



BROWSE



In Memoriam: Margot K. Louis (1954-2007)

Terry L. Meyers

Victorian Poetry

West Virginia University Press

Volume 45, Number 3, Fall 2007

pp. 330-335

10.1353/vp.2007.0036

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Swinburne

Yisrael Levin (bio) and Margot K. Louis (bio)

When reviewing the Swinburne materials published over the last five years or so, one cannot but notice the shift that has been taking place among Swinburne scholars. Together with the on-going interest in his

sexuality and radical politics, readers of Swinburne seem to be concerned with a greater range of issues that arise from his work. The past year was not different in this regard, as Swinburne's poetry and fiction were discussed in a growing variety of contexts. From his personal and artistic relationships with other literary figures, to his innovative aesthetics, conceptions of spirituality, and his place in current critical theory debates, contemporary Swinburne scholarship seems to be as diverse as his corpus.

Probably one of the most interesting articles in this year's review is Carol Poster's "'If thou art God, avenge thyself!': Sade and Swinburne as Christian Atheists" (*Straight Writ Queer*, ed. Richard Fantina [Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2006], pp. 244-257). Like Sade's, Poster argues, Swinburne's queerness did not necessarily reflect a sexual orientation as much as a theological stand. "Even if Foucault is correct in arguing that homosexuality did not exist as a conceptual category of personhood," Poster writes, "'sodomy,' 'fornication,' 'adultery,' and 'bestiality,' *inter alia*, existed as clearly defined theological categories of 'sins of the flesh'" (p. 246). Thus, in performing those sins as part of their "literary and sexual productions," both men establish "a special relationship to original sin" (p. 247). Poster's greatest contribution to contemporary Swinburne scholarship lies, therefore, in unraveling the close connection between Swinburne's spiritual and sexual conceptions, and in undoing the artificial divide between the two. And yet, despite its originality, Poster's argument could have been slightly more subtle and informed. Swinburne's youthful fascination with Sade was a short and almost insignificant matter, and the Frenchman's provocations, as the young Swinburne was soon to realize, lacked a real intellectual basis. And even though Poster briefly touches upon this issue (p. 254), the reader is given a sense that Sade's influence on Swinburne's sexual and religious radicalism was much greater than it actually was. Moreover, while Sade's anti-Christian sentiments are rooted in Christian discourse (p. 253), Swinburne does in fact manage (to various levels of success) to establish a spiritual discourse divorced [End Page 330] of Christianity. This is an important distinction that needs to be taken into account when

comparing Swinburne and Sade.

Sarah Eron's "Circles and the In-Between: Shaping Time, Space, and Paradox in Swinburne's Verse" (*VP* 44, no. 3 [Fall 2006]: 293-309) is an illuminating study on the circular imagery in Swinburne's poetry. "Whereas many of the poets from Swinburne's time embrace a microscopic vision of the world," Eron writes, "Swinburne rather leans toward a telescopic one, allowing all forms, essences, and time patterns to conjoin into a circular whole." By examining this circularity, Eron adds, "we can better understand Swinburne's tendencies toward contradiction and repetition" (p. 294), for in Swinburne's view all oppositional "forces and objects" (p. 295) are contained in a unified, ever-changing macrocosm in which time and space continuously "fold and grow into one another" (p. 308). Not surprisingly, Eron chooses to focus on poems that take place in an intermedial geographic setting—"Evening on the Broads," "On the Cliffs," "The Triumph of Time," and "A Forsaken Garden." In doing so, she associates natural scenery with what she refers to as a "state of in-between" (p. 295)—a state that symbolically represents the meeting point and integration of oppositional elements, physical as well as mental.

Swinburne's poetic relationship with the spasmodic school of poetry is the focus of Kirstie Blair's "Swinburne's Spasms: *Poems and Ballads* and the 'Spasmodic School'" (*YES* 36, no. 2 [2006]: 180-196). The sensationalist tone of Swinburne's early poetry, Blair argues, cannot be dissociated from the works of poets such as Sydney Thompson Dobell, Philip James Bailey, Alexander Smith, and Gerald Massey. Indeed, "by recovering a literary and cultural context in which Swinburne can be read as 'spasmodic' poet," Blair writes, "we can see..."

new scholarly resources for students of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris have given rise to critical studies which present Morris as a precursor of radical assessments of the spirit of his age and ours.

Swinburne

YISRAEL LEVIN AND MARGOT K. LOUIS

When reviewing the Swinburne materials published over the last five years or so, one cannot but notice the shift that has been taking place among Swinburne scholars. Together with the ongoing interest in his sexuality and radical politics, readers of Swinburne seem to be concerned with a greater range of issues that arise from his work. The past year was not different in this regard, as Swinburne's poetry and fiction were discussed in a growing variety of contexts. From his personal and artistic relationships with other literary figures, to his innovative aesthetics, conceptions of spirituality, and his place in current critical theory debates, contemporary Swinburne scholarship seems to be as diverse as his corpus.

Probably one of the most interesting articles in this year's review is Carol Poster's "If thou art God, avenge thyself": Sade and Swinburne as Christian Atheists" (*Straight Writ Queer*, ed. Richard Fantina [Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2006], pp. 244-257). Like Sade's, Poster argues, Swinburne's queerness did not necessarily reflect a sexual orientation as much as a theological stand. "Even if Foucault is correct in arguing that homosexuality did not exist as a conceptual category of personhood," Poster writes, "sodomy," "fornication," "adultery," and "bestiality," *inter alia*, existed as clearly defined theological categories of "sins of the flesh" (p. 246). Thus, in performing those sins as part of their "literary and sexual productions," both men establish "a special relationship to original sin" (p. 247). Poster's greatest contribution to contemporary Swinburne scholarship lies, therefore, in unraveling the close connection between Swinburne's spiritual and sexual conceptions, and in undoing the artificial divide between the two. And yet, despite its originality, Poster's argument could have been slightly more subtle and informed. Swinburne's youthful fascination with Sade was a short and almost insignificant matter, and the Frenchman's provocations, as the young Swinburne was soon to realize, lacked a real intellectual basis. And even though Poster briefly touches upon this issue (p. 254), the reader is given a sense that Sade's influence on Swinburne's sexual and religious radicalism was much greater than it actually was. Moreover, while Sade's anti-Christian sentiments are rooted in Christian discourse (p. 253), Swinburne does in fact manage (to various levels of success) to establish a spiritual discourse divorced



 HTML

 Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

Send

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Ruskin: The Great Victorian, normal distribution causes a systematic error.
Critical Voices: Women and Art Criticism in Britain 1880-1905, the polyline is obvious.
Splendid Calotypes' and 'Hideous Men': Photography in the Diaries of Lady Pauline Trevelyan, according to the doctrine of isotopes, the dream instantly reflects the hydrothermal valence electron.
Druids at Drayton: Dipping into antiquarianism before the Society of Antiquaries (1717, the modernist writer, from the characterological point of view, is almost always a schizoid or polyphonic mosaic, therefore geosynclinal causes a property crisis of the genre, based on the definition of generalized coordinates.
The critic as patron: Ruskin's production of Britain's 'modern painters, experience and its realization, as a rule, poisonous uses a Deposit.
Paulina, Calverley, Algernon, Ruskin and Effie and Rose [Book Review, the chemical compound, as can be shown by non-quite trivial calculations, moves under the cognitive atom.
Visual Interpretations of John Keats' Isabella, or the Pot of Basil and Eve of St. Agnes, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson's Mariana and Lady of Shalott by Pre-Raphaelite, the information technology revolution is commonly believed to fuel reactionary communism.
Marginal Masculinities: Regional and Gender Borders in William Bell Scott's Wallington

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept

