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# Swinburne's "The Tale of Balen": an Edition with Critical Commentary

Warren Hill Kelly

University of Mississippi, warrenkelly21@hotmail.com

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SWINBURNE'S THE TALE OF BALEN: AN EDITION WITH CRITICAL COMMENTARY

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Mississippi

Warren Hill Kelly

June 2011

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## ABSTRACT

Warren Hill Kelly's *Swinburne's The Tale of Balen: an Edition with Critical Commentary* comprises a variorum-like edition of the poem that records all variances of the poem evident in its manuscript through its first and second editions, Chatto & Windus 1896 and 1904, or those editions produced during the poet's lifetime and therefore potentially bearing evidence of his editorial input. The edition forms as its basis the poet's final intention expressed in the manuscript, and notes all alterations within the manuscript and the first two published editions, and by coupling the edition's text with the notations pertaining to the manuscript, readers have access to, in effect, a transcription of the poem's manuscript.

The edition also contains an introduction that accounts for the poem's antecedents, that is, the poet's life and influences as well as the history of the Balen myth, and that traces the poem's critical reception since its publication into the present. The introduction contains also a brief user's guide and some observations regarding Swinburne's manuscript practices.

**DEDICATION**

*In Memoriam*  
David Carroll Kelly  
(1942-2002)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank some individuals, who assisted me either in their capacity as agents of an institution or on a personal basis. In the former category, I am grateful to the people of The British Museum and Library, who have kindly granted me permission to use and reproduce Swinburne's manuscript of *The Tale of Balen*, which resides in The British Museum as *Ashley 4409*. Additionally, I am thankful to the library staff of the academic libraries where I conducted research, including the university libraries at The University of Mississippi, Cornell University, and Florida Atlantic University.

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## INTRODUCTION

Taken together, the present edition of *The Tale of Balen* and this introduction are designed to provide a reader with a view of the poem's influences and evolution and an account of its changing interpretations over time. To those ends, the poem's text comprises, in a variorum-like format, a record of alterations to the poem from its manuscript through its first two published editions, or those produced during the poet's lifetime. I also survey in my introduction Swinburne's biography with special reference to its bearing on the poem, the poem's antecedents and analogues, and an overview of the poem's critical reception.

### **Swinburne's Biography**

In London on April 5, 1837, Algernon Charles Swinburne was born into an aristocratic family, of which he was the eldest of six children. The household resided mainly at the family seat on the Isle of Wight, but periodically visited another family house in Northumberland, locations that fostered the poet's devotion to the natural landscape and the sea. These affections appear in *The Tale of Balen* in the poet's numerous natural descriptions, especially at the beginning of each of the poem's fyttes.

Swinburne's education, of course, pervades *The Tale of Balen*, and all of his other works, in inestimable ways. This cultivation began at home, where his mother, Lady Jane, acquainted the young Swinburne with an array of art and literature, including the Bible, Shakespeare's plays, Sir Walter Scott's Waverly novels, those of Dickens, and the writings of Dante. Additionally she initiated his study of French and Italian at home. His learning of those modern

languages continued as he entered Eton College in April of 1849, and in his four years there he studied also classical Greek and Latin poetry and expanded his knowledge of English literature, notably Elizabethan drama. Despite Swinburne's success at Eton, unclear circumstances led to his finishing his preparation for university, under a tutor at his family's home. During this time the young Swinburne aspired to join the army, which his father, Admiral Charles Henry Swinburne forbade, likely because of his son's frailty. Instead, Swinburne attended Balliol College, Oxford University, where his family anticipated his undertaking a degree in preparation for a legal or ecclesiastical career.

At Oxford Swinburne encountered some influences that left indelible marks on his poetry and other writings. One was John Nichol, a leader within Old Mortality, a group of student intellectuals, to which Swinburne belonged. Pulled by Nichol's sway, Swinburne resigned his religious faith and adopted a belief in political republicanism, which would form the ideological foundation of some future national poetry, poems that also bear the influence of Percy Bysshe Shelley. A second influence at Oxford was the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, particularly the members Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, and Edward Burne-Jones. This movement's interest in medievalism, no doubt, sowed the seeds that bloomed years later as *The Tale of Balen*, and the poet's other medieval poems. Initially, William Morris's poem "The Defence of Guenevere" inspired imitation in Swinburne that manifested as his poem *Queen Yseult*. Although Swinburne's poetry and writing evolved at Oxford, his extracurricular commitments and idiosyncratic habits led to his leaving the university in 1860 without taking a degree.

In 1861 Swinburne took up residence in London and affirmed his intention to have a literary career, a choice his father begrudgingly consented to, and the poet's living came

originally from an allowance his father bestowed. In the city Swinburne reestablished his association with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which, with other associations, contributed to his cultivating a bohemian lifestyle, replete with alcoholism. Also, in 1862, the poet's brief love affair with Jane Faulkner regrettably dissolved. Despite these difficulties, Swinburne continued writing critical reviews and poetry, but popularity evaded him, that is, until the publication (at his father's expense) of *Atalanta in Calydon*, which received fervent praise and established the poet's reputation. This critical favor was relatively short-lived, because Swinburne's 1866 *Poems and Ballads* was denounced as unethical. Distressed by the criticism, Swinburne's drinking was exacerbated, and he had a scandalous tryst, which further deteriorated his social reputation.

These problems ultimately gave rise to another phase in Swinburne's poetic output, the artistic stage to which *The Tale of Balen* might be assigned. The period bears characteristics following from the poet's renewed interest in social, political, and religious themes, whose presence in *The Tale of Balen* should not be dismissed. Swinburne's adoption of these concerns might have been prompted by his meeting in 1867 the Italian freedom-fighter Giuseppe Mazzini, whom the poet had idealized since his days at Oxford. The first important poetic products of this period were respectively *Songs Before Sunrise* and *Poems and Ballads, Second Series*, but the 1870's and afterward witnessed also the poet's publication of dramas and criticism, some of the latter vitriolic.

After Swinburne's father died in 1877, the poet's health deteriorated markedly because of severe alcoholism, and he came near death, until his friend Theodore Watts-Dunton invited Swinburne to reside at his home, The Pines, in Putney, an arrangement that lasted about thirty

years and the remainder of the poet's life. These years at The Pines saw Swinburne's publication of many articles for periodicals; his two great Arthurian poems, *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems*, in 1882, and *The Tale of Balen*, in 1896; and a number of political-minded poems, which ironically disfavored Gladstone and Parnell (despite the poet's advocacy for Italian republicanism). Swinburne died at The Pines on April 10, 1909, and was buried in the Bonchurch Churchyard on the Isle of Wight.

## Sources and Analogues to *The Tale of Balen*

The undisputed authority on Swinburne's appropriation of sources in *The Tale of Balen*, and in all of his medieval poems, for that matter, is David Staines, who published his article "Swinburne's Arthurian World: Swinburne's Arthurian Poetry and Its Medieval Sources" in *Studia Neophilologica* in 1978. Bestowed with this resource, I shall treat this matter by giving an account of Staines's findings.

Staines initiates his discussion by remarking that, as Swinburne read Malory's *Balin, or the Knight of the Two Swords*, it would have appealed to the poet on four counts. Scholars often cite three: Swinburne's and Balen's common Northumbrian origin, Tennyson's prior adulteration of Malory's tale, and the story's capacity for probing fate's role in human lives; the fourth, interestingly, rests in William Morris's one-time intention to adapt the same story to poetry. Staines muses, "It is curious that the two stories Morris was considering were the stories which form the basis of Swinburne's two major Arthurian poems" (64).

While Morris's selection of worthwhile Arthurian enterprises might have spurred Swinburne to write about Balen, and Tristram as well, the poet adhered faithfully to Malory's text in writing *The Tale of Balen*, and admittedly so, as Swinburne divulges in a letter to Mary Louisa Molesworth, dated May 11, 1896: "The groundwork is an old tale of chivalry which I have closely followed in all its incidents, with but few additions or variations: so it is only for the treatment of it that any credit—or discredit—is due to me" (Staines 65). Swinburne's adherence to Malory as a source for *The Tale of Balen* manifests, according to Staines, as the poet's paraphrasing, sense-for-sense, if not word-for-word, the account within *Morte D'Arthur*. Such constraint appears in Tennyson only within his earliest idyll, that entitled *Morte D'Arthur*, and

the poet laureate's variance thereafter seems to have incited Swinburne to restore for Victorian readership the story of Balen to Malory's design.

The first of *The Tale of Balen's* seven cantos, or fyttes, constitutes the most original, Staines contends, because it holds several variances from Malory. Whereas he presents the damsel bound to the sword before introducing readers to Balen, Swinburne shows them first Balen in his native Northumberland and portrays the title character's arrival at Arthur's court, and only afterward relates the episode involving the damsel. Prior to her introduction, moreover, Swinburne inserts a motive for Balen's murder of a knight and his subsequent imprisonment: Balen reacts because the man disparaged the character of Northumberlanders. Malory mentions only that Balen was incarcerated for slaying one of Arthur's knights. With these additions, Swinburne makes his most significant alterations to Malory's rendering of the tale. In fact, Staines alerts his readers to Swinburne's loyalty, from the second fyfte onward, to Malory's account of Balen's story:

From the beginning of the second canto until the conclusion of the poem, Swinburne observes such close adherence to Malory that almost every stanza of the poem has a direct correspondence in Malory's text. Every character in Malory is introduced into Swinburne's poem in the same context and with the same relative importance. No incident in Malory has been omitted by Swinburne. In addition, his attempt to recapture the medieval atmosphere of the story prompts the poet to employ a large degree of close verbal fidelity. The poem becomes an exact retelling of Malory with appropriate descriptive embellishments to paint the setting more vividly or to emphasize the intensity of the actions of the characters. (Staines 65-66)

Although after his first canto Swinburne varies his narrative little from Malory's, minor textual variations do appear, and Staines notes them in his article. For example, Swinburne expounds on the knights who lack the qualities needed to free the damsel from the sword, and also in this episode, the poet disrupts Malory's chronology of contesting knights by incorporating Launcelot,

Guenevere, Tristram, and Iseult into the spectacle. Notable deviations do not appear again until Balen's combat with Lot: at the latter's burial, Swinburne includes not only Morguase and her four sons, as Malory does, but also Mordred, whose attendance prefigures a disastrous destiny for Arthur's court and perhaps for Balen as well. While Swinburne presents the episodes involving Garlon and Pellam with relative fidelity to Malory's version of events, Staines mentions that Tennyson adapts these scenes unreservedly. Swinburne's only significant alteration to these accounts appears as his enhancement in detailing of Pellam's chapel.

In conclusion, Staines finds that Swinburne's *The Tale of Balen* forms "a close paraphrase" to Malory's account of Balen. Swinburne's only omissions comprise Malory's foreshadowing of eminent occurrences in *Morte D'Arthur*, exclusions entirely fitting Swinburne's limited focus; they include allusions to Galahad and his search for the Grail, Lancelot and his immorality, and the demise of the Round Table. The poet's primary generalized additions come in the form of natural and seasonal descriptions, as well as well-integrated insinuations of the power of fate in Balen's life, which serve to make him seem the sufferer of destiny, rather than of his own rashness.

Staines does not trace the genealogy of the Balen story earlier than Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* to its sources in the thirteenth century Old French Post-Vulgate Cycle, but this lapse may be appropriate because Swinburne dealt solely with Malory, or so all available evidence indicates. Looking for sources written prior to *Morte D'Arthur* befits a study of Malory's work itself, not its descendents. And while no text is derived from Swinburne's *Tale of Balen*, an analogous text exists in Tennyson's "Balin and Balan" from *Idylls of the King*. A reader might even be tempted to treat it as a secondary source to *The Tale of Balen* because Tennyson's idyll

predates Swinburne's tale by ten years and because Swinburne's reaction to the prior work constitutes a motivation for his own composition. The two works bear so many dissimilarities, though, that only their classification as analogous texts is sustainable.

So that readers may recognize the degree of difference between *The Tale of Balen* and Tennyson's "Balin and Balan," I shall render a summary of the latter here. The idyll begins as Arthur commands an old knight to visit and solicit payment from Pellam, who has refused to send the king tribute. Perhaps fearing for his life, the aged treasurer tells King Arthur that two unknown knights abide outside Camelot, near a fountain, two who accost, dual, and defeat any passer-by knight; and so mercifully, Arthur instructs his old servant to travel another route. Then, the king conceals himself and engages these knights, who reveal their mission as dishonoring all of the Round Table knights, and after assenting to their challenge, Arthur readily defeats both men.

At a later time, one of Arthur's heralds invites the two knights to court, and there, King Arthur asks them to identify themselves. Balin responds and says that they are brothers; he is called Balin the Savage, and his brother, Balan. Relating his story, Balin reveals that, three years prior and in a rage, he struck one of Arthur's thralls, a crime for which Balin was exiled. Prone to such episodes of madness, Balin says that the condition worsened during his exile, and only the support his brother, Balan, has kept him in check. Moreover, he discloses that the exile inspired such bitterness in him that he has aspired to defeat many of Arthur's knights so that he may convince the king that he is a great knight, worthy of readmission to the Round Table. In this endeavor, he had been undefeated until recently, he confesses, when an unnamed knight



unseated him from his horse. This moment of complete honesty, rather than all of his fighting, somewhat ironically, proves the action that prompts Arthur to readmit Balin to the court.

Days later, the ambassador who was sent to Pellam reappears and proclaims that King Pellam, formally irreligious and troublesome to Arthur, has recently converted to Christianity, and now traces his descent from Joseph of Arimathea, performs various religious rites, and claims to possess the sword the Romans used to pierce Christ's side. In fact, Pellam currently holds so little interest in earthly affairs that he has entrusted his kingdom to Garlon, his heir apparent. The latter paid the sought tribute, if grudgingly. The envoy also reports that, returning to Arthur's court, he found a murdered knight and first assumed that Garlon had committed the offense, but later learned that an evil forest demon had actually killed the man. After hearing this news, Arthur calls for a volunteer knight to pursue the murderer, and wishing to prove himself, Balan accepts the quest, but prior to his setting out, he instructs his brother, Balin, to temper his moods.

While his brother is away, Balin vows to enhance his chivalric qualities, and to this end, he emulates Lancelot, the most celebrated knight at Camelot, and he idealizes Guinevere, whom he regards as a paragon of female perfection. In these endeavors, Balin succeeds—until he witnesses a clandestine meeting between Lancelot and Guinevere, a violation that undermines his new-found faith in gentility. The shock causes Balin to lapse into his former insanity, and in rage, he leaves Arthur's castle for the forest, in the direction his brother traveled. Balin, too, wishes now to locate the demon because he hopes that he may unleash his rage on the evil creature and thereby relieve himself of his madness. Traveling recklessly, Balin does encounter

the demon, who attacks him and defeats him, because of the knight's distraught state. Without his lance and sword, Balin walks to Pellam's castle.

There, Garlon shows great hospitality toward Balin, but their rapport wanes after Balin praises Queen Guinevere and then Garlon counters by slandering her. Upset, Balin controls himself and refutes the rumors. The next day, however, Garlon continues to disparage Guinevere, and Balin loses his composure and assails Garlon, who is rescued by his men. Shattering his sword, Balin retreats to the castle's chapel, where he takes the sacred lance, with which he fights his way outside. He escapes his pursuers and finds his horse, but feeling he had discredited Guinevere, whose emblem adorned his shield, he discards it.

Fatigued by his rage and his futile efforts to restrain it, Balin falls asleep in the woods. As Balin slumbers, Vivien and her squire, enemies of Arthur, discover him, and after Balin awakens, Vivien requests that he escort her to Arthur's court. Balin declines, protesting that he is unworthy to attend the royal household and vowing that he will inhabit the woods for the remainder of his life, as suits a savage. At this self-debasement, Vivien laughs at him and causes Balin to believe that she taunts him; however, she explains that she found irony in his attitude, because of the hypocrisy and corruption already present at Camelot. She bolsters her allegations with malicious lies and misrepresentations, and unable to bear them, Balin flees into the forest's depths.

There, still seeking the wood-demon, Balin hears his brother's cries of madness, and he mistakes them for the demon's screams. Hurrying to find and fight the fiend, Balin takes his squire's shield, instead of his own. When the brothers meet, they are unable to recognize each

other, and they fight fiercely. Each brother mortally wounds the other, and only as they lie dying do they discover each other's identity and recognize the tragedy of their outcome.

Although Tennyson's idyll and Swinburne's tale share common features, they present different narratives—the latter demonstrating strong adherence to Malory, the former strong poetic license. Remarkably, no other canonical writer in the English language has treated the dynamic story of Balin since these two Victorian poets did. Otherwise, T. H. White employs the names *Balin* and *Balan* for two hawks whom Arthur meets in *The Sword and the Stone*, and in 1977, the popular fantasy writer Douglas Carmichael adapted the Balin story in his novel *Pendragon*.

## A Survey of the Poem's Critical Reception

In the following paragraphs, I catalogue chronologically and summarize accordingly the corpus of criticism on Swinburne's *The Tale of Balen*.

The earliest lengthy study appears in 1925 in the quarterly *Neophilologus*, where Willem Van Doorn publishes in four installments and in six sections "An Enquiry into the Causes of Swinburne's Failure as a Narrative Poet. With Special Reference to the 'The Tale of Balen'." Van Doorn discloses outright his negative disposition toward the poem in his essay's title. In its first section, he begins by lamenting readers and critics' tendency to canonize the marginal works of otherwise outstanding poets. With his unfavorable attitude toward the poem and toward its approving readers established, the critic renders a litany of the poem's detractors, whom Van Doorn congratulates, and of its advocates, whom he discredits. Although the merits and demerits of the poem's critics, as Van Doorn issues them, invite debate, a scholar wishing to inventory the earliest critical remarks on the poem, however brief, would likely find this portion of the essay useful.

In the article's second section, Van Doorn questions the sincerity of Swinburne's republicanism, which the poet espoused under the influence of Giuseppe Mazzini and Victor Hugo, and the critic alleges that the poet's works' lack of censure against the English monarchy and government evinces the poet's failed conviction. Regardless of whether Swinburne's later poetry, including *The Tale of Balen*, accomplishes a political goal, Van Doorn's apparent expectation that Swinburne would, in those works, compose didactic verse may suggest that *Balen* merits examination for a subtext, perhaps a social or political analogue contemporary to the poem's composition.

After impugning Swinburne's politics, Van Doorn challenges the poet's avowed artistic method and its realization in his work. From Swinburne's critiques of his own work and others', Van Doorn deduces that the poet's aesthetic code is the following: "what is wanted is a thoughtful, not a sentimental poem, in which there is a maximum of effect achieved by the expense of a minimum of apparent effort" (41). Armed with this metric, the critic measures one of Swinburne's purportedly greatest poems, "Hertha," as deficient according to his own criteria. The defect here appears in the poem's seeming lack of concision. Arguing that, if such faults blemish Swinburne's best output, then they likely pervade his whole poetic corpus, Van Doorn casts doubt on whether the poet's aesthetic convictions are real.

In the essay's third section, Van Doorn turns his attention to the shortcomings he perceives in Swinburne's poetic sound, his verse's music. The critic begins this enterprise by citing Gunnar Serner's 1910 dissertation *On the Language of Swinburne's Lyrics and Epics*, where Serner endorses the poet's verbal music and goes so far as to call him "the Paganini of lyrical poetry" (120). Resorting to *ad hominem* attack, Van Doorn repudiates Serner's commendation of Swinburne by alleging that Serner evidently has a poor ear for poetry based on his dissertation's "uncouth sentences" (121). The critic's proclivity to slander continues as he counters Swinburne's musicality by asserting that his reading of Latin and French were flawed. From these unsubstantial attacks, Van Doorn turns to an actual examination of the Swinburne's verse, which the critic deprecates because it is "full of awkward vowel-combinations or cacophonous repetitions of the same sounds" (123). Nonetheless, Van Doorn acknowledges that a number of credible scholars and critics have favorably reviewed Swinburne's poetic music—J. W. Mackail, Edmund Gosse, and Professor Saintsbury—but this seeming mitigation of or

counterbalance to the critic's disapproval soon gives way to his attenuation of those men's endorsements, especially Saintsbury's. Van Doorn asserts that a scrutiny of Saintsbury's review's wording reveals that Swinburne's poems "are not at all concerned with melodiousness properly so called, but exclusively with metrical effects" (124). The poetic outcome, according to Van Doorn, is: "The tumultuous rush of Swinburne's verse carries reader or hearer along; the strong rhythmical beats have the effect of drumming and rattling instruments of percussion. They intoxicate, and put intellect and senses asleep, as tomtoms and gongs stir up savages and barbarians to all-oblivious frenzy" (125). Any occurrence of music or melody within these hypnotic rhythms constitute, for the critic, a "by-product" or an accident.

In the essay's fourth section, Van Doorn addresses *The Tale of Balen* proper, and despite his bias against the poem, he presents neutrally a wealth of information about it. After alleging that the story of Balin is "one of the least interesting of the whole *Morte Darthur*" and assessing Malory's (and by extension Swinburne's) narration of it as "a failure and a chaotic jumble," Van Doorn outlines the poem's storyline with perhaps the most detailed synopsis available in English (199). He divides the story into fourteen sections, each of which he carefully summarizes. His headings for the fourteen episodes follow: the Episode of the Damsel with the Sword; the Episode of the Lady of the Lake; the Episode of Launceor; the Episode of the Defeat and Capture of Ryence; the Episode of the Battle; the Episode of the Sorrowful Knight; the Episode of Perin de Mountbelyard; the Episode of the Sick Chatelaine; the Episode of the Knight with the wounded son; the Episode of Garlon and Pellam; the Episode of Garnish of the Mount; the Episode of the Castle; the Episode of the Combat, the Mutual Recognition of the Combatants, and their Deaths; and the End (201-202).

Having sectioned and recapitulated the story, Van Doorn then ponders ways of understanding the text, most of which involve, directly or indirectly, possible sources or analogues. Initially, though, he dismisses some theories that had been already asserted regarding the Balin myth and its manifestations, by the date of his article. One approach addresses the brothers' Catholicism, evident in their acquisition of extreme unction and the story's inclusion of Joseph of Arimathy; however, Van Doorn rejects this basis for interpretation because the story contains little other reference to Christianity. Then, the critic considers the relevance of the solar myth theory—which, because of work in anthropology, was a favorite critical bent of the nineteenth century and was applied to the Siegfried myth. Whereas, in the Siegfried story, the characters recognize and fight each other as incarnations of darkness and light, Balen and Balan do not recognize and kill each other by mistake. Accordingly, Van Doorn finds the solar theory ill-suited to study of the Balin myth and its descendants. The same conclusion emerges from a consideration of the Balin myth's relevance to the story of Belinus and Brennius found in Godfrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Here, Van Doorn observes that the only relation between the texts appears in Godfrey's reference to Northumbria, but Belinus and Brennius are not of Northumbrian descent as Balen and Balan are. Moreover, the former pair of brothers bear the title of prince, while the latter certainly do not.

The aforementioned attempts at cross-referencing lead Van Doorn to list motifs common between Malory's story of Balin and other "sagas, tales, or epics" (203). Even though the critic does little more than offer up this listing of tropes, it reminds readers that the versions of the Balin story contain moments reminiscent of others in classical, medieval, and neo-medieval literature. For this reason, I reproduce Van Doorn's inventory in his own language: 1. the

freeing of a sword; 2. the head of the hero asked as a boon, which boon has been inadvertently granted beforehand; 3. the invisible slayer; 4. blood as medicine; 5. a kingdom suffering because its ruler has been grievously wounded; 6. a false lady discovered sleeping with a paramour of repellent aspect; and 7. ‘the custom of the castle,’ the victor succeeding to the position the man he has slain, with the inevitable prospect of being killed in like fashion himself (203).

Transitioning into an attack on Malory’s story-telling technique, which Swinburne relies upon considerably in *The Tale of Balin*, Van Doorn judges his motif-index as “the chief ingredients of Malory’s ill-constructed and badly told story” (204). The critic then references Vida Scudder’s 1917 *Le Morte Darthur of Sir Thomas Malory & its Sources* in order to allege that Malory’s psychological, not pictorial, retelling of his sources—Chretien, Wolfram, and Gottfried—lacks innovation and that the chronicler condenses the narratives in his haste to finish his enterprise. Proof of an appropriation of *Balin* source material superior to Malory’s exists, according to Van Doorn, in the 1535 Spanish *El Baladro del Sabio Merlin*, a work analogous to Malory’s, but not indebted to it. Additionally, Van Doorn observes that Tennyson’s construction of a hero in his retelling of the Balin myth resembles that in the Spanish *Baladro*, who operates according to a more probably motivation than that of Malory’s, and by extension Swinburne’s, Balin-figure. To demonstrate the alleged superiority of *Baladro*’s presentation of events, the critic systematically and extensively differentiates between the dissimilar moments in the *Baladro*’s and Malory’s account of the Balin story, and then presumes the *Baladro*’s advantage. Moreover, this Spanish text displays, according to Van Doorn, only one significant anomaly, an interpolation to an unnamed (perhaps theorized) original text: Merlin’s identification of the damsel of the sword as a sorceress and traitor who desires retribution on her brother, because he



killed her lover. Otherwise, as Van Doorn says, “artistically, both as regards psychology and picturesqueness, [the *Baladro*] is far superior to Malory’s version, which because of its baldness and exaggerated conciseness, presents a more disconnected appearance than the original can have done” (213).

In his essay’s fifth section, Van Doorn undertakes the question of what incited Swinburne to adopt the Balin story, or as the critic says, “this unpromising material” (273), as a poetic subject, and immediately, he asserts two catalysts—a feeling of rivalry and a sense of local patriotism—on both of which he expounds at length. Actually, the contest between Swinburne and Tennyson, as Van Doorn explains it, is reduced to a difference of approach when handling medieval material, rather than a rivalry. In his last idyll from *Idylls of the King*, “Balin and Balan,” Tennyson liberally adapts Malory’s source story, whereas Swinburne, in *The Tale of Balen*, reproduces it relatively faithfully. This difference does not stem, however, from Swinburne’s general practice of treating sources as immutable—a point the critic evinces by citing the poet’s departures from the Atalanta myth. Rather, Van Doorn attributes Swinburne’s adherence to the medieval source, to the influence of William Morris’s strong reverence for the Middle Ages. Morris admired medieval stories because they (and their inherent worldview) differ from Victorian creations, and so, not surprisingly, Swinburne, Dante Rossetti, and Morris’s other followers opposed Tennyson’s modernizing transformations of medieval material, and moreover, in their own appropriations, maintain the source’s design as much as possible.

In Van Doorn’s scheme to locate Swinburne’s motivations in composing *The Tale of Balen*, the critic turns next to a feeling he calls “local patriotism.” For Swinburne, this allegiance aligned with Northumberland, and while no one disputes the poet’s self-professed association

with that place, Van Doorn finds the connection more self-elected than genuine. Be that as it may, Swinburne deemed any aspersion on Northumberland and its people as a personal affront, and he suffered such an injury when Tennyson deprecates the Northumberland character by attributing Balin's violent nature to the same. Consequently, Swinburne issues a rebuttal against Tennyson's libel of medieval Northumberland, in the form of his *The Tale of Balen*.

Swinburne's treatment of the twin brothers from the borderland does not emanate, however, from a penetration of the medieval spirit, as readers find in Morris's work, but rather, according to Van Doorn, from Swinburne's uninspired imitation of Malory's account. Despite Swinburne's alleged simulation of the Balin story as it appears in *Morte D'Arthur*, Van Doorn discerns two instances where Swinburne adds to all of Malory's "absurdities and incongruities" (275). The first appears in the poem's fourth section's fourth stanza, within the "Launceor-Szene," as "Launceor's continual bawling" (275), and the second occurs in the fourth section's stanzas twelve through twenty, in the same scene, as an episode Van Doorn identifies as "utter nonsense," without explaining the basis of his judgment.

Before closing the essay's fifth section, Van Doorn rejects various positive reviews and endorsements *The Tale of Balen* received. In the *Academy*, a reviewer praises Malory's storytelling ability and then asserts that Swinburne's even transcends Malory's—a claim Van Doorn opposes by professing that Malory lacked narrative skill and that Swinburne blundered in emulating Malory and accordingly produced a worse version of the Balin story. A writer in the *Saturday Review* contends that Swinburne "catches the very spirit of the old story," and Van Doorn offsets that assertion by saying that he wonders whether "the reviewer knew a good version of 'the old story'" (276-7). The essayist then dismisses the review in the *Athenaeum* as

“too silly for words” (277), and exercises as much presumption in disapproving H. Beers’s assessment of Swinburne’s poem within the former’s 1902 *A History of English Romanticism in the XIX Century*, where he elevates Swinburne’s treatment of the Balin story above Tennyson’s in part because the younger poet’s fidelity to his medieval source reflects what Beers calls, “the true romantic method” (277). Not surprisingly, Van Doorn finds Jiriczek’s pronouncement of *The Tale of Balen* as “a little epic master-piece” in the 1911 *Viktorianische Dichtung* as being as misguided as the remarks of the poem’s other proponents.

In his essay’s sixth, and final, section, Van Doorn (finally) engages matters related to Swinburne’s narrative technique, the article’s ostensible purpose. Here, too, the critic assumes an antagonistic disposition toward the poem. With implied reference to Swinburne, Van Doorn begins by asserting that a poet who consistently lapses into redundancy does so for two reasons: “exuberance of temperament,” and “the verse-pattern chosen by the poet” (278). The first cause—“exuberance of temperament”—compels the poet to emphasize passages with variegated repetitions that give way to mismatched metaphors and other inconsistencies, and it also drives the poet to “sheer rant,” according to Van Doorn (278). The second source—“the verse-pattern”—promotes “padding” when the verse form and meter are intricate, because of their relentless demands. Such leads Van Doorn to assert that the narrative poet, as opposed to the lyric, ought to select a simple metrical form since narration requires progression and accordingly a certain amount of compositional freedom. On this point, the critic mentions the virtues of blank verse and heroic couplets for story-telling. With the proper poetic vehicles established, Van Doorn (astutely) identifies Swinburne’s stanza in *The Tale of Balen* as that Tennyson employs in “The Lady of Shalott,” which is difficult, but which the latter poet handles

masterfully in his comparatively short poem, one more impressionistic than narrative.

Swinburne's appropriation of the stanza proves impractical, according to Van Doorn, because of the poem's epic scope (which overshadows "its attempts at nature-symbolism") and duration, which runs two hundred fifty three stanzas in seven sections (of thirteen, twenty-two, twenty-one, twenty-four, forty-four, sixty-two, and sixty-seven stanzas, respectively) (279).

Encumbered by sustaining a demanding stanzaic form and rhyme scheme for such a span, Swinburne regresses to two poetic qualities that Van Doorn labels "cacophony" and "padding" (279). He supports his accusation by defining each attribute and then by listing alleged instances of each one. The first, "cacophony," manifests as "meaningless sibilancy and again and again a purposeless repetition of the same vowels," for which the critic provides examples, although the meaninglessness and purposelessness of those textual moments remain debatable (279). The second, "padding," Van Doorn explains in the following passage: "Sometimes the necessity of filling out a stanza causes [Swinburne] to put in merely superfluous matter. But as often as not the accessory stuff lacks all variety and is a weariness to the flesh. And frequently enough, the result is not only merely verbiage, but even sheer nonsense,—apart from the nonsense of the story as such" (281). Illustrations of this phenomenon attend its definition in Van Doorn's article, but his judgments here, as elsewhere, often defy readers' ready acceptance. The critic's final verdict regarding Swinburne's *The Tale of Balen* is that the poet "versified an inferior version of a second-rate story" (283) and that "if William Morris had tackled the story, we should have had the realism of romanticism," or readers would have known "that the Mediaeval mind could boast of an even greater variety than the modern" (284). Regardless of whether a

reader agrees with Van Doorn's assessment, one might well note that Swinburne, like Morris, affirmed Ruskin's conclusions about the lively medieval spirit.

Fortunately for those who favor Swinburne's *The Tale of Balen*, not all of its critics have attacked it as savagely as Van Doorn did. Nonetheless, roughly sixty years would pass before the poem received another significant scholarly treatment, or at least one in which the poem constituted a large portion of the author's focus. We might surmise that the poem's hiatus from academic scrutiny could be traced to Van Doorn's panning, but no clear evidence for that attribution exists. The poem's resurfacing in scholastic discussions accompanies a renewed interest in nineteenth-century medievalisms generally, and our poem's revival appears in Anthony H. Harrison's 1983 article "'For Love of This My Brother': Medievalism and Tragedy in Swinburne's *The Tale of Balen*."

Harrison begins his article by observing that, while *Tristram of Lyonesse* and some of Swinburne's other medievalist poems had recently interested scholars, *The Tale of Balen* largely had not. This oversight proves unmerited, according to Harrison, "because of its unique form and usual prosody as well as its energy and poignancy," all of which coming from Swinburne in 1896 discredits allegations that he had formerly peaked and then waned as a poet (470). Countering those charges and perhaps unwittingly replicating Van Doorn's opening, Harrison cites reviews and subsequent criticism that extols *The Tale of Balen*, but without the earlier critic's attempts at undermining those accolades. Here, Harrison relies on Clyde Hyder's scholarship in chronicling the critical responses to Swinburne's work. In doing so, Harrison recounts that *The Times* asserted that Swinburne's poetic treatment of the Balen story is comparable in quality to Tennyson's, and likewise offers that *The Saturday Review* judged the

younger poet's version as "truer to the spirit of the old story" than Tennyson's. Harrison also presents the positive assessments of some early Swinburne critics, including T. Earle Welby, George Lafourcade, and Samuel Chew. Welby contends that *The Tale of Balen* embodies "the freshest, most human, most lucid, least straining long poem of Swinburne's last twenty years...full of its own youth and of the clean sharp air of his native Northumberland" and is one of Swinburne's "masterpieces on the great scale" (470). Similarly, Lafourcade holds the poem is "subtle and powerful" (470), and regarding its prosody, Chew notes, "the stanza is varied in tone and color to suit the sense, now light and dancing, now swift, trenchant and severe" (470). Although these dated reviews express favorable receptions, Harrison observes that the only recent critic to affirm the poem is Jerome McGann, who regards it as "graced with a richness and artistic ease which only come when a poet's mind and craft have reached maturity" (471). And despite McGann's discussion of the poem, Harrison recognizes that no comprehensive and approving treatment of *The Tale of Balen* exists. Such a study, Harrison asserts, would serve to dispel the assumption that "Swinburne entered his dotage after 1879" and to promulgate the role that he played in cultivating the range of Victorian medievalism.

Before dealing directly with *The Tale of Balen*, Harrison expounds the virtues of nineteenth-century medievalism by asserting that "it was not merely a mode of post-Romantic escapism but was equally as often a means of glossing, evaluating, and redirecting contemporary developments in history, politics, literature, and art" (471). This claim may originate from the critic's reading of Alice Chandler's work, which he credits with ascertaining the implementation of medieval forms, settings, and stories in inculcating certain political and social purport. He also designates another (related) basis for understanding Victorian medievalism, one rooted in

some writers' conclusion that the medieval period embodied a harmonic correspondence between an individual's work practice and society's values. These authors include notably Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, and Morris. Although grouping Tennyson and Swinburne with these other medievalists may prove tempting, Harrison holds that readers should resist doing so. In the case of Tennyson, the poet held no serious scholarly interest in the middle ages; moreover, in his only major work set in medieval times, *Idylls of the King*, he "Victorianizes the characters, events, and moral significance of his materials" (472). That is, critical consensus holds that, in *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson recasts Malory's episodes to depict allegorically the discrepancy between society's professed beliefs and its lifestyle practices.

Unlike Tennyson, Swinburne studied medievalism and the middle ages conscientiously, but according to Harrison, tended toward portraying the period as if it were imbued with a Hellenic sense of tragic heroism and love. Expediting this tragic environment—corruption, disloyalty, and disingenuous Christianity abound in *The Tale of Balen's* landscape so that the protagonists, even the most stoic, suffer from a hostile fate. With this creation, Swinburne counters the Victorian tendency to venerate the middle ages and the Arthurian world, and he argues, in effect, that one historical age contains the same moral conundrums and disappointments as another. Harrison's conclusions about Swinburne's Camelot admittedly resemble those McGann made previously—diagnosing the atmosphere as corrupt and its forces as malevolent. For Harrison, the conditions sustain in Balen "a kind of Greek tragic hero in medieval armor" who, notwithstanding his best intentions, falls victim to his rashness and to supernatural powers.

Again resembling Van Doorn's essay, Harrison's contains numerical sections, which begin after four pages of preliminary discussion, whose content I just addressed. The first division turns from the poem's Hellenic tragedy to its formal qualities. Here, Harrison asserts that the very features that hinder modern readers—its form, prosody, and image patterns—double as archaisms that bolster both its medieval character and tragic worldview. Despite his contention that the poem's prosody suggests medievalism, Harrison cites Swinburne's claim within his "Dedicatory Epistle" to his collected *Poems* that *The Tale of Balen's* versification stands in contrast to a medieval one: "The form chosen for my only narrative poem was chosen as a test of the truth of my conviction that such a work could be done better on the strictest and strictest principles of verse than on the looser and more slippery lines of medieval or modern improvisation" (474). The rigid verse pattern did not register as an impediment for the poem's initial critics; however, recent ones have found fault with the poem's prosody. For example, Harrison quotes Philip Henderson, who writes that "the poem has been highly praised, but a metre resembling 'The Lady of Shallot' becomes almost unendurable when spun out to such a length" (475). Regardless of whether a reader agrees with Henderson, his observation that Swinburne's nine-line iambic tetrameter stanza mimics Tennyson's holds true.

The stanza form in both poems conveys a sense of medievalism, but as Harrison notes, the basis for this impression is "nearly subliminal" (475). Nonetheless, reasons for it reside within the poems and include "the use of frequent repetition, of short lines, and dominant one-syllable words," all of which intimate a balladic style reminiscent of a "primitive," or medieval, past. This primeval mode correlates well with the poem's plentiful natural imagery, which itself affords Swinburne various other effects, including one Harrison labels the "compressed depiction



of intense action” and the accentuation of the poem’s tragic world-view through understatement and irony (475). Additionally, seasonal imagery serves as an organizational device in the poem because the first six sections of the poem commence with an invocation of spring and the last section symbolically with a summoning of winter. Between these markers, readers encounter numerous similes and metaphors using natural images, which amplify the association of Balen with a primitive man, a natural force, subjected to an uncontrollable tragic fate. In this regard, as Harrison astutely observes, Balen resembles another of Swinburne’s medieval protagonists, Tristram. With Balen, his identity as a primitive man vulnerable to fate emerges in part from his association, in the poem’s first stanza, with the falcon and dove, Mars and Venus, or both war and love. This confluence of both benevolent and malevolent elements symbolizes Balen’s status as a force of nature, according to Harrison. As such, Balen suggests the simplicity that Victorians, such as Ruskin and Morris, connected with the middle ages. Victorian conceptions of the medieval period emanate from the poem’s natural imagery in another way too, that is by facilitating a Pre-Raphaelite “painterly” effect, found also in Gothic tapestry: a richly-detailed landscape tableau, contrasting human events, projects the stasis of nature as a constant force impacting mankind.

In his essay’s second section, Harrison turns to his interpretive focus regarding *The Tale of Balen*, the idea that Swinburne couples the poem’s medievalism—in subject, form, and atmosphere—with a Greek understanding of humanity’s tragic predicament. The medieval-Greek association antedates the Victorian period as far back as the eighteenth century, a connection that Alice Chandler, among others, has documented. Additional circumstantial proof of the thematic similarity between Arthurian and Trojan themes stands as their joint preeminence

as subjects within medieval romance. To establish the link within *The Tale of Balen*, Harrison quotes Swinburne, who, as a scholar, well knew the correspondence between the medieval and the Greek and sought to reestablish it:

The age when these [Arthurian] romances actually lived side by side with the reviving legends of Thebes and Troy, not in the crude and bloodless forms of Celtic and archaic fancy but in the ampler and manlier developments of Teutonic and medieval imagination, was the age of Dante and Chaucer.... There is no episode in the cycle of Arthurian romance more genuinely Homeric in its sublime simplicity of submission to the masterdom of fate than that which I have rather reproduced than recast in 'The Tale of Balen': and impossible as it is to render the text or express the spirit of the Illiad in prose or rhyme—above all, in English blank verse—it is possible in such a metre as was chosen and refashioned for this poem, to give some sense of the rage and rapture of battle for which Homer himself could only find fit and full expression by similitudes drawn like mine from ... the sea. (478-9)

The commonality between Greek and medieval subjects resides, as Swinburne recognizes it, in the fatalism both cultures shared and inscribed into their mythologies. And the realization of this bond would have occurred for only a few of Swinburne's contemporaries—including perhaps Morris, Pater, Hardy, and Arnold—according to Harrison, and its discovery within Swinburne's *The Tale of Balen* seems to have eluded most of its early critics, with the notable exception of Georges Lafourcade, who wrote about Swinburne's composition of the poem by saying, "with unfailing instinct he has recaptured the essential feature of the medieval theme—the sense of unjust oppressive doom heroically endured" (479).

Harrison reveals the location and character of the poem's fatalistic elements. First, he demonstrates that both the poem's narrative voice and that of Merlin serve as moderators of the story's tragedy, just as a Greek chorus provides a commentary on a hero's fate. The role finds expression so completely in Merlin that he becomes a symbol of fate in the poem, and as Harrison writes, "the narrator, too, continually reminds us that his hero's 'hap was evil as his

heart was good” (479). This virtuous soul’s incentives stem from familial and clannish loyalties, particularly those to Arthur, whose misguided decisions and directives result in kind in Balen’s actions. The discontinuity between motivation and effect promotes a morally ambiguous landscape fitting a Greek tragedy. And the symbiosis of antithetical states, their slippage, and the resulting fatalism, or doom, are likewise repeatedly reintroduced through metaphors from nature in the first stanza of each section. Although this doom haunts Balen, he meets evil and carries its burden stoically. Symbolically, he wears this affliction on his person as the sword Malison, meritoriously extracted from a damsel and relentlessly held. It serves as his cursed charm and as the instrument of his inadvertently malevolent acts, including the murders of the Lady of the Lake, Launceor, Garlon, and his brother, Balan.

Harrison tags two additional characters who serve as symbols, Arthur and Garlon. Arthur comes to represent fate first because he too endures the effects of an incomprehensible causality and second because he provokes much of Balen’s doom as the latter acts to satisfy the king. The first cause of Arthur’s symbolic value proves particularly interesting, as Harrison points out, for it allows Swinburne to incorporate a story tangential to the Balen tale, as Malory renders it, in order to emphasize his poem’s fatalistic theme. The secondary story concerns Arthur’s incest with Morgause of Orkney and the evil fruit of that union, Mordred. In this extra-textual episode, Arthur finds himself powerless to alter events and their effects, and accordingly, the references to it reinforce the appearance of Balen’s doom. The veiled allusion to this portion of Arthur’s past comes as Morgause’s appearance in the poem. She shows up twice, once before Balen frees the damsel from Malison and again for the funeral of her husband, King Lot, who undertook unsuccessfully to free his brother, King Ryons, from Balen’s custody. According to

Harrison, Morgause's representations in the poem carry strong symbolic value regarding fate because, with her, "Swinburne makes ironic use of eye imagery to remind us of fate's inevitability and complexly to suggest the ominous interaction throughout the Arthurian saga between Arthur's blind rashness and Merlin's futile vision" (481).

The second character-symbol Harrison identifies is Garlon, King Pellam's brother and "the invisible evil," who stands for Fate. In fact, it is precisely Garlon's imperceptibility that makes him correspond so well to Fate, which too arrives unannounced. Garlon comes into the poem's action initially just so. After Balen happens upon an "anonymous wayfaring knight accompanied by a maiden" who entreats Balen to fight Garlon, Balen agrees, with blind trust, to assist the unnamed knight. Soon afterward, startlingly, the knight falls dead with a spear-wound from an unseen assailant, later identified as Garlon, or Fate's emissary. The victim here both resembles and contrasts with Balen. Whereas they share forebodings of doom, only Balen exhibits a stoic indifference to them, and this quality of character produces a Greek-style tragic hero. The people who fall victim to Garlon's "invisible evil" do not, however, fulfill that model. Another such victim appears as the sorrowful father of a boy whom Garlon injured, and Garlon's representation as doom gains substantiation with that father's description of the evil agent as one who "walks and slays as plague's blind breath/ slays" (483).

After establishing Arthur's and Garlon's roles as symbols, Harrison elaborates on Merlin's function in the poem. Rather than hindering the destiny that he predicts, Merlin seems to hasten it in his very prognostication, however much his forecast would counter his own desire. In this way, Merlin behaves like a chorus in a Greek tragedy, or as Harrison writes, "like the role of the seer in much Greek tragedy, the role of Merlin as an unwilling functionary of Fate in *The*

*Tale* intensifies the poem's ironies and our emotional response to them" (484). Additionally, Merlin plays, according to Harrison, the part of an intermediary between Arthur and Balen—and between the story of Balen proper and the interlaced Arthurian subplots that comment thematically on the former.

Before closing his essay's second section, Harrison revisits his assertion that Balen satisfies the criteria of a Greek tragic hero by noting that he displays both *hamartia* and *hubris* in the expected fashion. While Balen's motivations follow from filial and fraternal values, his impulsive behavior prompts dishonorable effects. This lapse in the expected flow of moral causes and effects evinces the ethical ambiguity of the Arthurian landscape, and even if this realm frustrates readers' expectations, it generates some psychological complexity in Balen and the poem's other dynamic characters, because readers notice that even virtuous intentions can occasion evil effects and that even nefarious actions can stem from innocuous motives. In support of this claim, Harrison chronicles a litany of episodes in Balen's life that illustrate this dynamic. For example, in the poem's first fytte, a knave derides Northumberland and its people, and to preserve his homeland's and his own honor, Balen kills the rogue. Although the action appears heinous, the reason for it finds justification. Similarly, Balen's murder of the Lady of the Lake registers as abhorrent, but readers learn that by "her fell craft his mother died" (485).

And Harrison continues his listing:

[Balen's] killing of Launceor in self-defense results in the suicide of that knight's beloved. His capture of King Ryons and Lot's attempt to rescue his brother end with Lot's death and the slaughter of "many a mother's son." Balen's killing of Garlon, as prophesied, "Brought sorrow down for may a year/ On many a man in many a land." ... And, in his penultimate adventure, Balen is responsible for three other deaths. Bringing the knight Garnysshe to a garden in which his adulterous beloved lies with another, Balen watches Garnysshe rashly behead the false lovers.

Perhaps the most profound moment of this ethical uncertainty and unintended consequence comes when Balen and his brother, Balan, die at each other's hand. This culmination affords Harrison a transition into his essay's third, and final, section, addressing the tragic aspects of filial love in *The Tale of Balen*, a fated relationship Swinburne explores also in *Atalanta in Calydon*, "Phaedra," and in the novels.

The thematic prominence of brotherhood takes up a suitable residence in *The Tale of Balen*'s medieval setting because, as Alice Chandler notes, feudalism constructed a filial relationship between all people under God their Father's reign, or society's very order. Additionally, the inclusion of three fraternal pairs in the poem underscores the relationship's importance. Beyond the focal pairing—Balen and Balan—the poem presents readers with two others: King Lot and Ryons, and Pellam and Garlon. In each case, the profound sibling devotion engenders the sublime—an effect arising because "such blood ties between brothers exemplify but are not ultimately subsumed under larger secular, religious, and aesthetic systems of reciprocal filial allegiance appropriate to the feudal context" (Harrison 488). Within Swinburne's fatally doomed world or its microcosm, the poem's medieval landscape, the brothers who sacrifice themselves to one another, or one another's honor, embody a type of Arthur, whose realm's brotherly equality belies corruption and its own demise, as well as a type of Christ, whose alleged redemptive power itself represents a lie, for an atheist like Swinburne. Nonetheless, in the poem's world, these prototypes inspire in Balen (and others) a brotherly love extending to all members of the human family, and this altruism too proves doomed. Balen's generosity originates in his devotion to Arthur, or as Harrison asserts, "Arthur's paternal effect

upon Balen is to inspire transcendent emotions which generate selfless behavior” (489). The affect arises also within King Mark, who expresses sorrow at the death of Launceor and his lover; however, Mark follows this lament with resignation, a sentiment increasingly prevalent in the poem as it fulfills its thematic goals of expressing a fatalistic worldview. For the most part, King Mark’s and others’ example of selfless care of fellow human brothers and sisters accentuate Balen’s brotherly love—and its usually tragic consequences.

Standing in the sharpest relief from all other misfortunes involving brotherhood, Balen’s ill-fated confrontation with his brother, Balan, unfolds with bitter irony, because, even though Balen has often rushed perfunctorily to defend some filial or fraternal alliance, no affiliation compels him to challenge the knight who guards the island. Rather, only the “evil custom” of the place requires him to fight the man whom he does not recognize as his brother, and even prior to the encounter, Balen muses about how sinister a custom is that requires all knightly visitors to combat the knight who watches the island. According to Harrison, “Balen, like the reader, by now sees the ‘evil custom’ as a symbol of the whole tragic and fatal enterprise of life itself,” and “he is therefore resigned to its inevitability” (491). The conclusion may be as close as Harrison comes to expressing a theme for the poem, and with such, he attributes to Swinburne pessimism and atheism worthy of Thomas Hardy.

The critic expands upon this finding by drawing attention to the twin nature of Balen and Balan and by inferring that they are two halves of a whole entity, both trying to complete himself through various approximations of true fraternity, each attempt ending tragically but not fatally—that is, not fatally until they face each other, or each faces himself. Balen can perish only from his own virtues personified in his image, Balan, and in destroying himself, he escapes

the unjust world. In his essay's closing sentence, Harrison projects Balen's plight onto humanity: "As Balen's career based on thwarted filial and fraternal ideals has illustrated, this is by extension the tragedy of humanity whose pitiable fate it is to strive for fulfillment through filial, erotic, and fraternal love—but in doing so to generate only strife and be freed from frustration and suffering only in death" (492).

Harrison's culmination regarding twin counterparts provides a nexus for discussing the next major critical piece concerning *The Tale of Balen*: Joseph E. Riehl's "Swinburne's Doublings: *Tristram of Lyonesse*, *The Sisters*, and *The Tale of Balen*" (1990). Riehl starts his essay much as Harrison did before him, that is, by responding to long-standing assumptions that Swinburne's later poetry rates lowest among his output. The evidence for Riehl's rebuttal originates in the critical assessments that Paull F. Baum and later Kerry McSweeney made on behalf of "A Nympholept" and that Benjamin F. Fisher concluded from the poet's worksheets for *Tristram of Lyonesse*. Then, expanding the basis for Swinburne's later poetry's revaluation, Riehl contends that the aging poet symbolically negotiated his image as a social individual at the Pines with that of the reclusive artist by writing a "Shakespearean doubling" of characters in three later long poems (1). The device of doubling has precedence in Swinburne's work because, as Jerome McGann has argued, Swinburne used grammatical doubling, or pairing words, not only to add poetic value, but also to suggest the unity of existence. For Riehl, these grammatical doublings (with their noted purpose) extend to characters. In the three works on which Riehl focuses—*Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), *The Sisters: A Tragedy* (1892), and *The Tale of Balen* (1896)—Swinburne casts character-pairs either who are twins or who share a name. Riehl holds that, with the character duos in these poems, relationships between paired figures



metaphorically perform “psychic integration,” and in his essay, the critic devotes one of three sections to each of the aforementioned works. Because of the present edition’s scope, our attention will turn directly to Riehl’s third section, on *The Tale of Balen*.

There, Riehl draws his readers’ awareness to Swinburne’s concurrent composition of *The Tale of Balen* and the lyric poem “The Altar of Righteousness.” The latter poem attributes all of the world’s religions to humanity’s misunderstanding, in much the same way that Blake’s prophetic poems do. That is, instead of espousing a traditionally religious view of divinity, Swinburne adopts a Gnostic one, positing that, before the formulation of doctrines, mankind intuited ethical behavior through a “transcendent connection with a spirit of truth,” but one distinct from nature (6). Although this vital force remains with humanity, man’s fixed religion obscures the power’s presence within him. This befuddlement arises because man labels fate as God and because he withholds his own innate truth. Ironically, man institutes and eventually rejects one religion for another, and in doing so, acts as a god, but while he believes in his own construction, he fears himself. Swinburne’s poem “The Altar of Righteousness” explores this distorted dynamic as it occurs within Christianity too. Christ’s incarnation serves to remind humanity of its inner divinity, but the ensuing Church conflates Christ with the image of the Old Testament’s oppressive Father, personified in the early Church by Saint Paul. These thematic assertions find a parallel with those in *The Tale of Balen* when Riehl observes that Swinburne wrote to Watts in August of 1895, in effect, that “‘The Altar of Righteousness’ embodied an opposition between Hebraism and Hellenism” (7). For the ancient Hebrews, natural forces dispense God’s judgments and thereby have a direct correlating effect on humanity; however, for the Greeks, nature acts impersonally and indifferently to human lives. In “The Altar of

Righteousness,” Swinburne privileges the latter, Hellenic, worldview over the former, Hebrew, and in *The Tale of Balen*, the logic of the Hellenic scheme animates Balen’s world.

Such deliberation regarding *The Tale of Balen*’s didacticism may seem improbable given Swinburne’s relative precision in rendering Malory’s story, an allegiance Swinburne acknowledged at least twice, according to Riehl, once in a letter to Molesworth, and again in his “Dedicatory Epistle” (8). Moreover, the poet had various motivations for composing a poem, including his self-identification with and affinity for Northumberlanders, of whom Balen is one. Additionally, in 1891, Swinburne lost his brother Edward, to whom the poet lacked strong attachment, but whose death might have nonetheless inspired in the poet some reflection on the meaning of brotherhood. Perhaps the most cited cause for Swinburne’s composition of *The Tale of Balen* concerns his correcting Tennyson’s misrepresentation of Malory’s story ten years earlier in *The Idylls of the King*. Swinburne’s restorative efforts should not, according to Riehl, be construed as a transcription of Malory’s plot, but rather, as a realization of its capacity “to express a powerful understanding of fate” (8).

A variance from Malory that both Tennyson and Swinburne maintain comes as their representing Balen and Balan as twin brothers—a detail that affords the two Victorian poets the ability to consider the twins as divided parts of a human psyche. For Tennyson, this psychological division expresses itself in a Freudian paradigm:

Tennyson sees the idyll of Balin ... as an allegory in which Balin the Savage represents the uncontrollable urges which would destroy the Round Table. In Tennyson’s version, Balin attempts to suppress his rages, but when he learns of Guenevere’s infidelity, he destroys his shield and utters a wild cry which his brother Balan assumes is the bellow of a wood-devil. Unable to recognize his now shieldless brother, Balan and Balin mutually destroy each other. Rationality and primitive emotion join in battle, and both die.... Tennyson’s *Balin and Balan*

is a Freudian allegory in which the struggle between the inborn violence of Balin and the reasoned propriety of Balan eventually destroys them both. (Riehl 9)

With Swinburne's inclusion of the brother's twin nature, readers may well construe the same psychological scheme at work in *The Tale of Balen*, but Riehl distinguishes a variance between Swinburne's Balen and Tennyson's Balin—namely that Balen behaves not rashly, but rather defiantly, in light of his fate—that challenges a Freudian diagnosis, and leads to a Jungian finding of *coincidentia oppositorum*. Riehl's contention that Balen and Balan form a perfect complementary pair allows the critic to assert that the two men, when reunited, produce a single whole, an individual in step with Truth, such as the one Swinburne describes in “The Altar of Righteousness.”

This unity emerging from the two brothers fails to hold in this world, though, and the poem's description evinces this disjuncture with paradoxical language speaking simultaneously to the brothers' singularity and division. Additional circumstantial evidence of their vexed union appears in the episode immediately prior to the brothers' reunion, an incident when, after Balen kills Launceor, his lady, upon seeing her lover slain, commits suicide and says, “Two bodies and one heart thou hast slain,/ Two hearts within one body” (Riehl 10). The two may indeed live in perfect unity, but only in an afterlife, and the same reality likewise holds for Swinburne's Tristram and Iseult. In death, Balen and Balan too will find wholeness, or divine integration, and there, will transcend a world ruled by a vengeful god, the Jehovah of “The Altar of Righteousness.”

In life, Balen (and Balan) oscillate between a relative wholeness and a disunity of self, depending, respectively, on whether the twin brothers are together or apart. For example, when Balen battles Pellam in his castle, away from Balan, Balen overlooks his “second sword,” an

emblem of his complementary identity, and instead brandishes the Spear of Longinus, a religious artifact that he finds in Pellam's fortress, but moreover a weapon symbolizing Balen's appropriation of a disorienting religion. Proper orientation, integration between the brothers, breaks down initially when Balen leaves the Northumbrian childhood home he shared with his brother for Arthur's court, which holds the societal forces that, in fear, promote religion to displace innate divinity (wholeness). After entering Camelot, Balen meets only one endeavor with unmitigated success, the battle against King Ryon, and according to Riehl, it prevails precisely because Balen and Balan fight together again. In other conflicts, Balen acts independently of his twin brother, and regardless of intention, Balen triggers inadvertent consequences. Hence, Balen's fate strikes readers as accidental, but actually, it follows an intricate sequence of cultural (or socially conditioned) causes and effects. Complicating this fate, the natural world and time's passage operate indifferently to human desires. Balen's heroic supremacy emerges symbolically with his final, deadly reunion with his brother, Balan, but he merits this fulfillment "through a sustained refusal to accept guilt for what fate has compelled him to do" (Riehl 13).

By exhibiting his selfhood in this manner, Balen reveals himself as a Christ-figure, or as one who does not fear the circumstances and natural forces people generally identify as fate and as one who bravely embraces death issued by a broken world. This analogy between Balen and Christ finds corroboration in detailing that Riehl references:

Balen metes out "the dolorous stroke" to Pellam with the lance that pierced the side of Christ. Forgetting his second sword, Balen takes up the relic "Spear of Longinus" of the Parsival legend, and wounds King Pellam, engendering cosmic repercussions. In the ensuing fight at Pellam's castle, an evocation of the myth of the Fisher King, Pellam and Balan join together as a single sacrificial victim, and as the king falls, the walls of the castle are "rent from base to crown," recalling

the temple veil “rent from the top to the bottom” (Matthew 27.51) at Christ’s death. Both men lie together for three days in “death’s blind kingdom,” suggesting that they share in reenacting the three days Christ lay in the tomb. (Riehl 13)

The resemblance would seem to wane, however, because, after the events recounted, Pellam’s followers regard Balen as a tyrant, not a savior. Reconciling the story of Balen with that of Christ, Riehl amplifies the Biblical narrative with Swinburne’s account of Christ’s mishandling by the Church, as presented in “The Altar of Righteousness.” Given Christianity’s corruption, or the Pauline conflation of Christ with the Old Testament’s Jehovah, Balen’s defamation by those whom he liberated from Garlon, corresponds to the Church’s misunderstanding of the gospel. In the poem, Balen unwillingly suffers Pellam’s fate and precipitates devastation because people have misjudged him. Swinburne’s teaching, like Blake’s, tells readers that, in this world, a truth will invariably be muddled with a lie. Nonetheless, the parallel that Swinburne draws between Balen and Christ does, according to Riehl, lead to one final point in the poem, which is that the brothers’ death ends the evil “custom” of knights’ fighting on the island. Although Riehl does not articulate the Christian correspondence, readers can easily connect that custom’s dissolution with any number of practices that ceased with the conveyance of the Old Covenant to the New.

Riehl closes his article with a sentiment regarding *The Tale of Balen* that seems apropos as I close this summary of significant critical responses to the poem: “Those who have found the poem defective because it closely emulates Malory do not consider how deftly Swinburne turned Malory’s tale to his own account” (15).

## Editorial Observations from Transcribing the Manuscript and Collating Editions

In the edition proper of *The Tale of Balen*, which follows this introduction, I attempt to reproduce as faithfully and transparently as possible first the poet's final intention for the work as evident in the poem's manuscript, the alterations the poet executed within the manuscript in arriving at that final manuscript version, and variances from the former visible in the two editions published during the poet's lifetime—Chatto & Windus 1896 and Chatto & Windus 1904—which latter could reflect either Swinburne's desired change or that of his editors. Having transcribed and documented the text's evolution during the scope of the poet's life, in a variorum-like fashion, I wish to allow my readers to draw their own conclusions, rather than directing those findings and perhaps limiting their vision. Nonetheless, I would like to draw readers' attention to some phenomena rather apparent from the manuscript and the first two published editions of the poem.

First, I would like to feature Swinburne's handwritten practice of substituting the ampersand (&) for the word *and*, consistently, except when the word begins a line of poetry or a sentence. The habit might have resulted from Swinburne's weak wrist, which could have prompted him to abbreviate whenever possible, but his use of the ampersand seems so systematized that readers should at least consider other motivations. One may relate to the long history of the symbol, dating back to the first century A.D. Latin cursive, which employed the symbol as a ligature of the two letters "et" spelling the Latin word meaning *and*. Considering Swinburne's affinity for archaicism, which would well suit a work with a medieval setting, readers might ponder whether the poet might have used the symbol to add an ancient or medieval impression to the work.

Swinburne's practice of employing language and forms that project a particular locale or era is well established. As I read the following edition of *The Tale of Balen* and observe the poet's verbal modifications, I discern that he often sacrifices a pedestrian word for one that conjures a sense of a time and place much older than his own or for one that facilitates an alliterative line reminiscent of Old English verse. Other readers may well notice other patterns of apparent motivation for Swinburne's alterations.

I would note also that, despite the numerous changes Swinburne makes in the manuscript, the number of unaltered passages registers as significant too. That is, Swinburne does a remarkable job of making few mistakes, or at least finding a final wording with his initial take. Also, as I have become increasingly familiar with Swinburne's method of textual adaptation, I am struck by an inherent economy therein. For instance, in exchanging words with the same initial sound(s), the poet strikes out only those letters that he is replacing and writes only the letters replaced. These compositional practices testify to, or at least substantiate, Swinburne's literary genius.

Moreover, I hope that the present edition of *The Tale of Balen* will assist in putting to rest two allegations against Swinburne and the poem: first, the charge that the poet's talents waned after the 1870's; second, the charge that *The Tale of Balen* comprises Swinburne's mere paraphrase of Malory's account of Balin. Consideration of Swinburne's technique, apparent in the manuscript's transcription, foils both of these aspersions.

## A Guide to Using the Edition

The present edition of *The Tale of Balen* assumes as its foundation Swinburne's final intention as expressed in the poem's manuscript, which The British Library holds and catalogues as *Ashley 4409*, and this version of the poem appears on the current edition's pages above the dividing line. By coupling this portion of each page with the poet's modifications to the manuscript, appearing below the page's line and denoted by the abbreviation MS, a reader could construct essentially a transcription of the total content of the manuscript's pages. This edition, however, extends its survey beyond the manuscript to include variances from the final manuscript intention, articulated in the poem's first two editions—Chatto & Windus 1896 (C&W 1896) and Chatto & Windus 1904 (C&W1904)—both of which appeared during Swinburne's lifetime and accordingly could bear witness to his intentions regarding the poem.

The edition's methodology for documenting emendations and amendments, within the manuscript and between its finalized version and either of the subsequent editions, adheres to the notation and practices recommended by Mary Jo Kline in *A Guide to Documentary Editing*. Insertions, or added words, appear between carets (^insertion^); deletions, or deleted words, are italicized between brackets of the following shape (<deletion>); and editorial changes are bracketed ([editorial change]). Sometimes these symbols are compounded, or used in conjunction with each other, in which case they should be treated in an algebraic fashion—that is, read from the inside out. For example, the following combination--<^added, then deleted^>-- suggests that the bracketed words were added and then deleted. Also, rarely but sometimes, Swinburne's emendations are struck out so completely that they are illegible, in which cases the phenomenon is marked with brackets and an ellipse: <...>. Notations that do not lend



themselves to interpretation from these explanations will be accompanied by a footnote.

Dedication.

To my Mother,  
Love that holds life & death in fee,  
Deep as the clear unsounded sea  
And sweet as life or death can be, 5  
Lays here my hope, my heart, & me,  
Before you, silent, in a song.  
Since the old wild tale, made new, found grace,  
When half sung through, before your face,  
It needs must live a springtide space, 10  
While April suns grow strong.  
March 24, 1896.

---

1 [DEDICATION.]	C&W 1896
1 [DEDICATION]	C&W 1904
2 [TO MY MOTHER.]	C&W 1896
2 [TO MY MOTHER]	C&W 1904
3 [LOVE] that holds life [and] death in fee,	C&W 1896 <sup>1</sup>
3 [LOVE] that holds life [and] death in fee,	C&W 1904 <sup>2</sup>
7 Before you<r...> ^, silent,^ in a song	MS

---

<sup>1</sup> In the poem's manuscript, Swinburne uses the ampersand consistently for the word *and*, with the exception of the word's occurrence at the beginning of a sentence or a poetic line. All of the publishing editors replace the symbol with the word.

<sup>2</sup> Almost without exception, editorial changes for the Chatto and Windus 1896 edition of the poem are carried over to the publisher's 1904 edition of the poem. Any variance from this pattern will be noted.

The Tale of Balen

I.

1

In hawthorne-time the heart grows light, 15  
The world is sweet in sound & sight,  
Glad thoughts & birds take flower & flight,  
The heather kindles toward the light,  
    The whin is frankincense & flame.  
And be it for strife or be it for love 20  
The falcon quickens as the dove  
When earth is touched from heaven above  
    With joy that knows no name.

---

12 [THE/TALE OF BALEN]	C&W 1896
12 [...]	C&W 1904
14 [...]	C&W 1896 <sup>1</sup>
14 [...]	C&W 1904
15 [IN]	C&W 1896
15 [IN]	C&W 1904
17 <Sweet> ^Glad^ thoughts & birds <& hopes take> <^find flow...^> ^take flower &^ flight,	MS
19 The whin is <myrrh> ^frankincense^ & flame.	MS
22 When earth is <...> touched from heaven above	MS

---

<sup>1</sup> The 1896 and 1904 published editions of the poem do not include the stanza numberings that Swinburne wrote into the manuscript.

And glad in spirit & sad in soul 25  
 With dream & doubt of days that roll  
 As waves that race & find no goal  
 Rode on by bush & brake & bole  
     A northern child of earth & sea.  
 The pride of life before him lay 30  
 Radiant: the heavens of night & day  
 Shone less than shone before his way  
     His ways & days to be.

---

26 <For> ^With^ dream & doubt of days that roll MS  
 27 As waves that ^race &^ find no goal<,> MS  
 28 <Fade...> Rode on by bush & brake & bole MS  
 32 Shone less than shone before his way<...> MS

And all his life of blood & breath 35  
 Sang out within him: time & death  
 Were even as words a dreamer saith  
 When sleep within him slackeneth,  
     And light & life & spring were one.  
 The steed between his knees that sprang, 40  
 The moors & woods that shone & sang,  
 The hours wherethro' the spring's breath rang,  
     Seemed ageless as the sun.

---

35 <*But heavier than his heart was he*>  
     And all <...> his life of blood & breath MS  
 39 And light & life ^& spring^ were one MS  
 42 The <*skies*> ^hours^ wherethro' the spring's breath rang, MS<sup>1</sup>  
 42 The hours [wherethrough] the spring's breath rang, C&W 1896  
 43 <*Seemed...*> Seemed ageless as the sun. MS

---

<sup>1</sup> In the manuscript, Swinburne would sometimes abbreviate the letters *ough* in words, with the letter *o* with a line drawn over it. Published editions of the poem, of course, render the words with the complete spelling.

But alway thro' the bounteous bloom 45  
 That earth gives thanks if heaven illumine  
 His soul forefelt a shadow of doom,  
 His heart foreknew a gloomier gloom  
     Than closes all men's equal ways,  
 Albeit the spirit of life's light spring 50  
 With pride of heart upheld him, king  
 And lord of hours like snakes that sting  
     And nights that darken days.

---

45	But always [through] the bounteous bloom	C&W 1896
46	<Whence> ^That^ earth gives thanks if heaven illumine	MS
49	Than closes all men's ^equal^ ways,	MS
49	Than closes all men's equal ways[.]	C&W 1904

And as the strong spring round him grew 55  
Stronger, & all blithe winds that blew  
Blither, & flowers that flowered anew  
More glad of sun & air & dew,  
    The shadow lightened on his soul  
And brightened into death & died 60  
Like winter, as the bloom waxed wide  
From woodside on to riverside  
    And southward goal to goal.

---

61 Like winter, <*slain of*> as the bloom waxed wide MS

Along the wandering ways of Tyne, 65  
 By beech & birch & thorn that shine  
 And laugh when life's requickening wine  
 Makes night & noon & dawn divine  
     And stirs in all the veins of spring,  
 And past the brightening banks of Tees, 70  
 He rode as one that breathes & sees  
 A sun more blithe, a merrier breeze,  
     A life that hails him king.

---

66 <Thro'> ^By^ beech & birch & thorn that shine MS  
 71 <And streams that yearn toward ...seas>  
     He rode <elate> as one that ^breathes &^ sees. MS  
 72 <And breathes...> ^A sun more^ blithe, a merrier breeze, MS  
 73 A life that hail<ed>^s^ him king. MS



And down the softening south that knows 75  
No more how glad the heather glows,  
Nor how, when winter's clarion blows  
Across the bright Northumbrian snows,  
    Sea-mists from east & westward meet,  
Past Avon senseless yet of song 80  
And Thames that bore but swans in throng  
He rode elate in heart & strong  
    In trust of days as sweet.

---

76 <Less yet & less of storms & snows> MS  
76 No more how <broad> the heather glows, MS  
77 <And> ^Nor^ how, when winter's <...> clarion blows MS

So came he through to Camelot, 85  
 Glad, tho' for shame his heart waxed hot,  
 For hope within it withered not  
 To see the shaft it dreamed of shot  
     Fair toward the glimmering goal of fame.  
 And all King Arthur's knightliest there 90  
 Approved him knightly, swift to dare  
 And keen to bid their records bear  
     Sir Balen's northern name.

---

86 Glad, [though] for shame his heart waxed hot, C&W 1896  
 89 Fair toward the <...> glimmering goal of fame. MS  
 90 And all <of> King Arthur's knightliest there MS

Sir Balen of Northumberland	95
Gat grace before the king to stand	
High as his heart was, & his hand	
Wrought honour toward the strange north strand	
That sent him south so goodly a knight.	
And envy, sick with sense of sin,	100
Began as poisonous herbs begin	
To work in base men's blood, akin	
To men's of nobler might.	

---

97 <High not least> High as his heart was, & his hand	MS
98 W<...>rought honour toward the strange north strand	MS
103 To <nobler> ^men's^ of <lordlier> ^nobler^ might.	MS

And even so fell it that his doom, 105  
 For all his bright life's kindling bloom  
 And light that took no thought for gloom,  
 Fell as a breath from the opening tomb  
     Full on him ere he wist or thought.  
 For once a churl of royal seed, 110  
 King Arthur's kinsman, faint in deed  
 And loud in word that knew not heed,  
     Spake shame where shame was naught.

---

107 And <pride> light that took no thought for gloom, MS  
 109 Full on him ere wist or <feared> ^thought^. MS  
 113 Spake <...> shame where shame was naught. MS  
 113 Spake shame where shame was n[o]ught. C&W 1896

‘What doth one here in Camelot 115  
 Whose birth was northward? Wot we not  
 As all his brethren borderers wot  
 How blind of heart, how keen & hot,  
     The wild north lives & hates the south?  
 Men of the narrowing march that knows 120  
 Nought save the strength of storms & snows,  
 What would these carles where knighthood blows  
     A trump of kinglike mouth?’

---

115 [“]What doth one here in Camelot C&W 1904<sup>1</sup>  
 123 A <blast> trump of kinglike mouth? MS

---

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the poem, wherever the manuscript and the 1896 edition use a single quotation mark (‘), the 1904 edition employs a double quotation mark (“). This practice is consistently executed, and the variance should be assumed henceforth.

Swift from his place leapt Balen, smote 125  
The liar across his face, & wrote  
His wrath in blood upon the bloat  
Brute cheek that challenged shame for note  
    How vile a king-born knave might be.  
Forth sprang their swords, & Balen slew 130  
The knave ere well one witness knew  
Of all that round them stood or drew  
    What sight was there to see.

---

131 The knave ere well <the> one witness knew MS

Then spake the great king's wrathful will 135  
 A doom for six dark months to fill  
 Wherein close prison held him, still  
 And steadfast-souled for good or ill.  
     But when those weary days lay dead  
 His lordliest knights & barons spake 140  
 Before the king for Balen's sake  
 Good speech & wise, of force to break  
     The bonds that bowed his head.

---

135 <And by> ^Then spake^ the great king's wrathful <...> will MS  
 138 And steadfast-souled <^eyed^> for good or ill. MS  
 140 <The barons of> ^His^ lordliest knights & barons spake MS  
 144 <End of the First Fytte> MS

1.

In linden-time the heart is high  
For pride of summer passing by  
With lordly laughter in her eye;  
A heavy splendour in the sky 150  
    Uplifts & bows it down again.  
The spring had waned from wood & wold  
Since Balen left his prison hold  
And lowlier-hearted than of old  
    Beheld it wax & wane. 155

---

147 In linden-time the <world> ^heart^ is <sweet> <^glad^> high MS  
147 [IN] linden-time the heart is high C&W 1896  
151 <Exults> ^Uplifts^ & bows it down again. MS

2.



Though humble heart & poor array  
Reft not from spirit & sense away  
Their noble nature, nor could slay  
The pride they bade but pause & stay 160  
    Till time should bring its trust to flower,  
Yet even for noble shame's sake, born  
Of hope that smiled on hate & scorn,  
He held him still as earth ere morn  
    Ring forth her rapturous hour. 165

---

158 [Kept] not from spirit [and] sense away

C&W 1896

3<sup>1</sup>

But even as earth when dawn takes flight  
And beats her wings of dewy light  
Full in the faltering face of night,  
His soul awoke to claim by right 170  
    The life & death of deed & doom,  
When once before the king there came  
A maiden clad with grief & shame  
And anguish burning her like flame  
    That feeds on flowers in bloom. 175

---

170 His soul awoke to claim <of> ^by^ right MS  
171 The <woeful wonder> <^sign that sealed his^>  
    ^life & death of^ deed & doom, MS  
172 When <came> once before ^the^ king there came MS  
173 A maiden <girt for> ^clad with^ grief & shame MS  
175 <With steel> That feeds on flowers in bloom. MS

---

<sup>1</sup> Swinburne here discontinues placing a period after the stanza's numbering, a practice that he sometimes resumes later on.

Beneath a royal mantle, fair  
 With goodly work of lustrous vair,  
 Girt fast against her side she bare  
 A sword whose weight bade all men there  
     Quail to behold her face again. 180  
 Save of a passing perfect knight  
 Not great alone in force or fight  
 It might not be for any might  
     Drawn forth, & end her pain. 185

---

179 <A heavy> Girt fast <about> ^against^ her side she bare MS  
 181 Quail to behold <her breathless pain> ^her face again.^ MS  
 182 <Yet might not this be drawn, she said,>  
     ^Save of a passing perfect knight^ MS  
 183 Not <strong> ^great^ alone in force <&> ^or^ fight MS  
 183 Not great alone in force [and] fight C&W 1896

So spake she: then King Arthur spake:  
‘Albeit indeed I dare not take  
Such praise on me, for knighthood’s sake  
And love of ladies will I make  
          Assay if better none may be.’  
By girdle & by sheath he caught  
The sheath & girded sword, & wrought  
With strength whose force availed him nought  
          To save & set her free.

---

190

195

6.

Again she spake: 'No need to set  
The might that man has matched not yet  
Against it: he whose hand shall get  
Grace to release the bonds that fret  
          My bosom & my girdlestead  
With little strain of strength or strife  
Shall bring me as from death to life  
And win to sister or to wife  
          Fame that outlives men dead.'

200

205

---

203 Shall <set> ^bring^ me as from death to life  
205 <Praise> ^Fame^ that outlives men dead.'

MS

MS



8.

Then forth strode Launcelot, & laid  
The mighty-moulded hand that made  
Strong knights reel back like birds affrayed  
By storm that smote them as they strayed 220

    Against the hilt that yielded not.  
Then Tristram, bright & sad & kind  
As one that bore in noble mind  
Love that made light as darkness blind,  
    Fared even as Launcelot. 225

---

218 <His hand> The mighty-moulded hand that made MS

9.

Then Lamoracke, with hardier cheer,  
As one that held all hope & fear  
Wherethro' the spirit of man may steer  
In life & death less dark or dear, 230  
    Laid hand thereon, & fared as they.  
With half a smile his hand he drew  
Back from the spell-bound thing, & threw  
With half a glance his heart anew  
    Toward no such blameless may. 235

---

229 [Wherethrough] the spirit of man may steer C&W 1896  
231 <Laid lightlier hand thereto> MS  
231 <And smiles to take the helm & steer,> MS  
231 <Laid lightlier hand> MS<sup>1</sup>  
235 <Toward her> Toward no such blameless may. MS

---

<sup>1</sup> Swinburne makes a series of false starts for the line I have numbered 231. Each false start receives a distinct line in the manuscript, and Swinburne strikes through each of these aborted lines.



10.

Between Iseult & Guenevere

Sat one of name as high to hear,

But darklier doomed than they, whose cheer

Foreshowed not yet the deadlier year 240

That bids the queenliest head bow down,

The queen Morgause of Orkney: they<sup>1</sup>

With scarce a flash of the eye could say

The very word of dawn, when day

Gives earth & heaven their crown. 245

---

239 But dark<sup>li</sup>er doomed than they, whose cheer MS

239 But darklier doomed than they[< , >] whose cheer C&W 1896

---

<sup>1</sup> In Swinburne's manuscript and in the first two published editions, an empty space often appears before and after a colon or semicolon. Although I do not maintain this practice in my edition, an exacting documentary scholar would wish to note the same.

11.  
 But bright & dark as night or noon  
 And lowering as a storm-flushed moon  
 When clouds & thwarting winds distune  
 The music of the midnight, soon 250  
     To die from darkening star to star  
 And leave a silence in the skies  
 That yearns till dawn find voice & rise,  
 Shone strange as fate Morgause, with eyes  
     That dwelt on days afar. 255

---

246 11. <...> MS  
 248 <She glanced from him toward Arthur>  
     ^And lowering as a storm-flushed moon^ MS  
 251 To die from ^darkening^ star to star MS  
 254 Shone <where she stood> <^from her throne^>  
     ^strange as fate^ Morgause, with eyes MS

12.

A glance that shot on Lamoracke  
As from a storm-cloud bright & black  
Fire swift & blind as death's own track,  
Turned fleet as flame on Arthur back 260  
    From him whose hand forsook the hilt:  
And one in blood & one in sin  
Their hearts caught fire of pain within  
And knew no goal for them to win  
    But death that guerdons guilt. 265

---

257 <With eye> ^A glance^ that shot on Lamoracke MS  
258 As from a storm-cloud <^cloud's heart^> bright & black MS<sup>1</sup>  
259 Fire <that he> swift & blind as death's own track, MS  
259 Fire swift & blind as death's own track[<, >] C&W 1896  
260 <She glanced from him> <^Turned^> ^Turned^ <^again^>  
    ^fleet as flame^ on Arthur back MS

---

<sup>1</sup> The aborted replacement phrase "cloud's heart" appears directly above the phrase "storm-cloud" in the manuscript.

13.

Then Gawain, sweet of soul & gay  
As April ere he dreams of May,  
Strove, & prevailed not: then Sir Kay,  
The snake-souled envier, vile as they  
    That fawn & foam & lurk & lie,  
Sire of the bastard band whose brood  
Was alway found at servile feud  
With honour, faint & false & lewd,  
    Scarce grasped & put it by.

270

275

---

269 <Laid> Strove, & prevailed not: then Sir Kay,  
269 Strove, & prevailed not[;] then Sir Kay,  
273 <With> ^Was^ always found at servile feud

MS  
C&W 1904  
MS

14.

Then wept for woe the damsel bound  
With iron & with anguish round,  
That none to help her grief was found  
Or loose the inextricably inwound 280

    Grim curse that girt her life with grief  
And made a burden of her breath,  
Harsh as the bitterness of death.  
Then spake the king as one that saith  
    Words bitterer even than brief. 285

---

277 Then wept <aloud> ^for woe^ the damsel bound MS

15.

'Methought the wide round world could bring  
Before the face of queen or king  
No knights more fit for fame to sing  
Than fill this full Round Table's ring 290  
    With honour higher than pride of place:  
But now my heart is wrung to know,  
Damsel, that none whom fame can show  
Finds grace to heal or help thy woe:  
    God gives them not the grace.' 295

---

290 Than <close> ^fill^ this full Round Table's ring MS  
293 Damsel, <of all this> that none whom fame can show MS  
294 <That none finds> ^Finds^ grace to heal ^or help^ thy woe: MS

16.

Then from the lowliest place thereby,  
With heart-enkindled cheek & eye  
Most like the star & kindling sky  
That say the sundawn's hour is high 300  
    When rapture trembles through the sea,  
Strode Balen in his poor array  
Forth, & took heart of grace to pray  
The damsel suffer even him to assay  
    His power to set her free. 305

---

302 <Rose> Strode Balen in his poor array MS  
304 The damsel suffer ^even^ him <too> to assay MS

17.

Nay, how should he avail, she said,  
Averse with scorn-averted head,  
Where these availed not? None had sped  
Of all these mightier men that led 310  
    The lists wherein he might not ride,  
And how should less men speed? But he,  
With lordlier pride of courtesy,  
Put forth his hand & set her free  
    From pain & humbled pride. 315

---

309 Where these availed not? None ha<th>^d^ sped MS  
310 Of all these <...> ^mightier^ men that led MS  
312 And how <...> should less men speed? But he, MS



18.

But on the sword he gazed elate  
With hope set higher than fear or fate,  
Or doubt of darkling days in wait;  
And when her thankful praise waxed great 320  
    And craved of him the sword again,  
He would not give it. 'Nay, for mine  
It is till force may make it thine'.  
A smile that shone as death may shine  
    Spake toward him bale & bane. 325

---

322 He would not give it. < 'Sh... > 'Nay, for mine  
323 It is till force may make it thine[.]

MS  
C&W 1896

19.

Strange lightning flickered from her eyes.

'Gentle & good in knightliest guise

And meet for quest of strange emprise

Thou hast here approved thee; yet not wise 330

To keep the sword from me, I wis.

For with it thou shalt surely slay

Of all that look upon the day

The man best loved of thee, & lay

Thine own life down for his.' 335

---

330 Thou hast here approved thee [:] yet not wise C&W 1896

331 <Is he that> ^To^ keep<s> the sword from <^...^> me, I wis. MS

20.

'What chance God sends, that chance I take',  
He said. Then soft & still she spake;  
'I would but for thine only sake  
Have back the sword of thee, & break 340  
    The links of doom that bind thee round.  
But seeing thou wilt not have it so,  
My heart for thine is wrung with woe'.  
God's will', quoth he, 'it is, we know,  
    Wherewith our lives are bound' 345

---

337	'What chance God sends, that chance I take[,]'	C&W 1896
338	He said. Then soft<er yet> ^& still^ she spake;	MS
339	'I would but <...> for thine only sake	MS
342	But seeing thou wilt not <hear or know> ^have it so,^	MS
343	My heart for thine is wrung with woe[,]'	C&W 1896
344	God's will <it is,' quoth he,> ^quoth he, 'it is^ we know,	MS
344	God's will[,] quoth he, 'it is we know,	C&W 1896
345	Wherewith our lives are bound[.]'	C&W 1896

'Repent it must thou soon', she said,  
 'Who wouldst not hear the rede I read  
 For thine & not for my sake, sped  
 For vain as waters heavenward shed 350  
     From springs that falter, & depart  
 Earthward. God bids not thee believe  
 Truth, & the web thy life must weave  
 For even this sword to close & cleave  
     Hangs heavy round my heart.' 355

347 'Repent it must thou soon[,] she said, C&W 1896  
 351 From springs that <live not long, & sink> ^falter, & depart^ MS  
 351 From springs that falter [and] depart C&W 1896  
 353 Truth & <thy doom that bids me grieve>  
     ^the <doom> web thy life must weave^ MS  
 354 <Hangs heavy on my heart>  
     ^For even this sword to close & cleave^ MS

So passed she mourning forth. But he,  
 With heart of springing hope set free  
 As birds that breast & brave the sea,  
 Bade horse & arms & armour be 360  
     Made straightway ready toward the fray.  
 Nor even might Arthur's royal prayer  
 Withhold him, but with frank & fair  
 Thanksgiving & leavetaking there  
     He turned him thence away. 365

358 <Bade horse & <spear> <^arms^> & armour be> <^with heart^> MS  
 358 <Straightway to hand> ^With heart of springing hope set free^ MS<sup>1</sup>  
 361 Made straightway ready <for his guest> <^thence to part^>  
     ^toward the fray.^ MS  
 362 Nor even might Arthur's royal <plea> prayer MS  
 364 Thanksgiving & [leave-taking] there C&W 1896  
 365 He <passed from all> ^turned him thence^ away. MS  
 366 <(End of Fytte 2<sup>nd</sup>)> MS

<sup>1</sup> Swinburne struck out two whole drafted lines before he wrote their replacement on a third.

III.

1

As the east wind, when the morning's breast  
Gleams like a bird's that leaves the nest,  
A fledgeling halcyon's bound on quest 370  
Drives wave on wave on wave to west  
Till all the sea be life & light,  
So time's mute breath, that brings to bloom  
All flowers that strew the dead spring's tomb,  
Drives day on day on day to doom 375  
Till all man's day be night.

---

370 <Scarce fledged <^...^> & ... quickening <^...^>  
toward its quest,>

^A fledgling halcyon's bound on quest^ MS

Brief as the breaking of a wave  
 That hurls on man his thunderous grave  
 Ere fear find breath to cry or crave 380  
 Life that no chance may spare or save,  
     The light of joy & glory shone  
 Even as in dreams where death seems dead  
 Round Balen's hope-exalted head,  
 Shone, passed, & lightened as it fled 385  
     The shadow of doom thereon.

---

382 <Fle> The light of joy & glory shone MS  
 383 <O> Even as in dreams <ere with starlight fled>  
     ^where death seems dead^ MS  
 384 Round Balen's <bright-uplifted> ^hope-exalted^ head, MS  
 386 The <crown> shadow of doom thereon. MS

For as he bound him thence to fare,  
 Before the stately presence there  
 A lady like a wind-flower fair, 390  
 Girt on with raiment strange & rare  
     That rippled whispering round her, came.  
 Her clear cold eyes, all glassy grey,  
 Seemed lit not with the light of day  
 But touched with gleams that waned away 395  
     Of quelled & fading flame.

---

390 A lady like a [windflower] fair, C&W 1896  
 396 Of que<sup>nch</sup>ll<sup>ed</sup> & fading flame. MS



4

Before the king she bowed & spake:  
'King, for thine old faith's plighted sake  
To me the lady of the lake, 400  
I come in trust of thee to take  
    The guerdon of the gift I gave,  
Thy sword Excalibar.' And he  
Made answer: 'Be it whate'er it be,  
If mine to give, I give it thee, 405  
    Nor need is thine to crave.'

---

399 'King for thine old <word> faith's plighted sake MS

As when a gleam of wicked light  
 Turns half a low-lying water bright  
 That moans beneath the shivering night 410  
 With sense of evil sound & sight  
     And whispering witchcraft's bated breath,  
 Her wan face quickened as she said:  
 'This knight that won the sword – his head  
 I crave or hers that brought it. Dead, 415  
     Let these be one in death.'

---

409 Turns <all the> ^half a^ low <dark water> ^-lying^  
     <^lake's face^> ^water^ bright MS  
 412 And ^whispering^ witchcraft's bated breath, MS  
 413 Her wan face quickened as <...> she said: MS  
 414 'This knight that won the sword<,> - his head MS

6.

‘Not with mine honour this may be;  
Ask all save this thou wilt,’ quoth he,  
‘And have thy full desire.’ But she 420  
Made answer; ‘Nought will I of thee,  
Nought if not this.’ Then Balen turned,  
And saw the sorceress hard beside  
By whose fell craft his mother died:  
Three years he had sought her, & here espied 425  
His heart against her yearned.

---

421	Made answer[:]	‘Nought will I of thee,	C&W 1896
423	And saw the sorceress	<there> ^hard^ beside	MS
424	By whose fell craft	<...> his mother died:	MS
425	Three <h...>	years he had sought her, & here espied	MS

7.

'Ill be thou met,' he said, 'whose ire  
Would slake with blood thy soul's desire:  
By thee my mother died in fire; 430  
Die thou by me a death less dire.'

Sharp flashed his sword forth, fleet as flame,  
And shore away her sorcerous head.  
'Alas for shame,' the high king said,  
'That one found once my friend lies dead: 435  
Alas for all our shame!

---

428 'Ill be thou met,' he said, 'whose <...>ire MS  
429 <And hate> <Device as foul as hell's>  
^Would slake with blood thy soul's^ desire MS  
435 'That one found once my friend lies dead[;] C&W 1896

8.

'Thou shouldst have here forborne her; yea,  
Were all the wrongs that bid men slay  
Thine, heaped too high for wrath to weigh, 440  
Not here before my face to-day

Was thine the right to wreak thy wrong.'  
Still stood he there as one that found  
His rose of hope by storm discrowned,  
And all the joy that girt him round 445  
Brief as a broken song.

---

439 Were all the wrongs that <*wrath might say*> ^bid men slay^ MS  
441 Not here before my face [today] C&W 1896  
441 Not here before my face [to-day] MS  
443 <*Forth fared*> ^Still stood^ he then as one that found MS

Yet ere he passed he turned & spake:  
 'King, only for thy nobler sake  
 Than aught of power man's power may take 450  
 Or pride of place that pride may break  
     I bid the lordlier man in thee,  
 That lives within the king, give ear.  
 This justice done before thee here  
 On one that hell's own heart holds dear, 455  
     Needs might not this but be.

---

450 Than aught of power man's <force> ^power^ may take MS  
 453 <And not> ^That lives^ within the king, gives ear. MS

'Albeit, for all that pride would prove,  
 My heart be wrung to lose thy love,  
 It yet repents me not hereof: 460  
 So many an eagle & many a dove,  
     So many a knight, so many a may,  
 This water-snake of poisonous tongue  
 To death by words & wiles hath stung,  
 That her their slayer, from hell's lake sprung, 465  
     I did not ill to slay.'

---

459 <*It brings my*> ^My^ heart ^be wrung^ to lose thy love, MS  
 465 That her <,> their slayer, <*that coiled & clung*>  
     ^from hell's lake sprung^, MS

'Yea,' said the king, 'too high of heart  
 To stand before a king thou art:  
 Yet irks it me to bid thee part 470  
 And take thy penance for thy part,  
     That God may put upon thy pride.'  
 Then Balen took the severed head  
 And toward his hostry turned & sped  
 As one that knew not quick from dead 475  
     Nor good from evil tide.

---

469 To stand before a king thou are[;]

C&W 1896



12.

He bade this squire before him stand  
And take that sanguine spoil in hand  
And bear it far by shore & strand 480  
Till all in glad Northumberland  
    That loved him, seeing it, all might know  
His deadliest foe was dead, & hear  
How free from prison as from fear  
He dwelt in trust of the answering year 485  
    To bring him weal for woe.

---

478 <Here> He bade this squire <that met> ^before^ him stand MS  
483 His deadliest foe <...> was dead, & <see> hear MS  
484 How free from prison <...> as from fear MS

13.

‘And tell them, now I take my way  
To meet in battle, if I may,  
King Ryons of North Wales, & slay 490  
That king of kernes whose fiery sway  
    Doth all the marches dire despite  
That serve King Arthur: so shall he  
Again be gracious lord to me,  
And I that leave thee meet with thee 495  
    Once more in Arthur’s sight.’

---

491 That king of kernes whose <rude red> ^fiery^ sway MS  
494 <Prove> <Be> ^Again be^ gracious lord <...> to me, MS  
495 And I that leave <m> thee meet with thee MS

14.

So spake he ere they parted, nor  
Took shame or fear to counsellor,  
As one whom none laid ambush for; 500  
And wist not how Sir Launceor,  
    The wild king's son of Ireland, hot  
And high in wrath to know that one  
Stood higher in fame before the sun,  
Even Balen, since the sword was won, 505  
    Drew nigh from Camelot.

---

501 <Nor> ^And^ wist ^not^ how <fell> Sir Launceor, MS  
502 The <great> ^wild^ king's son of Ireland, hot MS

For thence, in heat of hate & pride,  
 As one that man might bid not bide,  
 He craved the high king's grace to ride 510  
 On quest of Balen far & wide  
     And wreak the wrong his wreath had wrought.  
 'Yea', Arthur said, 'for such despite  
 Was done me never in my sight  
 As this thine hand shall now requite 515  
     If trust avail us aught.'

509 <As one that had not heart to bide>  
     ^As one that ^man^ might ^bid^ not <...> bide^ MS  
 510 He craved <of Arthur leave> the high king's grace to ride MS  
 513 'Yea[,] Arthur said, 'for such despite C&W 1896  
 514 Was done <...> me never in my sight MS  
 515 As this thine hand <would> ^shall^ now requite MS

But ere he passed, in eager mood  
 To feed his hate with bitter food,  
 Before the king's face Merlin stood 520  
 And heard his tale of ill & good,  
     Of Balen, & the sword achieved,  
 And whence it smote as heaven's red ire  
 That direful dame of doom as dire;  
 And how the king's wrath turned to fire 525  
     The grief wherewith he grieved.

---

521 And heard <the> ^his^ tale <he held not> ^of ill &^ good, MS  
 523 And <how> ^whence^ it smote as <lightening fire>  
     ^heaven's red ire^ MS

And darkening as he gave it ear,  
 The still face of the sacred seer  
 Waxed wan with wrath & not with fear, 530  
 And ever changed its cloudier cheer  
     Till all his face was very night.  
 ‘This damosel that brought the sword,’  
 He said, ‘before the king my lord,  
 And all these knights about his board, 535  
     Hath done them all despite.

---

532 Till all his <glance> ^face^ was very night. MS

533 ‘This <damsel> ^damosel^ <here> that brought the sword,’ MS

'The falsest damosel she is  
 That works man ill on earth, I wis,  
 And all her mind is toward but this, 540  
 To kill as with a lying kiss  
     Truth, & the life of noble trust.  
 A brother hath she, --see but now  
 The flame of shame that brands her brow!—  
 A true man, pure as faith's own vow, 545  
     Whose honour knows not trust.

---

537 <I9> ^18^

540 And all her <will> ^mind^ is toward but this, MS

543 <She hath a brother> ^A brother hath she^, --see but now MS

545 A true man, pure as faith's own <brow> ^vow^, MS

546 <Or> Whose honour knows not rust. MS

'This good knight found within her bower  
 A felon & her paramour,  
 And slew him in his shameful hour, 550  
 As right gave might & righteous power  
     To hands that wreaked so foul a wrong.  
 Then, for the hate her heart put on,  
 She sought by ways where death had gone  
 The lady Lyle of Avalon, 555  
     Whose crafts are strange & strong.

---

547 <20> ^19^ MS  
 550 And slew him in <their> ^his^ shameful hour, MS  
 552 To hands that wreaked so <vile> ^foul^ a wrong. MS  
 553 Then, for the <...> hate her heart put on, MS



'The sorceress, one with her in thought,  
Gave her that sword of magic, wrought  
By charms whereof sweet heaven sees nought, 560  
That hither girt on her she brought  
    To be by doom her brother's bane.  
And grief it is to think how he  
That won it, being of heart so free  
And perfect found in chivalry, 565  
    Shall by that sword lie slain.'

---

558 'The sorceress, one with her <...> in thought, MS  
561 That hither <bound> ^girt^ on her she brought MS

'Great pity it is & strange despite  
 That one whose eyes are stars to light  
 Honour, & shine as heaven's own height, 570  
 Should perish, being the goodliest knight  
     That even the all-glorious north has borne.  
 Nor shall my lord the king behold  
 A lordlier friend of mightier mould  
 Than Balen, though his tale be told 575  
     Ere noon fulfil his morn'.

---

567 <20> ^21^	MS
576 <^make full^>	MS
576 Ere noon fulfil his morn[.]'	C&W 1896
577 <End of Fytte 3 <sup>rd</sup> >	MS

IV.

1.

As morning hears before it run 580  
The music of the mounting sun,  
And laughs to watch his trophies won  
From darkness, & her hosts undone,  
    And all the night become a breath,  
Nor dreams that fear should hear & flee 585  
The summer menace of the sea,  
So hears our hope what life may be,  
    And knows it not for death.

---

Each day that slays its hours & dies 590  
 Weeps, laughs, & lightens on our eyes,  
 And sees & hears not: smiles & signs  
 As flowers ephemeral fall & rise  
     About its birth, about its way,  
 And pass as love & sorrow pass, 595  
 As shadows flashing down a glass,  
 As dew-flowers blowing in flowerless grass,  
     As hope from yesterday.

---

589 <...> ^2^ MS  
 596 As shadows flashing <from> ^down^ a glass, MS  
 597 As dew-flowers <gl...> blowing in flowerless grass, MS  
 598 As <l...> hope from yesterday. MS

3

The blossom of the sunny dew 600  
That now the stronger sun strikes through  
Fades off the blade whereon it blew  
No fleetlier than the flowers that grew  
    On hope's green stem in life's fierce light.  
Nor might the glory soon to sit 605  
Awhile on Balen's crest alit  
Outshine the shadow of doom on it  
    Or stay death's wings from flight.

---

605 Nor might the <victory now> glory soon to sit MS

4.

Dawn on a golden moorland side 610  
By holt & heath saw Balen ride  
And Launceor after, pricked with pride  
And stung with spurring envy: wide  
    And far he had ridden athwart strange lands  
And sought amiss the man he found 615  
And cried on, till the stormy sound  
Rang as a rallying trumpet round  
    That fires men's hearts & hands.

---

616 And cried <^called^> <aloud> on, till the ^stormy^ sound MS

5.

Abide he bade him: nor was need 620  
To bid when Balen wheeled his stead  
Fiercely, less fain by word than deed  
To bid his envier evil speed,  
    And cried, 'What wilt thou with me?' Loud  
Rang Launceor's vehement answer: 'Knight, 625  
To avenge on thee the dire despite  
Thou hast done us all in Arthur's sight  
    I stand toward Arthur vowed'.

---

622 Fiercely, less <...> ^fain^ <of> <with> ^by^ word than deed MS  
625 <Made> ^Rang^ Launceor's vehement answer: 'Knight, MS  
628 I <come as> ^stand^ toward Arthur vowed'. MS  
628 I stand toward Arthur vowed[.] C&W 1896

6.

'Ay?' Balen said: albeit I see 630  
I needs must deal in strife with thee,  
Light is the wyte thou layest on me;  
For her I slew & sinned not, she  
    Was dire in all men's eyes as death,  
Or none were lother found than I 635  
By me to bid a woman die:  
As lief were loyal men to lie,  
    Or scorn what honour saith'.

---

630 'Ay?' Balen said: '<though well> ^albeit^ I see MS  
633 <So worse & more than death did she>  
    ^For her I slew & sinned not, she^ MS  
634 <I slew> Was dire in all men's eyes as death, MS  
638 Or scorn what honour saith[.]' C&W 1896



As the arched wave's weight against the reef 640  
 Hurls, & is hurled back like a leaf  
 Storm-shrivelled, & its rage of grief  
 Speaks all the loud broad sea in brief,  
     And quells the hearkening hearts of men,  
 Or as the crash of overfalls 645  
 Down under blue smooth water brawls  
 Like jarring steel on ruining walls,  
     So rang their meeting then.

---

640 As the arched wave's weight against <a> ^the^ reef MS  
 644 And quells the <mightiest> ^hearkening^ hearts of men, MS  
 646 Like jarring steel on <crushing> ^ruining^ walls, MS

As wave on wave shocks, & confounds 650  
 The bounding bulk whereon it bounds  
 And breaks & shattering seaward sounds  
 As crying of the old sea's wolves & hounds  
     That moan & ravin & rage & wail,  
 So steed on steed encountering sheer 655  
 Shocked, & the strength of Launceor's spear  
 Shivered on Balen's shield, & fear  
     Bade hope within him quail.

---

655 So steed on steed encountering <there> sheer MS  
 657 Shivered on Balen's shield, & <clear> ^fear^ MS  
 658 <...Balen's through his mail.>  
     ^Bade hope within him quail.^ MS

But Balen's spear through Launceor's shield 660  
 Clove as a ploughshare cleaves the field  
 And pierced the hauberk triple-steeled,  
 That horse with horseman stricken reeled,  
     And as a storm-breached rock falls, fell.  
 And Balen turned his horse again 665  
 And wist not yet his foe lay slain,  
 And saw him dead that sought his bane  
     And wrought & fared not well.

---

662 And <bade> ^pierced^ the <perished> hauberk <yield>  
     triple-steeled, MS  
 663 <For vantage> That horse with <...>horseman stricken  
     reeled, MS  
 664 And as a <shattering tower> ^storm-breached rock^ falls,  
     fell MS

Suddenly, while he gazed & stood, 670  
 And mused in many-minded mood  
 If life or death were evil or good,  
 Forth of a covert of a wood  
     That skirted half the moorland lea  
 Fast rode a maiden flower-like white 675  
 Full toward that fair wild place of fight,  
 Anhungered of the woful sight  
     God gave her there to see.

671 And mused in many-<colour> <^thought^> ^mind^ed  
     mood MS  
 673 Forth of <...> ^a^ covert of a wood MS  
 675 <Rode fast & fain a damosel> <^Rode^> ^Fast rode a  
     maiden flower-like white^ MS  
 676 Full toward that <...> ^fair^ wild place of fight, MS  
 677 Anhungered of the woful<...> sight MS

And seeing the man there fallen & dead, 680  
 She cried against the sun that shed  
 Light on the living world, & said,  
 'O Balen, slayer whose hand is red,  
     Two bodies & one heart thou hast slain,  
 Two hearts within one body: aye, 685  
 Two souls thou hast lost; by thee they die,  
 Cast out of sight of earth & sky  
     And all that made them fain.'

---

681 <*The man her lover, yet ...*, >  
     ^She cried against the sun that shed^ MS  
 684 <*Two ...*> ^Two bodies^ & one heart thou hast slain, MS  
 688 And all <*makes man*> ^that made them^ fain.' MS

12

And from the dead his sword she caught, 690  
And fell in trance that wist of nought,  
Swooning: but softly Balen sought  
To win from her the sword she thought

To die on, dying by Launceor's side.  
Again her wakening wail outbroke 695  
As wildly, sword in hand, she woke  
And struck one swift & bitter stroke  
That healed her, & she died.

---

695 <And> <He might not, so she gripped it fast>  
^Again her wakening wail outbroke^ MS

And sorrowing for their strange love's sake 700  
 Rode Balen forth by lawn & lake,  
 By moor & moss & briar & brake,  
 And in his heart their sorrow spake  
     Whose lips were dumb as death, & said  
 Mute words of presage blind & vain 705  
 As rain-stars blurred & marred by rain  
 To wanderers on a moonless main  
     Where night & day seem dead.

---

706 As <starbeams> ^rain-stars^ blurred & marred by rain MS

Then toward a sunbright wildwood side 710  
 He looked & saw beneath it ride  
 A knight whose arms afar espied  
 By note of name & proof of pride  
     Bare witness of his brother born,  
 His brother Balan, hard at hand, 715  
 Twin flower of bright Northumberland,  
 Twin sea-bird of their loud sea-strand,  
     Twin song-bird of their morn.

---

713 By note of name & proof <...> of pride MS  
 717 Twin sea-bird of their <glad> ^loud^ sea-strand, MS  
 718 Twin <day-star> <^watchman^> ^song-bird^ of their morn MS



Ah then from Balen passed away 720  
 All dread of night, all doubt of day,  
 All care what life or death might say,  
 All thought of all worse months than May:  
     Only the might of joy in love  
 Brake forth within him as a fire, 725  
 And deep delight in deep desire  
 Of deep far-flown days whose full-souled quire  
     Rang round from the air above.

---

720 <Fast> ^Ah^ then from Balen passed away MS  
 727 Of <glad old> ^deep far-flown^ days whose <...>  
     ^full-souled^ quire MS  
 727 Of <deed> far-flown days whose full-souled quire C&W 1896

16

From choral earth & quiring air 730  
Rang memories winged like songs that bear  
Sweet gifts for spirit & sense to share:  
For no man's life knows love more fair  
    And fruitful of memorial things  
Than this the deep dear love that breaks 735  
With sense of life on life, & makes  
The sundawn sunnier as it wakes  
    Where morning round it rings.

---

17.  
 ‘O brother, O my brother!’ cried 740  
 Each upon each, & cast aside  
 Their helms unbraced that might not hide  
 From sight of memory single-eyed  
     The likeness graven of face & face,  
 And kissed & wept upon each other 745  
 For joy & pity of either brother,  
 And love engrafted by sire & mother,  
     God’s natural gift of grace.

---

744 The likeness graven <^...^> of <^...^> ^face &^ face, MS  
 747 <Being> ^And^ love <engrafted & of> <engrafted from^>  
     ^engrafted by^ sire & mother, MS  
 478 <By gift of natural> ^God’s natural gift of^ grace. MS

And each with each took counsel meet 750  
 For comfort, making sorrow sweet,  
 And grief a goodly thing to greet:  
 And word from word leapt light & fleet  
     Till all the venturous tale was told,  
 And how in Balen's hope it lay 755  
 To meet the wild Welsh king & slay,  
 And win from Arthur back for pay  
     The grace he gave of old.

---

752 And <*told & heard*> grief a goodly thing to greet: MS  
 754 Till all the venturous <*told*> tale was told, MS

'And thither wilt not thou with me 760  
 And win as great a grace for thee?'  
 'That will I well,' quoth Balan: 'we  
 Will cleave together, bound & free,  
     As brethren should, being twain & one.'  
 But ere they parted thence there came 765  
 A creature withered as with flame,  
 A dwarf mismade in nature's shame,  
     Between them & the sun.

---

760 <'That will I well,' said Balan> MS  
 761 <And with him should his> MS  
 761 And win as <fair> great a grace for thee?' MS  
 765 <Now go we hence> ^But ere they^ <^passed^> ^parted^ MS  
     thence there came MS  
 766 <A ...pigmy> <Between them riding> MS

And riding fleet as fire may glide 770  
 He found the dead lie side by side,  
 And wailed & rent his hair & cried,  
 ‘Who hath done this deed?’ And Balen eyed  
     The strange thing loathfully, & said,  
 ‘The knight I slew, who found him fain 775  
 And keen to slay me: seeing him slain,  
 The maid I sought to save in vain,  
 Self-stricken, here lies dead.’

772 <Before those> And wailed & rent his hair & cried, MS  
 774 The strange thing lo<sup>a</sup>thfully, & said, MS  
 775 ‘The knight I slew, <that would have slain>  
     <sup>^</sup>who found him fain<sup>^</sup> MS  
 776 <Me to> <sup>^</sup>And keen to<sup>^</sup> slay me: <she that> seeing him slain MS  
 777 <For love & loves exceeding ...,>  
     <sup>^</sup>The maid I sought to save in vain,<sup>^</sup> MS  
 778 <Self-slain she lies here> <sup>^</sup>Self-stricken, here lies<sup>^</sup> dead.’ MS

‘Sore grief was mine to see her die, 780  
 And for her true faith’s sake shall I  
 Love, & with love of heart more high,  
 All women better till I die.’

‘Alas,’ the dwarf said, ‘ill for thee  
 In evil hour this deed was done: 785  
 For now the quest shall be begun  
 Against thee, from the dawning sun  
 Even to the sunset sea.

782 Love, <...> ^&^ with love of heart more high, MS

784 ‘Alas,’ <the dwarf said, ‘ill’> <^...evil it was^>  
 ^the dwarf said, ‘ill^ for thee MS

785 <This slaying shall surely ...> MS

785 <The grim dwarf said, ‘> ^In evil hour^ this deed was done: MS

'From shore to mountain, dawn to night,  
 The kinsfolk of this great dead knight  
 Will chase thee to thy death.' A light  
 Of swift blithe scorn flashed answer bright  
     As fire from Balen's eye. 'For that,  
 Small fear shall fret my heart,' quoth he:  
 'But that my lord the king should be  
 For this dead man's sake wroth with me,  
     Weep might it well thereat.'

790

795

---

793 Of <laughing> ^swift blithe^ scorn flashed answer bright MS  
 795 <I> ^Small^ fear shall fret my heart,' quoth he: MS  
 798 <Grief> ^Weep^ might it well thereat.' MS



Then murmuring passed the dwarf away, 800  
 And toward the knights in fair array  
 Came riding eastward up the way  
 From where the flower-soft lowlands lay  
     A king whose name the sweet south-west  
 Held high in honour, & the land 805  
 That bowed beneath his gentle hand  
 Wore on its wild bright northern strand  
     Tintagel for a crest.

---

805 Held high in honour, <*prince & chief*> & the land MS  
 806 <*King Mark*> That bowed beneath his gentle hand MS

And Balen hailed with homage due 810  
 King Mark of Cornwall, when he knew  
 The pennon that before him flew:  
 And for those lovers dead & true  
     The king made moan to hear their doom;  
 And for their sorrow's sake he sware 815  
 To seek in all the marches there  
 The church that man might find most fair  
     And build therein their tomb.

---

819 <End of Fytte 4>

MS

V.	820
1	
As thought from thought takes wing & flies,	
As month on month with sunlit eyes	
Tramples & triumphs in its rise,	
As wave smites wave to death & dies,	825
So chance on hurtling chance like steel	
Strikes, flashes, & is quenched, ere fear	
Can whisper hope, or hope can hear,	
If sorrow or joy be far or near	
For time to hurt or heal.	830

---

823 As month on month with <gleaming> ^sunlit^ eyes	MS
---	----

Swift as a shadow & strange as light  
 That cleaves in twain the shadow of night  
 Before the wide-winged word take flight  
 That thunder speaks to depth & height 835  
     And quells the quiet hour with sound,  
 There came before King Mark & stood  
 Between the moorside & the wood  
 The man whose word God's will made good,  
     Nor guile was in it found. 840

---

834 Before the <*thunder's*> ^wide-winged^ word take flight MS  
 834 Before the wide-winged word take[s] flight C&W 1896  
 836 And quells the quiet <*world*> <*sky*> ^hour^ with sound, MS  
 837 There came before <*the king*> ^King Mark^ & stood MS

And Merlin said to Balen: 'Lo,  
 Thou hast wrought thyself a grievous woe  
 To let this lady die, & know  
 Thou mightst have stayed her deadly blow.' 845

And Balen answered him & said,  
 'Nay, by my truth to faith, not I,  
 So fiercely she was to die;  
 Ere well her sword had flashed on high,  
 Self-slain she lay there dead.' 850

---

846 <Nay, sure> And Balen answered him & said MS

Again & sadly Merlin spake:

'My heart is wrung for this deed's sake,

To know thee therefore doomed to take

Upon thine hand a curse, & make

855

Three kingdoms pine through twelve years' change,

In want & woe: for thou shalt smite

The man most noble & truest knight

That looks upon the live world's light

A dolorous stroke & strange.

860

851 <But sadly Merlin spake again:>

^Again & sadly Merlin spake:^

MS

852 '<...>My heart is wrung for this deed's sake,

MS

853 To know thee therefore doomed to <m>^t^ake

MS

856 <For three ^twelve^ years' space ^length^ three kingdoms

pine waste> ^Three kingdoms pine through twelve years'

change,^

MS

856 Three kingdoms pine through twelve years' [/] change,

C&amp;W 1896

860 <... > ^A dolorous stroke & strange.^

MS

'And not till years shall round their goal  
 May this man's wound thou hast given be whole.'  
 And Balen, stricken through the soul  
 By dark-winged words of doom & dole, 865  
     Made answer: 'If I wist it were  
 No lie but sooth thou sayest of me,  
 Then even to make a liar of thee  
 Would I too slay myself, & see  
     How death bids dead men fare.' 870

862 'And not till years <*on year*> shall <*roll*> round their goal MS  
 865 By <*those*> ^dark-^winged words if doom & dole, MS  
 869 Would I too slay myself, & <*be*> see MS  
 870 <*No good man's grief or care.*>  
     ^How death bids dead men fare.'^ MS

And Merlin took his leave & passed  
 And was not: & the shadow as fast  
 Went with him that his word had cast;  
 Too fleet for thought thereof to last: 875  
     And there those brethren bade King Mark  
 Farewell: but fain would Mark have known  
 The strong knight's name who had overthrown  
 The pride of Launceor, when it shone  
     Bright as it now lay dark. 880

---

874 Went with him that his word had cast[,] C&W 1896  
 875 <*Fleet as a fear*> ^Too fleet for thought thereof to last:^ MS



And Balan for his brother spake,  
 Saying; 'Sir, albeit him list not break  
 The seal of secret time, nor shake  
 Night off him ere his morning wake, 885  
     By these two swords he is girt withal  
 May men that praise him, knights & lords,  
 Call him the knight that bears two swords,  
 And all the praise his fame accords  
     Make answer when they call.' 890

---

883 Saying[:] 'Sir, albeit him list not break C&W 1896  
 887 May <all> ^men^ that <know> ^praise^ him, knights & lords, MS  
 889 And all the praise <that> ^his^ fame accords MS

So parted they toward even tide;  
 And tender twilight, heavy-eyed,  
 Saw deep down glimmering woodlands ride  
 Balen & Balan side by side, 895  
     Till where the leaves grew dense & dim  
 Again they spied from far draw near  
 The presence of the sacred seer,  
 But so disguised & strange of cheer  
     That seeing they knew not him. 900

---

893 And tender twilight, <dewy> ^heavy^-eyed, MS  
 896 <And> Till where the leaves grew dense & dim MS  
 899 But so disguised <with> ^&^ strange<r's glee> ^of cheer^ MS

'Now whither ride ye,' Merlin said,  
 'Through shadows that the sun strikes red,  
 Ere night be born or day be dead?'  
 But they, for doubt half touched with dread, 905  
     Would say not where their goal might lie.  
 'And thou,' said Balen, 'What art thou,  
 To walk with shrouded eye & brow?'  
 He said, 'Me lists not show thee now  
     By name what man am I.' 910

---

905 <And brief as...their answer sped>

MS

909 He said[:] 'Me lists not show thee now

C&W 1896

10.

'Ill seen is this of thee,' said they,  
'That thou art true in word & way  
Nor fain to fear the face of day,  
Who wilt not as a true man say

915

The name it shames not him to bear.'

He answered: 'Be it or be it not so,  
Yet why ye ride this way I know,  
To meet King Ryons as a foe,  
And how your hope shall fare.

920

---

913 'That thou art <loyal> <^just^> ^true^ in word & way MS  
914 <W> Nor fain to hear the fall of day, MS  
918 Yet why ye ride this way I know, <...> MS  
919 To meet <with> ^King^ Ryons as a foe, <...> MS

11.

‘Well, if ye hearken toward my rede,  
Ill, if ye hear not, shall ye speed.’

‘Ah, now,’ they cried, ‘thou art ours at need:  
What Merlin saith we are fain to heed.’

925

‘Great worship shall ye win,’ said he,  
‘And look that ye do knightly now,  
For great shall be your need, I trow.’

And Balen smiled: ‘By knighthood’s vow,  
The best we may will we.’

930

---

924 ‘Ah, *<then>* ^now^,’ they cried, *<thy name we read>*  
^thou art ours at need^:

MS

Then Merlin bade them turn & take  
 Rest, for their good steeds' weary sake,  
 Between the highway & the brake,  
 Till starry midnight bade them wake: 935  
     Then 'Rise,' he said, 'the king is nigh,  
 Who hath stolen from all his host away  
 With threescore horse in armed array,  
 The goodliest knights that bear his sway  
     And hold his kingdom high. 940

---

937 <And> ^Who^ hath <left his host>  
     ^stolen from all his host away^ MS  
 938 With <knight> threescore <knight> ^horse in armed^ array MS  
 939 <And twenty ride of them before>  
     ^The goodliest knights <he holds in> ^that^ bear his sway^ MS  
 940 <To warn his ..., lest her door close when>  
     ^And hold his kingdom high.^ MS

'And twenty ride of them before  
 To bear his errand, ere the door  
 Turn of the night, sealed fast no more,  
 And sundawn bid the stars wax hoar; 945  
     For by the starshine of tonight  
 He seeks a leman where she waits  
 His coming, dark & swift as fate's,  
 And hearkens toward the unopening gates  
     That yield not him to sight.' 950

---

944 Turn of the night, <*that reigns*> ^sealed fast^ no more, MS  
 946 For by the sunshine of [to-night] C&W 1896  
 947 He seeks a leman <*that*> where she waits MS  
 949 And hearkens toward <*her*> the unopening gates MS

Then through the glimmering gloom around  
 A shadowy sense of light & sound  
 Made, ere the proof thereof were found,  
 The brave blithe hearts within them bound, 955  
     And 'Where', quoth Balen, 'rides the king?'  
 But softer spake the seer: ' Abide,  
 Till hither toward your spears he ride  
 Where all the narrowing woodland side  
     Grows dense with boughs that cling'. 960

952 Then through the glimmering gloom <*there came*> ^around^ MS  
 953 <*Came ghostly*> ^A shadowy^ sense of light & sound MS  
 954 Made, ere the <...> proof thereof were found, MS  
 956 And 'Where[,] quoth Balen, 'rides the king?' C&W 1896  
 958 Till hither toward your spears he ride[,] C&W 1896  
 960 Grows dense with boughs that cling[.] C&W 1896



There in that straitening way they met  
 The wild Welsh host against them set,  
 And smote their strong king down, ere yet  
 His hurrying horde of spears might get 965  
     Fierce vantage of them. Then the fight  
 Grew great & joyous as it grew,  
 For left & right those brethren slew,  
 Till all the lawn waxed red with dew  
     More deep than dews of night. 970

---

969 Till all the lawn <was> ^waxed^ red with dew MS  
 970 More <dense> ^deep^ than dews of night. MS

And ere the full fierce tale was read,  
 Full forty lay before them dead,  
 And fast the hurtling remnant fled  
 And wist not whither fear had led: 975  
     And toward the king they went again,  
 And would have slain him: but he bowed  
 Before them, crying in fear aloud  
 For grace they gave him, seeing the proud  
     Wild king brought lowest of men. 980

---

972 And ere the ^full fierce^ was <fully> read, MS  
 972 And ere the full fierce was read[<,>] C&W 1896  
 979 For grace <& mercy> they gave him, seeing the proud MS

And ere the wildwood leaves were stirred  
 With song or wing of wakening bird,  
 In Camelot was Merlin's word  
 With joy in joyous wonder heard 985  
     That told of Arthur's bitterest foe  
 Diskingdomed and discomfited.  
 'By whom?' the high king smiled & said.  
 He answered: 'Ere the dawn wax red,  
     To-morrow bids you know. 990

---

982 <And ere they bound them thence to fare>  
     ^And ere the wildwood leaves were stirred^ MS  
 985 <With joy<ful>^ous^ ... afield the happy battle>  
     ^With joy in joyous wonder^ heard MS  
 987 <Stricken. 'By whom?' King Arthur said.>  
     ^Diskingdomed & discomfited.^ MS  
 988 <'Tomorrow shall that rede be read>  
     ^'By whom?' the high king smiled & said.^ MS  
 989 <When> <The seer made answer>  
     ^He answered: 'Ere the dawn wax red,^ MS  
 990 To-morrow <shall> ^bids^ you know.<'> MS

'Two knights whose heart & hope are one  
And fain to win your grace have done  
This work whereby if grace be won  
Their hearts shall hail the enkindling sun 995  
    With joy more keen & deep than day.'  
And ere the sundawn drank the dew  
These brethren with their prisoner drew  
To the outer guard they gave him to  
    And passed again away. 1000

---

And Arthur came as toward his quest  
 To greet his foe, & bade him rest  
 As one returned from nobler quest  
 And welcome from the stormbright west, 1005  
     But by what chance he fain would hear.  
 ‘The chance was hard & strange, sir king,’  
 Quoth Ryons, bowed in thanksgiving.  
 ‘Who won you?’ Arthur said: ‘the thing  
     Is worth a warrior’s ear’. 1010

---

1004 As one <*made welcome*> returned from nobler quest MS  
 1007 ‘<*My*> ^The^ chance was hard & strange, sir king.’ MS  
 1010 Is worth a warrior’s ear[.] C&W 1896

The wild king flushed with pride & shame,  
 Answering: 'I know not either name  
 Of those that there against us came  
 And withered all our strength like flame: 1015  
     The knight that bears two swords is one,  
 And one his brother: not on earth  
 May men meet men of knightlier worth  
 Nor mightier born of mortal birth  
     That hail the sovereign sun'. 1020

1014 Of those that <hard> ^there^ against us came MS  
 1015 And <wash>^wither^ed all our strength like flame: MS  
 1018 May men meet men of <lord>^knight^lier worth MS  
 1019 Nor <mightier> <^braver^> ^mightier^ born of mortal birth MS  
 1020 That hail the sovereign sun[.] C&W 1896

<

21

*But Arthur wist not who they were  
Who had <thrown> ^done^ such <...> ^duty^ toward him there  
Where hardly might his liegeman fare  
And face not death too dire to dare  
<At hands of wild men> <Where> From hands that fought as hell may fight.  
And Merlin <sighing ... witness: Lord,> ^spake^  
Balen, <is one> that won the spell-bound sword,><sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Swinburne struck out this entire drafted stanza in the manuscript.

21

And Arthur said: "I know them not;  
But much am I for this, God wot,  
Beholden to them: Launcelot  
Nor Tristram, when the war waxed hot 1025  
    Along the marches east & west,  
Wrought ever nobler work than this.'  
'Ah,' Merlin said, 'sore pity it is  
And strange mischance of doom, I wis,  
    That death should mar their quest. 1030

---

1027 <Gave> ^Wrought^ ever nobler work <for me> ^than this^.' MS



'Balen, the perfect knight that won  
 The sword whose name is malison,  
 And made his deed his doom, is one:  
 Nor hath his brother Balan done 1035  
     Less royal service: not on earth  
 Lives there a nobler knight, more strong  
 Of soul to win men's praise in song,  
 Albeit the light abide not long  
     That lightened round his birth. 1040

---

1032 'Balen <...>, <who> the ^perfect^ knight that won MS  
 1037 Lives there a nobler knight, more <pure> ^strong^ MS  
 1038 Of <doubt> ^soul^ to <make the promise sure>  
     ^win men's praise in song,^ MS  
 1039 <That hope before him set to endure,>  
     ^Albeit the light^ <en> ^abide not long^ MS  
 1040 <Sealed fast upon> ^That lightened round^ his birth. MS

'Yea, & of all sad things I know  
 The heaviest & the highest in woe  
 Is this, the doom whose date brings low  
 Too soon in timeless overthrow 1045  
     A head so high, a hope so sure.  
 The greatest moan for any knight  
 That ever won fair fame in fight  
 Shall be for Balen, seeing his might  
     Must now not long endure.' 1050

---

1047 The greatest <*dole that ever might*> ^moan^ <*of*>  
     ^for any knight^ MS  
 1048 <*Be made of any fallen*>  
     ^That ever won <*such*> ^fair^ fame^ in fight MS  
 1049 Shall be for Balen, <*that*> ^seeing^ his might MS

'Alas,' King Arthur said, 'he hath shown  
 Such love to me-ward that the moan  
 Made of him should be mine alone  
 Above all other, knowing it known 1055  
     I have ill deserved it of him'. 'Nay,'  
 Said Merlin, 'he shall do for you  
 Much more, when time shall be anew,  
 Than time hath given him chance to do  
     Or hope may think to say. 1060

---

1055 Above all other, <see>^know^ing it known  
 1056 I have ill deserved it of him[,] 'Nay,'

MS  
 C&W 1896

'But now must be your powers purveyed  
 To meet, ere noon of morn be made  
 To-morrow, all the host arrayed  
 Of this wild foe's wild brother, laid 1065  
     Around against you: see to it well,  
 For now I part from you.' And soon,  
 When sundawn slew the withering moon,  
 Two hosts were met to win the boon  
     Whose tale is death's to tell. 1070

---

1062 'But now must be your <*strengths arrayed*>  
     ^powers purveyed^ MS  
 1065 Of this <...> <^wild^> <^yours^> ^wild^ foe<...>'s  
     ^wild^ brother, laid MS  
 1066 Around against you: see <...> to it well, MS  
 1070 <*That*> Whose tale is death's to tell. MS

A lordly tale of knights & lords  
 For death to tell by count of swords  
 When war's wild harp in all its chords  
 Rang royal triumph, & the hordes 1075  
     Of hurtling foemen rocked & reeled  
 As waves wind-thwarted on the sea,  
 Was told of all that there might be  
 Till scarce might battle hear or see  
     The fortune of the field. 1080

---

1072 A <royal> tale of <lor> knights & lords MS  
 1079 <Even ere those brethren>  
     ^Till scarce might battle hear or see^ MS

And many a knight won fame that day  
 When even the serpent soul of Kay  
 Was kindled toward toward the fiery play  
 As might a lion's be for prey, 1085  
     And won him fame that might not die  
 With passing of his rancorous breath  
 But clung about his life & death  
 As fire that speaks in cloud, & saith  
     What strong men hear & fly. 1090

1084 Was kindled toward [*<toward>*] the fiery play C&W 1896  
 1085 As might a lion's<, *fain of*> <^*yearn for*^> <*fray*>  
     be for prey MS  
 1090 <*What cloud*> <*That might & light are nigh.*>  
     ^What strong men hear & fly. MS

And glorious works were Arthur's there,  
 That lit the battle-darkened air:  
 But when they saw before them fare  
 Like stars of storm the knight that bare 1095  
     Two swords about him girt for fray,  
 Balen, & Balan with him, then  
 Strong wonder smote the souls of men  
 If heaven's own host or hell's deep den  
     Had sent them forth to slay. 1100

---

1096 Two swords about him girt for <fight> ^fray^, MS  
 1097 <And> Balen, & Balan with him, then MS  
 1099 If heaven's <high dome> ^own host^ or hell's deep den MS

So keen they rode across the fight,  
 So sharp they smote to left & right,  
 And made of hurtling darkness light  
 With lightning of their swords, till flight 1105  
     And fear before them flew like flame,  
 That Arthur's self had never known,  
 He said, since first his blast was blown,  
 Such lords of war as these alone  
     That whence be knew not came. 1110

---

1103 So <*sore*> ^sharp^ they smote to left & right, MS  
 1105 With lightning of <...> their swords, till flight MS  
 1106 And fear before them flew like <*fire*> ^flame^, MS



But while the fire of war waxed hot  
The wild king hearkened, hearing not,  
Through storm of spears & arrow-shot,  
For succour toward him from King Lot 1115  
    And all his host of sea-born men,  
Strong as the strong storm-baffling bird  
Whose cry round Orkney's headlands heard  
Is as the sea's own sovereign word  
    That mocks our mortal ken. 1120

---

For Merlin's craft of prophecy,  
 Who wist that one of twain must die,  
 Put might in him to say thereby  
 Which head should lose its crown, & lie 1125  
     Stricken, tho loth he were to know  
 That either life shd wane & fail;  
 Yet most might Arthur's love avail,  
 And still with subtly tempered tale  
     His wile held fast the foe. 1130

1122 For Merlin's <wisdom> craft of prophecy, MS  
 1124 <Gave him the power> ^Put might in him to say thereby^ MS  
 1126 Stricken, [though] loth he were to know C&W 1896  
 1127 <Of either dead: yet> That either life shd wane & fail; MS  
 1127 That either life [should] wane & fail; MS  
 1128 Yet most might Arthur's love avail<;>^,^ MS  
 1129 <By some & with ...> <^And so by^> ^And still with^  
     <magic> ^tempered^ tale MS  
 1130 His <...> wile held fast the foe. MS

With woven words of magic might  
 Wherein the subtle shadow & light  
 Changed hope & fear till fear took flight,  
 He stayed King Lot's fierce lust of fight, 1135  
     Till all the wild Welsh war was driven  
 As foam before the wind that wakes  
 With the all-awakening sun, & breaks  
 Strong ships that rue the mirth it makes  
     When grace to slay is given. 1140

---

1132 With woven words of <prophecy> magic might MS  
 1133 <He <bound> ^charmed^ King Lot's fierce lust of fight> MS  
 1133 <Till all the wild Welsh war was driven> MS  
 1133 ^Wherein the subtle shadow & light^ MS

And ever hotter lit & higher,  
 As fire that meets encountering fire,  
 Waxed in King Lot his keen desire  
 To bid revenge within him tire 1145  
     On Arthur's ravaged fame & life:  
 Across the waves of war between  
 Floated & flashed, unseen & seen,  
 The lustrous likeness of the queen  
     Whom shame had sealed his wife. 1150

---

1142 And ever hotter <*waxed*> ^lit^ & higher, MS  
 1147 Across the <*spears*> waves of war between MS

But when the woful word was brought  
 That while he tarried, doubting nought,  
 The hope was lost whose goal he sought  
 And all the fight he yearned for fought, 1155  
     His heart was rent for grief & shame,  
 And half his hope was set on flight  
 Till word was given him of a knight  
 Who said, 'They are weary & worn with fight,  
     And we more fresh than flame'. 1160

1052 But when the woful word was <*said*> brought MS  
 1055 And all the fight he <*looked*> ^yearned^ for fought, MS  
 1057 And <*wot not if to yield or fight,*>  
     ^half his hope was set on flight^ MS  
 1059 Who said[:] 'They are weary & worn with fight, C&W 1896  
 1060 And we more fresh than flame[.'] C&W 1896

And bright & dark as night & day  
 Ere either find the unopening way  
 Clear, & forego the unfaltering sway,  
 The sad king's face shone, frowning: 'Yea, 1165  
     I would that every knight of mine  
 Would do his part as I shall do,'  
 He said, 'till death or life anew  
 Shall judge between us as is due  
     With wiser doom than thine.' 1170

---

1162 <Then> ^And^ bright & dark as night & day MS

Then thundered all the awakening field  
 With crash of host that clashed & reeled,  
 Banner to banner, shield to shield,  
 And spear to splintering spear-shaft, steeled 1175  
     As heart against high heart of man,  
 As hope against high hope of knight  
 To pluck the crest & crown of fight  
 From war's clenched hand by storm's wild light,  
     For blessing given or ban. 1180

---

1177 <And> ^As^ hope against high hope of knight MS  
 1179 From war's clenched hand <of judgment, bright.>  
     <^of doom^> <^whose doom shd write^>  
     <^of judgment tho death shd stride^> <^of doom^>  
     ^by storm's wild light^ MS  
 1180 <With> ^For^ blessing <born of> ^given or^ ban. MS

All hearts of hearkening men that heard  
 The ban twin-born with blessing, stirred  
 Like springtide waters, knew the word  
 Whereby the steeds of storm are spurred 1185  
     With ravenous rapture to destroy,  
 And laughed for love of battle, pierced  
 With passion of tempestuous thirst  
 And hungering hope to assuage it first  
     With draughts of stormy joy. 1190

---

1184 Like <stormy> ^springtide^ waters, knew the word MS  
 1185 Where<with>^by^ the steeds of storm are <spared>  
     ^spurred^ MS



But sheer ahead of the iron tide  
That rocked & roared from side to side  
Rode as the lightning's lord might ride  
King Lot, whose heart was set to abide 1195  
    All peril of the raging hour,  
And all his host of warriors born  
Where lands by warring seas are worn  
Was only by his hands upborne  
    Who gave them pride & power. 1200

---

But as the sea's hand smites the shore  
 And shatters all the strengths that bore  
 The ravage earth may bear no more,  
 So smote the hand of Pellinore 1205  
     Charging, a knight of Arthur's chief,  
 And clove his strong steed's neck in twain,  
 And smote him sheer thro' brow & brain,  
 Falling: & there King Leo lay slain,  
     And knew not wrath or grief. 1210

1203 And <turns the ramparts reared of yore>  
     ^shatters all the strengths that bore^ MS  
 1204 <The land's heart of against it more>  
     <^To run that ...no more^>  
     ^The ravage earth may bear no more^ MS  
 1205 <Against his host came> <Than>  
     ^So smote the hand of Pellinore^ MS  
 1206 Charging, a <goodly> <^kingly^> knight  
     <&king> ^of Arthur's chief^, MS  
 1207 <And Arthur's liegeman sworn, & smote>  
     ^And <smote> ^clove^ his <chargers> ^strong steed's^  
     neck in twain,^ MS  
 1208 And smote him <falling> ^sheer^ thro' <the> ^brow^  
     <...> ^&^ brain<;>^,^ MS  
 1208 And smote him sheer [through] brow [and] brain, C&W 1896  
 1210 And knew not <hate> ^wrath^ or grief. MS

And all the host of Orkney fled,  
 And many a mother's son lay dead:  
 But when they raised the stricken head  
 Whence pride & power & shame were fled 1215  
     And rage & anguish now cast out,  
 And bore it toward a kingly tomb,  
 The wife whose love had wrought his doom  
 Came thither, fair as mornings' bloom  
     And dark as twilight's doubt. 1220

1217 And bore it toward a <royal> kingly tomb, MS  
 1219 <And turned his light of life to gloom>  
     ^Came thither, fair as mornings' bloom^ MS  
 1219 Came thither, fair as morning[']s bloom C&W 1896

And there her four strong sons & his,  
 Gawain & Gareth, Gaherys  
 And Agravain, whose sword's sharp kiss  
 With sound of hell's own serpent's hiss 1225  
     Should one day turn her life to death,  
 Stood mourning with her: but by these  
 Seeing Mordred as a seer that sees,  
 Anguish of terror bent her knees  
     And caught her shuddering breath. 1230

---

1225 <Should after smite her dead>  
     ^With sound of hell's own serpent's hiss^ MS  
 1228 << ^Came^>When Arthur's son & hers>  
     <Mordred smiled & scowled at ease,>  
     ^Seeing Mordred as a seer that sees,^ MS

The splendour of her sovereign eyes  
 Flashed darkness deeper than the skies  
 Feel or fear when the sunset dies  
 On his that felt as midnight rise 1235  
     Their doom upon them, there undone  
 By faith in fear ere thought could yield  
 A shadowy sense of days revealed,  
 The ravin of the final field,  
     The terror of their son. 1240

---

1239 The <ruin> ^ravin^ of the final field, MS

For Arthur's, as they caught the light  
That sought & durst not seek his sight,  
Darkened, & all his spirit's might  
Withered within him even as night 1245  
    Withers when sunrise thrills the sea.  
But Mordred's lightened as with fire  
That smote his mother & his sire  
With darkling doom & deep desire  
    That bade its darkness be. 1250

---

And heavier on their hearts the weight  
 Sank of the fear that brings forth fate,  
 The bitter doubt whose womb is great  
 With all the grief & love & hate 1255  
     That turn to fire men's days on earth.  
 And glorious was the funeral made,  
 And dark the deepening dread that swayed  
 Their darkening souls whose light grew shade  
     With sense of death in birth. 1260

---

1256 That turn to fire men's days <& nights> ^on earth.^ MS  
 1258 And dark the deepening dread that <stayed> <^weighed^>  
     ^swayed^ MS  
 1259 <The sorrow chilled in souls afraid>  
     ^Their darkening souls whose light grew shade^ MS  
 1260 <That know not> ^With sense of^ death <from> ^in^ birth. MS

VI.

1

In autumn, when the wind & sea  
Rejoice to live & laugh to be,  
And scarce the blast that curbs the tree 1265  
And bids before it quail & flee  
    The fiery foliage, where its brand  
Is radiant as the seal of spring,  
Sounds less delight, & waves a wing  
Less lustrous, life's loud thanksgiving 1270  
    Puts life in sea & land.

---

1261 [VI]	C&W 1896
1263 [IN] autumn, when the wind & sea	C&W 1896
1266 And bids <his leaves> before it quail & flee	MS
1268 <Burns> ^Is^ radiant as the <smiles> ^seal^ of spring,	MS



High hope in Balen's heart alight  
 Laughed, as from all that clamorous fight  
 He passed & sought not Arthur's sight, 1275  
 Who fain had found his kingliest knight  
     And made amend for Balen's wrong.  
 But Merlin gave his soul to see  
 Fate, rising as a shoreward sea,  
 And all the sorrow that should be 1280  
     Ere hope or fear thought long.

---

1277 And <shown ...> made amend for Balen's wrong. MS  
 1278 But Merlin's ... gave his hope to <^bade the^>  
     ^gave his soul to^ see MS

'O where are they whose hands upbore  
 My battle,' Arthur said, 'before  
 The wild Welsh host's wide rage & roar? 1285  
 Balen & Balan, Pellinore,  
     Where are they?' Merlin answered him,  
 'Balen shall be not long away  
 From sight of you, but night nor day  
 Shall bring his brother back to say 1290  
     If life burn bright or dim'.

---

1284 My battle <...>,' Arthur said, 'before MS  
 1285 The <*hurling host*> wild Welsh <*Lots*> ^host's^ MS  
     wide rage & roar?  
 1287 Where are they?' Merlin answered him[:] C&W 1896  
 1288 'Balen shall be not <*from you*> long away MS  
 1291 If life burn bright or dim[.] C&W 1896

'Now, by my faith', said Arthur then.  
 'Two marvellous knights are they, whose ken  
 Toward battle makes the twain as ten, 1295  
 And Balen most of all born men  
     Passeth of prowess all I know  
 Or ever found or sought to see:  
 Would God he would abide with me,  
 To face the times foretold of thee 1300  
     And all the latter woe'.

---

1293	'Now, by my faith[,] said Arthur then,	C&W 1896
1298	Or ever found < <i>at need in fight</i> > ^or sought to see:^	MS
1301	And all the latter woe[.]'	C&W 1896

For there had Merlin shown the king  
 The doom that songs unborn shd sing,  
 The gifts that time shd rise & bring 1305  
 Of blithe & bitter days to spring  
     As weeds & flowers against the sun.  
 And on the king for fear's sake fell  
 Sickness, & sorrow deep as hell,  
 Nor even might sleep bid fear farewell 1310  
     If grace to sleep were won.

1304 The doom <*all time to come*> ^that songs unborn^ shd sing, MS  
 1304 The doom that songs unborn [should] sing, C&W 1896  
 1305 <A> The gifts that time shd rise & bring MS  
 1305 The gifts that time [should] rise & bring C&W 1896  
 1308 And on the king <*thereafter*> ^for fear's sake^ fell MS  
 1311 <*Nor*> ^If^ grace <*from*> ^to^ sleep <*be*> ^were^ won. MS

Down in a meadow green & still  
 He bade the folk that wrought his will  
 Pitch his pavilion, where the chill 1315  
 Soft night would let not rest fulfil  
     A heart wherein dark fears lay deep.  
 And sharp against his hearing cast  
 Came a sound of horsehoofs fast  
 Passing, that ere their sound were past 1320  
     Aroused him as from sleep.

---

1313 <Deep> ^Down^ in a meadow green & still MS  
 1315 Pitch his pavilion, where <but ill> the chill MS  
 1316 <He slept, & might> ^Soft night would let^ not  
     <sleep his fill> ^rest^ fulfil MS  
 1317 <His heavy> ^A^ heart <with peace & rest.>  
     ^wherein dark fears lay deep.^ MS  
 1317 [His] heart wherein dark fears lay deep. C&W 1896  
 1319 Came <^Rang^> a sound of <one riding> ^horsehoofs^ fast MS  
 1320 <Whose horse> Passing, that ere their sound were past MS

And forth he looked along the grass  
 And saw before his portal pass  
 A knight that wailed aloud, 'Alas' 1325  
 That life should find this dolorous pass  
     And find no shield from doom & dole!  
 And hearing all his moan, 'Slide,  
 Fair sir,' the king arose & cried,  
 And say what sorrow bids you ride 1330  
     So sorrowful of soul.'

- 
- 1323 And <*past the portal*> forth he looked along the <...> grass MS  
 1325 A knight that <*made great moan*> ^wailed aloud, 'Alas^ MS  
 1327 And find no <*cease*> <^rest^> ^shield^ from doom & dole!' MS  
 1330 And <*tell ... me wherefore a knight may ride*>  
     <^say what burden bids you^> <^tell me wherefore thus^>  
     ^say what sorrow bids you ride^ MS  
 1331 <*So sore & sick in soul*> <^So sore abased^>  
     <^As one so grieved^> ^So sorrowful of soul.^ MS

'My hurt may no man heal, God wot,  
 And help of man may speed me not,'  
 The sad knight said, 'nor change my lot.' 1335  
 And toward the castle of Melyot  
     Whose towers arose a league away  
 He passed forth sorrowing: & anon,  
 Ere well the woful sight were gone,  
 Came Balen down the meads that shone, 1340  
     Strong, bright, & brave as day.

1333 <<Naught> ^Man^ may <man> ^not^ help me,'  
     said the knight,> ^My hurt may no man heal, God wot,^ MS  
 1337 Whose towers arose <not far> ^a league^ away MS  
 1339 Ere well the woful <man> ^sight^ were gone, MS

And seeing the king there stand, the knight  
 Drew rein before his face to alight  
 In reverence made for love's sake bright 1345  
 With joy that set his face alight  
     As theirs who see, alive, above,  
 The sovereign of their souls, whose name  
 To them is even as love's own flame  
 To enkindle hope that heeds not fame 1350  
     And knows no lord but love.

---

1344 <Was swift> <^Made speed^> ^Drew rein^  
     <with reverent joy> ^before his face^ to alight MS  
 1345 <In> <^With^> ^In^ reverence made for love's sake bright MS  
 1347 As theirs who see, <their chief of men,> ^alive, above^ MS



And Arthur smiled on him, & said,  
 'Right welcome be thou: by my head,  
 I would not wish me better sped. 1355  
 For even but now there came & fled  
     Before me like a cloud that flies  
 A knight that made most heavy cheer,  
 I know not wherefore; now may fear  
 Or pity give my heart to hear 1360  
     Or lighten on mine eyes.

---

1355 I would ^not^ wish me better sped. MS

1358 A knight that <...> made <great moan> ^most heavy cheer^ MS

'But even for fear's & pity's sake  
 Fain were I thou shouldst overtake  
 And fetch again this knight that spake 1365  
 No word of answering grace to make  
     Reply to mine that hailed him: thou,  
 By force or by goodwill, shalt bring  
 His face before me'. 'Yea, my king,'  
 Quoth Balen, '& a greater thing 1370  
     Were less than is my vow.

---

1365 And <bring> ^fetch^ again this knight that spake MS  
 1366 No word <& drew not ...> ^of answering grace^ to make MS  
 1368 By force <...> or by goodwill, shalt bring MS  
 1369 His face before me[.] 'Yea, my king,' C&W 1896

'I would the task required & heard  
 Were heavier than your sovereign word  
 Hath laid upon me': & hence he spurred 1375  
 Elate at heart as youth, & stirred  
     With hope as blithe as fires a boy:  
 And many a mile he rode, & found  
 Far in a forest's glimmering bound  
 The man he sought afar around 1380  
     And seeing took fire for joy.

---

1375 Hath laid upon me': ^&^ <...> hence he spurred MS  
 1375 Hath laid upon me[:'] & hence he spurred C&W 1896  
 1379 <Deep> ^Far^ in a forest's glimmering bound MS  
 1381 And seeing <was> <gave thanks for> ^took fire for^ joy. MS

And with him went a maiden, fair  
 As flowers aflush with April air.  
 And Balen bade him turn him there 1385  
 To tell the king what woes they were  
     That bowed him down so sore: & he  
 Made woful answer: 'This should do  
 Great scathe to me, with nought for you  
 Of help that hope might hearken to 1390  
     For boot that may not be.'

---

1389 Great scathe to me, & nought to> ^with^ <^break for^>  
     ^nought for^ you MS

1390 <Of> <^No^> ^Of^ help that hope might hear ken to MS

And Balen answered: 'I were loth  
 To fight as one perforce made wroth  
 With one that owes by knighthood's oath 1395  
 One love, one service, & one troth  
     With me to him whose gracious hand  
 Holds fast the helm of knighthood here  
 Whereby man's hope & heart man steer:  
 I pray you let not sorrow or fear 1400  
     Against his bidding stand.'

1393 And Balen <*said: Right loth were I*> ^answered: I were loth MS  
 1394 <*For pity & very courtesy*> ^To fight as one perforce made  
     wroth^ MS  
 1395 <*To enforce you*> ^With one^ that owes <...> by  
     knighthood's oath MS  
 1399 Whereby <*the ... finds grace to*> ^man's hope & heart may^  
     steer: MS  
 1400 I pray you let not <*gr*> sorrow or fear MS

The strange knight gazed on him, & spake:

‘Will you, for Arthur’s royal sake,

Be warrant for me that I take

1405

No scathe from strife that man may make?

Then will I go with you.’ And he

Made joyous answer: ‘Yea, for I

Will be your warrant or will die’.

And thence they rode with hearts as high

1410

As men’s that search the sea.

1409 Will be your warrant or will die[.]’

C&W 1896

16

And as by noon's large light the twain  
Before the tented hall drew rein  
Suddenly fell the strange knight, slain 1415  
By one that came & went again  
    And none might see him; but his spear  
Clove through the body, swift as fire,  
The man whose doom, forefelt as dire,  
Had darkened all his life's desire, 1420  
    As one that death held dear.

---

1414 Before the <*high royal place*> ^tented hall^ drew rein MS  
1414 Before the tented hall drew rein[,] C&W 1896

And dying he turned his face & said,  
 'Lo now thy warrant that my head  
 Should fall not, following forth where led 1425  
 A knight whose pledge hath left me dead.  
     This darkling manslayer hath to name  
 Garlon: take thou my goodlier steed,  
 Seeing thine is less of strength & speed,  
 And ride, if thou be knight indeed, 1430  
     Even thither whence we came.

1426 A knight <of Arthur's> whose pledge ^hath^ <leaves> ^left^  
     me dead. MS  
 1427 This <...that smote me> ^darkling manslayer^ hath to name MS  
 1428 Garlon: take thou my <...> goodlier steed, MS



'And as the maiden's fair behest  
 Shall bid you follow on my quest,  
 Follow: & when God's will sees best, 1435  
 Revenge my death, & let me rest  
     As one that lived & died a knight,  
 Unstained of shame alive or dead'.  
 And Balen, wrung with sorrow, said,  
 'That shall I do: my hand & head 1440  
     I pledge to do you right.'

1434 Shall <lead> ^bid^ you follow on my quest, MS  
 1438 Unstained of shame alive or dead[.] C&W 1896  
 1440 'That shall I do: <by hand & head> ^my hand & head^ MS  
 1441 <I am pledged> ^I pledge^ to do you right.' MS

And thence with sorrowing heart & cheer  
 He rode, in grief that cast out fear  
 Lest death in darkness yet were near, 1445  
 And bore the truncheon of the spear  
     Wherewith the woful knight lay slain  
 To her with whom he rode, & she  
 Still bear it with her, fain to see  
 What righteous doom of God's might be 1450  
     The darkling manslayer's bane.

1443 And ^thence with^ sorrowing <*thence he rode, & found*>  
     heart & cheer MS  
 1444 <*The maiden*> He rode, in grief that cast out fear MS  
 1445 <*Or wonder*> Lest death in darkness yet <*rode*> ^were^  
     near, MS  
 1448 <*Back*> To her with whom he rode, & she MS

And down a dim deep woodland way  
 They rode between the boughs asway  
 With flickering winds whose flash & play 1455  
 Made sunlight sunnier where the day  
     Laughed, leapt, & fluttered like a bird  
 Caught in a light loose leafy net  
 That earth for amorous heaven had set  
 To hold & see the sundawn yet 1460  
     And hear what morning heard.

---

1453 And down a <dark> ^dim^ deep woodland way MS  
 1455 With <flashing> ^flickering^ winds whose <sunny> ^flash^  
     & play MS  
 1460 To hold & see <fal...> the <m...> sundawn yet MS

There in the sweet soft shifting light  
 Across their passage rode a knight  
 Flushed hot from hunting as from flight, 1465  
 And seeing the sorrow-stricken sight  
     Made question of them why they rode  
 As mourners, sick at heart & sad,  
 When all alive about them bade  
 Sweet earth for heaven's sweet sake be glad 1470  
     As heaven for earth's love glowed.

1463 <And> There in the sweet soft shifting light MS  
 1464 <Against> ^Across^ <them> ^their^ <...> ^passage^ rode MS  
     a knight MS  
 1468 <So heavy> As mourners, sick at heart & sad, MS  
 1468 As mourners[<, >] sick at heart & sad, C&W 1896  
 1471 As heaven for earth's <sake> ^love^ glowed. MS

'Me list not tell you,' Balen said.  
 The strange knight's face grew keen & red;  
 'Now, might my hand but keep my head, 1475  
 Even here should one of twain lie dead  
     Were he no better armed than I.'  
 And Balen spake with smiling speed,  
 Where scorn & courtesy kept heed  
 Of either: 'That should little need: 1480  
     Not here shall either die.'

---

1473 'Me list[s] not tell you,' Balen said. C&W 1896  
 1475 <And> 'Now, might my hand but keep <...> ^my^ head, MS

And all the cause he told him through  
 As one that feared not though he knew  
 All: & the strange knight spake anew, 1485  
 Saying, 'I will part no more from you  
     While life shall last me.' So they went  
 Where he might arm himself to ride,  
 And rode across wild ways & wide  
 To where against a churchyard side 1490  
     A hermit's harbour leant.

---

1486 Saying[:] 'I will part no more from you

C&W 1896

And there against them riding came  
 Fleet as the lightning's laugh & flame  
 The invisible evil, even the same 1495  
 They sought & might not curse by name  
     As hell's foul child on earth set free,  
 And smote the strange knight through, & fled,  
 And left the mourners by the dead.  
 'Alas, again,' Sir Balen said, 1500  
     'This wrong he hath done to me'.

---

1494 Fleet as the lightning's <fear> ^laugh^ & flame  
 1501 'This wrong he hath done to me[.]'

MS  
 C&W 1896

And there they laid their dead to sleep  
 Royally, lying where wild winds keep  
 Keen watch & wail more soft & deep 1505  
 Than where men's choirs bid music weep  
     And song like incense heave & swell.  
 And forth again they rode, & found  
 Before them, dire in sight & sound,  
 A castle girt about & bound 1510  
     With sorrow like a spell.

---

1510 A castle girt <*with fear around*> about & bound MS



Above it seemed the sun at noon  
 Sad as a wintry withering moon  
 That shudders while the waste wind's tune 1515  
 Craves ever none may guess what boon,  
     But all may know the boon for dire.  
 And evening on its darkness fell  
 More dark than very death's farewell,  
 And night about it hung like hell, 1520  
     Whose fume the dawn made fire.

---

1513 Above it seemed the sun *<to be>* at noon MS  
 1517 *<And ni...>* But all may know the boon for dire. MS  
 1521 *<And dawn thereon seemed fire.>*  
     ^Whose fume the dawn made fire.^ MS

And Balen lighted down & passed  
 Within the gateway, whence no blast  
 Rang as the sheer portcullis, cast 1525  
 Suddenly down, fell, & made fast  
     The gate behind him, whence he spied  
 A sudden rage of men without  
 And ravin of a murderous rout  
 That girt the maiden hard about 1530  
     With death on either side.

---

1530 That girt the maiden <fall> ^hard^ about MS  
 1531 <To slay her here beside> ^With death on either side.^ MS

28

And seeing that shame & peril, fear  
Bade wrath & grief awake & hear  
What shame should say in fame's wide ear 1535  
If she, by sorrow sealed more dear  
    Than joy might make her, so should die:  
And up the tower's curled stair he sprang  
As one that flies death's deadliest fang,  
And leapt right out amid their gang 1540  
    As fire from heaven on high.

---

1532 <30> 28

And they thereunder seeing the knight  
 Unhurt among their press alight  
 And bare his sword for chance of fight 1545  
 Stood from him, loth to strive or smite,  
     And bade him hear their woful word,  
 That not the maiden's death they sought;  
 But there through years too dire for thought  
 Had lain their lady stricken, & nought 1550  
     Might heal her: & he heard.

1542 <31> 29 MS  
 1545 And bare his sword for <shieldless> ^chance of^ fight MS  
 1546 <Would strive not with> ^Stood from him, loth to strive or  
     smite,^ MS  
 1547 And bade him hear their ^woful^ word, <& head> MS  
 1549 But there through years too <sad> ^dire^ for thought MS

30

For there a maiden clean & whole  
In virgin body & virgin soul,  
Whose name was writ on royal roll, 1555  
That would but stain a silver bowl  
    With offering of her stainless blood,  
Therewith might heal her: so they stayed  
For hope's sad sake each blameless maid  
There journeying in that dolorous shade 1560  
    Whose bloom was bright in bud.

---

1552 <32> 30 MS  
1555 <Might heal her> Whose name was writ on royal roll, MS  
1559 For <trust therein> ^hope's soul sake^ each blameless maid MS

No hurt nor harm to her it were  
 If she should yield a sister there  
 Some tribute of her blood, & fare 1565  
 Forth with this joy at heart to bear,  
     That all unhurt & unafraid  
 This grace she had here by God's grace wrought.  
 And kindling all with kindly thought  
 And love that saw save love's self nought, 1570  
     Shone, smiled, & spake the maid.

---

1562	<33> 31	MS
1565	Some <drops> tribute of her blood, & fare	MS
1566	Forth <all> with this joy at heart to bear,	MS
1567	That all unhurt <she> & unafraid	MS
1571	<Spake> Shone, smiled, & spake the maid.	MS

'Good knight of mine, good will have I  
 To help this healing though I die'.  
 'Nay,' Balen said, 'but love may try  
 What help in living love may lie. 1575  
     --I will not lose the life of her  
 While my life lasteth'. So she gave  
 The tribute love was fain to crave,  
 But might not heal though fain to save, 1580  
     Were God's grace helpfuller.

1572 <34> 32 MS  
 1574 To <serve> ^help^ this <sorrow> ^healing^ though I die'. MS  
 1574 To help this healing though I die[.] C&W 1896  
 1576 What help in living love may lie.<'> MS  
 1578 While my life lasteth[.] So she gave C&W 1896  
 1579 The <...> tribute love was fain to crave, MS  
 1580 <Yet> ^But^ might <her sweet blood's gift not>  
     ^not heal though fain to^ save, MS  
 1581 Were God's <will> grace helpfuller. MS

Another maid in later Mays  
 Won with her life that woful praise,  
 And died. But they, when surging day's 1585  
 Deep tide fulfilled the dawn's wide ways,  
     Rode forth, & found by day or night  
 No chance to cross their wayfaring  
 Till when they saw the fourth day spring  
 A knight's hall gave them harbouring 1590  
     Rich as a king's house might.

---

1583 Another maid in <*other days*> later Mays MS  
 1584 <*Was born to win*> ^Won with her life^ that woful praise, MS  
 1590 A <*good*> knight's hall gave <...> them harbouring MS



And while they sat at meat & spake  
 Words bright & kind as grace might make  
 Sweet for true knighthood's kindly sake, 1595  
 They heard a cry beside them break  
     The still-souled joy of blameless rest.  
 'What noise is this?' quoth Balen, 'Nay,'  
 His knightly host made answer, 'may  
 Our grief not grieve you though I say 1600  
     How here I dwell unblest.

1595 <*For love's sake gracious,*> Sweet for true knighthood's  
     kindly sake, MS  
 1596 They heard a cry beside them <*wake*> break MS  
 1597 The <*quest*> ^still-souled^ joy of blameless rest. MS  
 1600 Our grief not <...> grieve you though I say MS

'Not many a day has lived & died  
Since at a tournay late I tried  
My strength to smite & turn & ride 1605  
Against a knight of kinglike pride,  
    King Pellam's brother: twice I smote  
The splendour of his strength to dust:  
And he, fulfilled of hate's fierce lust,  
Swore vengeance, pledged for hell to trust, 1610  
    And keen as hell's wide throat.

---

'Invisible as the spirit of night  
That heaven & earth in depth & height  
May see not by the mild moon's light 1615  
Nor even when stars would grant them sight,  
    He walks & slays as plague's blind breath  
Slays: & my son, whose anguish here  
Makes moan perforce that mars our cheer,  
He wounded, even ere love might fear 1620  
    That hate were strong as death.

---

'Nor may my son be whole till he  
Whose stroke through him hath stricken me  
Shall give again his blood to be 1625  
Our healing: yet may no man see  
    This felon, clothed with darkness round  
And keen as lightning's life.' Thereon  
Spake Balen, & his presence shone  
Even as the sun's when stars are gone 1630  
    That hear dawn's trumpet sound.

---

‘That knight I know: two knights of mine,  
 Two comrades, sealed by faith’s bright sign,  
 Whose eyes as ours that live should shine, 1635  
 And drink the golden sunlight’s wine

    With joy’s thanksgiving that they live,  
 He hath slain in even the same blind wise:  
 Were all wide wealth beneath the skies  
 Mine, might I meet him, eyes on eyes, 1640  
 All would I laugh to give’.

---

1641 All would I <gladly> ^laugh to^ give’.

MS

1641 All would I laugh to give[.]’

C&W 1896

His host made answer, & his gaze  
 Grew bright with trust as dawn's moist maze  
 With fire: 'Within these twenty days, 1645  
 King Pellam, lord of Lystenayse,  
     Holds feast through all this country cried,  
 And there before the knightly king  
 May no knight come except he bring  
 For witness of his warfaring 1650  
     His paramour or bride.

---

1644 Grew bright with trust as <*grows the days,*> <*rays*>  
     <*old seas ways*> ^dawn's moist maze^ MS  
 1645 <*Rising*> ^With fire^: 'Within these twenty days, MS  
 1650 <*His wife or paramour*> ^For witness of his warfaring^ MS  
 1650 For witness of his [wayfaring] C&W 1896

'And there that day, so soon to shine,  
 This knight, your felon foe & mine,  
 Shall shew, full-flushed with bloodred wine, 1655  
 The fierce false face whereon we pine  
     To wreak the wrong he hath wrought us, bare  
 As shame should see & brand it.' 'Then',  
 Said Balen, 'shall he give again  
 His blood to heal your son, & men 1660  
     Shall see death blind him there.'

1653 'And there that day, <*when swordblades*> ^so soon to^  
     shine, MS  
 1654 <*That*> ^This^ knight, your felon foe & mine, MS  
 1655 Shall shew, <... *feast, across the*> ^full-flushed with  
     bloodred^ wine, MS  
 1655 Shall [show], full-flushed with bloodred wine, C&W 1896  
 1658 As shame <*would*> ^should^ see <...> ^&^ brand it.'  
     'Then', MS  
 1658 As shame should see & brand it.' 'Then[,] C&W 1896  
 1660 His blood to heal your son, <*that*> ^&^ men MS  
 1661 <*Unhurt of spells shall fare.*>  
     ^Shall see death blind him there.'^ MS

'Forth will we fare to-morrow,' said  
 His host: & forth, as sunrise led,  
 They rode; & fifteen days were fled 1665  
 Ere toward their goal their steeds had sped.  
     And there alighting might they find  
 For Balen's host no place to rest,  
 Who came without a gentler guest  
 Beside him: & that household's hest 1670  
     Bade leave his sword behind.

---

1665 They rode; & fifteen days <had> ^were^ fled MS  
 1666 Ere toward their ^goal their^ steeds had sped. MS  
 1669 Who <rode> came without a gentler guest MS



Nay,' Balen said, 'that do I not:  
 My country's custom stands, God wot,  
 That none whose lot is knighthood's lot, 1675  
 To ride where chance as fire is hot  
     With hope or promise given of fight,  
 Shall fail to keep, for knighthood's part,  
 His weapon with him as his heart:  
 And as I came will I depart, 1680  
     Or hold herein my right.'

1674 My country's custom <ye shall> <^bids^> ^stands,^  
     ^God^ wot,

MS

1679 His weapon with him as his heart[;]

C&amp;W 1896

Then gat he leave to wear his sword  
Beside the strange king's festal board  
Where feasted many a knight & lord 1685  
In seamliness of fair accord:  
    And Balen asked of one beside,  
'Is there not in this court, if fame  
Keep faith, a knight that hath to name  
Garlon?' & saying that word of shame, 1690  
    He scanned that place of pride.'

1684 <Even at> ^Beside^ the strange king's festal board MS  
1687 And <softl> Balen asked of one beside, MS  
1688 'Is there not in this court, <a knight> if fame MS  
1689 <Strong as with person's strength> ^Keep faith, a knight  
that hath^ <power> to <smite> ^name^ MS  
1690 <Who rides wraht round with spells from sight>  
^Garlon? & saying that word of shame,^ MS  
1691 <As none save castoffs ride?'>  
^He scanned that place of pride.^ MS

'Yonder he goeth against the light,  
 He with the face as swart as night,  
 Quoth the other: 'but he rides to fight 1695  
 Hid round by charms from all men's sight,  
     And many a noble knight he hath slain,  
 Being wrapt in darkness deep as hell  
 And silence dark as shame.' 'Ah, well,'  
 Said Balen, 'is that he? the spell 1700  
     May be the sorcerer's bane'.

1693 'Yonder ^he^ goeth against the light.<'> MS  
 1694 <*Said the other*> He with the face as swart as might,' MS  
 1696 Hid round <*with spells*> ^by charms^ from all men's sight, MS  
 1701 May be the sorcerer's bane[.] C&W 1896

45

Then Balen gazed upon him long,  
And thought, "If here I wreak my wrong,  
Alive I may not scape, so strong 1705  
The felon's friends about him throng;  
    And if I leave him here alive,  
This chance perchance may life not give  
Again: much evil, if he live,  
He needs must do, should fear forgive 1710  
    When wrongs bid strike & strive.'

---

And Garlon, seeing how Balen's eye  
 Dwell on him as his heart waxed high  
 With joy in wrath to see him nigh, 1715  
 Rose wolf-like with a wolfish cry  
     And crossed & smote him on the face,  
 Saying, 'Knight, what wouldst thou with me? Eat,  
 For shame, & gaze not: eat thy meat:  
 Do that thou art come for: stands thy seat 1720  
     Next ours of royal race?'

---

1718 Saying, 'Knight, what wouldst thou ^with^ me? Eat, MS  
 1720 Do that thou art come for: <us> ^stands^ thy seat MS

'Well hast thou said: they rede rings true;  
 That which I came for will I do,'  
 Quoth Balen: forth his fleet sword flew, 1725  
 And clove the head of Garlon through  
     Clean to the shoulders. Then he cried  
 Loud to his lady, 'Give me here  
 The truncheon of the shameful spear  
 Wherewith he slew your knight, when fear 1730  
     Bade hate in darkness ride.'

1727 \*See footnote. MS  
 1727 <Clear> Clean to the shoulders. <Turning th> Then he  
     <bade> <said> <spake> ^cried^ MS  
 1728 <His> Loud to his lady, 'Give me here MS

And gladly, bright with grief made glad,  
 She gave the truncheon as he bade,  
 For still she bare it with her, sad 1735  
 And strong in hopeless hope she had,  
     Thro all dark days of thwarting fear,  
 To see if doom should fall aright  
 And as God's fire-fraught thunder smite  
 That head, clothed round with hell-faced night, 1740  
     Bare now before her here.

---

1734 She gave the truncheon as <*she*> he bade, MS  
 1737 <*For*> ^Thro^ all dark days of thwarting fear, MS  
 1737 [Through] all dark days of thwarting fear, C&W 1896

And Balen smote therewith the dead  
 Dark felon's body through, & said  
 Aloud, 'With even this truncheon, red 1745  
 With baser blood than brave men bled  
     Whom in thy shameful hand it slew,  
 Thou hast slain a nobler knight, & now  
 It clings & cleaves thy body: thou  
 Shalt cleave again no brave man's brow, 1750  
     Though hell would aid anew.'

---

1749 It ^clings &^ cleaves <within> thy body: thou  
 1750 [Shall] cleave again no brave man's brow,

MS  
 C&W 1896



And toward his host he turned & spake;  
 'Now for your son's long-suffering sake  
 Blood ye may fetch enough, & take 1755  
 Wherewith to heal his hurt, & make  
     Death warm as life.' Then rose a cry  
 Loud as the wind's when stormy spring  
 Makes all the woodland rage & ring:  
 'Thou hast slain my brother', said the king, 1760  
     'And here with him shalt die'.

---

1757 Death warm <^bright^> as life.' Then rose a cry MS  
 1760 Thou hast slain my brother[,] said the king, C&W 1896  
 1761 'And here with him shalt die[.]' C&W 1896

‘Ay?’ Balen laughed him answer. ‘Well,  
 Do it then thyself.’ And the answer fell  
 Fierce as a blast of hate from hell, 1765  
 ‘No man of mine that with me dwell  
     Shall strike at thee but I their lord,  
 For love of this my brother slain.’  
 And Pellam caught & grasped amain  
 A grim great weapon, fierce & fain 1770  
     To feed his hungering sword.

1766 ‘No man of mine <^...^> that with my dwell MS  
 1767 Shall <...> <^fight^> ^strike at thee^ <with thou his hand>  
     but I <the king> ^their lord^, MS  
 1771 <...Sir Balen did> To feed his hungering sword. MS

And eagerly he smote, & sped  
 Not well: for Balen's blade, yet red  
 With lifeblood of the murderous dead, 1775  
 Between the swordstroke & his head  
     Shone, & the strength of the eager stroke  
 Shore it in sunder: then the knight,  
 Naked & weaponless for fight,  
 Ran seeking him a sword to smite 1780  
     As hope within him woke.

---

1777 Shone, & the <might> ^strength^ of the eager stroke MS

And so their flight for deathward fast  
 From chamber forth to chamber past  
 Where lay no weapon, till the last 1785  
 Whose doors made way for Balen cast  
     Upon him as a sudden spell  
 Wonder that even as lightning leapt  
 Across his heart & eyes, & swept  
 As storm across his soul that kept 1790  
     Wild watch, & watched not well.

---

1784 From chamber forth to chamber [passed] C&W 1896  
 1785 <And> Where lay no weapon, till the last MS

For there the deed he did, being near  
Death's danger, breathless as the deer  
Driven hard to bay, but void of fear, 1795  
Brought sorrow down for many a year  
    On many a man in many a land.  
All glorious shone that chamber, bright  
As burns at sunrise heaven's own height:  
With cloth of gold the bed was dight, 1800  
    That flamed on either hand.

---

And one he saw within it lie:  
 A table of all clean gold thereby  
 Stood stately, fair as morning's eye, 1805  
 With four strong silver pillars, high  
     And firm as faith & hope may be:  
 And on it shone the gift he sought,  
 A spear most marvelously wrought,  
 That when his eye & handgrip caught 1810  
     Small fear at heart had he.

1804 A table of ^all^ clean gold thereby MS  
 1804 A table of all [clear] gold thereby C&W 1896  
 1805 Stood stately, <lifted up> <^steadfast hold^> <on high>  
     fair as morning's eye, MS  
 1808 And on it <lay> ^shone^ the <...> <^stay^> ^gift^  
     he sought, MS

Right on King Pellam then, as fire  
 Turns when the thwarting winds wax higher,  
 He turned, & smote him down. So dire 1815  
 The stroke was, when his heart's desire  
     Struck, & had all its fill of hate,  
 That as the king fell swooning down  
 Fell the walls, rent from base to crown,  
 Prone as prone seas that break & drown 1820  
     Ships fraught with doom for freight.

---

1815 He turned, & smote him down<s>. So dire MS  
 1820 Prone as <the> ^prone^ seas that break & drown MS  
 1821 <The> Ships fraught with doom for freight. MS

And there for three days' silent space  
 Balen & Pellam face to face  
 Lay dead or deathlike, & the place 1825  
 Was death's blind kingdom, till the grace  
     That God had given the sacred seer  
 For counsel or for comfort led  
 His Merlin thither, & he said,  
 Standing between the quick & dead, 1830  
     'Rise up, & rest not here.'

---

1828 For counsel or ^for^ comfort led MS



And Balen rose & set his eyes  
 Against the seer's, as one that tries  
 His heart against the sea's & sky's 1835  
 And fears not if he lives or dies,  
     Saying, 'I would have my damosel,  
 Ere I fare forth, to fare with me'.  
 And sadly Merlin answered, 'See  
 Where now she lies; death knows if she 1840  
     Shall now fare ill or well.'

1834 Against the seer's[<, >] as one that tries C&W 1896  
 1838 Ere I <pass> <^fare^> ^fare^ forth, to <pass> ^fare^  
     with me'. MS  
 1838 Ere I fare forth, to fare with me[.] C&W 1896  
 1840 Where now she lies; <& never> ^death knows if^ she MS  
 1841 Shall now fare ill or well.[<'>] C&W 1896

‘And in this world we meet no more,  
 Balen.’ And Balen, sorrowing sore,  
 Though fearless yet the heart he bore 1845  
 Beat toward the life that lay before,  
     Rode forth through many a wild waste land  
 Where men cried out against him, mad  
 With grievous faith in fear that bade  
 Their wrath make moan for doubt they had 1850  
     Lest hell had armed his hand.

---

1847 Rode forth through ^many a^ wild <&> waste<d> land<s> MS  
 1851 Lest <that> hell had armed his hand. MS

For in that chamber's wondrous shrine  
 Was part of Christ's own blood, the wine  
 Shed of the true triumphal vine 1855  
 Whose growth bids earth's deep darkness shine  
     As heaven's deep light through the air & sea;  
 That mystery toward our northern shore  
 Arimathean Joseph bore  
 For healing of our sins of yore, 1860  
     That grace even there might be.

---

1859 [Arimathean] Joseph bore

C&W 1896

And with that spear there shrined apart  
 Was Christ's side smitten to the heart.  
 And fierier than the lightning's dart 1865  
 The stroke was, & the deathlike smart  
     Wherewith, nigh drained of blood & breath,  
 The king lay stricken as one long dead:  
 And Joseph's was the blood there shed,  
 For near akin was he that bled, 1870  
     Near even as life to death.

---

1865 And [fiercer] than the lightning dart C&W 1896  
 1867 Wherewith, <the king> nigh drained of blood & breath, MS

And therefore fell on all that land  
 Sorrow: for still on either hand  
 As Balen rode alone & scanned 1875  
 Bright fields & cities built to stand  
     Till time should break them, dead men lay;  
 And loud & long, from all their folk  
 Living, one cry that cursed him broke;  
 Three countries had his dolorous stroke 1880  
     Slain, or should surely slay.

---

1874 Sorrow: for still on either hand[,] C&W 1896  
 1877 Till time should break them, ^dead^ men lay; <dead,> MS  
 1878 And loud [and] long [<,>] from all their folk C&W 1896  
 1880 ^Three countries had his^ <Who had slain them by the>  
     dolorous stroke MS  
 1882 <...> MS

VII.

1

In winter, when the year burns low 1885  
As fire wherein no firebrands glow,  
And winds dishevel as they blow  
The lovely stormy wings of snow,  
    The hearts of northern men burn bright  
With joy that mocks the joy of spring 1890  
To hear all heaven's keen clarions ring  
Music that bids the spirit sing  
    And day give thanks for night.

---

1883 [VII]	C&W 1896
1884 [<I>]	C&W 1896
1885 In winter, when the <world> ^year^ burns low	MS
1885 [IN] winter, when the years burns low	C&W 1896

Aloud & dark as hell or hate 1895  
 Round Balen's head the wind of fate  
 Blew storm & cloud from death's wide gate:  
 But joy as grief in him was great  
     To face God's doom & live or die,  
 Sorrowing for ill wrought unaware, 1900  
 Rejoicing in desire to dare  
 All ill that innocence might bear  
     With changeless heart & eye.

---

1895 Aloud & dark as <death> <^fear^> ^hell^ or hate MS  
 1899 To face God's <will> ^doom^ & live or die, MS  
 1900 Sorrowing for <wrong done> ^ill wrought^ unaware, MS  
 1901 Rejoicing in <delight> ^desire^ to dare MS  
 1902 All <do...> ill that innocence might bear MS

Yet passing fain he was when past 1905  
 Those lands & woes at length & last.  
 Eight times, as thence he fared forth fast,  
 Dawn rose & even was overcast  
     With starry darkness dear as day,  
 Before his venturous quest might meet 1910  
 Adventure, seeing within a sweet  
 Green low-lying forest, hushed in heat,  
     A tower that barred his way.

---

1907 <And eight> ^Eight^ times, as thence he fared forth fast, MS  
 1909 With starry darkness <sweet> ^dear^ as day, MS



Strong summer, dumb with rapture, bound	1915
With golden calm the woodlands round	
Wherethrough the knight forth faring found	
A knight that on the greenwood ground	
Sat mourning: fair he was to see,	
And moulded as for love or fight	1920
A maiden's dreams might frame her knight;	
But sad in joy's far-flowering sight	
As grief's blind thrall might be.	

---

1915 Strong summer, <rapt in> ^dumb with^ rapture, bound	MS
1919 <One sitting <^that sat^> on the> ^A knight^ that one the greenwood ground	MS

'God save you,' Balen softly said, 1925  
 'What grief bows down your heart & head  
 Thus, as one sorrowing for his dead?  
 Tell me, if haply I may stead  
     In aught your sorrow, that I may'.  
 'Sir knight,' that other said, 'thy word 1930  
 Makes my grief heavier that I heard'.  
 And pity & wonder inly stirred  
     Drew Balen thence away.

---

1927 Thus,<'> as one sorrowing for his dead? MS  
 1929 In aught your sorrow, that I may[.] C&W 1896  
 1931 Makes my grief heavier that I heard[.] C&W 1896  
 1933 Drew <softly> ^Balen^ thence away. MS

## 6

And so withdrawn with silent speed 1935  
 He saw the sad knight's stately steed,  
 A war-horse meet for warrior's need,  
 That none who passed might choose but heed,  
     So strong he stood, so great, so fair,  
 With eyes afire for flight or fight, 1940  
 A joy to look on, mild in might,  
 And swift & keen & kind as light,  
     And all as clear of care.

---

1935 And so withdrawn with <soft> ^silent^ speed MS  
 1938 <Made past to a tree> ^That none who passed^ might MS  
     choose but heed,

And Balen, gazing on him, heard 1945  
 Again his master's woful word  
 Sound sorrow through the calm unstirred  
 By fluttering wind or flickering bird,  
     Thus: 'Ah, fair lady & faithless, why  
 Break thy pledged faith to meet me? soon 1950  
 An hour beyond thy trothplight noon  
 Shall strike my death-bell, & thy boon  
     Is this, that here I die.

---

1949 Thus: <...> 'Ah, fair lady & faithless, why MS  
 1950 Break thy pledged faith to meet <me?> ^me?^  
     <Soon by n...> ^soon^ MS  
 1952 Shall <strike> <^sound^> ^strike^ <for> m<e>^y^ <^the^>  
     death<b>^-^bell<s>, <...> boon MS  
 1953 <As here by thee> ^Is this, that here^ I die<'>. MS

8

'My curse for all thy gifts may be  
Heavier than death or night on thee:  
For now this sword thou gavest me  
Shall set me from thy bondage free.'

1955

And there the man had died self-slain,  
But Balen leapt on him & caught  
The blind fierce hand that fain had wrought  
Self-murder, stung with fire of thought,  
As rage makes anguish fain.

1960

---

1956 Heavier than death or night on thee[;]

C&W 1896

Then, mad for thwarted grief, 'Let go  
 My hand', the fool of wrath & woe  
 Cried, 'or I slay thee.' Scarce the glow  
 In Balen's cheek & eye might show,  
     As dawn shows day while seas lie chill,  
 He heard, tho pity took not heed,  
 But smiled & spake, 'That shall not need:  
 What man may do to bid you speed  
     I, so God speed me, will.'

1965

1970

---

1966 My hand[,'] the fool of wrath & woe C&W 1896  
 1969 <Made answer,> <As dawn shows day ere heaven>  
     ^As dawn shows day while seas lie chill,^ MS  
 1970 He heard, <&> ^tho pity^ took not heed, MS  
 1970 He heard, [though] pity took not heed, C&W 1896  
 1972 What man may do <by mede or deed> to bid you speed MS  
 1973 <To help you> <I> I, so God speed me, will.' MS

And the other craved his name, beguiled 1975  
 By hope that made his madness mild.  
 Again Sir Balen spake & smiled:  
 'My name is Balen, called the Wild  
     By knights whom kings & courts make tame  
 Because I ride alone afar 1980  
 And follow but my soul for star.'  
 'Ah, sir, I know the knight you are,  
     And all your fiery fame.

---

1979 <Because> By knights whom <kings & courts make>  
     <^courtly life keeps^> ^kings & courts make^ tame MS  
 1982 'Ah, sir, I know the knight you are[<, >] C&W 1896

11

‘The knight that bears two swords I know, 1985  
Most praised of all men, friend & foe,  
For prowess of your hands, that show  
Dark war the way where balefires glow  
    And kindle glory like the dawn’s.’  
So spake the sorrowing knight, & stood 1990  
As one whose heart fresh hope made good:  
And forth they rode by wold & wood  
    And down the glimmering lawns.

---

1988 Dark war the way <...> where balefires glow MS



And Balen craved his name who rode 1995  
 Beside him, where the wild wood glowed  
 With joy to feel how noontide flowed  
 Through glade & glen & rough green road  
     Till earth grew joyful as the sea.  
 ‘My name is Garnyshe of the Mount, 2000  
 A poor man’s son of none account,  
 He said, ‘where springs of loftier fount  
     Laugh loud with pride to be.

---

1998 Through glade & glen & <wildwood> ^rough green^ road MS  
 2003 Laugh<, bright> loud with pride to be. MS

'But strength in weakness lives & stands  
 As rocks that rise through shifting sands;  
 And for the prowess of my hands  
 One made me knight & gave me lands,  
     Duke Hermel, lord from far to near,  
 Our prince: & she that loved me – she  
 I love, & deemed she loved but me,  
 His daughter, pledged her faith to be  
     Ere now beside me here'.

2005

2010

---

2007 And for the prowess<...> of my hands MS  
 2009 Duke Hermel, <*prince of all men here*>  
     ^lord from far to near,^ MS  
 2010 <*Duelling*> ^Our prince^: & she that loved me – she MS  
 2010 Our prince[;] & she that loved me – she C&W 1896  
 2013 <*By less*> ^Ere now^ beside me here'. MS  
 2013 Ere now beside me here[.'] C&W 1896

And Balen, brief of speech as light 2015  
 Whose word, beheld of depth & height,  
 Strikes silence through the stars of night,  
 Spake, & his face as dawn's grew bright,  
     For hope to help a happier man,  
 'How far then lies she hence?' 'By this,' 2020  
 Her lover signed & said, 'I wis,  
 Not six fleet miles the passage is,  
     And straight as thought could span'.

2016 Whose word, beheld <up> ^of^ depth & height, MS  
 2020 'How far then lies she <hence & from> <now?' 'By this,'  
     ^hence?' 'By this,' MS  
 2021 <The> ^Her^ lover <...> ^sighed^ & said, 'I wis, MS  
 2023 <That severs her from me, I wis.>  
     ^And straight as thought could span'. MS  
 2023 And straight as thought could span[.] C&W 1896

So rode they swift & sure, & found 2025  
 A castle walled & dyked around:  
 And Balen, as a warrior bound  
 On search where hope might fear to sound,  
     The darkness of the deeps of doubt,  
 Made entrance through the guardless gate 2030  
 As life, while hope in life grows great,  
 Makes way between the doors of fate  
     That death may pass thereout.

---

2028 <To> ^On^ search wh<at>^ere^ hope might fear to sound, MS  
 2028 On search where hope might fear to sound[<,>] C&W 1896

Through many a glorious chamber, wrought 2035  
 For all delight that love's own thought  
 Might dream or dwell in, Balen sought  
 And found of all he looked for nought,  
     For like a shining shell her bed  
 Shone void & vacant of her: thence 2040  
 Through devious wonders bright & dense  
 He passed & saw with shame-struck sense  
     Where shame & faith lay dead.

---

2041 <Down <^Passing^> in a fa... strait garden's pen>  
     ^Through devious wonders bright & dense MS  
 2042 He <saw> passed & saw <with> <^what^> ^with^  
     shame <...> ^-struck^ sense MS  
 2043 <To see> Where shame & faith lay dead. MS

Down in a sweet small garden, fair 2045  
 With flowerful joy in the ardent air,  
 He saw, & raged with loathing, where  
 She lay with love-dishevelled hair  
     Beneath a broad bright laurel tree  
 And clasped in amorous arms a knight, 2050  
 The unloveliest that his scornful sight  
 Had dwelt on yet; a shame the bright  
     Broad noon might shrink to see.

---

2052 Had dwelt on <...> ^yet^; a <*sight*> ^shame^ the bright MS

And thence in wrathful hope he turned, 2055  
 Hot as the heart within him burned,  
 To meet the knight whose love, so spurned  
 And spat on & made nought of, yearned  
     And dreamed & hoped & lived in vain,  
 And said, 'I have found her sleeping fast,' 2060  
 And led him where the shadows cast  
 From leaves wherethrough light winds ran past  
     Screened her from sun & rain.

---

2055 And thence <with ... ..> ^in wrathful hope^ he turned, MS  
 2062 <Soft Light as her faith in love now>  
     ^From leaves wherethrough light winds ran^ past MS

But Garnysshe, seeing, reeled as he stood 2065  
 Like a tree, kingliest of the wood,  
 Half hewn through: & the burning blood  
 Through lips & nostrils burst aflood:  
     And gathering back his rage & might  
 As broken breakers rally & roar 2070  
 The loud wind down that drives off shore,  
 He smote their heads off; there no more  
     Their life might shame the light.

---

2068 Through lips & nostrils burst <...> aflood: MS  
 2070 As <waves wind> <^gate^> broken breakers rally & roar MS  
 2072 He smote their heads off[:] there no more C&W 1896



20

Then turned he back toward Balen, mad 2075  
With grief, & said, 'The grief I had  
Was nought: ere this my life was glad:  
Thou hast done this deed: I was but sad  
    And fearful how my hope might fare:  
I had lived my sorrow down, hadst thou 2080  
Not shown me what I saw but now.'  
The sorrow & scorn on Balen's brow  
    Bade silence curb him there.

---

2083 <*Bade silence curb him*> ^Bade silence curb him^ there. MS

And Balen answered: 'What I did 2085  
 I did to hearten thee & bid  
 Thy courage know that shame should rid  
 A man's high heart of love that hid  
     Blind shame within its core: God knows,  
 I did, to set a bondman free, 2090  
 But as I would thou hadst done by me,  
 That seeing what love must die to see  
     Love's end might well be woe's.'

---

2091 But as I would <you did to> ^thou hadst done by^ me, MS  
 2093 Love's <death> <^ring^> ^end^ might <bring forth>  
     <^chime with^> ^will be^ woe's.' MS

'Alas,' the woful weakling said, 2095  
 'I have slain what most I loved: I have shed  
 The blood most near my heart: the head  
 Lies cold as earth, defiled & dead,  
     That all my life was lighted by,  
 That all my soul bowed down before, 2100  
 And now may bear with life no more:  
 For now my sorrow that I bore  
     Is twofold, & I die.'

---

2096 <Whose violent hand two deaths made red>  
     ^'I have slain what most I loved: <the heart>  
     ^I have shed^^

MS

2101 And now may bear with life <wi...> no more:

MS

Then with his red wet sword he rove 2105  
 His breast in sunder, where it clove  
 Life, & no pulse against it strove,  
 So sure & strong the deep stroke drove  
     Deathward: & Balen, seeing him dead,  
 Rode thence, lest folk would say he had slain 2110  
 Those three: & ere three days again  
 Had seen the sun's might wax & wane  
     Far forth he had spurred & sped.

---

2110 Rode thence, <*that none might*> ^lest folk would^ say he  
     had slain MS  
 2111 Those three[; and] ere three days again C&W 1896  
 2112 Had seen the sun's might wax & wane[,] C&W 1896  
 2113 Far forth <... ...> ^he^ had <...*sped*> <^*spurred*^>  
     ^spurred & sped.^ MS

And riding past a cross whereon 2115  
 Broad golden letters written shone,  
 Saying, 'No knight born may ride alone  
 Forth toward this castle', & all the stone  
     Glowed in the sun's glare even as though  
 Blood stained it from the crucified 2120  
 Dead burden of one that there had died,  
 An old hoar man he saw beside  
     Whose face was wan as woe.

---

2115 And riding <toward> ^past^ a cross whereon MS  
 2117 <Showing how no knight might>  
     ^Saying, 'No knight born may^ ride alone MS  
 2118 ^Forth^ <T>^t^oward this <near> castle', & all the stone MS  
 2118 Forth toward this castle[, ' and] all the stone C&W 1896  
 2120 Blood stained it from <one> ^the^ crucified MS

'Balén the Wild,' he said, 'this way  
 Thy way lies not: thou hast passed today  
 Thy bands: but turn again, & stay  
 Thy passage, while thy soul hath sway  
     Within thee, & through God's good power  
 It will avail thee:' & anon  
 His likeness as a cloud was gone,  
 And Balén's heart within him shone  
     Clear as the cloudless hour.

---

2126 Thy way lies not: thou hast passed [to-day] C&W 1896  
 2127 Thy <bounds> ^bands^: but turn again, & stay MS  
 2129 <Yet on thy> Within thee, & <... death>  
     <^through pity's power^> <^mercy's boon^>  
     <^God's dear^> <by> ^through God's good power^ MS  
 2131 His <vanished> likeness as a cloud was gone, MS  
 2133 Clear as the <sun> cloudless <noon> ^hour^. MS

Nor fate nor fear might overcast 2135  
 The soul now near its peace at last.  
 Suddenly, thence as forth he past,  
 A mighty & a deadly blast  
     Blown of a hunting-horn he heard,  
 As when the chase hath nobly sped. 2140  
 ‘That blast is blown for me’, he said,  
 ‘The prize am I who am yet not dead’,  
     And smiled upon the word.

---

2136 The soul now near its <^her^> peace at last. MS  
 2137 Suddenly, <ere he> thence as forth he past, MS  
 2140 As <for> <^toward^> <a beast’s death: then>  
     when the chase hath nobly sped. MS  
 2141 ‘That blast is blown for me[,]’ he said, C&W 1896  
 2142 ‘The prize am I who am yet not dead[,]’ C&W 1896

As toward a royal hart's death rang 2145  
 That note, whence all the loud wood sang  
 With winged & living sound that sprang  
 Like fire, & keen as fire's own fang  
     Pierced the sweet silence that it slew.  
 But nought like death or strife was here: 2150  
 Fair semblance & most goodly cheer  
 They made him, they whose troop drew near  
     As death among them drew.

---

2145 As toward a royal <...> hart's death rang MS  
 2150 But nought <of sorrow> ^like death^ or strife MS  
     <seemed near> ^was here:^  
 2152 They made him, <while their> ^they whose^ MS  
     troop drew near



A hundred ladies well arrayed 2155  
 And many a knight well weaponed made  
 That kindly show of cheer: the glade  
 Shone round them till its very shade  
     Lightened & laughed from grove to lawn  
 To hear & see them: so they brought 2160  
 Within a castle fair as thought  
 Could dream that wizard hands had wrought  
     The guest among them drawn.

---

2157 <Such> ^That^ kindly show of cheer: the glade MS  
 2159 Lightened & laughed <as> ^from^ grove to lawn MS  
 2162 Could dream that wizard hands had <drawn> ^wrought^ MS

All manner of glorious joy was there: 2165  
 Harping & dancing, loud & fair,  
 And minstrelsy that made of air  
 Fire, so like fire its raptures were.

Then the chief lady spake on high:  
 'Knight with the two swords, one of two 2170  
 Must help you here or fall from you:  
 For needs you now must have ado  
 And joust with one hereby.

---

2171 Must help you <now> ^here^ or fall from you: MS

'A good knight guards an island here 2175  
 Against all swords that chance brings near,  
 And there with stroke of sword & spear  
 Must all for whom these halls make cheer  
     Fight, & redeem or yield up life.'  
 'An evil custom,' Balen said, 2180  
 'Is this, that none whom chance hath led  
 Hither, if knighthood crown his head,  
     May pass unstirred to strife.'

---

2176 <An island> ^Against^ all swords that chance <draws>  
     ^brings^ near, MS  
 2179 Fight, & redeem or <leave his> ^yield up^ life.' MS  
 2183 May pass un<touched of>^stirred to^ strife.' MS

'You shall not have ado to fight  
Here save against one only knight,'  
She said, & all her face grew bright  
As hell-fire, lit with hungry light  
    That wicked laughter touched with flame.  
'Well, since I shall thereto,' said he,  
2190 'I am ready at heart as death for me:  
Fain would I be where death should be  
    And life should lose its name.

---

2191 'I am ready at heart <as man may be> ^as death for me^: MS

'But traveling men whose goal afar 2195  
 Shines as a cloud-constraining star  
 Are often weary, & wearier are  
 Their steeds that feel each fret & jar  
     Wherewith the wild ways wound them: yet,  
 Albeit my horse be weary, still 2200  
 My heart is nowise weary; will  
 Sustains it even till death fulfil  
     My trust upon him set.'

---

2195 'But traveling men whose goal<s> <...>afar MS  
 2196 Shines as <the un...>  
     a cloud-<...><^surpass^>^constrain^ing star MS  
 2197 <...> Are often weary, & wearier are MS  
 2198 Their steeds that feel <the wild ways> ^each fret &^ jar MS

‘Sir,’ said a knight thereby that stood, 2205  
 ‘Meseems your shield is now not good  
 But worn with warrior work, nor could  
 Sustain in strife the strokes it would:

    A larger will I lend you.’ ‘Ay,  
 Thereof I thank you’, Balen said, 2210  
 Being single of heart as one that read  
 No face aright whence faith had fled,  
 Nor dreamed that faith could fly.

2208 Sustain in strife the strokes it would <^sh...^>: MS  
 2210 Thereof I thank you[,] Balen said, C&W 1896  
 2213 Nor dreamed that <man would be> ^faith could fly.^ MS

And so he took that shield unknown 2215  
 And left for treason's touch his own,  
 And toward that island rode alone  
 Nor heard the blast against him blown  
     Sound in the wind's & water's sound,  
 But hearkening toward the stream's edge heard 2220  
 Nought save the soft stream's rippling word,  
 Glad with the gladness of a bird,  
     That sang to the air around.

---

2217 And toward that island rode alone[,] C&W 1896  
 2218 Nor heard the blast <*his doom*> against him blown MS  
 2221 <*Avo...*> Nought save the soft stream's rippling word, MS

And there against the water-side 2225  
 He saw, fast moored to rock & ride,  
 A fair great boat anear abide  
 Like one that waits the turning tide,  
     Wherein embarked his horse & he  
 Passed over toward no kindly strand: 2230  
 And where they stood again on land  
 There stood a maiden hard at hand  
     Who seeing them wept to see.

---

2231 And <as> ^where^ they stood again on land MS



And 'O knight Balen', was her cry, 2235  
 'Why have ye left your own shield? why  
 Come hither out of time to die?  
 For had ye kept your shield, thereby  
     Ye had yet been know, & died not here.  
 Great pity it is of you this day 2240  
 As ever was of knight, or may  
 Be ever, seeing in war's bright way  
     Praise knows not Balen's peer.'

---

2235 And 'O knight Balen[,] was her cry, C&W 1896  
 2239 Ye had <yet> ^yet^ <now> been known, & died not here. MS  
 2243 <Fame hails> ^Praise knows^ not Balen's peer.' MS

37

And Balen said, 'Thou hast heard my name  
Right: it repenteth me, though shame  
May tax me not with base men's blame,  
That ever, hap what will, I came  
    Within this country; yet, being come,  
For shame I may not turn again  
Now, that myself & nobler men  
May scorn me: now is more than then,  
    And faith bids fear be dumb.

2245

2250

---

2253 And faith bids fear be dumb.<'>

MS

‘Be it life or death, my chance I take, 2255  
 Be it life’s to build or death’s to break:  
 And fall what may, me lists not make  
 Moan for sad life’s or death’s sad sake.’

Then looked he on his armour, glad  
 And high of heart, & found it strong: 2260  
 And all his soul became a song  
 And soared in prayer that soared not long,  
 For all the hope it had.

---

2256 <As chance for time’s adventurous sake>  
 ^Be it life’s to build or deaths’ to break:^ MS

Then saw he whence against him came 2265  
 A steed whose trappings shone life flame,  
 And he that rode him showed the same  
 Fierce colour, bright as fire or fame,  
     But dark the visors were as night  
 That hid from Balen Balan's face, 2270  
 And his from Balan: God's own grace  
 Forsook them for a shadowy space  
     Where darkness cast out light.

---

2267 And he that rode him <bore> ^showed^ the same MS  
 2270 <And> That hid from Balen Balan's face, MS

The two swords girt that Balen bare  
 Gave Balan for a breath's while there  
 Pause, wondering if indeed it were  
 Balen his brother, bound to dare

The chance of that unhappy quest:  
 But seeing not as he thought to see  
 His shield, he deemed it was not he.  
 And so, as fate bade sorrow be,  
 They laid their spears in rest.

---

2276 <Made> ^Gave^ Balan for a breath's while there  
 2281 His shield, he deemed it was not he[,]

MS  
 C&W 1896

So mighty was the course they ran 2285  
 With spear to spear so great of span,  
 Each fell back stricken, man by man,  
 Horse by horse, borne down: so the ban  
     That wrought by doom against them wrought:  
 But Balen by his falling steed 2290  
 Was bruised the sorer, being indeed  
 Way-weary, like a rain-bruised reed,  
     With travel ere he fought.

---

2286 With spear to spear <to> so great of span MS  
 2289 That wrought <for> ^by^ doom against them wrought: MS  
 2291 Was bruised <sore as> ^the sorer, being indeed^ MS  
 2292 <Being> ^Way-^weary, like a rain-bruised reed, MS

And Balen rose again from swoon 2295  
 First, & went toward him: all too soon  
 He too then rose, & the evil boon  
 Of strength came back, & the evil tune  
     Of battle unnatural made again  
 Mad music as for death's wide ear 2300  
 Listening & hungering toward the near  
 Last sigh that life or death might hear  
     As last from dying men.

---

2297 He too then rose, & the evil <tune> boon MS  
 2298 Of strength <^life^> came back, & the evil tune MS  
 2301 Listening & hungering <for> ^toward^ the near MS

43

Balan smote Balen first, & clove 2305  
His lifted shield that rose & strove  
In vain against the stroke that drove  
Down: as the web that morning wove  
    Of glimmering pearl from spray to spray  
Dies when the strong sun strikes it, so 2310  
Shrank the steel, tempered thrice to show  
Strength, as the mad might of the blow  
    Shore Balen's helm away.

---

2311 <*Beneath the mad might of the blow*>  
    ^Shrank the steel, tempered thrice to show^ MS



Then turning as a turning wave 2315  
 Against the land-wind, blind and brave  
 With hope that dreams despair may save,  
 With even the unhappy sword that gave  
     The gifts of fame & fate in one  
 He smote his brother, & there had nigh 2320  
 Felled him: & while they breathed, his eye  
 Glanced up, & saw beneath the sky  
     Sights fairer than the sun.

---

2317 With hope that <calls> ^dreams^ despair <to> ^may^ save, MS  
 2317 [In] hope that dreams despair may save, C&W 1896  
 2320 He smote his brother, & ^there^ had nigh MS

The towers of all the castle there 2325  
 Stood full of ladies, blithe & fair  
 As the earth beneath & the amorous air  
 About them & above them were:  
     So toward the blind & fateful fight  
 Again those brethren went, & sore 2330  
 Were all the strokes they smote & bore,  
 And breathed again, & fell once more  
     To battle in their sight.

---

2327 As the earth beneath <or> ^&^ the amorous air MS  
 2331 <The wounds> ^Were all the^ strokes they <gave> ^smote^ MS  
     & bore,

With blood that either spilt & bled 2335  
 Was all the ground they fought on red,  
 And each knight's hauberk hewn & shred  
 Left each unmailed & naked, shed  
     From off them even as mantles cast:  
 And oft they breathed, & drew but breath 2340  
 Brief as the word strong sorrow saith,  
 And poured & drank the draught of death,  
     Till fate was full at last.

---

2335 With blood that either spilt & <shed> ^bled^ MS  
 2339 From off them even as mantles <torn> cast: MS

And Balan, younger born than he 2345  
Whom darkness bade him slay, & be  
Slain, as in mist where none may see  
If aught abide or fall or flee,  
    Draw back a little & laid him down,  
Dying: but Balen stood, & said, 2350  
As one between the quick & dead  
Might stand & speak, 'What good knight's head  
    Hath won this mortal crown?

---

'What knight art thou? for never I  
 Who now beside thee dead shall die  
 Found yet the knight afar or nigh  
 That matched me'. Then his brother's eye  
     Flashed pride & love; he spake & smiled  
 And felt in death life's quickening flame,  
 And answered: 'Balan is my name,  
 The good knight Balen's brother: fame  
     Calls & miscalls him wild.'

2355

2360

---

2360 <As one assured of life & As though death felt life's  
     *quicken*ing> ^And felt in death life's quickening flame,^ MS

The cry from Balen's lips that sprang 2365  
 Sprang sharper than his sword's stroke rang.  
 More keen than death's or memory's fang,  
 Through sense & soul the shuddering pang  
     Shivered: & scarce he had cried, 'Alas  
 That ever I should see this day,' 2370  
 When sorrow swooned from him away  
 As blindly back he fell, & lay  
     Where sleep lets anguish pass.

2365 The cry from Balen's lips that <broke> spring MS  
 2366 <Rang louder> ^Sprang sharper^ than his sword's <keen>  
     <sharp> stroke rang. MS  
 2367 <Rang ever:> More keen than death's or memory's fang, MS

But Balan rose on hands & knees 2375  
 And crawled by childlike dim degrees  
 Up toward his brother, as a breeze  
 Creeps wingless over sluggard seas  
     When all the wind's heart fails it: so  
 Beneath their mother's eyes had he, 2380  
 A babe that laughed with joy to be,  
 Made toward him standing by her knee  
     For love's sake long ago.

---

2376 And crawled by <death delayed> <^childlike^> ^childlike^  
     <^...^> degrees

MS

Then, gathering strength up for a space, 2385  
 From off his brother's dying face  
 With dying hands that wrought apace  
 While death & life would grant them grace  
     He loosed his helm & knew not him,  
 So scored with blood it was, & hewn 2390  
 Athwart with darkening wounds: but soon  
 Life strove & shuddered through the swoon  
     Wherein its light lay dim.

---

2385 <And> ^Then^, gathering strength up for a space, MS

2392 Life <gave him back an hour's brief boon>  
     ^strove & shuddered through the swoon^ MS



And sorrow set these chained words free: 2395  
 'O Balan, O my brother! me  
 Thou hast slain, & I, my brother, thee:  
 And now far hence, on shore & sea,  
     Shall all the wide world speak of us.'  
 'Alas', said Balan, 'that I might 2400  
 Not know you, seeing two swords were dight  
 About you; now the unanswering sight  
     Hath here found answer thus.

---

2397 Thou hast slain, & I, my <^thy^> brother, thee: MS  
 2398 And now <by land & shore> ^far hence, on shore,^  
     & sea, MS  
 2400 Alas[,] said Balan, 'that I might C&W 1896  
 2402 About you; <yet> ^now^ the unanswering sight MS  
 2403 <Availed me not but> ^Hath here found answer^ thus. MS

'Because you bore another shield 2405  
 Then yours, that even ere youth could wield  
 Like arms with manhood's tried & steeled,  
 Shone as my star of battle-field,  
     I deemed it surely might not be  
 My brother'. Then his brother spake 2410  
 Fiercely: 'Would God, for thy sole sake,  
 I had my life again, to take  
     Revenge for only thee!

2405 'Because you <ha...> bore another shield MS  
 2406 Than yours, that <was,> <^still^> <while> ^even ere^  
     youth <would wield> ^could wield^ MS  
 2407 <Proud hope its fault trust in things unsealed,>  
     ^Like arms with manhood's^ <^hope days fast^>  
     ^tried & sealed,^ MS  
 2413 Revenge for ^only^ thee <& me>! MS

'For all this deadly work was wrought  
Of one false knight's false word & thought,  
Whose mortal craft & counsel caught  
And snared my faith who doubted nought,  
    And made me put my shield away.  
Ah, might I live, I would destroy  
That castle for its customs: joy  
There makes of grief a deadly toy,  
    And death makes night of day.'

---

2415

2420

'Well done were that, if aught were done  
 Well ever here beneath the sun,'  
 Said Balan: 'better work were none:  
 For hither since I came & won  
     A woful honour born of death,  
 When here my hap it was to slay  
 A knight who kept this island way,  
 I might not pass by night or day  
     Hence, as this token saith.

2425

2430

---

2426 Well <...> ever here beneath the sun,'

MS

'No more shouldst thou, for all the might 2435  
 Of heart & hand that seals thee knight  
 Most noble of all that see the light,  
 Brother, hadst thou but slain in fight  
     Me, & arisen unscathed & whole,  
 As would to God thou hadst risen! though here 2440  
 Light is as darkness, hope as fear,  
 And love as hate: & none draws near  
     Save toward a mortal goal.'

---

2439 Me, &<gone hence> ^arisen^ unscathed & whole, MS  
 2440 As would to God thou hadst <gone> ^risen^!  
     <for,> ^though^ here MS  
 2443 <Whose hand may save his soul>  
     ^Save toward a mortal goal.'^ MS

57

Then, fair as any poison-flower  
Whose blossom blights the withering bower  
Whereon its blasting breath has power,  
Forth fared the lady of the tower  
    With many a lady & many a knight,  
And came across the water-way  
Even where on death's dim border lay  
Those brethren sent of her to slay  
    And die in kindless fight.

2445

2450

---

2444 57 <...>

MS

2450 And <...> came across the water-way

MS

And all those hard light hearts were swayed 2455  
 With pity passing like a shade  
 That stays not, & may be not stayed,  
 To hear the mutual moan they made,  
     Each to behold his brother die,  
 Saying, 'Both we came out of one tomb, 2460  
 One star-crossed mother's woful womb,  
 And so within one grave-pit's gloom  
     Untimely shall we lie.'

---

2462 And <now> ^so^ within one grave-pit's gloom MS

And Balan prayed, as God should bless 2465  
 That lady for her gentleness,  
 That where the battle's mortal stress  
 Had made for them perforce to press  
     The bed whence never man may rise  
 They twain, free now from hopes & fears, 2470  
 Might sleep; & she, as one that hears,  
 Bowed her bright head: & very tears  
     Fell from her cold fierce eyes.

---

2468 Had made <perforce for them> ^for them perforce^  
 to press

MS

2473 <Shone in> Fell from her cold fierce eyes.

MS



Then Balan prayed her send a priest 2475  
To housel them, that ere they ceased  
The hansel of the heavenly feast  
That fills with light from the answering east  
    The sunset of the life of man  
Might bless them, & their lips be kissed 2480  
With death's requickening eucharist,  
And death's & life's dim sunlit mist  
    Pass as a stream that ran.

---

And so their dying rites were done: 2485  
 And Balen, seeing the death-struck sun  
 Sink, spake as he whose goal is won:  
 ‘Now, when our trophied tomb is one,  
     And over us our tale is writ,  
 How two that loved each other, two 2490  
 Born & begotten brethren, slew  
 Each other, none that reads anew  
     Shall choose but weep for it.

---

2487 Sink, spake as he whose goal is <one> ^won^: MS  
 2491 Born ^& begotten^ brethren <of one mother>, slew MS

'And no good knight & no good man 2495  
 Whose eye shall ever come to scan  
 This record of the imperious ban  
 That made our life so sad a span  
     Shall read or hear, who shall not pray  
 For us for ever'. Then anon 2500  
 Died Balan; but the sun was gone,  
 And deep the stars of midnight shone,  
     Ere Balen passed away.

---

2497 This record <*that records the*> ^of the imperious^ ban MS  
 2499 Shall read or hear, <&> ^who^ shall not pray MS

And there low lying, as hour on hour  
Fled, all his life in all its flower  
Came back as in a sunlit shower  
Of dreams, when sweet-souled sleep has power  
    On life less sweet & glad to be.  
He drank the draught of life's first wine  
Again: he saw the moorland shine,  
The rioting rapids of the Tyne,  
    The woods, the cliffs, the sea.

---

The joy that lives at heart & home, 2515  
 The joy to rest, the joy to roam,  
 The joy of crags & scaurs he clomb,  
 The rapture of the encountering foam  
     Embraced & breasted of the boy,  
 The first good steed his knees bestrode, 2520  
 The first wild sound of songs that flowed  
 Through ears that thrilled & heart that glowed,  
     Fulfilled his death with joy.

---

2517 The joy of <*waves that curl & comb*>  
     ^crags & scaurs he clomb^, MS  
 2522 Through ears that thrilled <...> & heart that glowed, MS

65

So, dying not as a coward that dies  
And dares not look in death's dim eyes  
Straight as the stars on seas & skies  
Whence moon & sun recoil & rise,  
    He looked on life & death, & slept.  
And there with morning Merlin came,  
And on the tomb that told their fame  
He wrote by Balan's Balen's name,  
    And gazed thereon, & wept.

---

For all his heart within him yearned 2535  
 With pity like as fire that burned.  
 The fate his fateful eye discerned  
 Far off now dimmed it, ere he turned  
     His face toward Camelot, to tell  
 Arthur of all the storms that woke 2540  
 Round Balen, & the dolorous stroke,  
 And how that last blind battle broke  
     The consummated spell.

---

2536 With pity like as fire <that> ^that^ burned. MS  
 2537 <That night should reap what light had earned>  
     ^The fate his ^fateful^ eye <from far> discerned^ MS  
 2540 Arthur of all the <...> <^grief^> ^storms^ that  
     <broke> ^woke^ MS  
 2541 <On> <^For^> ^Round^ Balen, & the dolorous stroke, MS  
 2542 And how that last <wild> ^blind^ battle broke MS  
 2543 The consummated <^Life's bond & sorrow's^> spell. MS

‘Alas,’ King Arthur said, ‘this day  
I have heard the worst that woe might say:  
For in this world that wanes away  
I know not two such knights as they.’

    This is the tale that memory writes  
Of men whose names like stars shall stand,                     2550  
Baln & Baln, sure of hand,  
Two brethren of Northumberland,  
    In life & death good knights.

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## VITA

Warren Hill Kelly

### Education

Ph.D., English, The University of Mississippi  
M.A., English, The University of Toronto  
B.A., English, *summa cum laude*, Vanderbilt University

### Employment

Instructor of English (full-time), Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, 2009-current  
Instructor of English (12<sup>th</sup> grade British lit.), Saint Andrew's School, Boca Raton,  
Florida, 2005-2009  
Graduate Instructor of English, The University of Mississippi, Oxford, 2000-2005

### Honors

*Phi Kappa Phi*, The University of Mississippi, 2003  
*Phi Beta Kappa*, Junior-year election, Vanderbilt University, 1998

### Publications

*The Mechanics of Metaphor in A Shropshire Lad*. The Housman Society Journal 27  
(2001) Worcestershire, England: The Housman Society.  
*Detecting the Critic: The Presence of Poe's Critical Voice in His Stories of Dupin*.  
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*Thomas Love Peacock*. [entry] The Encyclopedia of Supernaturalism. (2005)

### Professional Development

The School for Criticism and Theory, Cornell University, Summer 2007