh.
Matthew.
Sent to a Lady the day after marriage.

³ White, 13.9 x 12.9. Below the couplet is written, probably not in Swinburne's hand,
'T C & E C Jack.'

⁴ White, 10.5 x 11.5.

⁵ White, 13.3 x 14.

⁶ White, 12.1 x 11.4.

⁷ Blue, 18.8 x 12.

Then I shall think, beyond this earth and grass,
 Whose growth her growth is laid and held within¹¹
 Death pleads with her and uses loving breath,
 His mouth set fast on hers as my mouth was
 And his lips fastened in her throat and chin
 As love's lips were, before love turned to death.

4

Yea, in my rising up and downlying
 Doubtless my thought will always cleave to it.

[10]¹²

The flower that has left us behind it
 Thorns sharp as its petals are sere,
 At what height, at what depth shall we find it,
 The rose of last year?

The light that was love's when it lightened,
 The daystar of days that shd be
 Is the sky with the beams of it brightened?
 Is it quenched with the stress of the sea?

[11]¹³

Fast locked round heaving sides and hips
 Their coiled weight writhes, their eyed skin glares;
 And quivering like the red wet lips
 Of a wound opened her mouth shares
 The breath of theirs

As from some flower of the sinful[?] south
 The wild [wd. illeg.] sucks its red sweetheart
 The soft hot palpitating mouth
 Sucks with fierce subtleties of art
 The breaths they dart.

Short breaths and sharp like arrow-shot,
 With quick tongues flickering out and in;
 Flat fawning heads that menace not
 And spotty as a soul with sin
 The starry skin.

¹¹ Several lines, including this one, have been canceled, but this one, unlike the others, has no substitute, and since it is essential, I have restored it.

¹² White, 13.1 x 21. —The meter of these eight lines is that of the second half of one 'Dolores' stanza plus the first half of another. The 'Dolores' stanza was also used in the 'Dedication' (for which this passage may have been intended) of *Poems and Ballads*, in parts of 'The Garden of Cymodoce' and 'By the North Sea,' in the 'Dedication' of *Astrophel and Other Poems* and of *A Channel Passage and Other Poems*, and in 'Astrophel.'

¹³ White, 16.8 x 21. —Written in the 'Félice' stanza.

Her bright loose limbs flung out to wreck
 Her great arms lying down her thighs,
 Helpless, her head and heavy neck
 Thrown sideways, and with blank lost eyes;
 Vanquished, she lies.

[12]¹⁴

(Aytoun with posterior puff no less
 Blows boldly forward his own beastliness)
 Pass north, between the doors of lead and gold,
 Up where the stench exudes from Wilson's mould;
 Where, rotten with the dropping dung of years,
 His carrion claims its gibbet, tho his ears
 Worm-eaten now, have shirked the hangman's shears[?]
 Where good men stay to spew, and with short sighs
 Rebuke the old inefficient pillories:
 Where, mushroom-sprung from Middenstead reviews,
 Steaming and stinking like his Scottish stews,
 Rank Aytoun rumples the brief-killed Muse
 And with fierce itch (but not of passion) warm
 With filthy fingers fumbles at his form[?]
 Till sick with hireling heat of sin-drenched beds
 She yields the fiftieth of her maidenheads,
 And drugged with (not [wd. illeg.]) half the refuse shop
 Snivels[?] and squeaks and lets a *Bothwell* drop.

[13]¹⁵

Mother of life and love and death and fear,
 Now heaven, now hell, for man to see and hear,
 Sea, when thy heart is keen as fire to slay,
 Thy wrath makes death and grief for love's sake dear.
 Thou knowest not whence a light more bright than day
 Is kindled even of sorrow and dread, to say
 How far one woman's heart, one mother's tear,
 Transcends the triumph of thy stormy sway.

[14]¹⁶

Their country's lovers chuckle
 To see their country starve:

¹⁴ Blue, 18 x 11.3. —W. E. Aytoun's *Bothwell* appeared in 1856, but this piece is certainly of a later date, and is possibly related to 'A Study,' printed in Wise's *A Swinburne Library*, p. 31. Aytoun died in 1865.

¹⁵ Blue, 11 x 20.2. —The stanza is that of 'Relics,' 'Memorial Verses on the Death of Théophile Gautier,' 'A New Year's Eve,' 'The Centenary of the Battle of the Nile,' 'Trafalgar Day,' 'Cromwell's Statue,' and 'In Memory of Aurelio Saffi.'

¹⁶ White, 10.7 x 16, with the second stanza on the verso. Both stanzas have cancellations, and the second is followed by six canceled lines, easily decipherable. —The verses

Feed, famine, on our brothers!
 Die, peasants; perish, mothers
 With babes you cannot suckle;
 Shall Erin's heroes truckle
 For beef that Saxons carve?
 Their &c.
 While they, sublime and fearless,
 Shirk risks, break trusts, set sail
 And shudder down the Channel
 Too chill with fright for flannel
 To warm, befogged and cheerless:
 But England, hard and tearless,
 <Derides their doleful> tale
 xxx xx broken bail
 While, &c.

[15]¹⁷

Beloved and blest of children, heaven-born head,
 Nailed up and spat on like the head of Christ,
 Crowned by the nails and hallowed, quick and dead,
 By scorn and spittle, filth and falsehood, shed
 Upon thee whom we saw self-sacrificed:
 Who are we that we should praise thee, whom we saw
 Bepraised, bemocked, bespattered, and betrayed
 By mouths of men that knew not faith nor awe,
 And had for guide self-interest, fear for law?
 Not of men's praises is thy glory made.
 To have done the deed that failure makes divine
 To have dared the doom that valour durst not dare
 Untouched and uninformed by faith like thine
 Who seeing the midnight sawest the sundawn shine
 And light cast night from heaven, ere dawn were there:

evidently refer to the escape, in October, 1890, of Dillon and O'Brien, the Irish M. P.s, from a Tipperary Police Court in order to fulfil a fund- and sympathy-raising engagement in the United States. Their flight by yacht across the Channel to the French coast was much ridiculed in the anti-Irish press. (Another manuscript, of biographical rather than artistic interest, seems to be part of a frivolous verse-drama involving anti-Gladstonism.)

¹⁷ I am by no means sure, or, indeed, even persuaded, that these stanzas are arranged in their proper order—or, for that matter, that they all belong to the same poem. The first three are written on white paper, 25.6 x 19.2, on the verso of which appears the seventh. The fourth, fifth, and sixth stanzas are on white paper, 32.5 x 20.3 (verso blank). The eighth stanza is on blue paper, 20 x 16.2. —As Lafourcade (*Swinburne A Literary Biography*, pp. 286 f.) points out, the verses certainly refer to General Charles George Gordon (1833-1885), the hero of Khartoum, and (in the eighth stanza) to Gladstone.

This, tho' no praise embalm thee—this, tho' they
 That flattered and forsook thee shd applaud—
 This is thine honour; higher than song can say
 Or ceremony of choirs that wail and pray
 Or tongues that mocked and now are fain to laud.
 The little hand redeemed from hell by thee
 Whose writing bade God bless thee wrote thy name
 Above the reach of earth or cloud or sea
 That limit all our lifelong vision: we
 Know that by theirs our praise wd seem as blame.
 Heaven, heaven is his even here till all things end
 And heaven tho' all things end is his we know
 Whom children else forsaken hail their friend.
 Whom hands held up in darkness, knees that bend
 In anguish find their helper ere he go.
 To Christ and thee what matters where the cross
 May stand or how the herd may howl beneath
 That mocks the moment and accounts for loss
 The gain of godhead? Let the tempests toss,
 While fraud and fear and falsehood gnash their teeth.
 Irresolute, unstable as water,—yea,
 And false as water—how shall ye escape
 The dark damnation that men's judgment lay
 On them that tempt and comfort and betray?
 What though your fame set herds of fools agape?
 'God bless the Kurnal'

[16]¹⁸

Villon

To my good mother that me bore
 I leave in hand of Our Lady,
 For bitter pain she had of yore,
 God knows, and many a grief for me;
 Castle or harbour of land or sea
 For soul and body I have none other
 Save this in time of tyranny,
 Nor she, poor woman, mine own mother!

¹⁸ White paper, 18 x 22.6, folded once to form four pages: page one contains 11. 1-20, page two, 11. 21-40, and page three, the last five lines. —The poem is, of course, a close translation of the 'Ballade que Villon feist à la requeste de sa mère pour prier Nostre Dame,' with the preceding eight-line introduction from *Le Grand Testament*. Lafourcade (II, 104) quoted the opening four lines of the 'Ballade' proper, but otherwise, so far as I am aware, no one has ever printed the complete poem, which is, in my opinion, the most important addition to the canon since Swinburne's death.

Lady of heaven and governess terrene
And empress of the bitter lake of hell,
Grant me thine humble Christian woman clean
That with thy people chosen I may dwell,
Albeit I be nought worthy, I wot well;
More than my sins, my queen and soul's lady,
More than they all, thine excellences be;
Nor can man's soul win heaven, me lists not be,
Save through this perfect excellence of thee;
In this belief I think to live and die.

Say to thy son I am his bondwoman;
Bid him blot out my sins who ransomed us,
And heal me like the unclean Egyptian,
Or as he healed the clerk Theophilus,
Who was absolved of thee most piteous
Though to the devil his soul betrothen was;
Preserve me that I go not hence nor pass,
O Virgin bearing in a maid's body
The sacrament men worship in the mass;
In this belief I think to live and die.

A woman am I poor and sad and old,
Nor nought I know, nor never letters read;
I see at church, where I sit in God's fold,
Heaven painted fair with harps and lutes disspread,
And hell where damned folk boil in burning lead;
This frights me sore, that gives me joy and bliss;
Grant me that joy, high goddess, that there is,
Thou to whom sinners all for help must fly,
Fill full of faith, nor slow nor false, I wis;
In this belief I think to live and die.

Thou barest, Virgin, holy lady, Mary,
Jesus the King, that cannot die nor vary;
The Almighty, clad in weakness voluntary,
Came to our help down out of heaven most high,
Gave his sweet youth to death at hands unwary;
He is our Lord, and I his tributary,
In this belief I think to live and die.