

*Swinburne's Apollo: Myth, Faith, and Victorian Spirituality* by Yisrael Levin. Farham: Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. 167 pp. ISBN 978-1-4724-0417-6. £60; \$109.95.

Three years after analysing Swinburne's "solar erotica" in an article published in *A.C. Swinburne and the Singing Word* (2010), the collection of essays he edited for the poet's centenary, Yisrael Levin has dedicated a monograph to the poet's complex relation to myth in connection with his search for a "non-Christian expression of spirituality." This book, *Swinburne's Apollo: Myth, Faith, and Victorian Spirituality*, convincingly explores what Levin terms Swinburne's "Apollonian poetry," which encompasses not only poems explicitly referring to the Olympian god (there are very few) but also works which give pride of place to the light and solar imagery closely associated with the Greek divinity. The author's aim is to reposition Apollo as "the main deity" in the Victorian poet's mythological and mythopoeic writings, with a particular focus on his mature work, notably poems like "On the Cliffs," "Off Shore," and "By the North Sea" which have received far less critical attention than Swinburne's earlier poetry.

*Swinburne's Apollo* opens with a discussion of the "pagan roots of Christianity" in the context of the rise of Victorian mythography that Levin connects with the general crisis of faith affecting Swinburne and many of his contemporaries. Levin is careful to note, however, that the poet's well-documented rejection of Christianity should not be understood as a refusal of all forms of spirituality. Paganism indeed offered Swinburne an alternative "comprehensive spiritual system" that aimed to "replace institutional religion." In this complex system, the sun-god evidently played a crucial role, allowing the poet not only to voice his "spiritual anxieties" but also to resolve them. The introduction ends with a valuable overview of critical studies on Swinburne's Apollonian poetry, including David G. Riede's *Swinburne: A Study of Romantic Mythmaking* (1978), Thaïs E. Morgan's "The Sun of Faith, The Shadow of Doubt: Language and Knowledge in Swinburne's Myth of Apollo" (1984), and the slightly more recent *Swinburne and His Gods: The Roots of an Agnostic Poetry* (1990) by Margot K. Louis, to whom Levin's analysis is clearly indebted. As shown by the dates of most of these critical sources, Levin's approach to Swinburne's understanding of myth appears to be particularly necessary and timely.

The book is divided into two main sections. The first part, "Apollonian Origins," comprises three chapters that analyse the "background" of Swinburne's Apollonian poems. Chapter 1 provides a very enlightening contextual survey of 19th-century literary texts centred on the figure of Apollo – from Shelley's "Song of Apollo" (1820) to Pater's "Apollo in Picardy" (1887) –