STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA, LXII, 1, 2017, p. 123 - 142
(RECOMMENDED CITATION)
DOI:10.24193/subbphilo.2017.1.09

A NOVEL OF CELIBACY: SWINBURNE'S *LESBIA BRANDON*

ROXANA PATRAŞ[1]

ABSTRACT. ***A Novel of Celibacy: Swinburne's* Lesbia Brandon.** Swinburne's lost masterpiece, *Lesbia Brandon*, is a text that reflects upon the burden of family memory and on the ways a particular individual could escape the reproduction chain. Caught at different ages, Beauty represents for the Decadent writer a state of unequalled perfection, which can be neither expressed nor related to a referent. In this context, celibacy becomes the social condition of Beauty as well as an aesthetic form. A novel with bachelors and about celibate, Swinburne's *Lesbia Brandon* transcends its shocking premises (lesbianism, incest, violence, flogging) and reveals itself as a meditation on the evanescent condition of mortal beauty. Along with his favored typologies and themes, Swinburne also devised here a different way to think the relationship between authoritarian (complementary partners) and egalitarian love (equal or identical partners) within the wider ideological frame of republicanism.

Keywords: *roman célibataire, indirection, seriality, memory, decadence, androgyny.*

REZUMAT. ***Un roman al celibatului:* Lesbia Brandon *de Algernon Charles Swinburne.*** Capodopera pierdută a lui A.C. Swinburne este un text care reflectă asupra memoriei apăsătoare a familiei precum și asupra soluțiilor individuale de a ieși din lanțul reproducerii. Surprinsă la vârste și prin generații diferite, Frumusețea reprezintă pentru scriitorul decadent un nivel inegalabil de perfecțiune, care nu poate fi exprimat pe deplin nici prin scris, nici prin raportare la un referent real. In termenii definiți de Jean Marie Schaeffer, celibatul devine nu numai forma socială a Frumuseții, ci și figura sa estetică cea mai potrivită. Roman cu celibatari androginici și despre condiția celibatului, *Lesbia Brandon* reușește să-și transceandă premisele șocante (lesbianism, incest, violență, biciuire) și să se reveleze ca o meditație profundă asupra condiției evanescente a Frumuseții muritoare. Pe lângă tipologiile și temele ce l-au consacrat, Swinburne a reușit să propună aici un nou mod de a înțelege distincția dintre amorul autoritar (dintre parteneri complementari) și amorul egalitarist (dintre parteneri egali sau chiar identici) în contextul mai larg al unei ideologii de tip republican.

Cuvinte cheie: *Lesbia Brandon, roman celibatar, indirecţie, serialitate, memorie, decadenţă, androginie.*

[1] Senior Researcher, Department of Interdisciplinary Research in Social Sciences and Humanities, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Romania. Contact address: <roxana.patras@yahoo.ro>.

The (Mis)adventures of *Lesbia Brandon*. An unknown novel

In his letters written around 1904, D. H. Lawrence draws the attention to the value of Algernon Charles Swinburne's work. Himself a literature connoisseur, the writer tries to persuade his acquaintances to read aloud Swinburne's texts:

> If you see Mrs. Eder, do ask her if she could send the Swinburne Frieda left at her house at Christmas. I love to read him... You sent atlases and Swinburne – then the cake and the sweets Frieda ordered. This is a most surprising array... I will have Swinburne and Shelley and Herodotus and Flaubert: just the four, round the round table in the tower... Thank you very much indeed for Swinburne. I lie in bed and read him, and he moves me very deeply. The pure realization in him is something to reverence: he is very like Shelley, full of philosophical spiritual realization and revelation. He is a great revealer, very great. I put him with Shelley as our greatest poet. He is the last fiery spirit among us... There was more powerful rushing fame of life in him than in all the heroes rolled together. One day I shall buy all his books (Lawrence, *qt. in* Murfin 186).

It is not sure if Lawrence achieved his plan on buying all Swinburne's books. However, it is quite sure certain that, around 1900 (when this letter was written), he had formed a strong intuition of the resemblances among Swinburne, Shelley, and Flaubert. In all three cases identified by the young writer, the attempt at reforming the language and the incessant effort of stylization brought into existence a gray space of quasi-failures, that is, a huge amount of literary productions set in-between aesthetic realization and complete rigmarole. Nevertheless, these "minor" writings are still under the signature of the three major writers just mentioned above, so they are meant to disarrange a bit the equation of critical evaluation. When Lawrence was writing these lines, much of Swinburne's prose pieces were completely unknown to the public. Apparently, they had been introduced only to those happy few (bibliophiles and suchlike) who could traffic them as *infernalia* items.

Among the four novels, *Love's Cross-Currents. A Year's Letters*, Lesbia Brandon, La Soeur de la Reine, La Fille du Policeman, only one had been published, yet with great caution and under a feminine pseudonym ("Mrs. Horace Manners"). Indeed, *Love's Cross-Currents. A Year's Letters* is brought out to the public in 1877, and then re-issued, under Swinburne's own signature, only in 1905. A second novel, currently entitled *Lesbia Brandon* (Gosse 164)[2], circulated

[2] In his biography, Gosse names the text after of the characters' names *(Lesbia Brandon*), and considers that it should not be made public: "Swinburne carried out this scheme in a disjointed romance called, from the name of its heroine, Lesbia Brandon. After keeping it for nearly ten years in MS., he had it set up in type in 1877. The original MS. is lost, but a single galley-proof, lacking both the beginning and the end, was kept by Mr. Andrew Chatto, and is now in Mr. T. J. Wise's collection. In his opinion and mine this mélange of prose and verse, which Swinburne thought he had completely suppressed, ought never to be published". Nevertheless, in Randolph Hugues's opinion, Gosse's title is not relevant but can be accepted as a convention.

clandestinely as a collection of scattered fragments, until Randolph Hugues endeavored to remake the original narrative project in 1952, after almost a century of misadventures and pecuniary disputes over the manuscripts[3] (Mayfield 1-100). Preceded by some short stories (*The Portrait*, *Lucrezia Borgia: The Chronicle of Tebaldeo Tebaldi*, *Dead Love*, *The Chronicle of Queen Fredegond*, *The Marriage of Mona Lisa*) and by two parodic micro-novels written in French (*La Soeur de la Reine* and *La Fille du policeman*), Swinburne's ampler texts should impress a contemporary sensibility with its sophistication of language, its infinitesimal shading of psychologies or with its relativizing of viewpoints, all these stressing the modernity of Swinburne's *écriture* albeit his option for a somewhat obsolete form such as the epistolary novel.

On the surface, Swinburne does not seem to have bet much on his talents as a prose writer. Always looking for Apollonian impersonation, theater and poetry should have carried about them the air of social dignity and signification. Contrarily, the novel bears witness of the Dionysian discharging, which is "the reverse of the medal", an art already "decayed" and meant for decadence. In time, the clandestine circulation of *Lesbia Brandon*, *La Soeur de la Reine* and *La Fille du Policeman* has emphasized the eccentric and shadowy details of Swinburne's biography, some of their commentators being ready to discover just there the secrets of Swinburne's life at Putney, the real drive of Swinburne's relationship with Theodore Watts-Dunton, and, last but not least, the significance of Swinburne's own "celibacy", assumed not only as a social option, but also as an aesthetic form (Bertrand, Biron, Dubois and Pâque 4-193). Edmund Wilson considers that Swinburne had a story to tell, a story which could not be conveyed through poetry but which has been partially reported through fiction works (Wilson 10). Such biographic "swerves" turned Swinburne's unknown novel into an appendix of the six-volume edition of letters, published in the 60s. Other interpreters also formulated the hypothesis that *Lesbia Brandon* should be related to the aesthetic experience from *Poems and Ballads*, being a sort of "genial detritus" (Fletcher 44).

Commentators used with A.C. Swinburne's experiments should find it pretty difficult to justify the writer's outmoded option for the 18th-century epistolary novel. In his 1905 preface to *Love's Cross-Currents*, Swinburne himself pointed out that his only wish was to perfect a novel's formula that Balzac and Walter Scott could not manage thoroughly:

> As it is, I can only hope that you may be for once mistaken in your favourable opinion of a study thrown into the old epistolary form which even the giant genius of Balzac could not restore to the favour it enjoyed in the days of Richardson and of Laclos (...) I do not forget that the king of men to whose hand we owe the famous history of Redgauntlet began it in epistolary form and

[3] Mayfield comes with important facts about the posthumous destiny of Swinburne's unknown works.

> changed the fashion of his tale to direct and forthright narrative when the story became too strong for him, and would no longer be conceived within the limits of conceivable correspondence (*Love's Cross-Currents*, v-vi).

So his leading impulsion might be interpreted either in terms of competition with models or in terms of critical theory, as a variant of his lifelong interest in "the noble pleasure of praising".

Which is the proper way of reading *Lesbia Brandon*? Should we read the novel though its virtual intentions or through its "restored", well-rounded form that is proposed by Randolph Hugues in 1952? Should we consider *Lesbia Brandon* as a laboratory, as work in progress that cannot arrest aesthetic attention? Should we consider it as a memoir or a biographic piece, written in a coded fashion but absolutely transparent when set side by side with the timeline of Swinburne's life? Should we consider *Lesbia Brandon* as "a novel of novels", a "book of books", as later French critics do (Aquien 194-211)? Should we really read it as a meta-text, a palimpsest, as a "novel-interrogation" addressing all literary genres and ages? Should we take it as a "saturated" inter-text, full of references to *Telemac*, *Paul et Virginie*, *Les Châtiments*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Le Chevalier de Faublas*, *Le Marriage de Figaro*, *La Cousine Bette*, *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes*, *Eugenie Grandet*, *The Old Curiosity Shop* and so forth? In postmodernist fashion, a saturation indicating the void of meaning (Grădinaru 10-53)?

If we boil down the critical texts and the letters to the essence of formative patterns, there are indeed some references that, through their repeated occurrence, might be taken as narrative models of Swinburne's prose experiments: The Marquis of Sade, Laclos, Restif de Bretonne, Walter Scott, Theophile Gautier, Edgar Allan Poe, Victor Hugo, the Brönte sisters, Honoré de Balzac, and Charles Dickens. From all early exegetes, Georges Lafourcade is the only one who investigated the affinity between de Sade's literature and philosophy and Swinburne's ideas. However, a keen inquiry of both writers came to the conclusion that, in terms of cultural acquisition, Swinburne's relationship with de Sade is rather superficial and late. Around 1880, the bard from Putney used to assert that Voltaire's and Fénelon's writings read like modest commentaries to de Sade's novel *Justine, ou Les malheurs de la vertu* (*Swinburne Letters IV* 136-137). Drawing near to the end of his life, Swinburne writes to Theodore Watts-Dunton that Restif should not be labeled anymore as a "pornographer", but as a species of "French Defoe" (*Swinburne Letters VI* 103-105). Consequently, recent biographies have accentuated the fact that readings from de Sade and libertine literature occur pretty late in Swinburne's intellectual journey, most of them being imposed throughout the writer's praise for Lord Houghton and his library, named *Aphrodisiopolis* (Henderson, Thomas, Rooksby).

Celibacy and memory: the recipe of a decadent novel

In a recent anthology focused on Swinburne's maturity writings, Yisrael Levin identifies a symptomatology of critical verdicts that connect pre-maturity to the hasty burnout of creative powers (Levin 1-6). It is not by chance that Swinburne's commentators give either a diagnosis of early artistic maturity or one of prematurely interrupted development (Bush; Rosenberg). The overall feeling about his works is one of stagnation or of imperceptible evolution, barely quantifiable (Dobrée in Levin 1).

Yielding profit from the exciting "critical biographies" published by Jean Overton Fuller (1968), Philip Henderson (1974), Donald Thomas (1979) and Rikky Rooksby (1997), the cultural studies consecrated to Decadence that have adjudicated Swinburne's personality and work (Murfin; Weir; de Palacio; Dellamora; Paglia). For instance, Ross C. Murfin notes that the kinship with the decadent prose does not lie in a shared imaginary ground, but in the air of "aesthetic prematurity" imparted by by Swinburne's writings. When under scrutiny, Swinburne's prose should not be labeled as suffering of "sterility" or "impotence", as a *demon de impuissance* (de Palacio 16-18), but it should be connected with a sort of spontaneous reactivity, which is characteristic for all "preemies" (Murfin 159).

Decadence, says David Weir, does not have a posterity; everything that comes after decadence is not decadence anymore (Weir 146). The American critic emphasizes the fact that, within the Decadent frame of thought, birth is one and the same with death; the decadent imagination refuses the idea of evolution, wherefore the decadent writers' obsessions with genealogies. The lack of inheritors corresponds, on the aesthetic level, to the lack of aesthetic manifests or communities. The individualism of the decadent mind (Călinescu 131-89) comes with an awareness of genetic singularity with a problematic relationship between the indihidual and his/her ancestry For Swinburne celibacy becomes a lifestyle optionas well as a main theme of his work. Like in a system of communicant vessels, he turns the atypical traits of his biography and genealogy into literary themes. In the same vein, a fictional bachelor such as Helen Midhurst (*Love's Cross-Currents* and *Lesbia Brandon*), who appears to be an English version of M-me de Merteuil from Laclos' *Liaisons Dangereuses*, is endowed with an atypical discursive style.

Departing from these facts, Swinburne's unknown novel *Lesbia Brandon* can be analyzed by applying the concept of "celibate novel" (*le roman celibataire*) framed by Jean-Pierre Bertrand, Michel Biron, Jacques Dubois and Jeannine Pâque in a collective volume from 1996. Usually, the phrase has been related to masculinity but in Swinburne's case, it could be applied with success when one turns to the typology of *the cerebral/ ultra-rational woman* (an extremely

cultivated, refined and malicious lady), most of the times paralleled by the typology of *the beautiful old lady*. The narrator himself comments that Helen Midhurst is a sort of "Madame de Merteuil *en bourgeoisie*" (*Lesbia Brandon* 69), endowed with a "style of sarcasm" in both writing letters to her younger relatives and in memorizing her family business. In her turn, Lesbia Brandon is a talented poetess who chooses bachelorship even though Herbert Seyton seems to be, from a symbolical point of view, her perfect match. For Swinburne, the woman cannot escape celibacy unless she discharges herself from the burden of memory, that is, when the woman becomes a mother. Biologically speaking, Amicia (Lady Midhurst's niece) drops into regenerative and healing forgetfulness only when the forbidden relationship with her cousin produces a son:

> She makes a delicious double to her baby, lying in a tumbled tortuous nest or net of hair with golden linings, with tired relieved eyes and a face that flashes and subsides every five minutes with a weary pleasure — she glitters and undulates at every sight of the child as if it were the sun and she water in the light of it. You see how lyrical one may become at an age when one's grandchildren have babies. I should have thought her the kind of woman to cry a fair amount of tears at such a time, but happily she refrains from that ceremonial diversion. She is the image of that quivering rest which follows on long impassive trouble, and the labour of days without deeds — quiet, full of life, eager and at ease. I imagine she has no memory or feeling left her from the days that were before yesterday. She and the baby were born at one birth, and know each as much as the other of the people and things that went on before that (Love's Cross-Currents 230-231).

If related to the symbolic level of *Lesbia Brandon*, the peculiar *post-partum* amnesia of Lady Midhurst's niece corresponds to Lesbia's way of generating forgetfulness. The young poetess pictures herself as the new Persephone who has lost now the fertile, regenerative traits that the ancient goddess used to have. As a matter of fact, Persephone's sadness is not due to her imprisonment within Hades's realm, but to her confinement to the memory of human reproduction. Swinburne takes from the usual Pre-Raphaelite props white and red poppies, which adorn his fictional figure. It is also a way to emphasize how the natural cycles overlap with the mechanisms of memory: birth and death, the succession of seasons, and the sea movements have a correspondent in the cycles of memorization-forgetfulness-remembrance.

Developed along with Lady Midhurst and Lady Margaret Wariston, a chain of masculine characters (Reginald, Frank, Herbert, Denham, Linley and so forth) dovetails the typology of the Swinburnian bachelor. Irrespective of their personal and family stories, the bachelors – be they in their youth or in their late maturity – act like true oracles; they do not participate in discussions, they just give forth snippets without any real connection to the context of the conversation. Carrying an androgynous air about them, both old

people and teenagers emanate the same fascination. Using a gnomic style and being always obsessed with the memory of her own family, Helen Midhurst can be considered a feminine Tiresias, a legendary figure also referred to in Swinburne's poems from *Songs before Sunrise*:

> I am as Time's self in mine own wearied mind,/ Whom the strong heavy-footed years have led/ From night to night and dead men unto dead,/ And from the blind hope to the memory blind;/ For each man's life is woven, as Time's life is,/ Of blind young hopes and old blind memories.// I am a soul outside of death and birth./ I see before me and afterward I see.

The bachelor has indeed a problematic relationship with memory, both his own and the human race's. When reading Swinburne's novels, Maurice Halbwachs's classic distinction among individual, personal, and cultural memory is of little use (Halbwachs 53-58). David G. Riede notices, in his turn, that Swinburne is prone to the thematization of memory; for instance, his poetry seems to evince the functions of an inventory memory, on the one hand, and to respond to the signals of a "pure memory" (Riede 151), on the other. Also, in perfect consonance with the typical androgynous characters of "the celibate novel", one may recall John R. Reed's distinction between *the narratives of decadence* and *the decadent narratives*. In point of fact, Swinburne is not one of the writers that avail of the sensational bits of the decadent imagination. This happens because he prefers to explore the "poetic" functions of borderline, ambiguous situations such as incest, androgyny or flagellation.

Through his favoring of the *technique of indirection* (Hugues 294), the author of *Lesbia Brandon* shows that he was aware of the essential difference between the rhetoric and the (real) dissolving spirit of decadence, developed by John R. Reed with respect to the previously mentioned distinction between *the narratives of decadence* and *the decadent narratives*. "Indirection" means, first of all, the possibility to find a precise answer through aberration and divagation. The mediating discourse occurs between the emitter's intention and his proper words, in redundant narrative situations, when the speakers (usually two of a kind) do not want to name what they have in mind. In other terms, even though the characters of *Lesbia Brandon* mean one thing, they are invariably uttering something else. The "in-directed" meaning does not necessarily challenge the real message; on the contrary, it focuses the concealed through a paradoxical effect of "insolitation".

Dramatic techniques: serial situations and in-directed speech

Adding to "the bachelor typology" and to the "in-directed speech", the text's own theatrical features constitute the third axis of its decadent mode. The dramatic code of *écriture* is unveiled through the obstinate use of terms

coming from the theater's semantic sphere. Thus, all Swinburne's characters are "actors" or want to experiment a sort of histrionic life: "I should like to die acting – says Lesbia Brandon – I've heard of people dying on the stage" (*Lesbia Brandon* 165). Action and life, in general, can be pictured, in terms of seasonal tropes, as "comedy", "tragedy" or "domestic romance" (*Love's Cross-Currents* 241). Moreover, the word "play" preserves its semantic polyvalence: from children's play ("you two poor children are not to be given more play", remarks Lady Midhurst as if she has assumed the posture of a director) to the meaning of "a plot, a game of counter-chances". The drawing-room conversation and gestures are named by the same Lady Midhurst "exploring cruises in search of characters" (*Love's Cross-Currents* 13).

For instance, the fifth chapter of *Lesbia Brandon* re-enacts the Renaissance setting from the whimsical play *The Sisters*. Before that, in the chapter entitled *A day's work*, the characters had been prepared for the stage, being involved all together in a *drawing room novelette*, where the narrator presents the rhythms of living in Margaret Wariston's residence and brings into focus a pageant-like sequence where identities and sex are changed because of costume shifts. In the same vein, Lady Midhurst "migrates" to Lesbia Brandon's story, where she is in charge with the same directing role. The aforementioned chapter confirms that Helen Midhurst is an actress equally gifted at both 15 and 54, who dresses up in a "rococo" costume, whereas Herbert Seyton's sister (Margaret Wariston) choses a robe tailored after a Venetian picture, probably representing Lucretia Borgia:

> There is a head like you in San Zanipolo; a portrait head in the right corner of a picture of the Virgin crowned; we shall see that. Only it has thick curled gold hair, like my sister's. You had that hair when you sat to Carpaccio; you have had time to grow perfecter in since (Lesbia Brandon 227).

The men's attire (Lord Wariston' and Mr. Linley's), is composed of ribbons and silk pieces, taking after the Elizabethan fashion. The young Lunsford plays the part of Gennaro, the victim of Lucrezia's love. But the theatrical impression emanated by the whole narration comes neither from this Renaissance play's embedding nor from the intertextual techniques counting on seriality and reduplication of characters. A sense of theatricality is formed from the amalgamation of theatre and real life. When their little set-up is over and they are already installed in living-room conversation, the characters decide to keep their costumes. In this precise moment, Herbert – the only male in the company dressed up as female, is introduced to Lesbia Brandon as Margaret Wariston's twin sister. Under this disguise, Mrs. Seyton awakens Lesbia's sexual interest.

At the end of the novel, when she is lying on her death bed, Lesbia gives tongue to her desire to re-enact that precise theatrical context and to see

the feminized Herbert again. The fragment also epitomizes a phenomenon of consciousness reduplication: the avatar of ancient Sappho (Lesbia) dreams that she is actually Sappho's lover Anactoria, the one that pushes Sappho off the Leucadian cliff. The personality of Swinburne's heroine is built on the principle of scenic duality: she is both the destroyer (Lesbia, Sappho's murderer) and the creator (Lesbia, Sappho's imitator and symbolic inheritor). Swinburne's infatuation with Sappho's story and verse is manifest from the debut volume, where a poem entitled *Anactoria* is included. On the genesis of this text, the poet himself left a few valuable testimonies:

> In this poem I have simply expressed, or tried to express, that violence of affection between one and another which hardens into rage and deepens into despair... I have striven to cast my spirit into the mould of hers, to express and represent not the poem but the poet (Swinburne Replies. Notes on Poems and Reviews. Under the Microscope. Dedicatory Epistle 20-21).

But the theatricality of the text is also enhanced by resorting to female characters who have an appetite for disguise and who surely understand seriality. All Swinburnian women – in both plays and novels – wield an irrepressible attraction because their whole existence appears to be reeling off on the scene. Among them, the most representative is Mary Stuart, the Queen of Scots (lead character of the plays Chastelard, Bothwell, and Mary Stuart), who lives her royal destiny as if fully aware of acting in a play. According to the same scheme, Margaret Wariston (also spelled as Waristoun) is shown in full theatrical mood when surrounded by her children: she is paying attention to the effects that her voice pitches have on her kids, she is minutely calculating her gestures and postures. Likewise, Helen Midhurst is endowed with a keen theatrical (self)awareness; when she is in the middle of her family, Lady Midhurst is set upon a pedestal by her nephews who, almost enthralled, closely follow her words and movements. As a matter of fact, making an inventory of Swinburnian *femmes fatales*, Christian La Cassagnère demonstrates that seduction is not by far produced by the heroines' particular personalities but by a *drame scopique* (La Cassagnère in Dennis Bonnecasse and Sébastien Scarpa 243), conditioned by the sensorial activity of the spectator/ perceiver.

How to turn lead into gold: from the novel's laboratory

Like in a minuet movement where dancers exchange their places, Swinburne's heroes have an appetite for changing gender polarities and ages. The erotic plot (Margaret-Herbert), the politic plot (the ex-revolutionary Attilio Mariani), the family plot (the Waristons' and the Brandons' story of

unchaste marriages and consanguine intercourse), as well as the bohemian plot (lifestyle of the writers Lesbia Brandon and Herbert Seyton) are issued by a complicate identity equation that also brings to the novelist's attention a complex problem of dramatic technique. How is it possible – without magic aids – for a man to live in a woman's body and for a woman to live in a man's?

The argument can be unfolded by presuming a certain "inter-medial" feature of all fictional situations (for instance, the themes of sexual same-ness and incest) when gender, age, and social role are jumbled. Accordingly, from a structural viewpoint, the novel *Lesbia Brandon* seems to follow the scheme of social dances such as *minuet con trio*. The incestuous kiss between brothers (Margaret and Herbert) from the sixth chapter (*A Day's Work*) landmarks the end of the first "measure". The chapters evoking the characters' London life and experiences resemble the *trio* moment, or the rotation of partners around an axis – an idea of love in this case. The third measure is consecrated to identity shift: Margaret becomes Herbert, whereas Herbert gets to the background of the scene and lives "womanhood" for Lesbia's sake.

In the editor's remake, the "action" of *Lesbia Brandon* progresses through 17 chapters, counting168 pages. Intensely ironized and contested, the bold edition of the "frustrated masterpiece" brought off by Randolph Hugues remains the best starting point for investigating the way the prominent dramatic moods perpetuate within the epic medium. Also, Swinburnian scholars have established that the writer was working on *Lesbia Brandon* in parallel with *Chastelard*[4], the first of the three historic tragedies devoted to Mary Stuart's spectacular life, with William Blake's biography, and with the Greek play *Atalanta in Calydon*. At the same time, it might be relevant that the epistolary novel *Love's Cross-Currents* was already finished (Hugues 196-198). Taking into consideration the singularity of its conception, *Lesbia Brandon* should be interpreted as a project, as a laboratory, and cannot be granted with autonomy. Broadly speaking, it is a panopticon that provides a view into Swinburne's whole work.

Nevertheless, the variety of styles does not beat back the hypothesis of a thematic arrangement. Departing from the motifs belonging to the same thematic and typological sphere (incest, consanguinity, disciplinarian father, *famme fatale*) and from the high intra-textual mobility of characters, Randolph Hugues could establish 4 stages in the development of Swinburne's prose: 1. the version conventionally entitled *Reginald Harewood*; 2. the novel *Love's Cross-Currents*; 3. the sketch *Herbert Winwood*; 4. the novel *Lesbia Brandon* (275). Yet,

---

[4] The idea of the novels' choreographic structure was inspired by Swinburne's play *Chastelard*, especially, Act I, Scene II. The scenic indications of the minuet scene when the two pretenders to the Queen's hand – Chastelard and Darnley – revolve around the beloved woman ("they dance a measure; they pass") have been particularly suggestive for my interpretation of Swinburne's prose as they enabled me to catch the rhythmic component of the characters' movements.

there may be noted a significant difference between *Lesbia Brandon*' imaginary and the previous texts'; here, there is no disciplinarian (father or mentor), prone to inflict severe punishments on children.

Especially the variant entitled *Herbert Winwood* confirms the hypothesis that the English writer attempted at a larger narrative project and intended to create a family chronicle. However, Swinburne's project does not count on a naturalist poetics inspired by Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart*. On the contrary, as his letters attest, Swinburne hated Zola and the monstrous premises of naturalism. Thus, Swinburne's family chronicle is not meant to picture heredity miseries, but to illustrate exceptional cases that manage to escape the biological series. Moreover, Swinburne's serial narration is not based on nature's fatality, but on a psychological fatality, which makes that all his psychologies have an "anamorphic" component (Riede 53; La Cassagnère 242-254). It seems that around 1850 and 1860, Swinburne outlined an ampler two-volume work, which should have been consecrated to the cozy life of Kirklowes and, respectively, to the psychological and genetic entanglements from Ellerstone society. Very keen on biographical details, Swinburne gives clear indications about his characters' birth dates: Cecil Winwood is born in 1847, Rosamund in 1848, and Ethelbert in 1850. On Herbert Winwood's birth certificate was about to be written the year 1837, which coincides with both the year of the marriage between Philip Harewood and Amicia Cheyne and the year of Swinburne's own birth. Apparently, the fictional scheme was meant to be extended to virtual erotic relationships between Herbert Winwood-Margaret Lunsford, Anne Halden-Edward Wycombe, Anne Halden-Arthur Lunsford, Frank Halden-Catherine.

Swinburne focuses on several generations of consanguine lovers. For example, in *Love's Cross-Currents* one can discover three pairs whose erotic attachments are debatable from a moral point of view: Helen Midhurst and Philip Harewood who are in their sixties, Clara Radworth and Reginald Harewood who are in their thirties, and the teenagers Amicia Cheyne and Frederick Cheyne. The family-tree is enrooted in a family myth, that is, in the founding story about the intercourse between the archetypical Lady Margaret Cheyne and the prototypical Reginald Harewood in the 17th century. *Lesbia Brandon* too is grounded on a subtextual arabesque of incestuous relationships: Mr. Linley and Lady Midhurst are in their sixties, Mr. Denham and Margaret Wariston are in their thirties, while Herbert Seyton and Lesbia Brandon are presumed to be younger, nearly teenagers. Right in the heart of the novel, Swinburne places the intertextual reference to Shelley's *The Cenci*, a play which turns incest into a romantic myth. Also in Swinburne's version, there are two noble sisters, Margaret and Catherine, who are courted by two young aristocrats Linley and Charles Brandon; but one of the sisters, most probably the demonic Margaret, gets involved in a pre-marital relationship with Frank Seyton, a sin which would leave deep traces in the erotic imagination of future generations.

When sex ends at a certain point

The energetic flux, circulating like a voltaic arch between the two genders can be grasped from the novel's opening. Assuming the part of a *mise en abîme* (both from a thematic and from a stylistic viewpoint), chapter I of *Lesbia Brandon* is a slow-motion description of two faces – one of them female, the other male – bearing a hieroglyphic resemblance because of their gender specifications. The former is Margaret Seyton, the latter is her brother, Herbert.

Through the abyssal effect of concentric circles, the description of Margaret's eye suggests that her figure has been repeated several times before, and that, in her actual shape, it contains all colors, nuances, and secrets enclosed in the looks of her feminine predecessors. Bertie Seyton's sister carries about her, like a Russian doll, all her ancestors, and offspring; her unequaled beauty is composed, like Walter Pater's "gem-like flame", from a series of perceptions:

> Her eyes had an outer ring of seeming black, but in effect of deep blue and dark grey mixed; this soft and broad circle of colour sharply divided the subtle and tender white, pale as pure milk, from an iris which should have been hazel or grey, blue or green, but was instead a more delicate and significant shade of the colour more common with beast or bird; pure gold, without alloy or allay, like the yellowest part of a clear flame; such eyes as the greatest analyst of spirit and flesh that ever lived and spoke had noticed as proper to certain rare women, and has given for a perpetual and terrible memory to his Georgian girl. In a dark face, southern or eastern, the color should be yet rarer, and may perhaps be more singularly beautiful than even here, where it gave to the fair and floral beauty of northern features a fire and a rapture of life. These eyes were not hard or shadowless; their color was full of small soft intricacies of shade and varieties of tone; they could darken with delicate alteration and lighten with splendid change. The iris had fine fibers of light and tender notes of color that gave the effect of shadow; as if the painter's touch when about to darken the clear fierce beauty of their vital and sensitive gold had passed in time and left them perfect. The pupil was not over large and seemed as the light touched it of molten purple or of black velvet. They had infinite significance, infinite fervor and purity. The eyelashes and the eyebrows were of a golden brown, long and full; their really soft shade of color seemed on a skin of white rose-leaves, between a double golden flame of eyes and hair (1).

Having in mind Swinburne's praise of Balzac, we can discover here a replica of Paquita Valdez from *La fille aux Yeux d'Or* as well as a subtle intertextual hint at Ligeia's eyes depicted by Edgar Allan Poe in the short-story entitled *Ligeia*.

By contrast with the aforementioned models, for Swinburne, old age represents an aesthetic ideal because it engraves a special kind of beauty on people's face. Far from being worn-out, niggard and hideous, the *senex* imagined by the English author is close to the marbled tranquility of statues.

Along with an astute mind, elaborate style in both speaking and writing, psychological insight and comprehensive culture, the elder Lady Midhurst preserves her beauty and magnetism. Furthermore, even though he has the look of a satyr, Mr. Linley acts his last life scenes with the dignity of a stoic, with the disengagement of a moralist, and with a young man's sexual appetite, youth occurs at once with sexual differentiation, which triggers, in its turn, a chain of mishaps and ecstatic moments. It is during the adolescence and the old age when the human being contains both sexes, as Master Denham avers: "but sex ends at a certain point – male and female coalesce" (122).

However, the writer's most notable contribution in *Lesbia Brandon* does not lie in his "noble pleasure of praising" Balzac or Poe as models. His originality rests with Swinburne's talent in catching the imperceptible tones of Herbert Seyton's figure, almost in the same way Oscar Wilde advances in picturing Dorian Gray. Colored in ineffable golden, Bertie looks like an aesthetically upgraded version of his sister. Apart from the features that Herbert shares with Reginald Harewood from *Love's Cross-Currents* (poetic talent, bohemian spirit, and political passions), probably one of the most enhanced is this character's androgyny, which is also a means to preserve a link with the archetypal man's innocent and amoral memory. Thus, androgyny does not signal mere effeminacy; when Bertie is introduced to Margaret's guests (Lady Midhurst and Mr. Linley), the narrator comments the following: "the critics could not taint him of effeminate or vulgar bearing" (50). Additionally, when Margaret finds him sleeping in her own bedroom, she throws him a look suffused with masculine desire; when the statue rendering the embrace between Ampelos and god Bacchus is referred to (a statue that, undoubtedly, Swinburne had studied at the museum Uffizi of Florence during his Italian sojourn), the indication of same-sex love becomes quite obvious. Accordingly, Margaret has the impression that Bertie has not anything to do with the child Cupid, but with the grace of an Ampelos sculpted by Polykleitos (74).

Therefore, Herbert's face from the first pages of *Lesbia Brandon* should be taken as a masculinized treatment of a feminine model, which is a technique borrowed from the - Pre-Raphaelite theories; following details from letters and testimonies, scholars have demonstrated that Dante Gabriel Rossetti's portrait of *Joan of Arc kissing the Sword of Deliverance* departed from the lines of Swinburne's face. Both the adverbs of intensity and the adjectives' comparative forms stress that Bertie's face is more exquisite than his sister's; he is the impersonation of immemorial perfection, being undetermined in terms of gender or social role:

> While yet a boy her brother was so like her that the description may serve for him with a difference. They had the same complexion and skin so thin and fair that it glittered against the light as white silk does, taking sharper and fainter tones of

> white that shone and melted into each other. His hair had much more of brown and red mixed into it than hers, but like hers was yellower underneath and rippled from the roots, and not less elastic in the rebellious undulation of the curls. The shape of the face and set of head was the same in either, but the iris of his eyes, which might have been classed as hazel more fairly than hers, was rather the colour of bronze than of gold, and the shades and the tones of its colour were more variable, having an admixture of green like the eyes of pure northern races, and touched with yellow and brown; except for the green in them, best definiable as citrine eyes, but not easy to define; soft and shining like brilliant sea-water with golden lights in it; the pupils purple and the rings violet. Either face would have lost could they have changed eyes; the boy's even when his face was most feminine were always the eyes of a male bird. Looked well into and through, they showed tints of blue and grey like those of sea-mosses seen under a soft vague surface of clear water which blends and brightens their sudden phases of colour: they were sharp at once and reflective, rapid and timid, full of daring or of dreams: with darker lashes, longer and wavier than his sister's: his browner eyebrows had the exact arch of hers, and the forehead was higher, of a thicker and a harder white: his lips were cut out after the model of hers, but fuller and with less of purple; the cheeks and neck were not less clear and pale, but had gathered freckles and sunburns in the hard high air; his chin and throat were also copies from her on a due scale of difference, and his hands, though thinner and less rounded, were what hers would have been with a little more exposure to sun and wind (2-3).

In spite of their common artistic aspirations and talents, Sappho's heir (Lesbia Brandon) and Ampelos's (Herbert Seyton) cannot engage in a natural, Dionysian relationship as all the others do. Moreover, Lesbia declares that she might be considered Bertie's *major* (101).

The second chapter captures the daily rhythms from Ensdon, where Bertie passes his childhood. Inspired by the views Hadji-Algernon kept from the Isle of Wight – *the inland moors* and *the sea* (7, 9), Ensdon residence is set in-between darkness and light, in-between unconscious and superconscious. An "unmeasured" quantity of French and English literature determines a book-mediated perception of reality whose main feature is the ambivalence of the child's responses to the cultural stimuli (10). But, once the child gets over the "pagan" stage of childhood, he is forced into maturity by his tutor's didactic "experiments" based on "elaborate" stories of cruelty, whip, rod and other physical traumas (13-14). Yet, in spite of brutality, Bertie's relationship with Denham does not seem to epitomize a handbook case of victim-aggressor attachment. No matter how much their forces can be really compared, the two men engage themselves into a "duel" (17), anchored in the principles of masculine aristocratic honor. Paradoxically, it is not Bertie the one who is traumatized, but Denham himself, as he has to censure his instincts, to get through "quiet stages of perversion" (20), eventually to refine the erotic drive awaken by his half-sister, Margaret.

By far the most consistent from a narrative viewpoint, the fragment entitled *A Day's Work* (running along chapters II, IV, V, and VI) is formed from the assortment of various episodes that happened during a day's time. It goes without saying that, as a novelist, Swinburne wanted us to picture Herbert Seyton as a perfect *gentleman*. All in all, Herbert Seyton behaves like a hero and not like an anti-hero (in Stephen Dedalus' fashion for instance) in each of the following circumstances: when he endangers his life in order to save a child from drowning, when he discusses with Walter Lunsford about education through a harsh disciplinarian spirit, when he is whipped in the library of Ensdon Residence, when he engages in literary discussions with his sister's guests, and when he plays his strange role in the relationship with Lesbia Brandon. The incestuous scene that took place between the siblings Margaret and Bertie Seyton (the kiss) is only a way to enhance the moments when Herbert Seyton becomes a man, thus when he steps outside Lesbia Brandon's erotic interest.

By getting beyond the novel of manners, the writer aims at bringing out into full relief a sort of *écriture* stamped by gender cues. After a quick scan of the human samples gathered in Lord Wariston's dining room, we can see how the two genders separate the domestic spaces and their ways of discoursing about reality. Nevertheless, Herbert's androgynous beauty tarries as a common topic of both sides. The men tell stories from the old times of regency and remind themselves about Helen Midhurst's incestuous relationship with her son-in-law, while the women comein the drawing room. Bertie is left only with Lady Midhurst and "the sadist" Mr. Linley who press him to debate over manhood and school floggings. Chapter IV brings more details about life at Ensdon. Randolph Hugues notices that these four chapters cover a period of over 4 years; it is also highly probable that Swinburne imagined a narrative scheme implying Margaret's elopement with Denham after a similar script to that played by Clara Radworth and Reginald Harewood in *Love's Cross-Currents* (Hugues 341).

Chapter V presents us with a Herbert Seyton who is no more a lethargic hermaphrodite, prone to be influenced and activated on either his feminine or masculine side. On the contrary, he behaves like an easy-going young man, a bit touched by his failed academic experience. Gathered in a similar formula for the second time, Margaret Wariston's guests are in the mood for charades and *quid-pro-quo*s. Again, *mutatis mutandis*, they brew a drawing-room play. For the play, Herbert puts on a woman's attire and, dressed like that, he awakens Lesbia Brandon's erotic interest. But once he returns again to his masculine identity, the hero finds out that he cannot become a partner for the famous poetess; the only thing they share in common is their artistic ideals and their sense of failure.

Chapter VI contains a narrative about the Balaklava assault. Margaret's guests appear to be particularly impressed by the story of two lovers (the motif of *Les Noyades* is here obvious) who, tied up tightly, are thrown into the

sea. Chapter VII confirms Herbert Seyton's artistic destiny. More and more sterile, he is haunted by the idea that the perfection of Beauty cannot be caught in words. But is this a way to suggest that the Decadent ideal itself (art for art's sake) should be treated only in terms of artistic behavior and not in terms of artistic production? Indeed, Herbert pursues the sense of Beauty while his feminine counterpart, Lesbia, chases after the beauty of Sense. Seated at Lesbia's feet, the young poet finds out that his lover (also his aesthetic trainer) can neither love a man nor marry:

> And now you must take me as I am. If I could love or marry, I am sure I could love and marry you, absurd as people would call it. But I can't. I don't know why at least I don't wholly know. I am made as I am, and God Knows why – I suppose. You quite deserve that I should be fair to you, and truthful. I never felt for anyone what I feel for you, and shall while I live. I do really in a way, so to speak, love you. And you can see by my way of telling you this that I can never by any chance love you otherwise or love you more [...] But you must understand there may be love between us, but must be no more lovemaking. I am not marriageable. Neither you nor I will ever revert to this (99-100).

The following fragments (entitled *Turris Eburnea*, *Another portrait*, *An Episode*, *La Boheme Dedorée*) catch/offer glimpses of London's social life; the wagtail Leonora Harley, Linley's lover and afterward Herbert's, is described as "a woman too stupid for vice or virtue" (105). Perfectly contrastive to Leonora's figure is Count Attila Mariani's character; he is an old militant of the Italian cause, a revolutionary and an anti-Bonapartist or, in the author's own words "an aristocrat and Republican, virgin and martyr" (108). Knotting together countless contradictions, Mariani exercises a tremendous influence over the young Seyton as the dialogue from chapter XI (*An episode*) illustrates.

This piece makes it clear how Swinburne conceived his own "republican" allegiances. Departing from an integrative and "unionist" paradigm and refusing "the municipality" of historic republics, Swinburne's democratic ideal did not ground on either the power of the many or on the principle of equality. Swinburne's republican ideal represents an average position between the old aristocratic values and the new social order praised by Alexis de Tocqueville in his work on America. Thus the Victorian writer's political thinking directs towards a sort of paradigmatic humanism that is apt to surpass the history's accidents and catastrophes and keep humankind unchanged: "I see not a certain number of men, a given number of years; I see humanity and time" (114). Unfinished, Chapter XIII is left without a title. It focalizes a discussion among three cynical voices; Lady Midhurst, Lady Wariston and Mr. Linley speak about a conflict between art and nature, also put in terms of ideological opposition between "aristocracy" and "democracy":

> I fear sometimes that nature is a democrat. Beauty, you see is an exception; and exception means rebellion against a rule, infringement of a law. This is why people who go in for beauty pure and plain – poets and painters and all the tail trash of the arts, besides all men who believe in life – are all born aristocrats on the moral side (119).

Presented as such, these principles can serve as a framework for the following chapter entitled, in de Sade's fashion, *Les malheurs de la vertu*. It is the right moment to unveil "the history" of the odd figures crammed together in Lady Wariston's dwelling. By far the most narrative of them all, this episode presents Denham paying a visit to his former tutor, Mr. Linley. A letter that appears out of the blue is the pretext for unfolding an intricate genetic story, which finally sheds light on the liaisons among all Swinburne's characters. Bertie's ex-tutor and Margaret's ex-lover (Denham) finds out that he is half-brother to the two Seytons. Moreover, he discovers that, soon after she had abandoned Denham, Denham's mother got married to Lord Brandon, which also makes Denham a half-brother to Lesbia. In this moment, Denham's concern is not his previous cruelty (as Bertie's tutor), but the burden of the previous generation's foolishness. From a cruel aggressor he now turns into a victim: "then it struck him that the whole involved story might be a sudden fiction, kindled by wine and lascivious fanciful humour in the labouring brain of this inventive cynic, this great blagueur of private life" (125).

This kind of narrative complications can be considered both an effect of indirect speech but also a typical hoax, in the spirit of critical texts where young Swinburne derived great satisfaction from inventing Decadent authors (Félicien Cossu, Ernest Clouët and suchlike) who could offend the Victorians' prudery (Patraș 158).

The overall impression left by the fragment *Via Dolorosa* is that it represents an experiment of narrative and theatrical hybridization. The demonic Margaret Wariston is now the mother of four children. As she chants old Scottish ballads or poems composed by Uncle Herbert, her offspring is magnetized by Margaret's theatrical gesticulation. Served with a mixture of death and cruelty, they are introduced to the melancholic beauty of decomposition and decay:

> Her singing rather than her song had fulfilled her threat; before she ended, the boys stood by shuffling, with cheeks that twitched and eyed that blinked, stung by the bitter sweetness of her soft keen voice. She lifted her face and laughed again; as though their tears had the power to dry her own [...] As the fierce fragments rang from her lips, their eyes glittered and their lips moved; now they stood abashed and troubled. The brilliance of her voice and face became stronger at each note; her features assumed a fierce and funereal beauty, her eyes a look of insane and bitter foresight (154-155).

Swinburne seems to be in his best command of dramatic techniques because the episode starts with the separation of two lovers (which is rather imprecise and presumably out of context) and ends with the movie-like scene of Denham's suicide. The intensity can be measured through Margaret's gestures and speech with her children; apparently innocent, many of the mother's utterances have the gravity of choruses from Ancient tragedies.

The chapter coming before the last displays the scene of Lesbia's death. We find out that, after Denham's suicide, the young Herbert Seyton suffers a sort of "inward defeat"; his whole existence is marked by "the shadow of a hopeless hope, the phantom of labor unperformed" (157). Consequently, more than an aggressor, Denham used to be a virile referent, a symbol of manly behavior. Half-sister to the one who committed suicide, Lesbia is the embodiment of the auto-referential work of art that can dispose of both its creator and its worshippers. The refinement of Swinburne's own art in conveying Lesbia's death should be proven by an extended quotation. Following John A. Cassidy's suggestions (Cassidy 85-88), Pascal Aquien affirms that the scene has the greatness of *Traviata*'s finale (Aquien 188). I believe that the resemblance with Violetta from *Traviata* can be related only to the atmosphere of contaminating *malaise*. Nonetheless, one can elaborate on this hint and find a richer ground of reflection in the comparison with other androgynous *enchantresses* such as Norma or Turandot.

Addicted to perfumes and opium, Lesbia acts her part with ghostly, slow gestures while her voice sounds almost prophetical. As she lays dying, the poetess feels only the slow decay of flesh: "I'm dying upwards", she says (159). In fact, Lesbia confesses that she experiences agony as an enhancement of vital signs, a form of exceeding vitality. Now reduced to an infantile Bertie whose love should be "sad and pure as a prayer without hope" (160), Herbert becomes the depository of her dream about the old and the new Proserpines. While the beauty of the old goddess used to be nurtured from life itself, the beauty of the new Proserpine comes from lifelessness and stillness. This new goddess – *gravis dum suavis*, as Giorgio Aurispa describes his lover in the novel *Il trionfo della morte* – has no "memory" and no "aspiration", Lesbia being the only one who, among Swinburne's chains of characters, will not be subjected to the endless chain of anamorphosis. The only one who will not be repeated as everybody else:

> Then I tried to see Proserpine, and saw her. She stood up to the knees almost in full-blown poppies, single and double. She was not the old Proserpine who comes and goes up and down between Sicily and hell; she had never seen the sun. She was pale and pleased; there was nothing in her like memory or aspiration. The dead element was vital for her (161-162).

Under woman disguise (in order to please his friend in agony), Herbert Seyton agrees to be his sister's surrogate image.

The sacrifice of Bertie's tutor (also, the sacrifice of Margaret's incestuous lover) as well as Lesbia's exit are not instances of moral justice. On the contrary, one must keep an eye on the relationship between Herbert and Margaret, being perfectly aware that Denham and Lesbia (who are half-brothers themselves) represent only collateral victims of this story of mediated love and of indirect discourse. In fact, Margaret and Herbert experience mutual love only through mediators. The intricacy of consanguine relationships – up to a point where the reader feels that all of them are related and lead promiscuous lives – reinforces the aesthetic value of brotherly love.

Through his narrative explorations, Swinburne devised a different way to think the relationship between authoritarian (between complementary partners) and egalitarian love (between equal or identical partners). The Austrian novelist Robert Musil – who, if we give credit to his essays, was quite familiar with Swinburne's works (Musil 218) – developed the same scheme in *The Confusions of Young Törless* as well as in his great project *The Man without Qualities*. For the two novelists who approached the theme of incestuous relationships, this kind of love represents the only scenario where the human being disentangles from its celibate condition and where actual replacement can be conceived.

WORKS CITED

Aquien, Pascal. "Lesbia Brandon, ou l'art et la lanière." *Tombeau pur Swinburne.* Sous la direction de Dennis Bonnecasse et Sébastien Scarpa. Éditions Aden, 2010, pp. 35-67.

Bertrand, Jean-Pierre, Biron, Michel, Dubois, Jacques, Pâque Jeannine. *Le roman célibataire. D'À rebours à Paludes*. Éditions José Corti, 1996.

Călinescu, Matei. *Cinci fețe ale modernității: modernism, avangardă, decadență, kitsch, postmodernism*. Translated by Tatiana Pătrulescu and Radu Țurcanu. Univers, 1995.

Cassidy, John A. *Algernon C. Swinburne*. Twayne Publishers, 1964.

Chew, Samuel C. *Swinburne*. Archon Books, 1929.

Curtis, Dahl. "Autobiographical Elements in Swinburne's Trilogy on Mary Stuart." *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 3, issue 2, 1965, pp. 91-99. Accessed in March 2011, http://www.saintbonaventure.com.

de Palacio, Jean. *Figures et formes de la Décadence*. Séguier, 1994.

Dellamora, Richard. *Masculine Desire. Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism*. University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Fletcher, Ian. *Swinburne*. Longman, 1973.

Gilman, Richard. *Decadence. The Strange Life of an Epithet*. Ferrar Straus and Giroux, 1979.

Gosse, Edmund. *The Life of Charles Algernon Swinburne*. Macmillan & Co, 1917.

Grădinaru, Camelia. *Discursul filosofic postmodern*. Institutul European, 2010.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Edited, Translated, and with an Introduction by Lewis A. Coser. The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Henderson, Philip. *Swinburne. Portrait of a Poet*. Macmillan, 1974.
Joad, C.E.M. *Decadence. A Philosophical Inquiry, Part I. Principles of Decadence*. Faber and Faber Ltd., 1948.
Kuduk Weiner, Stephanie. *Republican Politics and English Poetry, 1789-1874*. Macmillan-Palgrave, 2005.
La Cassagnère, Christian. "Entre texte et fantasme: la famme fatale de Swinburne." *Tombeau pour Swinburne.* Sous la direction de Dennis Bonnecasse et Sébastien Scarpa. Éditions Aden, 2010, pp. 50-76.
Lafourcade, Georges. *La Jeunesse de Swinburne*. Paris, 1928.
Lang, Cecil Y. (ed.). *Swinburne Letters*. Vol. I-VI. Yale University Press, 1959-1962.
Levin, Yisrael. "Introduction." *A. C. Swinburne and the Singing Word. New Perspectives on the Mature Work*. Edited by Yisrael Levin. Ashgate, 2010, pp. 5-15.
Mayfield, John S. *Swinburneaiana. A Gallimaufry of Bits and Pieces About Algernon Charles Swinburne*. The Waring Press, 1974.
McGann, Jerome J. *Swinburne. An Experiment in Criticism*. Chicago University Press, 1972.
Murfin, Ross C. *Swinburne, Hardy, Lawrence, and the Burden of Belief*. The University of Chicago Press, 1978.
Musil, Robert. *Precision and Soul: Essays and Addresses*. Edited and Translated by Burton Pike and David S. Luft. The University of Chicago Press, 1990.
Overton Fuller, Jean. *Swinburne. A Critical Biography*. Chatto &Windus, 1968.
Paglia, Camille. *Sexual Personae. Art and Decadence from Neferititi to Emily Dickinson*. Yale University Press, 1990.
Pater, Walter. *Renașterea*. Translated by Iolanda Mecu. Univers, 1982.
Patraș, Roxana. *Cântece dinaintea Decadenței. A.C. Swinbune si declinul Occidentului*. Timpul, 2013.
Praz, Mario. *The Romantic Agony*. 2nd edition. Translated by Angus Davisdson. Collins, 1966.
Riede, David G. *Swinburne. A Study of Romantic Mythmaking*. University Press of Virginia, 1978.
Rooksby, Rikki. *A.C. Swinburne: A Poet's Life*. Scolar Press, 1997.
Rosenberg, John D. "Swinburne." *Victorian Studies*, vol. 11, issue 2, 1967, pp. 131-152.
Ross C. Murfin. *Swinburne, Hardy and Lawrence and the Burden of Belief*. University of Chicago Press, 1978.
Swinburne, Algernon Charles. *Chastelard*. Chatto&Windus, 1878.
---. *Lesbia Brandon. An historical and critical commentary being largely a study (and elevation) of Swinburne as a novelist*. Edited by Randolph Hugues. The Falcon Press, 1952.
---. *Love's Cross-Currents. A Year's Letters*. Chatto & Windus, 1905.
---. *Songs before Sunrise*. Chatto & Windus, 1871.
---. *Swinburne Replies. Notes on Poems and Reviews. Under the Microscope. Dedicatory Epistle*. Edited by Clyde Kenneth Hyder. Syracuse University Press, 1966.
---. *The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne (Bonchurch Edition)*. Edited by Edmund Gosse & Thomas J. Wise. William Heinemann & Co, 1925-1929, vol I-XX.
Thomas, Donald. *Swinburne. The Poet in His World*. Oxford University Press, 1979.
Weir, David. *Decadence and the Making of Modernism*. University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.
Wilson, Edmund. "Swinburne of Capheaton and Eton." Algernon Charles Swinburne, *The Novels of A. C. Swinburne*. Greenwood Press Publishers, 1978, pp. 13-34.