

HARDY'S DANGEROUS COMPANION:  
A STUDY OF THE POETIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
THOMAS HARDY AND A.C. SWINBURNE

by

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## ABSTRACT

Thomas Hardy's elegy to A.C. Swinburne, composed in 1910 shortly after his death, points to a poetic relationship between the two poets which goes beyond admiration or influence. The relationship between Hardy and Swinburne has not been adequately explored by twentieth century critics, and it is the central purpose of this thesis to examine more closely parallels between them on the level of technique. Analysis of Hardy's elegy entitled "A Singer Asleep" suggests how Hardy may have identified with Swinburne on the level of technique.

Swinburne and Hardy both lived in London in the 1860s, a lively period which provided them both with much creative and intellectual sustenance, including in the area of prosody. And although Hardy's career as a novelist temporarily eclipsed his career as a poet, the seeds planted in those early days in London provided him with an enduring sympathy for Swinburne's work which continued long after he resumed his career as a poet. Several components of Hardy's technique suggest a sympathetic connection with Swinburne on Hardy's part, reflecting not so much influence but rather inspiration. Hardy's metrical borrowing of several forms unique to Swinburne did not result in poems of identical character; Hardy's adaptations exhibit his distinct poetic style. His experiments in classical prosody are similar to Swinburne's

in their willingness to resist convention. In his use of trisyllabic substitution, Hardy has tested the limits of this technique just as Swinburne has, and it can be argued that Hardy is ultimately more successful in his attempts to loosen the iambic line. The two poets also conducted extensive experiments in the use of rhyme, either through imitation of established schemes or invention of new patterns.

This comparison of the techniques of Swinburne and Hardy prompts some reconsideration of Hardy as a naive and clumsy poet, and suggests that he was far more learned and considerate in his use of prosody than has been concluded by many twentieth-century critics. Hardy's uneven but highly expressive rhythms demonstrate not naivete, but a desire to test the bounds of tradition, and it was in this desire that he found poetic companionship with Swinburne.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgements	v
I. "A Singer Asleep"	1
II. Swinburne and Hardy in London in the 1860s	9
III. Common Forms: a comparison of several poems	19
IV. Experiments in Classical Prosody	32
V. Trisyllabic Substitution and the Iambic Quatrain	53
VI. Rhyme	57
VII. Conclusion	64
Bibliography	72

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## I.

In 1910 Thomas Hardy visited the grave of Algernon Charles Swinburne in Bonchurch on the Isle of Wight to pay his respects to the fiery, red-headed poet whose lyrics had scandalized the staid Victorian literary world of the 1860s and 1870s. The occasion prompted Hardy to compose an elegy to Swinburne entitled "A Singer Asleep" -- just as Swinburne had elegized the literary rebel Baudelaire almost fifty years earlier with his lyric tribute "Ave Atque Vale."<sup>1</sup> The elegy is a nostalgic record of Hardy's fascination with and admiration for Swinburne, and with it Hardy pays tribute to what he believed to be Swinburne's contributions to literature: artistic freedom, prosodic experimentation and disdain for Victorian prudery. Yet, the poem may also suggest a more profound connection between the two poets. Hardy's tribute is charged with empathetic as well as sympathetic overtones and expresses more than fascination and admiration. What was Hardy's relationship to Swinburne? Did he identify strongly with him, and if so, in what sense?

The poem opens with an impression of the place where "the Fates have fitly bidden" that Swinburne be buried: the seacoast. Hardy's use of "Fates" appropriately reflects his respect for Swinburne's neo-paganism. Indeed, Millgate writes that this respect inclined him to be "much offended" by the cross which had

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<sup>1</sup> See "'Ave Atque Vale': An Introduction to Swinburne." In this essay, Jerome J. McGann offers an exhaustive interpretation of the elegy in which he presents it as representative of Swinburne's "obsession" with death and as a tribute to the French poet and his vision.

been placed on the grave - in violation of Swinburne's wishes, Hardy believed (467). In the next stanza, he echoes Swinburne's playful and ironic use of religious figures by describing the effect of the release of Poems & Ballads "as though a garland of red roses / Had fallen about the hood of some smug nun." The imagery Hardy chooses indicates deep familiarity with Swinburne's verse, and admiration for the startling effect it may have had on "Victoria's formal middle time."

It is with "quick glad surprise" that Hardy first read "New words, in classic guise," indicating his pleasure both in the content which rejects convention while embracing originality, and in the form, which operates within "classic" constraints. The following stanza reiterates this idea by praising the "passionate pages" for their honest descriptions of "hot sighs, sad laughter, kisses, tears" and the poet, who "Blew them not naively, but as one who knew / Full well why thus he blew." Here Hardy asserts that Swinburne composed poetry with conscious recognition of the knowledge of the craft of poetry.

Swinburne's knowledge and abilities are praised further in Hardy's depiction of Sappho. Rising from the water "as a dim / Lone shine upon the heaving hydrosphere," she greets the phantom poet and suggests that no need exists to discover the lost fragments of her verse, assuring him that, "'Sufficient now are thine.'" Swinburne's verse, Hardy suggests, is a "sufficient" replacement for the lost fragments of a Greek poet who is recognized for her skillful use of metre. His suggestion of poetic



lineage reflects profoundly the degree to which Hardy admired Swinburne's skill and recognized the technical brilliance of his poetry. Hardy's deliberate return in the next stanza to his own perspective perhaps also suggests a poetic succession: that which Sappho graciously passes to Swinburne may, in Hardy's mind, have been passed on to himself.

The form of the elegy also pays tribute to Swinburne's range of technique by exhibiting a variety of stanza forms . Four of the stanzas are quintets, four are sestets, while the concluding stanza is an octet; all are unified by the use of a shortened final line. The basic iambic rhythm is varied with the use of tri-syllabic substitution, and the rhyme patterns are unfixed, ranging from couplet form to alternating and then to enclosed. The overall effect is one of richness and variety of sound, rhythm and metre, a fitting prosodic tribute to a poet who challenged the accepted practices of conventional prosody and experimented widely within the tradition.

Hardy's elegy, therefore, reflects his admiration for Swinburne's lyrical gifts, as well as for the latter's daring in his choice of subject matter. It is possible that the qualities possessed by Swinburne which Hardy emphasized in his elegy are those with which Hardy most strongly identified. Coleridge has argued that an elegy "must treat of no subject for itself; but always and exclusively with reference to the poet himself..." (263, his emphasis); this interpretation of the elegy as essentially self-reflexive would indicate that Hardy's chosen details and

perspectives on Swinburne offer clues as to how he regards himself as a poet and therefore how he might identify with his subject. Hardy's focus on details describing Swinburne's defiance of the constraining influences of Victorian prudery, his metrical virtuosity and his studied and consciously traditional forms are not coincidental. They suggest that he identified strongly with Swinburne at all these levels.

In 1918 just eight years following the composition of this elegy, and a decade before Hardy's own death, Edmund Gosse, biographer of Swinburne and literary friend of Hardy, published an article in the Edinburgh Review called "Mr. Hardy's Lyrical Poems." In it he praises Hardy's poetry and points out that Hardy's career as a poet began many decades before the publication of Wessex Poems; in fact, in 1866, in London -- the same year and place in which Poems & Ballads had astonished its readers. Gosse continues by pointing out that even if Hardy had been able to publish early in his career, "it may well be doubted whether his poems would have been received in the mid-Victorian age with favour, or even have been comprehended":

Mr. Hardy was asking in 1866 for novelty of ideas, and he must have been conscious that his questioning would seem inopportune. He needed a different atmosphere, and he left the task of revolt to another, and at first sight, a very unrelated force, the 'Poems and Ballads' of that same year. But Swinburne

succeeded in his revolution, and although he approached the art from an opposite direction, he prepared the way for an ultimate appreciation of Mr. Hardy....The differences in their styles do not affect their common attitude, and the sympathy of these great artists for one another's work has already been revealed, and will be still more clearly exposed. (273-4)

Gosse's article was indeed prescient, but ironically so. In fact, rather than "expose" the "sympathy of these great artists for one another's work," twentieth-century criticism has concentrated on their differences in style and diction and largely on that basis, dismissed Swinburne as any kind of "influence" on Hardy. A survey of Hardy criticism provides little evidence of Gosse's anticipated exposition of the poets' common attitude and "sympathy" for each other's work. In 1930, H.J.C. Grierson commented only that "it is a strange, wheezy note is Hardy's, after the clamour and clangour of Swinburne." In 1946, C.M. Bowra wrote that "the poets Hardy most loved, Scott, Shelley, Keats, and Swinburne left no trace" on his work, and that his origins as a countryman determined his outlook (222). In 1969 Kenneth Marsden echoed Bowra:

It is striking that except for the Shakespearian provenance of some early sonnets, only Browning's influence really

shows in Hardy....consciously or not, [Hardy]  
 knew that his favorites were not the food his  
 creative faculties needed. (232)

And in 1975 Robert Gittings commented that Hardy appeared to allow Swinburne's "liquid lyric gift [to] wash over him in a tide of pure pleasure, without once considering it as a model" (81).

Only recently have critics and scholars begun to recognize the sympathetic connection between the two poets, and to identify Hardy's affinities with Swinburne. Pinion's A Commentary on Thomas Hardy's Poetry (1976) mentions the relationship of Swinburne's work to Hardy's, but primarily in connection with the novels. Not until Ross Murfin's 1978 study of Swinburne, Hardy, and Lawrence did criticism begin to elaborate on Gosse's initial observations. Murfin suggested that "the importance of Swinburne's poetry to Thomas Hardy has always been underestimated, and, in nearly all cases utterly ignored" (81). In the same year, David Reide concluded that although Swinburne's poetry "is generally bardic" while Hardy's is essentially "dramatic," the two poets clearly shared the "attitudes" which Gosse insists are common to them (217-18). And finally, Dennis Taylor's 1988 study of Hardy's prosody makes the first modern critical connection between the two poets on the level of technique. At last, after many decades, Gosse's insights are being "more clearly exposed" as he had predicted. In this study, I shall move a step beyond the work of Taylor and Murfin by providing comparative metrical analysis of selected verse of Swinburne and Hardy, demonstrating the affinities which Gosse

first noted.

The critics who looked for signs of influence understandably found little evidence, for as Gosse pointed out originally, and as criticism has recently demonstrated, the connection between Swinburne and Hardy is one of "common attitude." Hardy, "in spite of his silence of forty years" after the publication of Poems & Ballads, "laboured with Swinburne at a revolution against the optimism and superficial sweetness of his age" (Gosse 273-4). This common attitude manifests itself on all levels of their poetry: theme, diction, style and technique, and involves experimentation and poetic revisionism, but within the framework and matrix of tradition. Neither Hardy nor Swinburne wished to make a break with tradition: their educations, intellectual concerns and poetry itself demonstrate that clearly. Their shared aesthetic involved the ardent pursuit of honesty and freedom of expression, but always with attention to the rules governing poetic form. However, they both wished to challenge accepted ideas and accepted poetic practices. The experimentation in their poetry demonstrates a tendency to resist complacency.

While this adherence to tradition and resistance of convention may seem initially to be a contradiction, in fact it is not. I shall argue that what Hardy saw in Swinburne's poetry in London in the 1860s was a combination which particularly appealed to him and inspired him: a challenge of conventional poetic practices with an accompanying respect for the laws and traditions governing English verse. And, while Swinburne's work certainly was not the only

intellectual inspiration in the development of Hardy's poetry, his was an important force, both at the time Hardy first read his poems and throughout Hardy's poetic career.

## II.

Gosse's article of 1918 maintains that Swinburne and Hardy "approached the art from an opposite direction," which is perhaps a reference to the fact that they were trained and prepared for their work as poets in very different ways. Hardy's observation that he was "so late in getting [his] poetical barge under way" while Swinburne "was so early with his flotilla" (Letters vol.4 16) is a revealing metaphor for their careers, and for the background and education which prepared them. Hardy's choice of the metaphor of "flotilla" for Swinburne indicates his recognition of the latter's manifold abilities, 'regal' preparations and decidedly flamboyant career. By comparison, Hardy's more deliberate education and slow rise to fame are analogous to the plodding, utilitarian nature of a "barge." Swinburne's birth into an aristocratic family offered him a life of privilege, economic security and social status; Hardy's arrival in a cramped cottage in rural Dorset initially determined for him a far more limited horizon both financially and culturally. When we read accounts of the two poets' childhoods, we are struck by the inevitability of Swinburne's rise to fame, and the incredibility of Hardy's. Very little about their early years predicts that they would one day be in London at the same time, and eventually develop a sympathy for and admiration of each other's work.

Hardy arrived in London in April 1862 to work as an architectural assistant, the same year in which Swinburne began to

compose many of the poems which would later appear in Poems & Ballads (Lafourcade 96 ff.). Between 1862-65, Hardy's goals slowly evolved from material and social to literary and emotional (see Millgate 74-101) and it is clear that by 1865, he had begun his methodical, self-conscious and life-long training as a poet. At this time, he purchased Nuttall's Standard Pronouncing Dictionary and Walker's Rhyming Dictionary, studied The Golden Treasury and read poetry from Shakespeare to Tennyson, signalling his ultimate goal to combine, if possible, the ministry with the writing of poetry (Millgate 96). He also began keeping a notebook on poetry, entitled "Studies, Specimens &c." (Millgate 87). His comments in Early Life that he cared for life as an "emotion" (70) reflect a rejection of purely material and social success; although he continued to work diligently as an architect, Hardy had begun to prepare himself mentally and emotionally for the life of a poet.

It is important to note that Hardy's preparation for and interest in poetry were well underway before he could have encountered Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon in 1865 or Poems & Ballads in 1866. Despite the relative tardiness and poverty of Hardy's education as compared to that of Swinburne, he would have been prepared enough to note and appreciate the prosodic devices and rich cultural texture of Swinburne's work. Hardy's belated publication of his first volume of poetry can lead to a misrepresentation of his development as a poet, and of Swinburne's relationship with him. As Gosse pointed out in his 1918 article, Hardy was a poet who laboured with Swinburne, who would have seen



Poems & Ballads as a contemporary example of prosody's potential.

Hardy may have first learned of Swinburne's work with the publication of Atalanta in Calydon in March 1865. Its publication was a literary sensation. This "modern" Greek tragedy could not have been less like The Idylls of the King; nothing remotely resembling it had been written in English since Shelley's Prometheus Unbound (Henderson 106), and its choruses possessed a quality which neither Tennyson nor Browning displayed: speed. These "new words in classic guise" must have captivated Hardy as they did most of literary London.

In that same year, Hardy copied a revealing passage from Newman's Apologia:

The truth was, I was beginning to prefer  
intellectual excellence to moral; I was  
drifting in the direction of liberalism.

(quoted in Literary Notebooks vol.1 8)

In another note on Newman which was omitted from Early Life,<sup>2</sup> he revealed even more clearly his developing agnosticism: "Poor Newman! His gentle childish faith in revelation and tradition must have made him a very charming character" (quoted in Personal Notebooks 218). Hardy's distinctly patronizing tone indicates a developing skeptical attitude toward religious faith and other established practices. The 1860s were a "decisive stage in

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<sup>2</sup> This and many other passages which Hardy intended to be included were omitted by Florence Hardy in her version of the Life published as Early Life and Later Years.

philosophy and epistemology, in philology and prosody" and these developments "profoundly impressed Hardy's mind at a formative stage" (Taylor xvii).<sup>3</sup> In this state of mind, he would have been attracted on the one hand to the undisguised neo-paganism and, on the other, the prosodic experimentation of Atalanta. He stood to be profoundly affected by Poems & Ballads, which Swinburne published in 1866. Hardy's church attendance had been on the decline since the summer of 1864, his self-imposed study of English poetry and classical languages was well underway, and he was inclined to exalt "the merits and reputations of poets far above those of mere novelists" in the little literary lectures he gave to the other people in the architecture office at about this time (Millgate 92). Hardy himself quotes from a journal entry from the 1860s:

A sense of the truth of poetry, of its supreme place in literature, had awakened itself in me. At the risk of ruining all my worldly prospects I dabbled in it....was forced out of it...it came back upon me....All was of the nature of being led by a mood, without foresight, or regard to whither it led.

(Later Years 185)

This passage uses the language of theological revelation to describe a "conversion" to a very unusual religion, that of poetry.

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, this and all subsequent entries cited as "Taylor" refer to Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody.

It was with this conviction about the importance of poetry that he would encounter Poems & Ballads.

Poems & Ballads was published in August 1866. The third stanza of "A Singer Asleep" suggests that Hardy read it immediately upon its appearance, perhaps inspired to do so when he came across the scathing review by John Morley in Saturday Review, a periodical to which Horace Moule had introduced Hardy while he was still in Dorchester. In his review, Morley says that "it is of no use...to scold Mr. Swinburne for grovelling down among the nameless shameless abominations which inspire him with such frenzied delight." He credits Swinburne's courage for asking his readers to "go hear him tuning his lyre in a sty" and condemns him for "the mixture of vileness and childishness of depicting the spurious passion of a putrescent imagination" (quoted in Swinburne: The Critical Heritage).<sup>4</sup>

Undoubtedly, what would have captivated Hardy initially about Poems & Ballads was the "gesture on behalf of freedom" represented by the erotic and spurious contents of the volume, a gesture which made Swinburne an inspiration and a kind of prophet to many young men of the age. In mid-century, poets were generally regarded as the most elevated and serious kind of writer, useful either as entertainers, guides or moral leaders (Heyck 41); the artistic freedoms represented in the passionate and highly charged pages of

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<sup>4</sup> Ironically, it was Morley who advised Hardy to ignore the "fooleries of critics" (Millgate 231). Moreover, Swinburne's poetry was published by the Fortnightly Review from 1862-75, some of it during Morley's tenure as editor, from 1867-82.

Poems & Ballads were not guiding or moralizing in a way that would have pleased Mrs. Grundy. Accurately reflecting this expectation of the poet as moral leader, John Morley's review of Poems & Ballads in the Saturday Review pointed out that Swinburne paid no "attention to critical monitions as to the duty of the poet" and was "firmly and avowedly fixed in an attitude of revolt against the current notions of decency and dignity and social duty" (Hyder Critical Heritage). Swinburne's blasphemous metaphors, frank displays of carnal pleasure and treatises on lesbian love horrified reviewers and drawing rooms alike, but delighted liberal intellectuals. His disregard for the didactic role of the poet demonstrated a defiance of the market-dependent production of publicly acceptable ideas (Heyck 42) and set him apart as one who could not, as he insisted in a letter to Lady Trevelyan immediately prior to the volume's publication, do "as Hamlet advises [and] betake [himself] 'to a nunnery'" (Letters vol.1 141).

Swinburne's reaction to suggestions that he bowdlerize or even suppress passages or poems before publication was defiant. Prior to the volume's publication, he had written to Lord Lytton that to suppress some of the more controversial sections would injure "the whole structure of the book, where every part has been as carefully considered and arranged as I could manage" (Letters vol.1 172). While many other poets of the time allowed their ideas to be guided by the market power of the reading public and by public Victorian morality and values, Swinburne rejected this readiness to compromise and seemed to be resuming the posture of an heroic poet

taken earlier by many of his Romantic predecessors. He asserted to William Rossetti after the volume's publication that "it is really very odd that people...will not let one be an artist, but must needs make one out to be a parson or a pimp" (Letters vol.1 193).

With the publication of Poems & Ballads, the literary initiative unquestionably passed to a new generation of poets, of which Swinburne was the pre-eminent representative (Thomas 110), acting as "a symbol of genteel rebellion" (111). He appealed to Hardy at a time when Hardy "was in a restless mood, full of hopes and ideas but despairing of their realization" (Millgate 95). Like Shelley, whom Hardy so admired, Swinburne rebelled thoroughly and courageously; such a defiant gesture for the sake of artistic freedom was not missed by Hardy, as his description of reading with "quick, glad surprise" implies. Although it may be true that the influence of Swinburne was more emotional than intellectual, the anti-Christian and Hellenic ideas in Atalanta and Poems & Ballads probably resonated as well (Björk in Page, ed. 106). In addition, as Dennis Taylor's study has recently shown, Hardy the technician did not miss the rich and complex array of new verse forms displayed in both volumes. Saintsbury describes Swinburne as exhibiting in Poems & Ballads "every sleight of hand of the English poet" in his use of equivalence, substitution, stanza construction and line. His first volume of poetry also demonstrated a variety and individuality of construction which was almost bewildering, though every one of them responds, with utmost accuracy, to the laws and specifications of English prosody (History 342).

Yet Swinburne's verse experimentation was not unanticipated. It came at a time when interest in poetic form was on the rise. The number of articles and books published on metre doubled in ten years, from 21 in the 1850s to 41 in the 1860s (Taylor 20). Related to this growing interest in English prosody was a revival of imitation of classical metres in English, the most significant upsurge since the sixteenth century (Taylor 56-7). The rich variety of metrical forms, rhyme schemes and rhythmic patterns contained in Poems & Ballads reflected this renaissance in prosody and offered an example and inspiration to any reader who looked beyond its controversial content to its technique.

Just as Swinburne's early verse offered Hardy an example of artistic liberty and freedom of expression, it also educated him in the technical possibilities of freedom within tradition, both classical and modern. Although Hardy's earliest poems offer striking evidence that he was intent on associating himself with conventional verse models and thus, exercising "an almost manic degree of formal control and technical firmness" (Morgan 1), he did not continue to maintain such rigid and unimaginative control over the shape of his verse. Ross Murfin has recently observed that the poems Hardy composed in 1865-67 "are clearly Swinburnian...in their obsessively precise metrical, or more precisely diametrical, sound patterns...in their Sapphic stanza forms..." (83), but he does not elaborate further, or provide any specific analysis. Murfin's comments are representative of the paucity of critical work on Hardy which discusses the development of his technique

accurately and concretely. In fact, the 'obsessive' precision of Hardy's poetry would have been in greater part due to his replication of proven forms such as the sonnet than to Swinburne's influence, since Swinburne's poetry exhibits neither "obsessively precise" nor "diametrical" sound patterns. In addition, the Sapphic stanza forms, examples of which Hardy may well have found in Poems & Ballads, are not at all like Swinburne's; they carry Hardy's stamp of originality and indicate that Hardy's work on classical forms was part of a larger poetical movement, not just a replication of Swinburne.

More to the point, the experiments, challenges and innovations in prosody conducted by Swinburne in the 1860s might have encouraged Hardy to pursue some of his own. Rather than merely assimilating Swinburne's technique, Hardy took inspiration from his poetic companion's liberal and ambitious attitude toward prosody. Like Swinburne, Hardy desired to apply the principle of liberty to prosody. While they took very different paths to London, and did not meet in their youthful days there, the two poets crossed paths intellectually and poetically; for both the 1860s were years of experimentation and development which set the tone for life-long interest in poetic form, and helped them form the conviction that English prosody had limitless possibilities. Of Poems & Ballads, Lord Lytton wrote to Bulwer Lytton that "the beauty of diction and masterpiece of craft in melodies really at first so dazzled me, that I did not see the naughtiness till pointed out....I suspect he would be a dangerous companion to another poet"

(The Life of Edward Bulwer vol.2 437). Lytton was correct in his observation of another poet's relationship with Swinburne being filled with risk: it would be easy for a weak poet to imitate him with disastrous results; Swinburne's own self-parody is proof of this potential.<sup>5</sup> For a strong poet, however, the risk involved was worthwhile and Swinburne's example and companionship offered much creative inspiration. Swinburne's work presented Hardy with enormous and exciting challenges in prosody. In part, as a result of Swinburne's efforts, this decade gave Hardy enough to think about for a lifetime (Taylor, Hardy's Poetry xviii), and the companionship he felt with Swinburne, although it was in its early stages one-sided, offered Hardy enduring poetic sustenance.

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<sup>5</sup> The parody, entitled "Nephelidia," was published along with his other parodies of contemporary poets in The Heptalogia or the Seven Against Sin. It begins:

From the depth of the dreamy decline of the dawn through a  
 notable nimbus of nebulous noonshine  
 Pallid and pink as the palm of the flag-flower that flickers with  
 fear of the flies as they float,  
 Are they looks of our lovers that lustrously lean from a marvel  
 of mystic miraculous moonshine,  
 These that we feel in the blood of our blushes that thicken and  
 threaten with throbs through the throat?



## III.

Hardy's fascination with poetic form is evident in the rich variety of forms he employed. Of the 1093 extant poems, Hardy used over 790 different metrical forms (that is, forms distinguishable by rhyme scheme and the number of accents/line, not including different stanza forms within the same poem). Of these, fully one half imitated 170 different established forms (Taylor 71). Such numbers indicate that Hardy was fascinated by the metrical successes of other poets, and had no difficulty co-opting forms for his own use. While the fact that Hardy imitated forms is not unusual, the number and scope of his imitations is, for he chose to reproduce not only established, traditional forms such as the Spenserian stanza, the sonnet or the ballad, but also more obscure and individual ones. He kept "quantities of notes on rhythm and metre," including "outlines and experiments in innumerable original measures." Hardy called these experiments and outlines "verse skeletons" (Later Years 79-80), although his explanation does not suggest that many of these "original" forms were adapted from those of other poets (Taylor passim).

Of the 170 forms Hardy used as models, six originate with Swinburne. They provide tangible evidence of Hardy's interest in Swinburne's prosodic experiments. These metrical borrowings demonstrate clearly that Hardy admired and was interested in Swinburne's technique. The poems he chose to work with were not traditional and widely accepted forms which he felt bound as a

learned poet to reproduce,<sup>6</sup> but were alterations or even subversions of those traditional forms.

Four of the six metrical forms Hardy borrowed are quatrains, the most frequently employed stanza form in English versification. Swinburne altered both line length and metre to create these original variations of the traditional form. Two of the poems, "An Interlude" and "In Memory of Walter Savage Landor" appeared in the 1866 edition of Poems & Ballads and are marked by Hardy in his 1873 edition (Taylor 223, 224). "A Wasted Vigil" is from Poems & Ballads (Second Series), and "Lines on the Monument of Giuseppe Mazzini" appeared in A Midsummer Holiday and other Poems, which Hardy owned in the third edition (1904). Swinburne's experiments with traditional forms, and Hardy's interest in these experiments, span many decades.

"An Interlude" alters the standard iambic quatrain with anapaests. It employs the standard rhyme scheme found in the "common measure" hymn form, yet complicates that scheme by alternating masculine with feminine rhyme. The mixture of iambs and anapaests conveys a lighthearted tone, creating lines which skip lightly, a movement particularly appropriate to the poem's description of an idyllic encounter between two lovers:

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<sup>6</sup> See William Morgan, "The Novel as Risk and Compromise, Poetry as Safe Haven: Hardy and the Victorian Reading Public; 1863-1901." In the essay, Morgan identifies Hardy's "intention to associate himself with traditional poetic authority" by reproducing numbers of fixed-form, strophic poems, especially sonnets, making "plain his loyalty to Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne, Wordsworth, Keats, and other masters of the forms he had chosen" (1).

x     |     x     x     |     x     |     x  
 Your feet in the full-grown grasses  
 x     |     x     x     |     x     |  
 Moved soft as a weak wind blows;  
 x     |     x     x     |     x     |     x  
 You passed me as April passes,  
 x     |     x     |     x     x     |  
 With face made out of a rose. (ll. 12-16)

Hardy echoes the form of "An Interlude" in two poems, "The Fiddler" and "The Old Neighbour and the New." In the first, the triple rhythm with free duple substitutions reinforces the sound and sense of the fiddler in much the same way that "An Interlude" conveys the light step of two lovers. The first stanza begins with iambs predominating over anapaests, as the fiddler waits to begin playing:

x     |     x     |     x     |     x  
 The fiddler knows what's brewing  
 x     x     |     x     x     |     x     |  
 To the hilt of his lyric wiles  
 x     |     x     |     x     |     x  
 The fiddler knows what ruing  
 x     |     x     |     x     |  
 Will come of this night's smiles! (ll. 1-4)

And, as the fiddler begins to play, the poem modulates to the triple rhythm and the pace quickens:

x     x     |     x     |     x     x     |     x  
 He sees couples join them for dancing,  
 x     |     x     x     |     x     x     |  
 And afterwards joining for life,  
 x     |     x     x     |     x     x     |     x  
 He sees them pay high for their prancing  
 x     x     |     x     x     |     x     |  
 By a welter of wedded strife. (ll. 5-8)

"The Fiddler" is one of many examples of Hardy's sensitivity to sound and meaning in the composition of poetry, and it suggests that his replication of a certain form could be intrinsically appropriate to the subject matter of the poem. He has accomplished a metrical experiment and a successful artistic rendering in a poem

which balances an interest in form with content.

But Hardy was not always so successful, as is demonstrated by his adaptation of the anapaestic trimeter of "An Interlude" in "The Old Neighbour and the New" (Taylor 223), which alternates masculine and feminine double rhyme. Samuel Hynes has pointed out that "in many poems the use of one meter rather than another seems adventitious and often the meter chosen is patently unsuitable to the material" (6). "The Old Neighbour and the New" bears out this criticism. The brief but poignant reminiscence of an old neighbour in contrast to a new one is too nostalgic and reflective a subject to suit the levity of the metrical pattern:

```

      x   i   x x   i   x   i       x   i
The newcomer urges things on me;
      x x   i   x   x       i       x   i
I return a vague smile thereto,
      x   i   x   x       i   x   x   i   x
The olden face gazing upon me
      i   x   x   i   x   i
Just as it used to do. (l. 9-12)

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Here, Hardy's use of the metrical pattern of "An Interlude" is "adventitious" and the poem's composition suggests that metre could fascinate him so much that he neglected other aesthetic considerations. What must have attracted Hardy to the anapaestic trimeter quatrain? Aside from the novelty of the form, the free use of iambic substitutions may have appealed because such substitution offered greater metrical flexibility. This use of substitution also allowed subtle but adroit shifts in tone and pace, even within the narrow confines of a three-foot line and a four-line stanza.

The remaining quatrain forms which Hardy chose to imitate all

work in one way or another with the concept of a shortened line. In "In Memory of Walter Savage Landor," Swinburne has alternated tetrameter with dimeter, while preserving the standard alternating rhyme scheme, a pattern which Hardy matches in "A King's Soliloquy" and "The Occultation" (Taylor 224). The alternation between long and short line is even more pronounced in "Lines on the Monument of Guiseppe Mazzini" where Swinburne juxtaposes a pentameter line with a dimeter, a pattern Hardy employs in "Former Beauties" (Taylor 228). Both of Swinburne's experiments can be seen as variants of the standard 4-3-4-3 hymn stanza. The shortened second and fourth lines dramatically alter the visual shape of the stanza, an effect which would have appealed to Hardy, who always took into account the visual impact of a stanza.<sup>7</sup>

The shortened line is also found in the two other poems by Swinburne whose form Hardy employed, "Felise" and "Dolores." Both poems appeared in Poems & Ballads, First Series, and are marked by Hardy in his 1873 edition (Taylor 236, 248). While "Felise" is a quintet in duple rising rhythm and "Dolores" is an octet in duple-triple rising rhythm, both poems close each stanza with a two-foot line, an innovation which Saintsbury praised enthusiastically in his History of English Prosody:

The isolation or individualising of the final  
line at once breaks the monotony...[It]

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<sup>7</sup> Although never acknowledged by Hardy, his concern with the visual impact of a stanza must have been related to his training as an architect. He does make the connection between architecture and his penchant for cunning irregularity in Later Years, see below pp. 65-66.

reminds you that you are at the end of one stanza, and it prepares you for the next.

(vol.3 345)

And, further dispelling monotony, both of these experiments depend on the free exchange of duple and triple rhythms. It is perhaps the exchange of these rhythms which creates the hypnotic "coiling and uncoiling" stanzas which Samuel Chew describes as "moving in gyrations [seeming] never to get anywhere" (91). Their appearance in 1866 was revolutionary.

The eight-line stanza of "Dolores" which both Saintsbury and Chew praise highly for its originality and effect is - like that of "An Interlude" - based on the anapaestic trimeter, a form which had its origin in the eighteenth century with the "rickety jingle of Byron's and Shenstone's and Cowper's three-foot anapaest" (Saintsbury, vol. 3 96). By freely substituting duple rhythms and shortening the final, eighth line, Swinburne transforms the effect of the metre, a transformation which could not have escaped the notice of Hardy. Amidst the stolid and by that time predictable blank verse of Tennyson, such experimentation was exciting and energizing in its ability to alter traditional forms and breathe new life into prosody.<sup>8</sup>

Hardy uses this eight-line stanza in "The Strange House."

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<sup>8</sup> An article from The Spectator written immediately following Swinburne's death in 1909 paid tribute to his power of adaptation of established metrical patterns: "A commoner example of this power of adaptation is, of course, to be found in the "Dolores" measure. Mr. Swinburne saw that the anapaests Praed had used for humorous verse and drawing-room satire might easily be employed for serious poetry."

While the basic metrical structure is identical, a comparison of the two poems demonstrates the distinct styles of these poets. Hardy transfers none of the heated passion and tortuous expression of Swinburne's poem about "the sensualities of a man foiled in love and weary of loving" (Chew 91); his poem describes Max Gate in AD 2000, when the house is inhabited by ghosts of the past, presumably Hardy and Emma. Nor does he employ the dignified and commanding diction of "Dolores." The poem is a dialogue between people who may be living at Max Gate in the next millennium.

Although the poem does operate within the basic structure of Swinburne's metrical pattern, Hardy employs fewer trisyllabic rhythms (Taylor 248), eliminating some of the speed and movement present in "Dolores." In addition, the first foot in each line of "The Strange House" is iambic, while Swinburne's initial feet are either iambic or anapaestic. Hardy's alterations within the basic structure taken from Swinburne suit the colloquial tone of "The Strange House"; conversation in triple rhythms would not reflect as realistically the predominantly iambic rhythms of conversational English.

In "At Castle Boterel," Hardy adapts Swinburne's five-line iambic tetrameter of "Félice" by including more trisyllabic substitution and alternating masculine with feminine rhyme. Hardy's versions of the metrical patterns of "Dolores" and "Félice" strongly support his statement in the Life that he kept a file of verse skeletons dating from even his earliest days as a poet and used or adapted them to his purposes, sometimes many years later.

Hardy's adaptations of Swinburne's forms are not those of a novice poet replicating with admiration. Instead, they demonstrate that he takes inspiration more than influence from the metrical patterns, and sometimes with superior results. He is able to take inspiration from the intriguing elements of the poem and produce his own version - using and adapting all of the good, while avoiding the less successful features. While the metrical framework of the two poems is very similar (Taylor 236), the two poems are remarkably dissimilar in tone and pace; through his more liberal use of trisyllabic substitution and feminine endings, Hardy creates a poem of lilting nostalgia and sweetness of recollection. Swinburne's more consistent use of iambs and heavier masculine endings results in a poem of slower movement and greater oppressiveness.

Swinburne's "Félice" opens with the epigraph "Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?",<sup>9</sup> setting the tone for a poem which laments the end of a mutual love ("One love grows green when one turns grey;/ This year knows nothing of last year") and whose speaker reflects ironically upon the mutability of love and passion. The dispirited tone is reinforced by the monotony of iambs which rarely bridge two words.

<sup>x</sup>   <sup>i</sup>   <sup>x</sup>   <sup>i</sup>   <sup>x</sup>   <sup>i</sup>   <sup>x</sup>   <sup>i</sup>  
 What shall be said between us here  
<sup>x</sup>   <sup>i</sup>   <sup>x</sup>   <sup>i</sup>   <sup>x</sup>   <sup>i</sup>   <sup>x</sup>   <sup>i</sup>  
 Among the downs, between the trees,

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<sup>9</sup>"But where are the snows of bygone years?", a line Swinburne takes from François Villon. It appears in Le Testament as the refrain line of a ballade called "Des Dames du Temps Jadis," or "Of the Ladies of Bygone Times," which mourns the loss of celebrated female beauties in history.



x     |            x     |            x     |            x     |  
 In fields that knew our feet last year  
 x     |            x     |            x     |            x     |  
 In sight of quiet sands and seas,  
 x     |            x     |  
 This year, Félice?

The use of strong stresses at the end of two-syllable words and the consistent use of masculine rhyme convey the sense of weight and force the pace to slacken.

Swinburne's rigid and ceaseless application of iambic tetrameter (in 176 lines, only 22 employ trisyllabic substitution) is an experiment in consistency - and monotony. "Félice" is a testimony to Swinburne's reputation as a tedious poet, but the poem also demonstrates his remarkable ability to shape and mold the language to fit his metrical pattern. Hardy undoubtedly noted with admiration his contemporary's facility with language, but may have also registered the poem's resulting monotony. While "Félice" is a poem of extraordinary technical virtuosity, its monotony and persistence in tone and pace belie its rich subject matter, the mutability of love, and the ironical sadness of ill-timed passion:

|            x            x            |            x            |            x            |  
 Now, though your love seek mine for mate,  
 x     |            x     |  
 It is too late.

"At Castle Boterel," on the other hand, demonstrates a richness of idea and expression which reflects the complexity of the emotions it records: developing affection, love and longing. Hardy's decision to loosen the rigidity of the iambic pattern of his model, and to alternate masculine and feminine rhymes in "At Castle Boterel" results in a poem of much less metrical weight, monotony and oppressiveness. Moreover, Hardy places the strong

stress in the first or second syllable of some words, a small alteration of Swinburne's pattern which results in a far more resilient, perhaps even dynamic sound pattern:

x    '    x    '    x    x    '    x    '    x  
 I look behind at the fading byway  
 x    '    x    x    '    x    '    x    '    x  
 And see on its slope, now glistening wet,  
 x    '    x    '    x  
 Distinctly yet

One of the more significant differences in Hardy's poem is its reliance on trisyllabic substitution. Here, he surpasses Swinburne at his own game, introducing a movement and pace which suits the poem entirely. In the first three stanzas, the use of these triple rhythms replicates the jerking carriage ride in both the present and his recollection of the past:

x    x    '    x    x    '    x    x    '    x    '    x  
 As I drive to the junction of lane and highway,  
 x    x    '    x    x    '    x    x    '    x    '    x  
 And the drizzle bedrenches the waggonette,  
 x    '    x    '    x    x    '    x    '    x  
 I look behind at the fading byway  
 x    '    x    x    '    x    '    x    '    x  
 And see on its slope, now glistening wet,  
 x    '    x    '    x  
 Distinctly yet

x    '    x    x    '    x    '    x    '    x  
 Myself and a girlish form benighted  
 x    '    x    '    x    x    '    x    '    x  
 In dry March weather. We climb the road  
 x    '    x    '    x    x    '    x    '    x  
 Beside a chaise. We had just alighted  
 x    '    x    '    x    '    x    '    x  
 To ease the sturdy pony's load  
 x    x    '    x    '    x  
 When he sighed and slowed.

The uneven, jerking rhythm reflects the movement of the horse-drawn journey, especially in the final four lines of the stanza above.

Equally significant to the sound and sense of the verse is Hardy's use of feminine rhyme. A feminine ending in the first and third lines of each stanza results in a weakening of emphasis:

x    |    x    |    x    x    |    x    |    x  
 I look and see it there, shrinking, shrinking,  
 x    x    |    x    |    x    |    x    |  
 I look back at it amid the rain,  
 x    x    |    x    x    |    x    x    |    x    |    x  
 For the very last time; for my sand is sinking,

The recollections Hardy describes are, in fact, fading, and are not as sharp and defined as a more recent memory might have been. His use of the feminine ending contributes to this sense of falling off and evokes the sweet sadness of the poem. A consistent use of masculine endings would have resulted in a poem of somewhat harsher and more definitive sound; Hardy's decision to alter the pattern to which Swinburne adhered religiously demonstrates his sensitivity to rhythm as an evocative instrument.

The changes Hardy made to the basic rhythm he found in "Félice" show how he could draw effectively on suggestions from other poets. His alteration of the iambic tetrameter supports the suggestion made by Trevor Johnson in a recent essay on Hardy and the English poetic tradition that critics have been too extreme in charging Hardy with being a naive poet operating in a vacuum rather than in the line of tradition (Johnson 49). Critics have been too extreme, and yet Hardy's adaptation of "Félice" in part explains why they might have overlooked his links with tradition, and his technical abilities. While Swinburne's poem is an obvious technical success - one could not miss the artful iambic regularity - Hardy's virtuosity is less conspicuous, and indeed one can

appreciate his prosodic skill much more fully when one juxtaposes "At Castle Boterel" with "Félice."

Who knows what in particular interested Hardy about this poem, enough for him to scan it, probably record its pattern in one of his verse skeletons, and use it himself many years later as the metrical base for "At Castle Boterel." It may be that he was - as with "Dolores" - captivated by the visual and metrical impact of a final line being half the length of the other lines in a stanza.<sup>10</sup> While his poem varies widely from Swinburne's original in rhyme and rhythm, it consistently maintains the shortened final line. Or, it may be that Hardy saw the metre of "Félice" simply as a unique form which he might one day be able to adapt to his own uses.

Comparison of these four poems demonstrates in part why Swinburne's influence on Hardy has not drawn attention to itself. While the stanzas of "The Strange House" owe their metrical form and rhyme scheme to "Dolores," the diction and subject matter reflect Hardy's own peculiar background as a poet. At the time when critics still consistently recognized and discussed the consummate metrical abilities of Swinburne, Hardy's verse was not yet carefully studied for its form. And, the recent recognition of Hardy's interest in practicing and reproducing within the wide range of English prosodic possibilities comes at a time when critical commentary on Swinburne's concern with poetic form is

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<sup>10</sup> See George Herbert's "Virtue" for an early English example of this use of a shortened final line. Trevor Johnson's article (see above p. 28) develops a connection between Herbert and Hardy, although he does not mention this poem in particular.

virtually non-existent. That the two authors' poems demonstrate few similarities on the level of diction, tone and subject matter reinforces the observation that Hardy had a conscious interest in poetic form and may have even been moved by some poems exclusively on that level. Just as an architect would study the formal components of a building and piece them together to form his own style, Hardy studied the formal components of English verse, and constructed his own poetic idiom.

## IV.

But Hardy's interest in Swinburne's verse forms goes beyond borrowing or copying. Some of Swinburne's poems were contemporary, successful examples of the inquiries and experiments into prosody taking place in the second half of the nineteenth century. Publication of classical experiments in the 1860s -- when Hardy was embarking on his self-directed study of poetry and Swinburne was working on Atalanta and Poems & Ballads (First Series) -- reached a zenith which could only be rivalled by the number of experiments conducted in the late sixteenth century (Taylor 56-7). Victorian poets were again interested in the replication of classical, quantitative metres in English, a qualitative language. Hardy, although he was at the time completely unknown as a poet, was unquestionably experimenting with the hexameter and other classical forms in the 1860s and again when he resumed the full-time pursuit of poetry in the 1890s (see Taylor 258 ff.). One classical line at the centre of this lively discussion was the dactylic hexameter, a metre used in antiquity primarily in the epic, but also found in lyric, elegiac, philosophical and satirical poetry. Nineteenth-century poets generally regarded this hexameter line as a supreme challenge for several reasons. First, the six-foot, falling triple rhythm begins necessarily with a strong syllable; this is difficult to accomplish in English without consistently promoting unimportant syllables or using anacrusis. Second, the hexameter has a dissyllabic ending (either the trochee or spondee), and this

ending becomes monotonous in a predominantly monosyllabic language. And third, in an uninflected language such as English, it is difficult to keep the unstressed part of the feet clear and strong enough (Murray, The Classical Tradition 105-6). These difficulties clearly explain why English poets struggled to find accentual-syllabic equivalents for the hexameter as well as for other classical rhythms. Strict application of quantitative measure to the metrical conventions of a qualitative language presented unresolvable difficulties (see Taylor 10 ff).

Until the publication of Poems & Ballads in 1866, the use of the hexameter had largely been restricted to light or comic verse. Swinburne's experiments demonstrate a return to the once appropriate lyric and elegiac treatments while at the same time exhibiting an exciting break with the conventions associated with triple rhythms. Hardy's classical experimentation accomplishes a similar purpose. Like Swinburne, he was attempting to break with convention while respecting the metrical laws of the accentual-syllabic tradition.

In "Hesperia" and "In Tenebris III," the two poets seek to adhere to the metrical laws of the accentual-syllabic tradition while attempting to loosen the conventions surrounding that tradition. The poems attack intellectual and social as well as prosodic conventions of the Victorian period by treating subjects which were neither appropriate for parlour rooms nor particularly uplifting. While the poems are in many respects dissimilar, and a gap of thirty years separates them, they demonstrate that both

Swinburne and Hardy were concerned with achieving the full potential of accentual-syllabic verse by rising above the established conventions of the nineteenth century.

In "Hesperia," Swinburne balances a rebellious rejection of conventional wisdom about metrical patterns and 'appropriate' subject matter with a great respect for and knowledge of the traditional laws of poetry and classical culture. He seems to have "Hesperia" in mind when he asserts:

Law, not lawlessness, is the natural condition of poetic life; but the law must itself be poetic and not pedantic, natural and not conventional. ("Dedicatory Epistle" Poems & Ballads (First Series), 1904 ed., iv, my emphasis)

His formulation echoes Aristotle, who assumes that the poet will know and strictly observe the metrical laws and that "whatever variety of metrical effect the poet may produce or aim at, it must always be a variety inside the rules of art" (Murray, The Classical Tradition 18).

Swinburne's description of himself as a "lawful" poet contrasts significantly with his literary reputation just as Hardy's reputation as a clumsy poet was until recently difficult to reconcile with his interest in metre. Swinburne's brilliant technique has been unfortunately eclipsed by the view that he wrote unseemly verse and spent much of his time ranting and raving in drunken stupor. A mention of Swinburne's name conjures more



clearly the image of a naked slide down Gabriel Rossetti's bannister and the sound of monotonous, superfluous verse, than it does technical brilliance and devotion to artistic freedom. A comparison of "Hesperia" with "In Tenebris III" will help to clarify that Swinburne and Hardy were both fascinated with the concept of ordered liberty, and that Hardy may have been inspired by Swinburne, the bold, experimental poet who delightedly threw off the mantle of convention while refusing to leave behind the structures and security of established tradition.

"Hesperia" depicts a mortal male's passionate desire for Hesperia, one of four daughters of Venus who guard the garden of the Hesperides in the far west, "where the sea without shore is" (l. 1). The poem is in many respects a lyrical flight: a flight of imagination, as Swinburne pairs a disillusioned mortal lover with one of the daughters of the Hesperides, a flight of rhythm as anapaests and dactyls combine in a metrical tour de force and a flight from reality as the speaker yearns to escape to the west with his mythic lover. The speaker's desire is erotic and highly charged with physical and spiritual passion, and it evokes a strong sense of unreality. The poem depicts emotional confusion resulting from disillusionment with corporeal passion.

Swinburne's particular adaptation of the hexameter line is appropriately matched to this sense of confusion. Rather than restrict his lines to the rigid structure of the classical hexameter (five dactyls and a final trochee), Swinburne boldly substitutes anapaests for dactyls, a move which observes the laws

of substitution but unconventionally pairs two opposing triple rhythms. With these substitutions he avoids the heavy and monotonous pattern of a dactylic foot and at the same time evokes a powerful sensation of movement and unpredictability:

Out of the golden remote wild west where the sea without  
                   shore is,  
 Full of the sunset, and sad, if at all, with the fullness of  
                   joy,  
 As a wind sets in with the autumn that blows from the region  
                   of stories

Here, the third line of the poem breaks the heavy pattern of initial strong stresses by substituting anapaests for dactyls. The insertion of a line of anapaests breaks the potential monotony of initial strong stresses and also suggests the swirling of wind by reversing the two triple rhythms. As the poem progresses, intermittent anapaestic lines continue to break the heavy pattern of dactyls. This interplay between two triple rhythms demonstrates Swinburne's willingness to experiment within the confines of tradition. While convention would deny that anapaests could be effectively substituted for dactyls, the experiment in "Hesperia" demonstrates that such an exchange successfully adapts the classical hexameter in a qualitative language; without making concession to quantity, Swinburne creates a lyric hexameter line by stretching the potential of the metrical laws surrounding the accentual-syllabic tradition.

Other metrical effects used by Swinburne in "Hesperia"

indicate his respect for the prosodic tradition. In order to avoid the monotony of the hexameter's dissyllabic ending, Swinburne alternates the use of the final trochee with catalexis throughout the poem. This move makes possible the alternation of masculine and feminine rhyme, further dispelling the monotony. As a result, Swinburne is able to employ the trace of a classical form and yet exhibit extraordinary freedom and creativity within that form. By strictly observing metrical law but applying it in revolutionary fashion, he produces a brilliant and intricate poem.

This increased metrical flexibility parallels Swinburne's departure from the conventional treatment of love. "Hesperia" is a vivid, erotic flight of passion which flies in the face of more conventional, restrained treatments of the erotic such as the sonnets of Elizabeth Barrett Browning or Tennyson's neo-medieval romances. Unfortunately, Victorian audiences used to more less fantastical statements of love could not understand Swinburne's poem as a statement of fancy more than of fact. As experimental as his metres, the story of "Hesperia" remains mythical and fanciful from beginning to end, thus providing infinite liberty to the poet who was also experimenting with the depth and breadth of an imagined reality.

By choosing a mythical subject as object for the passions of the poem's speaker, Swinburne offers his first clue that the verse will be concerned with fancy more than with fact. According to the myth, Hesperia is one of the daughters of the evening who lived in the far west guarding the golden fruit of the garden and singing

for recreation. The daughters sang in chorus near a gushing spring which spurted forth ambrosia. Swinburne has chosen a highly appropriate object for the speaker's affection, but rather than leave Hesperia in the far west as a distant object of worship, he brings her in "as a bird borne in with the wind from the west," "straight from the sunset across white waves." The rushing dactyls and swirling anapaests along with the alliteration all reinforce the ephemeral, fanciful vision of the poem.

Having adapted the classical myth, Swinburne proceeds to portray the speaker's previous amorous experiences and his feelings for Hesperia in bold language and images. The speaker calls for Hesperia to release him from "love that recalls and represses,/That cleaves to my flesh as a flame" and from "the bitter delights of the dark, and the feverish, the furtive caresses." Such images are powerful and erotic, and their presence in the poem contributed to its shocking effect. The speaker yearns for Hesperia to ease the pain of a love that "wounds as we grasp it, and blackens and burns as a flame." Hesperia may provide the speaker with escape from his cruel former lover who is "flushed as with wine with the blood of her lovers." He wishes to "fly" with the lovely goddess to a fanciful respite "where life breaks loud and unseen, a sonorous invisible tide." Swinburne's images are graphic and at the same time oddly enchanting; they present love as a paradoxical power which can wound as well as heal, which has a physical as well as spiritual dimension. To Victorians who "were at once obsessed with sex and terrified of it" (Henderson 130), this portrait of love as

a physical experience with spiritual hazards was shocking, daring and unconventional.

The speaker's desire to fly from the cruel force of human physical passion and join Hesperia the goddess "by the meadows of memory" and "the highlands of hope" is underlined by the rushing rhythmic pattern. Swinburne's particular adaptation of the hexameter merges form with content by evoking a rush of wind and a swirling flight. The alternation of anapaest and dactyl, either from line to line or foot to foot within a line, reinforces the sense that the speaker's experience, like the metrical pattern, is groundless and unfixed. Adaptation of the hexameter goes beyond mere technical virtuosity; "Hesperia" is a poem which makes a statement about love on several levels.

Thirty years after Swinburne composed and published his daring hexameter experiment, Hardy wrote a series of poems entitled "In Tenebris". The third in this series, "In Tenebris III," represents one of Hardy's experiments with the hexameter form. Unlike "Hesperia," "In Tenebris III" remains grounded in the darkest moments of misery and despair. This poem presents in many ways a contrast to Swinburne's flight of imagination. Hardy's hexameter experiment is much shorter (20 lines to Swinburne's 92), less varied and more evidently philosophical, but it shares with "Hesperia" a suitability of form and content, a respect for metrical law and an attempt to translate the hexameter into accentual-syllabic measure.

"In Tenebris III" is the third and metrically the most complex

in the series. The speaker's brooding about "when he might have died before becoming disillusioned" is the ultimate of this series of dark and sombre poems which "offer some justification for calling Hardy a pessimist" (Bailey 188 & 180). Just as Swinburne's "Hesperia" challenged mid-Victorian prudery, Hardy's poem challenges Victorian optimism and faith in the individual's power to control or determine his experience.

"In Tenebris" demonstrates that Hardy was aware of the problems of adapting the hexameter line. Like Swinburne, his knowledge of prosody provided him with tools to create a unique solution. Hardy's substitution of trochees for dactyls interrupts the potential monotony of the falling triple rhythm while still preserving the dolorous tone evoked by the intitial strong stresses:

/   x   x            /   x   x            /   x   x            /   x   /   x   /   x  
Fashioned and furbished the soil into a summer-seeming order

Hardy's choice of trochees as a substitute for dactyls is more conservative than Swinburne's choice of anapaests, but is equally suited to the subject matter of his poem; the repetition of the heavy stresses prevents the dactyls from rushing too much and lending too much levity to a poem which is about an individual who is weighted with and nearly immobilized by knowledge that "the world was a welter of futile doing." The poem plods heavily just as Swinburne's "Hesperia" swirls lightly.

Although Hardy begins 16 lines of the poem with the strong stress of a dactyl, he does employ anacrusis four times (lines six, nine, 13 and 18) in order to be able to begin lines with weak

words. By doing so, he also relieves the pattern of two adjacent strong stresses at the end of one line and the beginning of the next. More frequently, Hardy makes his final trochee catalectic -- in the first and final line of each four-line stanza -- in order to end the line on a strong stress and thus envelop two feminine rhymes with two masculine rhymes. He further complicates the rhyme pattern by constructing double rhyme (for example, border/order, folk there/awoke there) on the feminine rhyme, again adapting the classical line to his own conventions, not those of the mid-Victorians.

Unlike "Hesperia," Hardy's poem is grounded firmly in reality. This poem is not an escape from but a confrontation with the human condition. The speaker's reminiscences of happy moments in his past are provoked by his bitter recognition that he might have been better to have "passed then and the ending have come" before he "had learnt that the world was a welter of futile doing." Hardy's is a curious twist on nostalgic reflection: his speaker recalls happy memories only to wish that none had followed them.

The poem traces the origin of the speaker's despair to the recognition that "vision could vex" and "knowledge could numb," perhaps a reference to the impact of ideas such as Darwin's theory of evolution which caused many Victorians disillusionment and even despair as established faiths and certitudes were called into question. Whatever the source of the speaker's bitter despair, Hardy's poem represents the questioning and self-doubt which offset some of the tremendous optimism and faith in the established social

and intellectual orders of the Victorian period. Just as Swinburne's "Hesperia" depicts one man's disenchantment with the satisfactions of purely physical love, Hardy's poem evokes through both image and sound the extraordinary disillusionment and depression which could result from the shattering of established beliefs and faiths. It succeeds especially because the semantic level of the poem is reinforced with corresponding sound, rhythm and metre.

"Hesperia" and "In Tenebris III" represent two highly appropriate and intricate adaptations of an extremely challenging metrical structure. Rather than fall prey to quantitative experimentation like that conducted by Tennyson, both Swinburne and Hardy chose to evoke the hexameter in terms of English prosody, not the reverse. Both poems prove that English metrical law holds extraordinary possibilities, possibilities which were not necessarily being realized by relegating accentual-syllabic adaptation of the hexameter to "light verse." Through their use of many traditional metrical techniques, Hardy and Swinburne have created lyrics which demonstrate an interest in adapting classical forms with traditional tools, but are unwilling to yield to the Victorian conventions which surrounded those forms.

Both Swinburne and Hardy also experimented with various forms of sapphic verse. In the nineteenth century, sapphic experimentation took place on thematic and technical levels. On the one hand, poets and scholars continued a centuries-old struggle to translate into English the elegant and musical fragments of the



Greek poet Sappho, either into verse or a more literal prose equivalent. Hardy praises Swinburne's efforts in translation in a letter to the poet in 1897:

One day, when examining several English imitations of a well-known fragment of Sappho, I interested myself in trying to strike out a better equivalent for it than the commonplace "Thou, too, shalt die" &c. which all the translators had used during the last hundred years.<sup>11</sup> I then stumbled upon your "Thee, too, the years shall cover" [in "Anactoria"], and all my spirit for poetic pains died out of me....Having rediscovered this phrase, it carried me back to the buoyant time of 30 years ago, when I used to read your early works walking along the crowded London streets, to my imminent risk of being knocked down. (Letters, vol.2 158)

The final sentence in this brief piece of correspondence has often been quoted as evidence of Hardy's infatuation with Swinburne's early verse while living in London. More significantly, the letter demonstrates Hardy's and Swinburne's common interest in the poetry of Sappho, and Hardy's sensitivity to the challenge of translating

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<sup>11</sup> Hardy's "Sapphic Fragment" indicates that he settled on "Dead shalt thou lie." He chose as an epigraph for his translation of the fragment two other translations, "Thou shalt be - Nothing" (Omar Khayyam) and "Tombless, with no remembrance" (William Shakespeare).

from a quantitative to a qualitative language without sacrificing poetic grace. The translation of a sapphic fragment to which Hardy refers is one in unrhymed iambic verse which Swinburne interpolated into "Anactoria," his poem about love between Aphrodite and Sappho.

Interest in Sappho's verse went beyond the need to translate effectively one line of the fragments. Nineteenth-century poets were also preoccupied with the form of Sappho's verse. Most commonly, attention to sapphic form included the creation of a 'sapphic effect,' concluding a stanza with a two-beat line (Taylor 260). Less commonly, poets attempted to "translate" sapphic metre into English accentual-syllabic verse, composing qualitative verse within a quantitative matrix. One such experiment is Swinburne's ambitious attempt at accentual-syllabic sapphic metre, "Sapphics," published in Poems & Ballads (First Series).

While the technical nature of "Sapphics" may not have moved Hardy emotionally as much as the translation of Sappho in "Anactoria" obviously did, there is evidence that it intrigued him. He carefully scanned several lines of the poem in his (1873) edition of Poems & Ballads. The tone of Hardy's letter to Swinburne and Hardy's scanning of "Sapphics" together indicate that Swinburne's experiments directly motivated Hardy to experiment as well -- with dramatically different results. What began for Hardy as an emotional reaction to the poetic beauty of a translation, may have led to an intellectual interest in the sapphic stanza and the metrical challenges it represented to nineteenth-century poets.

Technical analysis and comparison of Swinburne's "Sapphics"

and Hardy's "The Temporary the All" will demonstrate how each poet responded to the challenge of translating quantitative Greek metre into accentual-syllabic verse. Swinburne's poem is a masterful transposition quoted frequently by classical scholars as an admirable English version of the Greek metrical effect. Hardy's is a more problematic adaptation whose metre puzzled critics sufficiently to prompt Hardy to add the subtitle "Sapphics" to explain the metre (Purdy 287). As with his adaptation of the dactylic hexameter, Hardy's sapphics may have found its inspiration in Swinburne, but it takes on a metrical ambiguity and complexity which is distinctly Hardy's.

Swinburne's fascination with the poet Sappho and her works has a long history; from his earliest acquaintance with Greek verse at Eton, he revered her works and her lilting verse. Edmund Gosse notes that he early demonstrated a preference for lyric poetry such as Sappho's (Swinburne 24-5). His early and lasting experience with Sappho's verse undoubtedly made his ear sensitive to her metrical effects and influenced the success of his "Sapphics," a poem which one classical scholar singles out as the best representation in English of Sappho's rhythms: "With such lines as these ringing in the reader's ears, he can almost hear Sappho herself singing...." (Wharton 43).

Like "In Hesperia," "Sapphics" makes no concessions to quantitative interpretation. The poem mimics the Greek metrical pattern  $\text{IU IU IUU IU IU(I)}$  by translating it directly into an accentual-syllabic structure. Swinburne does not attempt to

reproduce the classical metre; instead, he produces a verse which is parallel to the original. Recognizing the limitations of English for expressing quantitative measure, he suggests a sapphic pattern by echoing precision of sound pattern. The poem avoids monotony and achieves lyric grace through the flexible placement of the optional spondaic foot, promotion or demotion of stresses, restrained use of soft consonant alliteration, and assonance. These techniques are perhaps more suggestive of the sapphic rhythm than the metrical pattern itself, and their use reflects Swinburne's sensitivity not only to metre, but to the poem's overall effect on the ear. While the metrical pattern is unmistakable, the more intricate prosodic techniques are less discernible even though they may contribute more to the poem's successful evocation of a classical metre than the metre itself.

Rules of Greek prosody identify the second foot in the first three lines of the sapphic stanza as either a spondee or a trochee. The Latin version of this form requires that the second foot be a spondee. Swinburne's decision to use both spondee and trochee intermittently reflects his knowledge of classical form and, perhaps, a recognition that unbending metrical form in classical adaptation results in monotonous and stilted English verse which fails to capture the grace of classical lyrics. Thus the poem opens:

|   x   |   | (x)   |   x   x   /   x   |   |  
 All the night sleep came not upon my eyelids

and shifts in the next line to:

/   x   |   | (x)   /   x   x   |   x   |   x  
 Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather

Swinburne extends this flexible adaptation of Greek and Latin form by substituting spondees for some of the final trochees with words or phrases such as "eyelids" (a variation noted by Hardy in his scansion of l. 1), "forehead" (l. 49), "all men" (l. 52), "bird soars" (l. 56) and "dewfall" (l. 72). These liberties may destroy any precise correspondence with the classical metre, but they do not detract from the poem's charm and beauty (Hamer 320). Swinburne abandons precise translation, perhaps because he has recognized that the classical lyric cannot be truly reproduced in English; it can only be suggestive of classical rhythms, metres and sounds.

F.W. Newman, an editor of Matthew Arnold's essays and translator of the *Iliad*, observes that Greek is "a highly vocalized tongue; while ours is overfilled with consonants" (quoted in Smith 152). Swinburne works to recreate this characteristic by restraining his use of alliteration and emphasizing repeated vowel sounds. The infrequent alliterative consonants are soft and smooth, as in "western waters" (l. 11), "flying feet" (l. 17), and "laurel by laurel" (l. 32), with "doves departing" (l. 45) one of only two examples of hard consonant alliteration in the entire poem. The effect of this softened alliteration is a smooth and supple sound which de-emphasizes the consonant sounds and highlights vowels.

The poem's assonance reinforces the effect achieved by the soft alliteration. For example, in line 7,

/ x / x / (x) x / x / x  
 Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I too,

Swinburne rhymes the long i in "mine," "eye" and "I," as well as the short i in "lids" and "lips." And throughout the poem, he repeats the same word or prefix several times in a stanza (for example, "saw" in stanzas 3 and 12 and "un" in stanza 3 and 19) in order to repeat and emphasize the vowel sounds. Newman's comments on the sound quality of Greek and Swinburne's attempt to reproduce the sense of Greek verse in rhythm and sound prompt a reconsideration of the criticism of Swinburne's verse as repetitious and mesmerizing, and therefore lacking in substance. "Sapphics" clearly demonstrates that Swinburne's intention was to suggest the sound and sense of the quantitative verse of Sappho, while restricting himself to the prosodic tools of the accentual-syllabic tradition.

The unmistakable and admired sapphic rhythms of Swinburne's poem contrast sharply with the rhythms of "The Temporary the All" which so puzzled Hardy's critics. No one seemed really to understand the metrical structure of this poem; yet it was a poem which was unquestionably valued by Hardy, who chose to place it at the beginning of his first published collection of verse. Ironically, the poem did receive specific praise from Swinburne, who, in a letter to Hardy acknowledging receipt of a copy of Wessex Poems, said that he admired "none more than the frontispiece so happily chosen and the poem it illustrates" (Letters vol.6 133). Hardy had perhaps placed too much confidence in the successful interpretation of his metrical structure, the knowledge of his critics, and to a small extent, his own ability; his decision to

place the subtitle "Sapphics" in the next edition is in one sense representative of his career as a poet: Hardy's interest in classical prosody and his attempts at reproducing it have not been clearly understood, nor have they been properly appreciated. While the critics' response is understandable given the poem's metrical ambiguity, the subsequent dismissal of Hardy's efforts as amateur or unsuccessful has not acknowledged his ability to control metre and his solid understanding of classical prosody. He recognized this himself when he commented that "he often wrote verse in Sapphics but intentionally not quite correct - a bad thing to do because then people thought he did not know what Sapphics were" (Felkin, quoted in Bailey 48). In fact, "The Temporary the All" demonstrates that Hardy did know sapphic verse, even if his attempt may not have been received as successful as had that of Swinburne.

Hardy's comment that he wrote sapphics "not quite correct" applies unquestionably to "The Temporary the All." Ten of 24 lines do not scan confidently as sapphic lines; of these, two are adonic lines which break the pattern of a dactyl followed by a trochee or spondee. While the syllable count remains constant at 11 in each line, the placement of stresses varies far more than Swinburne's occasional spondee substituted for a dactyl.

The first line sets the tone for metrical ambiguity:

|     x     |     x   x   | (x) |   |   x     |   x  
Change and chancefulness in my flowering youthtime

While the first foot is decidedly a trochee, the next two feet, "chancefulness in my" are problematical. Hardy has apparently chosen "chancefulness" as an experiment of building words on common

roots like the poet Barnes (Bailey 48), but favouring diction over metre presents a problem of scansion: it is difficult to identify confidently the stress pattern as that of a dactyl. The next two words "in my" could be scanned as pyrrhic or trochaic, although neither choice is entirely satisfactory or fitting.

Subsequent lines present similar uncertainties in scansion. Is the first foot in lines 3 and 17 a trochee or a spondee? Does Hardy consistently place the dactyl in the third foot where it would be expected, or does he move it to the second foot? Does he intentionally follow a dactyl with a pyrrhic, thus setting up four consecutive unstressed syllables? Plausible misreadings of Hardy's metrical intentions can be applied to nearly one-half of the entire poem and set a tone not of consistency and predictability, but, indeed of "change and chancefulness."

Hardy's alteration of the adonic line hints at the purposefulness of his alterations of the standard sapphic metre. The two adonic lines which break the dactyl-trochee/dactyl-spondee pattern are also the only final lines in stanzas to assume the first-person voice. Both lines,

So self-communed I

and

Thus I...But lo, me!

resist scansion entirely, but may be read as a dactyl-trochee with anacrusis and catalexis framing the line. Such a reading would support Hardy's statement that he knew sapphics, but did not always follow the metrical rules precisely.



These problematic scansion indicate that Hardy, like Swinburne, was resisting the precise and unbending application of a quantitative metre within an accentual-syllabic framework. Unlike "Sapphics," however, Hardy's effort is far from lilting and sonorous: "The Temporary the All" is halting, eccentric and even awkward in places. Yet, it is not so much Hardy's tinkering with the metrical structure as it is his admixture of sounds that undermines a potentially smooth and recognizable rhythm.

Like "Sapphics," the poem has no end-rhyme and depends on assonance and alliteration to provide sound continuity. Yet, Hardy's choice of alliterating consonants reflects less concern than Swinburne with the de-emphasis of harsh consonants which break up vowel sounds. Hardy's opening alliteration "change and chancefulness" is abrupt and choppy, as is "despite divergence"; the predominance of the hard d in "fused us in friendship" and "did a damsel saunter" also creates a break. A tension exists between the diction and sound of words which is not present in Swinburne's poem; this tension contributes to a less graceful poem, but also a phonically richer one. While Swinburne's sapphics lull and mesmerize like the Sirens' songs, Hardy's verse initially puzzles and then fascinates the reader with its metrical ambiguity and verbal eccentricity. However, the poem's unevenness and less obvious success is not, as Davie asserts, the product of an autodidact whose verse form "mirrors a cruel self-driving, a shape imposed on the material" (Davie 16, his emphasis), but rather that of a poet whose intricate knowledge of traditional prosody

sometimes cramped the freedom of his line. Hardy was inspired by the potential of English verse rather than driven by a desire to master it on his own terms, and to describe his style as something "imposed" on language does not accurately reflect his profound respect for and knowledge of English prosody, nor does it adequately recognize the subtlety of his own prosody.

Hardy's self-teaching is, however, an important element which contributes to the eccentricity of this sapphic verse. His self-instruction in Greek did not begin until his early twenties, as opposed to Swinburne's early immersion in the language and literature. His acquisition of knowledge about the language and culture was necessarily less systematic, rigorous and complete. The structure and sound of his sapphics reflects the individuality and independence of his education, just as Swinburne's poem reflects the depth and breadth of his systematic classical training. "Sapphics" reflects a profound understanding of and sensitivity to Greek prosody and its potential to be replicated in English verse; the sapphic form is organic to the sound and sense of the poem. "The Temporary the All," on the other hand, exhibits a tension between the form inspired by Greek prosody, the texture of English diction and the philosophical ideas Hardy was striving to convey. In the battle between sound and meaning, neither has won out in this sapphic experiment, but the lack of a victor makes for a metrically intricate and philosophically compelling poem.

## V.

In his study of Thomas Hardy's prosody, Dennis Taylor speculates that the trisyllabic substitutions of "Neutral Tones" may have been inspired by Hardy's work with the sapphic form; he suggests that the poem "has a much more interesting mixture of iambs and dactyls, perhaps reminiscent to Hardy of the dactyls and trochees in sapphics" (261). Although the poem does contain a "mixture" of duple and triple rhythms, it is difficult to see the latter as falling rather than rising, or to perceive any real connection with the sapphic form. The intent of this poem is not so much to mimic an established form as to generate through free anapaestic substitution a new and startlingly effective form based on the iambic quatrain.

In an early study of Hardy's verse, Samuel Hynes commented that "though he invented stanzas, [Hardy] never ventured far from the iambic norm which had been the standard English rhythm for four centuries," surmising in explanation that perhaps Hardy "was metrically less radical than the others..." (79). Hardy's "Neutral Tones" is only one of many poems which refute Hynes on both points. The poem's base rhythm is iambic, but only marginally so, and in a fashion that is not at all typical of the "norm": nearly half of the feet are anapaestic substitutions, an unusually high ratio. By so freely and almost equally exchanging anapaests and iambs, Hardy has created a metre which challenges the iambic "norm" far more than conforms to it; the poem recalls several written by Swinburne

in the late 1860s in which he was experimenting with the juxtaposition of duple and triple rhythms. The metrical technique of "Neutral Tones" is perhaps one more example of the effect Swinburne's verse had on Hardy's. Considered in light of Swinburne's several experiments with the juxtaposition of duple and triple rhythms, "Neutral Tones" appears more clearly as an example of Hardy's ambitious and energetic attempt to meet accentual-syllabic challenges.

The prosodic laws of accentual-syllabic verse have always discouraged unrestrained use of substitution because such use could destroy the consistency of the underlying verse rhythm. A study of English metre written in 1923 allows that trisyllabic feet may be substituted if: a) the two unstressed syllables are light and can be pronounced rapidly, so that the triple foot occupies the same time as a duple foot, and b) the stressed and unstressed syllables keep the same relative position (Smith 38). In addition, the smoothness of trisyllabic substitution may be enhanced by vowel coalescence, elision of vowel and consonant and the bridging of two words by the triple foot (Smith, passim).

Swinburne's "An Interlude" and "Les Noyades" from Poems & Ballads are two of many poems which demonstrate his skill in combining duple and triple rhythms. Both are anapaestic, but with free and almost equal numbers of iambic feet, the mirror image of "Neutral Tones." In the first stanza of "An Interlude," six of 12 feet are iambic:

x   x   |   x   |   x   x   |   x  
In the greenest growth of the Maytime,

x    i        x        x        i        x        i  
 I rode where the woods were wet,  
 x    i        x        i        x        x        i        x  
 Between the dawn and the daytime;  
 x    i        x        i        x        x        i  
 The spring was glad that we met.

The second stanza contains five iambs, the third, four, the fourth, eight. Reading these poems, Hardy would have remarked - as critics did - the smoothness of the transition from one rhythm to the next, the consistent and strong sense of the base triple rhythm despite the numbers of duple feet, and the appropriate adaptation of triple rhythm to a serious and solemn subject. Almost without exception, the triple feet in these two poems: either employ elision (Mar|vellous    mercies), vowel coalescence (me    as    Ap|ril) or alliteration (where    the    woods), or bridge two words (In the green|est growth), in order to compress the triple foot as much as possible. Swinburne's technique seems to allow the poem to sustain the triple rhythm by bringing it in line with the speed of the basic iambic rhythm. The consistent and free alternation between iambs and anapaests creates a vital and varied movement, and slows the pace of the triple rhythm enough to free it of any comic effect.

Hardy applies the same principle of free exchange of duple and triple rhythms in "Neutral Tones," but introduces some differences. His choice of iambic as the base rhythm yields a slower, more contemplative pace, and his anapaests are not always as smooth as those of Swinburne. He does, however, resemble Swinburne in his bridging of words with triple feet (as though chid|den) in nearly half of the anapaests, and also in his use of elision (by a pond)

and, less seldom, vowel coalescence (ted<sup>|</sup>ious rid<sup>|</sup>dles).

Six of the triple feet in the poem do not demonstrate any attempts to "smooth" the transition from duple rhythm. For example, in lines 8-9, "on which lost," "by our love" and "on your mouth" all scan as anapaests, but have not been constructed to move quickly. These and other elongated triple feet serve to reinforce the contemplative, even hesitant tone of the poem. Scanning "Neutral Tones" in juxtaposition with Swinburne's two poems of similar metrical shape creates the distinct impression that in the dilemma between form and content, Swinburne more often chose the former, and Hardy the latter. Such a conscious or unconscious choice by Hardy may have involved a sacrifice of fluidity, and of the impression of technical abilities, but the result is a poem with a rich semantic texture recording an intensely personal experience (Bailey 56).

The clearest understanding of Hardy's metrical intent might be accomplished by considering the poem in terms of temporal rather than syllabic regularity. Measuring the phonetic duration of each foot in addition to identifying its metrical value results in an impression of evenness and consistency. "Neutral Tones" demonstrates that Hardy was, in fact, a poet who respected laws of prosody and challenged the variety of their application. This poem alters the iambic quatrain rhyming abba which Tennyson established as a norm, through the free use of trisyllabic substitution and a slightly shortened final line in each stanza.

## VI.

Rhyme, Hardy read in the preface to his Rhyming Dictionary, is "the purple band on the princely toga of the poet," a verse ornament "unknown to the Anglo-Saxon poet" whose primary adornment was alliteration, but gradually adapted into English poetry beginning in medieval times (Walker xlii). Hardy's purchase of the rhyming dictionary in 1865 was part of his methodical preparation as a poet (Millgate 87), and the appearance of Poems & Ballads in 1866 was for him a stunning contemporary example of rhyme's potential for intricacy; until that point, the understated sound patterns of Tennyson's verse were setting the standard for rhymes of limited complexity and originality (Gosse, "A Plea For Certain Exotic Forms of Verse" 71). For example, while Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam had been published in 1859, interest in its intricate Persian stanzas did not become widespread until after his death in 1883 (Taylor 233). Poems & Ballads and Swinburne's later volumes all contain a rich variety of rhyme - including an adaptation of the Rubaiyat stanza - and his efforts in this area were acknowledged by Hardy in the copying of various rhyme schemes and adaptations of others (see above). Swinburne's work drew on many centuries of examples of rhyming in English and Continental verse and offered Hardy contemporary, published examples of rhyme's potential and challenge.

An exhaustive study of Swinburne and Hardy's use of rhyme would be extensive, for both poets experimented and adapted widely.

Their poetry serves as a catalogue of the standard end-rhyme patterns found in sonnets, ballads, heroic couplets and certain exotic forms of verse transplanted from Italy and France, as well as more original patterns they developed themselves. In addition, they explored the possibilities of other repeated patterns, experimenting in the use of assonance, alliteration and internal rhyme. I will not be conducting here a full analysis of their use of rhyme; however, this study of their verse form would be incomplete without some comments on the general characteristics of their repeated sound patterns.

One of the most prominent features of the verse of both Swinburne and Hardy is the extensive use of alternating masculine and feminine rhyme. This technique was employed frequently by Swinburne in Poems & Ballads (First Series) in, among others, "The Garden of Proserpine," "An Interlude," and "Dolores," and also in subsequent volumes. Hardy uses the alternating pattern in "At Castle Boterel," "In Tenebris III," "The Fiddler," and many other poems. By alternating masculine and feminine rhymes, he and Swinburne were able to enrich the texture of sounds and vary stress patterns. Hardy in particular often uses feminine rhyme to indicate the shift of mood or tone from line to line (see discussion of "At Castle Boterel," above), while Swinburne's shifts from masculine to feminine seem more often to be purely examples of technical virtuosity.

Their extensive use of triple rhythms lent both Swinburne and Hardy the opportunity to take the double rhymes of feminine endings



one step further. Swinburne's isolated use of triple rhyme in "Dolores" and Hardy's in "The Voice" demonstrate their willingness to apply forms conventionally associated with comic verse to elegiac or dramatic verse.<sup>12</sup> The preface to Hardy's Rhyming Dictionary does not mention triple rhyme, and his early poetry contains no examples of this type; it is entirely possible that "Dolores" presented Hardy with his first contemporary example of triple rhyme applied to a serious subject. If so, it is an example which he adapted appropriately and successfully in "The Voice."

Hardy and Swinburne also shared an interest in employing rhyme to unify the stanzas of a poem. This technique is the primary distinguishing feature of a Persian stanza form, in which all final lines of stanzas rhyme with each other. Hardy wrote three poems in this abcd pattern, "My Cicely," "The Mother Mourns" and "The Flirt's Tragedy" (Taylor 233), all of which vary from the standard refrain line by employing different forms of the rhyme word. In "The Mother Mourns," for example, Hardy employs 21 variations of the rhyme word "lane," producing a unifying effect which is both more intricate and more various than that of a refrain line. Swinburne produced a similar effect in "Dolores," although his is only a loose adaptation of this Persian principle. In "Dolores," each eight-line stanza follows the ababcdcd rhyme pattern, with an eighth refrain line, "Our Lady of Pain" completing

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<sup>12</sup> Comic applications of triple rhyme such as Byron's in Don Juan were more the rule, or limitation, in the nineteenth century. Triple rhyme was, however, a feature of medieval Latin verse; Sydney mentioned it in the Defense of Poesie and used it in Arcadia.

every other stanza. In these alternating stanzas, the sixth lines offer a total of 28 variations on the rhyme word "pain." It may only be a coincidence that Hardy's poem, composed much later than Swinburne's, uses the same rhyme ending and even employs several of the same words. In any case, the tangential similarities between "Dolores" and "A Mother Mourns" indicate that both poets were interested in the potential for variations of the same sound to unify the poem.

The potential for linkage of stanzas through rhyme was also explored by both poets. In "Laus Veneris" (Poems & Ballads, First Series), Swinburne rhymes the third line of the first and second stanzas, the third and fourth stanzas, and so forth - which are unrhymed within their individual stanzas - creating an effect, to use Saintsbury's description, of each alternating stanza "[holding] out a feeler to the next." Hardy composed a far more elaborate version of linking rhyme in "Friends Beyond," specifically terza rima, as used by Dante in the Divine Comedy. In "Friends Beyond," the second line of each three-line stanza rhymes with the first and third lines of the subsequent stanza, resulting in the linking of one stanza with the next without the closure of Swinburne's rhyming pairs. Each stanza introduces a rhyme word which links it to the following stanza, creating a succession of linking rhymes. Hardy identified the terza rima as one of Swinburne's favourites. Either Swinburne indicated his preference in one of the few private conversations they had, or Hardy is unconsciously identifying his own connection between Swinburne's rhyme pattern and his own

version of terza rima.

Swinburne's and Hardy's wide-ranging experimentation with and invention of rhyme patterns was undoubtedly influenced by their interest in various other exotic forms which enjoyed a renaissance in England in the last half of the century. In the 1877 Cornhill Magazine article by Edmund Gosse entitled "A Plea For Certain Exotic Forms of Verse," Gosse introduced several forms of verse and explained why he believed contemporary English poetry could be enriched by more attention to intricate rhyme schemes and rhythmic patterns. According to Gosse, "Half the pleasure given to the reader, half the sense of richness, completeness, and grace which he vaguely perceives and unconsciously enjoys" is the result of the technical labours of a poet who struggles to master intricate rhyme forms. "In spite of Milton, in spite of Tennyson," Gosse asserts, "the world can never grow too old to be bewitched by the siren of rhyme" (71). Swinburne and Hardy both seemed to answer Gosse's plea for greater intricacy of rhyme: Swinburne with his two poems entitled "Rondel" in Poems & Ballads (First Series) and the collection A Century of Roundels (1883), and Hardy with his experimentation with and adaptation of the villanelle, triolet and various forms of the rondeau.<sup>13</sup> The two poets' parallel interest in these forms demonstrates their ability to construct highly controlled verse, and their desire to test the limits of rhyme in

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<sup>13</sup> See "The Caged Thrush Freed and Home Again" (villanelle); "How great my grief" and "The Coquette and After" (triolet); and, "The Roman Road" and "The Skies Fling Flame," in Dynasts (rondeaux).

English by using forms more easily constructed in romance languages.

Of these forms, the rondeau and its variants have the most diverse application in their verse. Swinburne's collection of roundels is an admirable tour de force, displaying technical brilliance in its ability to mould and shape language as well as to restrict his typically "broad and sweeping measures" with one-hundred poems in this "rigidly determined fixed form" (Gosse, Life 266-7). His "roundel," a term which was used by Chaucer and others as a synonym for the rondeau, trims one line from each of the rondeau's first and third stanzas to produce a poem eleven lines long and also moves the refrain from line eight to line four (Rooksby 251). Gosse's description of it as "rigidly determined" is not entirely accurate, for the roundels vary in the metrical pattern and the position and length of the refrain line (Rooksby 252).

Hardy's variations on the rondeau were far more extensive and could be said to represent interesting variations in the history of the form (Taylor 253). While three of his rondeaux are strict adaptations ("The Roman Road," "Midnight on Beechen, 187-," and "The Skies Fling Flame" in Dynasts), many others are much looser adaptations (Taylor 252). For example, in describing "When I Set Out for Lyonesse" in 1924, Hardy called it "one of the many varieties of Roundelay, Roundel, or Rondel" (Bailey 270). The poem is in three stanzas and opens and closes each stanza with the same line, using only two rhymes in each stanza, but not the same rhymes

in all stanzas (Taylor 253). Hardy's variations on this repetition of lines of the rondeau go even further in many poems which repeat initial lines as refrain lines, including "She Revisits Alone..." and "By Henstridge Cross" (Taylor 254), although they do limit two rhymes per stanza. His departures from the rondeau norm are more significant than those of Swinburne, and suggest a more imaginative and flexible application of the principles of line repetition and refrain.

Perhaps more thoroughly than any other of their contemporaries, Hardy and Swinburne experimented with an extensive variety of end rhyme patterns, and this experimentation serves as an important adjunct to their metrical accomplishments. Their use of end-rhyme added a layer of intricacy and complexity to verse which was already a labyrinth of metrical patterns. And yet, their numerous original applications of standard rhyming patterns also indicate that they did not view this extra layer of intricacy as an incumbrance to their freedom. Rather, it was a challenge which translated into the freedom of invention.

## VII.

In his recollections of his early days in London in Early Life, Hardy makes several references to Swinburne which suggest a distinct desire to associate himself closely with the man he later termed as a "brother-poet" (Later Years 135). In his description of a restaurant called "Newton House" he said that "a few years after Hardy frequented it Swinburne used to dine there..." (55). Several pages later he offers that "during part of his residence at Westbourne Park Villas he was living within half a mile of Swinburne..." (65). And, in his depiction of the summer spent in Weymouth, he presented himself as "being - like Swinburne - a swimmer...rising and falling with the tide in the warmth of the morning sun" (84). These references seem to be attempts on Hardy's part to align himself as a contemporary and companion of Swinburne, emphasizing that they lived, and therefore worked, in the same context.

In fact, their association goes much deeper than having dined in the same restaurant, or shared an interest in swimming; Hardy's references are just one more example of his curious and enigmatic method for revealing truths about himself. Swinburne and his poetry meant a great deal to Hardy, but the poet and his work provided an example more than an influence. Hardy was unquestionably inspired by the man for whom "every metre was docile and plastic in his hands" (Leith 32), and who endured savage

criticism for the sake of his art. "There is no new poetry," said Hardy, "but the new poet - if he carry the flame on further...comes with a new note. And that new note it is that troubles the critical waters" (Later Years 78). Hardy's words can be applied to a description of both his and Swinburne's careers; they were companions in their desire to "carry the flame on further" by testing poetic conventions and challenging prosodic norms.

And yet, each man met with mixed success in his campaign against complacency. Initially hailed by the critics, Swinburne was soon in ill repute for his defiance of moral constraints, and by the end of the nineteenth century his bright star had faded. Today, Swinburne is studied infrequently, and his contributions to prosody are seldom recognized. Why? He was perhaps in part a victim of a phenomenon which Hardy described in Later Years:

As to reviewing. Apart from a few brilliant exceptions, poetry is not at bottom criticized as such, that is, as a particular man's artistic interpretation of life, but with a secret eye on its theological and political propriety. Swinburne used to say to me that so it would be two thousand years hence; but I doubt it. (183)

Perhaps Swinburne's reputation could never recover from the savage criticism of his 'theological and political propriety,' but such a long-lasting and nearly permanent condemnation is unlikely. It could be that criticism of the past century has fulfilled Hardy's

expectation and judged Swinburne's poetry 'as a particular man's artistic interpretation of life' which was uncomfortable or unpalatable.

Even one of Swinburne's greatest champions, George Saintsbury, identified a weakness inherent in Swinburne which may partially explain his faded reputation:

...his extraordinary command of metre has led him to make new and ever new experiments in it...to plan sea-serpents in verse in order to show how easily and gracefully he can make them coil and uncoil their enormous length, to build mastadons of metre that we may admire....In other words, he has sometimes, nay too often, forgotten the end while exulting in his command of the means (Essays vol.2 222).

Another of Swinburne's great admirers, Hardy, also appears to have acknowledged Swinburne's fixation on technique at the expense of his poetry's philosophical substance. In 1898, he copied the following phrase from an October 29 article in the Spectator: "...Swinburne, if he live...mastery of words, rather than any interpretation of life" (quoted in Literary Notebooks vol.2 71, Hardy's ellipsis). A 1909 entry in Literary Notebooks (vol. 2 239) demonstrates that he had read an article on Swinburne from the Spectator of April 17:

That is why his verse, which at first



astonishes us by his perfection of sound, in the end is apt to weary and prove unsatisfying. There is too much artifice and too little inspiration. ("Swinburne as a Master of Metre" 605-606)

Hardy's notes hint that he, like Saintsbury, perceived that technical virtuosity was admirable, indeed necessary, but could not alone produce poetry of lasting interest and vitality. He said in a letter to Florence Henniker in 1909, "This is what makes Swinburne the greater writer [than Meredith], though he is much the smaller thinker: he knew so well how to appeal" (Letters vol.4 24).

Hardy's comments show that the rhythmic musicality of Swinburne's verse appealed to him a great deal, but that he was not impressed with its corresponding repetitiveness and rather empty interpretation of life. In his eagerness to conduct radical and compelling metrical experiments, and to demonstrate his command of metre, Swinburne created verse of technical perfection. But the unending and persistent musicality of Swinburne's verse ultimately reflects a vision of life as dull, repetitious and perhaps even profoundly empty. This is a vision which does not offer lasting and intriguing analysis, and which is not echoed in the verse which Hardy composed throughout his life.

Unfortunately, Hardy's richer interpretations of life - reflected partly in his uneven, enigmatic application of prosody - were also ill-treated by critics. Hardy felt that his own approach to technique was not well understood:

The reviewer so often supposes that where art is not visible it is unknown to the poet under criticism. Why does he not think of the art of concealing art? There is a good reason why. (Later Years 184)

Hardy's deliberately unorthodox application of prosodic techniques has been for years profoundly misunderstood as a reflection of his ignorance or poor training. But an analysis of his poetry in the context of Swinburne's shows that he was in fact carrying Swinburne's unconventional practices one step further. He applied the principles of substitution and metrical flexibility to his verse, but avoided monotony with an abundance of unorthodox twists and turns. Hardy called this "the principle of spontaneity" and equated it architecturally with an effect "found in mouldings, tracery, and such like" (Later Years 78-9).

Unfortunately, the potential for understanding Hardy's enigmatic prosodic technique has faded together with Swinburne's reputation has. Few critics have understood Hardy's attempts to test the bounds of prosody, and most have interpreted those attempts as a failure to adhere to convention, and, therefore, to tradition. Samuel Hynes has commented that Hardy

shared with the more radical innovators of his time a certain experimental spirit, but he was both less extreme and less programmatic than they....though he invented stanzas, [he] never ventured far from the iambic norm which had

been the standard English rhythm for four centuries. Perhaps he was metrically less radical than the others because he was a more self-taught poet; whatever the reason, he did have a naive reverence for, or at least a dependence on, the forms which he inherited.

(79)

These mistaken observations are representative of a great body of criticism which dismisses Hardy's experiments as failures. In fact, Hardy did venture far from the iambic norm, but he ventured forward, building on the gradual loosening of the iambic line. This loosening of the iambic line began with free substitution such as that accomplished by Swinburne and perhaps sees its zenith in Hardy's bumpy but highly expressive rhythms. His use of inherited forms, as in the case of Swinburne, demonstrates not simply a "naive reverence" for tradition, but a respect and admiration for, as well as knowledge of, the history of English prosody. To dismiss Hardy as naive does not do justice to his art, and should criticism persist in drawing this conclusion, it would be ignoring the great body of information now available which vindicates Hardy as an extremely learned, thoughtful and consciously experimental poet.

Far from naive, Hardy was a poet whose carefully assembled body of knowledge expressed itself in an often misunderstood sense of poetic decorum. Hardy knew the rules, and was willing to apply them, but not in conventional fashion. It is possible that his

knowledge of and respect for prosody is not immediately evident in his poetry because his reputation as a novelist has affected the analysis of his verse. Most students of Hardy encounter him as the first critics did - first as novelist, then as poet. It would be difficult not to allow his prose voice to influence one's interpretation of his poetic voice; read like prose, and without consideration of the experimental tradition in which Hardy was composing, his metrically ambiguous and experimental verse does not sound like poetry.

Unfortunately perhaps for Hardy, he chose to avoid the tendency to "exhibit his learning, or his fine taste, or his skill in mimicking the notes of his predecessors" (Early Life 167). Instead, he deliberately attempted to construct verse which was not pedantic, but was nonetheless rich in verbal texture and overflowing with his own peculiar interpretation of life. As a result, his knowledge and skill in prosody have been for some time hidden by the critical conclusion that his avoidance and rejection of conventional prosody was a result of his inability to use it. This conclusion is most unfair to Hardy, and has undoubtedly precluded much rich and satisfying study of his verse.

Analysis of Hardy's poetry within the context of a developing tradition demonstrates that he was carrying the flame on further, testing the bounds of the tradition in which he was trained. It was in this desire to move forward that he found poetic companionship with Swinburne, and ultimately surpassed him. In the uneven and imperfect rhythms of Hardy's verse resonates the

imperfection and ambiguity of the human experience. Somehow, Swinburne's swirling, technically uplifting measures convey a sense of unreality and repetitive emptiness. It is the humanity of Hardy's verse which produces its rich and lasting appeal, and ironically, which is the source of so much critical misunderstanding.

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