Swinburne's *The Statue of John Brute*

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PREFACE

> Fellow student Michael Darling and I were determined to typeset an unpublished manuscript by Swinburne and uncatalogued from the McGill University library. It is a handwritten story called *The Statue of John Brute*, accompanied by a misleading letter by T. J. Wise, who sought to assign more importance to the story by identifying it with Swinburne's project *Triameron*. (Latham 2007, 6)

In 1978, Professor David Latham of York University (Toronto, Canada) and Michael Darling printed a twelve-page book containing the transcript of an unpublished short story called *The Statue of John Brute* by the English writer Charles Algernon Swinburne. That was the first and only edition (as well as being a limited one) of a work which had always been neglected. The publishing house, the Erlin Press of Toronto, which is no longer in existence, printed only thirty copies of it.

The two scholars transcribed the manuscript by Swinburne's hand that is currently kept at the McLennan Library, McGill University, Montreal, thus publishing a short story that until then had been unknown to most. However, the limited edition of the Canadian publisher has not helped the fortunes of the work, given that the volume edited by Latham and Darling was never printed again, also because the publishing house ceased to exist.

Along with the manuscript, the scholars also transcribed a letter attributed to the bibliophile and editor of the 1919 edition of Swinburne's letters, Thomas James Wise. In the letter, Wise stated that the work in question dates to the early years of Swinburne's attendance at Oxford University—as we will see shortly, Swinburne entered Balliol College in 1856—or at the latest the 1860s.

Professor Latham, whom I contacted in September 2012 and whom I am here to thank dearly, very kindly sent me a copy of his edition, which allowed me to read the text.

Therefore, what I present in this volume is the first critical edition of a work that had a circulation of only thirty copies more than a century after its composition. Thus, it can be considered as a relatively unknown work.

INTRODUCTION

The "Demoniac Youth": Biography of Algernon Charles Swinburne

Birth and childhood

Algernon Charles Swinburne was born on April 5, 1837 at 7 Chester Street, Grosvenor Place, in the elegant West London district of Belgravia, right between Buckingham Palace and Hyde Park. He was the first born of the six children of Captain—then Admiral—Charles Henry Swinburne and Lady Jane Henrietta Ashburnham, daughter of George, the third Earl of Ashburnham. Apart from some rare exceptions such as Percy Bysshe Shelley and George Byron, he was one of the very few nineteenth-century poets to belong to the upper class. If Swinburne owes his unique physical appearance to his father's family, it was from his mother that he inherited his passion for literature and foreign languages.

Although he was born in the capital city of the British Empire, Swinburne grew up in East Dene, Bonchurch, in the southeastern part of the Isle of Wight where his father had bought a wonderful estate located between the small towns of Niton and Ventnor, as well as the Landslip, a long strip of undercliff on the southeast coast of the island. This circumstance greatly encouraged Swinburne's genuine love for the sea, and it is probably for this reason that he developed an extraordinary talent for swimming. This went hand in hand with his father's teachings and sea-related profession. Swinburne was short—just over five feet tall (slightly taller than 1.50 metres)—and of a slight build. Nonetheless, he was the first man ever to climb Culver Cliff on the Eastern part of the Isle of Wight in the summer of 1851, at the age of fourteen.

Swinburne's paternal grandfather, the sixth baronet Sir John Edward Swinburne, owned the estate of Capheaton Hall in Northumberland, a few miles northwest of Newcastle upon Tyne. At Capheaton Hall, little Algernon was fascinated by the medieval ballads which his grandparents' servants used to sing to him; he was also an excellent horseman and

enjoyed riding his pony across the moors, nearing the Scottish borders which, however, he never called by this name.[1]

Sir John owned a famous local library and was the president of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne. He had been raised in Bordeaux, France, and was a follower of the French liberal nobleman and diplomat Honoré Gabriel Riqueti de Mirabeau; this meant that he thought and dressed like a pre-revolutionary French aristocrat. Sir John and his wife taught Algernon some Italian and French, a privilege of which little Algernon would make the most later in his school years.

Both East Dene and Capheaton Hall contributed to developing and shaping Swinburne's eclectic personality. He was so fond of the two places which represented his childhood that he used to spend six months on the Isle of Wight with his parents and the remaining six months in Newcastle, with his paternal grandfather. Thanks to his strong connection to East Dene and Capheaton Hall, his first and some of his later works were characterized by oxymoronic and antithetical feelings, inspired by the austere landscapes of Northumberland on the one hand—as shown in poems like "Northumberland" (*A Channel Passage and Other Poems*, 1855) or "Grace Darling" (*Astrophel and Other Poems*, 1894)—and by the flourishing Isle of Wight with its tepid sea and bright landscapes on the other. Probably the strongest influence was the one exerted by the luxuriant island of the English Channel, as is evident from some of his poetic compositions (e.g. "The Cliffside Path," *A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems*, 1884). Effectively, most of his best poems were composed at the Orchard, a marine villa by Niton Bay between Niton and St. Lawrence belonging to some of Swinburne's relatives, where spent much of his time when he was on the island.

As far as Swinburne's religious education was concerned, his family was "High Church"—meaning that they were Anglican and observed the rite of the Church of England, but that they also had "sympathies" for Roman Catholicism. In his works, Swinburne clearly shows an in-depth knowledge of the Bible as well as of the apocalyptic, prophetic, and typological standard interpretative methods of the scriptures. Swinburne seems to use the religious material he knows so well quite idiosyncratically. Even though, unlike the rest of his family, he was a fierce opponent of the Roman Catholic Church because of the ambiguous attitude the Papal State had towards the unification of Italy (see the anti-Catholic tropes in "Before a Crucifix," *Songs before Sunrise*, 1871), he

[1] In "Dedication," a poem collected in *Poems and Ballads: Third Series* (1889), Swinburne talks about the "honeied leagues of the northland border" (18) to indicate the England-Scotland border.

made large use of biblical, yet sometimes blasphemous, allusions in his works. While at Balliol College, Oxford, Swinburne took up the philosophical doctrine of nihilism, but he was never indifferent to religious culture (see, for instance, "Hymn to Proserpine," *Poems and Ballads: First Series*, 1866, or "Hertha," *Songs before Sunrise*).

Swinburne's appearance, his personality, and the events that have marked out his life have received attention from biographers—Edmund Gosse above all, whom he met in 1871—and critics who were interested in finding biographical references in his works. As far as his physical aspect was concerned, his appearance was extraordinarily uncommon: he was incredibly short, with green eyes and an unreasonably big head crowned by a great mass of bright ginger hair. Charles Dickens, who spent seven months at Bonchurch in 1849 where he wrote part of *David Copperfield*, remembered that "golden-haired lad" (in Gosse 2011, 11). His shoulders were narrow and sloping, his hands and feet tiny. The American writer and historian Henry Brooks Adams, who met him at Fryston in 1861, compared Swinburne to "a crimson macaw among owls" (Gosse 2011, 18), referring to his physical appearance as well as his peculiar habit of flapping his hands and walking around, hopping and talking too much.

Moreover, Swinburne had such an impulsive nature that people who met him described him as a "demoniac boy" (Keegan and McKusick 2001, 733)[2] who used to go around declaiming his own or other people's poetry in a very loud manner. As for this side of his personality and many other things, he did not possess any sort of moderation. Indeed, he probably had epileptic crises in public once or twice, and his fragile physical and psychological condition deteriorated because he drank excessively.

Eton and Oxford

As already hinted at, Swinburne received his first domestic education between East Dene and Capheaton Hall, where his mother and paternal grandfather taught him some Italian and French. Moreover, Collingwood Forster Fenwick, the rector at Brook on the southeast coast of the Isle of Wight, completed his preparation for his admission to college. Indeed, Swinburne's official secondary education began at Eton College, Berkshire, where he studied from 1849 to 1853. As Gosse reports in his biography (2011, 457), on Easter Day 1849, Swinburne entered the college

[2] In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton dated January 22, 1866, the famous writer and art critic John Ruskin labelled Swinburne this way after meeting him.

with a copy of a bowdlerized edition of Shakespeare's works which his mother had given him when he was only six years old.

While at school he became an eager reader of European and American literature under the tuition of James Leigh Joynes. He even read and liked the works of the ancient Greek poets, as can be easily inferred from the influence they exerted on his early dramatic production, and won first prizes for his knowledge of Italian and French (specifically the Second Prince Consort's Prize in 1852 and the First Prize for French and Italian in 1853). In 1850 his mother gave him reverend Dyce's edition of Christopher Marlowe's works, and he also began reading plays by John Ford and John Webster, starting to collect their rare first editions. Whenever he could he went to Eton Library and Mr. Brown, the librarian, described him to tourists or strangers who were visiting as one of the college's most peculiar attractions. Moreover, Eton was known for the terrible corporal punishments that were usually inflicted within its walls, and this brutal practise must have been at the base of Swinburne's obsession with masochism, flagellation, and physically painful experiences in general, as is clear from his earlier works (e.g. "Eton: Another Ode," unpublished parody of his poem "Eton: An Ode," *Astrophel and Other Poems*, 1894). His obsession with masochism and flagellation would also be stimulated by his later friendship with Tennyson's "apostle" Richard Monckton Milnes—who introduced him to the sadomasochistic works of the Marquis de Sade—and the Victorian translator and explorer Richard Francis Burton, with whom Swinburne spent some time in Vichy.

During the years spent at Eton, in September 1849 Swinburne's parents took him to visit William Wordsworth in the Lake District. As his mother's acquaintance Elizabeth M. Sewell reports in her autobiography, "Algernon was greatly interested at the thought of seeing the great poet" (Sewell 1907, 106) and the elder poet "was so kind, and so very nice to Algernon especially, at last, that [he] cried … when [they] went away" (108). The same year, Swinburne's mother sent some of Algernon's earlier poems to be published in the *Frazer's Magazine for Town and Country*, and some of them appeared in 1849 and 1851; a literary achievement of which the older Algernon would not be proud.

It is worth noting, moreover, that when he was still at Eton studying French with Henry Tarver, Swinburne was introduced to *Notre Dame de Paris*,[3] his first contact with the French writer Victor Hugo, who would deeply influence his works later on.

[3] Swinburne read Hugo's original French version, published in 1831, not the English translation (1833) by Frederic Shoberl.

In 1854, after leaving Eton, Swinburne wanted to enlist as a Cavalry Officer but his parents opposed his decision, probably because of his short stature. Therefore, after spending three years under the private tuition of the local curate at Combo (Northumberland), Rev. John Wilkinson, and after a brief visit to Germany with his maternal uncle General Thomas Ashburnham, Swinburne entered Balliol College, Oxford, on January 24, 1856, and left in 1860 without a degree. Even if he went on reading a lot about his interests, he did not appreciate academic discipline and therefore deserted his studies more than once. During his first year, however, Swinburne also contributed to the "Undergraduate Papers," a journal which collected essays and other pieces of writing by students at Oxford, printed by the publisher John Nichol—whom he met and started a friendship with—and he also wrote a number of poems.

At Balliol, Swinburne made acquaintance with two of the most eminent scholars in Oxford: Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde's mentor, and Benjamin Jowett, master of Balliol College. The latter appreciated Swinburne's poetic talent so much that he unsuccessfully tried to prevent him from being expelled from Balliol for good in 1858–9 when Swinburne declared his open support for Felice Orsini, the Italian patriot who had attempted to murder Emperor Napoleon III of France. Swinburne established a long-lasting friendship with the two, especially Jowett.

In 1857 Swinburne also met some of the most influential artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: Edward Burne-Jones—to whom he would dedicate *Poems and Ballads: First Series* in 1866—William Morris, John Roddam Spencer Stanhope, and—last, but not least—Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whose relationship with Swinburne lasted until 1872, as well as his brother William Michael Rossetti. In those years the Pre-Raphaelites were working on the Arthurian murals on the walls of the Oxford Union Library building from 1857 to 1859. The same year, Swinburne also participated in the Newdigate Prize for the best composition in verses at the University of Oxford with the poem "The Temple of Janus" (published by Lafourcade in his *La jeunesse de Swinburne*, 1928), but he did not win. In 1858, the talented poet won the Taylorian scholarship, another prize for French and Italian, and the same year he took a second-class mods in classics, even though Swinburne's name does not appear in any of the honours. The same year, during one of his many trips to his beloved Isle of Wight, Swinburne also dined at Farringford with Tennyson, who took the young Algernon in high consideration and read his *Maud* to him, which made Swinburne quite partial to the Latin poet Virgil.

During the Oxford years (specifically 1857 to 1860), Swinburne also fell into the good graces of painter Paulina Jermyn (alias Lady Pauline

Trevelyan) and he started to frequent her intellectual circle at Wallington Hall, Northumberland. It was here that he met John Ruskin. He had a few friends at Oxford, certainly more than at Eton, and he became a member of The Old Mortality Club (the name of which probably paid homage to Walter Scott's homonymous historical novel). The club also included Bywater, Bryce, Caird, Nichol, Dicey, Green, Luke, and Pater.

As mentioned earlier, in 1859 Swinburne was temporarily removed from Balliol for his regicide sympathies towards Orsini. Jowett, who wished to defend the reputation of Balliol and avoid wasting Swinburne's genius, perhaps ironically sent him to study modern history with William Stubbs. When he got back to Oxford in May 1860, after a period of expulsion from Balliol due to his openly Republican political activism, his colleagues started to consider him a dangerous fellow. However, the decision to leave university without a degree seems to have been his own. Although his father was seriously upset by Algernon's inconclusive behaviour, he granted his son a stable allowance, which meant that Swinburne could keep pursuing his literary career.

During his Oxonian days Swinburne became known for his ferocious attacks against Roman Catholicism and Victorian conventional and sanctimonious morality, as well as his late-night revelry and heavy drinking. The more his circle of acquaintances expanded the more he started to replace the religious faith he had as a kid with political zeal, declaiming poetry under the portrait of Giuseppe Mazzini hung in his room at Balliol College.

The 1860s and 70s

In 1860 Swinburne published the book *The Queen-Mother and Rosamond*, containing two verse dramas and mostly ignored by the critics. Although the work went nearly unnoticed, it attracted the attention of a couple of literary agents and some literary patrons who considered it an early experiment of rare literary genius. Among these personalities was the poet Richard Monckton Milnes (later First Baron Houghton), whom Swinburne met in 1861. As mentioned earlier, it was Milnes who encouraged Swinburne to go on writing by introducing him to de Sade's works.

Nevertheless, despite being too immature in style, these two pieces of poetry ought to be considered a brilliant output for a twenty-three-year-old poet. They are characterized by a strong dramatic energy—even stronger than some of Swinburne's later works—and a competent use of the Elizabethan blank verse.

During the course of the same year Swinburne's paternal grandfather died, and the poet stayed with the Scottish Pre-Raphaelite artist William Bell Scott in Newcastle for a short time. From that year on, Swinburne also became a close friend of the Rossetti family. In 1861, Swinburne spent some time in Menton, France, where his father had rented Villa Laurenti. He then visited Italy for the first time, stopping in Genoa, Turin, Milan, and Venice, before heading back to England.

As a consequence of his stay in Newcastle with the Rossettis, when Rossetti's wife Elizabeth Siddall died in 1862, Swinburne and the widowed painter and poet moved to Tudor House, 16 Cheyne Walk, in the district of Chelsea, London for about a year. George Meredith was with them, spending every Thursday with Swinburne and Rossetti as a guest from 1862 to 1863. Rossetti was delighted to live with Swinburne, whom he called "my little Northumbrian friend" (Gosse 2011, 85), a clear reference to Swinburne's "not excessive" height. Rossetti exerted a positive influence on the poet, leading him to write some of his best poetry during those years. During the year Swinburne spent at Rossetti's London house, some funny stories and anecdotes circulated. For instance, it is said that Rossetti once had to tell his friend to stop making noise because Swinburne and a boyfriend of his were running about the house naked and disturbing the painter at work (Gosse 2011, 459). According to another, Rossetti tried to introduce Swinburne to heterosexual love and he asked the American actress, poet, and painter Adah Bertha Theodore Menken for help—in fact, he gave her ten pounds to seduce his friend. Unfortunately for Rossetti, the woman threw in the towel and returned the money to the painter because she could not "make him [Swinburne] understand that biting's no use" (Jenkins 2017, 24). It is in this period that Swinburne developed a taste for attracting gossip about something that one of his biographers, Cecil Lang, defined as "Algernonic exaggeration" (Balk 2008, 703). When rumour had it that he delighted in homosexual relationships or practised some sexual perversions, he began to invent hyperbolic stories about his pederasty or various perversions. For instance, one of his most famous anecdotes was that he claimed to have had sex with a monkey before eating it. It is not known exactly how many of these stories were actually true and how many were invented by Swinburne or by his adversaries. For example, Oscar Wilde—whose love-hate relationship with Swinburne will be analysed in detail later in this volume—was wrongly said to have defined Swinburne "a braggart in matters of vice, who had done everything he could to convince his fellow citizens of his homosexuality and bestiality without being in the slightest degree a homosexual or a bestializer" (Balk 2008, 703).

Anyway, while still in London, in the spring of 1862 Swinburne united with his family in the Pyrenees and went for a swim in the Lac de Gaube, near Cauterets (where he found the inspiration for the homonymous poem, "The Lake of Gaube"). This was a scandalous event for the inhabitants of that quiet mountainous region between France and Spain.

Back to England, in December 1862 Swinburne accompanied William Scott and his Newcastle guests on a trip to Tynemouth. Rossetti was probably also part of this group. In his memoirs, Scott writes that Swinburne walked by the sea proclaiming the verses of "Hymn to Proserpine" and "Laus Veneris"—which had not been published yet—in his rhythmic intonation.

In 1863, during a trip to Paris, the poet met the American painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler and also became intimate with his family—the painter's mother helped Swinburne to recover from one of his numerous nervous breakdowns caused by his temperament and alcohol. After five months of complete recovery at East Dene, Swinburne left for Paris where he met the painter Ignace Henri Jean Théodore Fantin-Latour. He then reached Milnes at his villa in Hyeres, Provence, and finally went to Italy with his parents.

Before further analysing Swinburne's biography, it is worth shedding some light on the poet's relationship with Italy. It is a common error to assert that after leaving Oxford in 1860 Swinburne spent more than a few weeks in Italy with his family and friend and writer Walter Savage Landor. In actual fact, in 1864 Swinburne's family spent little more than a fortnight in Italy for the second time in order to visit the places where Algernon's mother had studied. The family visited the Tuscan village of Fiesole, near Florence, and it was here that Walter Landor was living in the house which Robert and Elizabeth Barret Browning had procured for him. Swinburne admired Landor so much that, since he knew they were in the same town by chance, he asked Milnes to be introduced to Landor. The poets met and talked to each other, showing reciprocal interest and esteem. They did not meet very often—probably only four or five times—and the meetings did not last longer than one hour at a time.

Back to England, Swinburne spent two months in Cornwall with Jowett, in particular at Tintagel, Kynance Cove, and St. Michael's Mount. Upon his return to London, Swinburne moved to 22a Dorset Street and stayed there for a few years, during which time he probably suffered because of an unhappy love affair. Still, little is known about this. What is certain is that Swinburne had always had a very close relationship with his favourite cousin, Mary Charlotte Julia Gordon, with whom he had published the novel for young readers *The Children of the Chapel* in 1864,

and he was deeply upset by the fact that she eventually married Colonel Robert William Disney Leith on June 14, 1865.

In addition, during this period Swinburne's private life was troubled by a series of problems. His favourite sister, Edith, died at East Dene in 1863, and was buried in Bonchurch—where the poet would also be buried. Her death hit Swinburne's father so hard that he sold East Dene and the whole family moved to Holmwood, in Binfield Heath, South Oxfordshire, in 1865. Nevertheless, the poet was now integrated in London's literary world and he had become concerned with finding stable accommodation in the company of his literary circle, which shared his artistic tastes. He found a room at 12 North Crescent, Bloomsbury, and went back to the tornado of London life. His Pre-Raphaelite friends were still the focus of the capital city's artistic life, and Swinburne was an active part of their acquaintances in London (in 1864 he was also elected to the London Arts Club, but he resigned in 1870).

Throughout the 1860s and 70s London life also made Swinburne reach the apex of his alcoholic addiction, repeating the same scheme again and again: he drank, then collapsed, went to his home in the country to detoxify—East Dene at first, then Holmwood—went back to London, and started all over again. Rossetti had to endure all this. More than once, while they were living together in Chelsea, the police delivered a blind drunk Swinburne to the door of 16 Cheyne Walk in the middle of the night.

Parallel to these dreadful biographical events, Swinburne's literary career touched one of its highest moments; in 1865, the verse drama *Atlanta in Calydon* was an instant success, since the poetic power of its verses was at its finest. *Atlanta in Calydon* was a powerful imitation of Greek tragedy in which Swinburne masterfully managed to recreate the essence and style of the classical tragedy in English. Although the majority of the critics have noticed the sublime virtuosity of Swinburne's metres, made evident by the frequent change of rhythm in the powerful choruses of the drama, only a few of them have succeeded in perceiving the subtle and underground theme of dark love (Wymer 1971).

The tragedy *Chastelard* (1865)—Swinburne's first play of the trilogy dedicated to the Scottish queen Mary Stuart—was published between *Atalanta in Calydon* and the first series of *Poems and Ballads*, but it enjoyed less attention than Swinburne's two masterpieces. However, it can be undisputedly affirmed that, on the verge of his thirties and beyond the opposition of the public opinion and some other Victorians, not only had Swinburne obtained a prominent position in the Arcadia of Victorian poets, but also he had come into the public eye as the leader of a

generation of young late-Victorian and proto-Modernist poets (see Levin 2010 for details).

In April 1866, Swinburne published *Poems and Ballads: First Series*, a collection of poems which put the at-times perverse sensuality and anti-Christian tones of his lyrics in the spotlight, and gave him instant notoriety. Thanks to *Poems and Ballads: First Series*, Swinburne was once and for all labelled as an indecent poet whose verses were dominated by the concept of "art for art's sake." Most of the finest poems of this collection were undoubtedly aimed at shaking up and challenging the contemporary, middle-Victorian public opinion. This volume encompasses Swinburne's highest poetry, characterized by precious, lithe, and uncommon rhythms, sublime figures of sound, and the vertiginous overlapping of images. *Poems and Ballads: First Series* includes fierce anti-Catholic pagan poems like "Hymn to Proserpine (After the Proclamation in Rome of the Christian Faith)"—which begins with the epigraph "*Vicisti, Galilaee*," the legendary dying words of Emperor Julian the Apostate, a sworn enemy of Christianity—or "Garden of Proserpine." Moreover, mindful of the corporal punishment he was subjected to during his time at Eton, Swinburne filled poems like "Anactoria," "Faustine," "Dolores," and "Sapphics" with unequivocal and macabre references to sadomasochism and flagellation, in addition to homosexual themes. Other poems such as "Laus Veneris," "The Leper," or "St. Dorothy," characterized by a medieval style, reflect the typical Victorian attraction towards the Middle Ages (Harrison 1988). It is almost certain that it was Swinburne's bad luck that *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Poems and Ballads: First Series* were published when he was not even thirty. He was soon labelled as the leading English poet and rightful successor to Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning. In the popular mind, this was probably the position he held until his death. However, refined critics like Alfred Edward Housman—who gave a lecture on Swinburne in 1910, published in 1969—thought that the question of being one of England's best poets ever was likely to go beyond Swinburne's real skills and merits (Housman 2011).

Although it was ardently welcomed by the newer generation of writers—as younger poets used to say, poems like "Dolores" and "Faustine" were on everyone's lips and they "all went about chanting to one another these new, astonishing melodies" (Beatty 1909, xii)—the book was so violently criticized for its exaggerated and violent tones that the publisher Moxon and co. was forced to transfer its rights of publication to a different printing press, John Camden Hotten: "Reviewers from across the political spectrum declared the poetry, 'a carnival of ugly shapes,' 'unclear for the mere sake of unclearness,' exhibiting 'a mind all aflame

with the feverish carnality of a school boy'" (Pease 1997, 43). The satirical magazine *Punch* also referred to the poet as "Mr. Swineborn," alluding to the sexual perversions he boasted about (Luebering 2011, 131). For this reason, that same year Swinburne answered the critics with *Notes on Poems and Reviews*. Even if the various collections of poems by Swinburne were intermittently considered by the public opinion, his critical popularity and reputation as a poet generally declined after the publication of *Poems and Ballads: First Series.*

In 1867 Swinburne met Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian politician exiled to England and one of the main makers of the unification of the Italian state. Mazzini inflamed the poet's soul by advising him to use his poetic gift to turn himself into the bard of freedom. The result of Mazzini's encouragement is evident in *A Song of Italy* (1867)—dedicated "with all the devotion and reverence to Joseph Mazzini"—and *Songs before Sunrise* (1871), a collection of poems committed to the cause of liberty and the triumph of Republican values in late nineteenth-century Italy.

Swinburne's health was shakier and shakier: he even had a crisis at the British Museum on July 10, 1868 from which he only recovered over a month later. He was taken to his family at Holmwood and, by the time he started to feel better in September, his friend George Ernest John Powell took him to Étretat, Normandy, where the two rented the Chaumière de Dolmancé, a small villa they named after de Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795). The composer and cellist Jacques Offenbach and the French writer Henri-René-Albert-Guy de Maupassant visited them. Swimming in Normandy and the marine air of the area were beneficial to Swinburne; nonetheless, when he went back to London in 1869, nurtured by his stubbornness, his illness became much more severe. From July to September he stayed in Vichy with Richard Burton—to whom he would dedicate *Poems and Ballads: Second Series* in 1878 —Frederick Leighton, and Adelaide Sartoris. He then spent the winter in Holmwood.

In the summer of 1870 Swinburne went back to Étretat with Powell and almost drowned swimming in the sea, but was saved by a fishing boat which took him to Yport. By the time Germany had invaded France during the Franco-Prussian war, Swinburne and Powell had returned to England.

Swinburne wrote his second play, *Bothwell*, in 1874 and again—after *Chastelard*—he drew his inspiration from the story of Mary Stuart. *Bothwell* has good scenes and its poetic language is sometimes of the finest; however, it is too long to be enjoyed and staged harmoniously. In 1876, with *Erechtheus*, Swinburne returned to the Greek tragedy and followed the inspiration of *Atalanta in Calydon*, even if *Erechtheus* did not have the same impact on the public. The same year, as further proof of

the fact that his temperament was exceeding any limit, Swinburne was sued by Robert Buchanan for the publication of "Epitaph on a Slanderer" (in the newspaper *The Examiner* on November 20, 1875) and "The Devil's Due: A Letter to the Editor of *The Examiner*." The court proved Buchanan to be in the right. Swinburne's father Admiral Charles Henry died in March 1877, and Algernon spent some time with Nichol in Glasgow.

In 1878 Swinburne published *Poems and Ballads: Second Series*, but his second attempt to collect his new poems failed, since only a few of them could boast the beauty and shocking effect on the public of the first series. Victor Hugo's influence was indisputable here, and at last the French writer seemed to take the place that had once been occupied by Baudelaire and Mazzini. Nevertheless, the second series of *Poems and Ballads* definitely marked the end of the poet's most extraordinary poetic achievements.

1879: *Annus horribilis*

As already seen, until the end of the 1870s Swinburne's fragile health had forced him to leave London and stay with his parents to recover from various collapses. During this time he was debilitated by alcohol, by his unusually extreme temperament, and by his ubiquitous masochistic propensities. He underwent periods of uncontrollable nervous spasms, and he got better thanks to his astonishing strength of recovery.

In 1879, at the age of forty-two, Swinburne collapsed completely, and the only one who was able to save him was his friend, the critic and poet Theodore Watts-Dunton, whom Swinburne had met in 1873. Watts-Dunton removed him from his house at 3 Great James Street, near Russell Square, and took him to The Pines, 11 Putney Hill, London where he looked after his friend until his death. At The Pines, Watts-Dunton kept an austere lifestyle and encouraged Swinburne to dedicate all his time to writing. The critic isolated Swinburne completely, gradually managed to cure him of alcoholism, and distanced him from many of his former acquaintances and behaviours.

However, his saviour's conduct was largely controversial since he forbade Swinburne's friends to visit him, managed the poet's income and properties, and limited his activities (Panter-Downes 1971). Despite this rigid and debatable behaviour it is indisputable that Swinburne's unpredictable conduct during the 1860s and 70s could have led him to death had not Watts-Dunton saved him.

The last period of his life

Starting from 1879, Swinburne's life was characterized by decorum and attention to morality, and he continued to be undisturbed by noteworthy events, regardless of the meaning one wishes to attribute to this adjective. He was entirely devoted to the cult of literature in peace and tranquillity. He ceased to be the young and reckless rebel poet and became a socially respected person. In his last thirty years at The Pines he published a total of twenty-three volumes of poetry, prose, and theatre; yet, apart from a few rare exceptions that will be discussed shortly, his output never reached the height of the first half of his life. Although he continued to read avidly and write copiously under the control and advice of Watts-Dunton, Swinburne did not grow further from an intellectual or an artistic point of view.

In 1880 Swinburne published *Songs of the Springtides and Birthday Ode*, *Specimens of Modern Poets: The Heptalogia or Seven against Sense*—a book of parodies of contemporary poets—and *Studies in Song*. In 1881, he published the third and last tragedy of the Elizabethan trilogy dedicated to Mary Queen of Scots, which was entitled *Mary Stuart*. The following year he succeeded in reproducing the sublimity of his early poetry with the long poem *Tristram of Lyonesse*, his personal and original contribution to the nineteenth-century cult of the Arthurian myth.[4] The poem is composed of heroic couplets which give it a magnificent style, with romantic rhythms typical of Swinburne's best poetry. In writing the poem the heroic couplets went through a complete transformation, and were no longer linked to a neat caesura highlighting two antithetical hemistiches. Swinburne developed them into a highly musical measure, full of an endless variety of combinations. In 1883 and 1884, Swinburne and Watts-Dunton spent some time in Cromer, Norfolk, on the sea, an ecosystem which always helped the poet with his health disorders.

During the course of these years, Swinburne did not publish any major or original poetry; *A Century of Roundels* (1883), *A Mid-summer Holiday* (1884), and *Miscellanies* (1886) revealed without a shadow of a doubt that Swinburne's rhythmic ability had worsened, having transformed into a disproportionate articulacy of versification that was very far from the burning poetry of the days at Balliol. Only a verse drama about the only beheaded Venetian doge in history, *Marino Faliero* (1885), and *Locrine*

[4] Let us consider, for example, Morris's "The Defence of Guinevere" (1858), Tennyson's twelve gargantuan *Idylls of the King* (1859–85), or the previously-mentioned murals realized by the Pre-Raphaelite painters in Oxford (Bryden 2005).

(1887) seem to possess intense moments of power and pathos. In order to further benefit from the sea air, Watts-Dunton took Swinburne to Lancing, West Sussex, near Brighton in 1878 and 1888 for short trips.

However, as already mentioned, at The Pines the flow of his poetry went on unimpeded during the 1880s and 90s. The great cadenced effects produced by works such as *Astrophel* (1894), *The Tale of Balin* (1896), *Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards* (1899), *A Channel Passage and Other Poems* (1904)—which also contains some gracious poems, like the previously-mentioned "The Lake of Gaube"—or *Duke of Gandia* (1908) are in any case inferior in their music and variety of topics to his previous masterpieces from the 1860s and 70s. In 1904, the English publisher Chatto and Windus began the publication of a six-volume collected edition of Swinburne's poems called *The Poems by Algernon Charles Swinburne*, and the following year published a collected edition of his plays in five volumes.

Swinburne is well known as a poet, but prose must not be neglected. His epistolary novel *A Year's Letters* (1877), initially published under the pseudonym of Mrs. Horace Manners, first appeared in the weekly journal *The Tatler* and was reviewed for publication in 1905 with the extended title *Love's Cross-Currents: A Year's Letters*. This novel attracted little notice, apart from the interest around the question of its authorship. Swinburne also began another novel, *Lesbia Brandon*, which he wrote between 1859 and 1868 and which was illustrated by the Pre-Raphaelite painter Simeon Solomon. The novel was considered pornographic for the times and was left incomplete at his death, being published posthumously in 1952. Some critics have hypothesized that Swinburne's second novel was intended by its author as a sort of fictional autobiography; unfortunately, due to its incomplete form there is not one single interpretation.

Following a first attack of pneumonia in late 1903, Swinburne died at The Pines from influenza that degenerated again into pneumonia. He died on April 10, 1909 at the age of seventy-two—thirteen years after his mother's death in 1896—and was buried five days later at St. Boniface Church, Bonchurch, on the Isle of Wight, next to his sister's tomb.

Swinburne the critic

Swinburne was also an important and well-known English literary critic of the late-Victorian era. Today he is probably more famous for his witty essay about Elizabethan writers than his pure poetic talent. His studies of early modern literature are full of admiration for the playwrights who lived in that period, and there was no Victorian critic who engaged like

Swinburne did to revive the interest in the literature of that era of "minor" dramatic excellences, the output of which has usually gone unnoticed due to William Shakespeare's encompassing and leading figure. Swinburne's knowledge of a wide range of literatures from the world, which was due to his eagerness as a reader as well as his mother's and paternal grandfather's teachings, contributed to create a critical style which is rich in quotations, intertextual allusions, references, and comparisons. As well as being particularly famous and appreciated for his enlightening studies about the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, Swinburne is also well known for his essays about other British and French writers.

His paramount critical writings are possibly *Essays and Studies* (1875), which contain critical reflections on his beloved Victor Hugo as well as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, Matthew Arnold, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and John Ford; *Note on Charlotte Brontë* (1877), a pivotal study on the mid-Victorian female writer; three volumes on William Shakespeare, entitled *A Study of Shakespeare* (1880), *The Age of Shakespeare* (1909), and *Contemporaries of Shakespeare* (1919), published posthumously; *A Study of Victor Hugo* (1886); and *A Study of Ben Jonson* (1889). His devotion to and deep knowledge of Shakespeare and his contemporaries are evident in his early tragedy *Chastelard* (1865), dedicated to Victor Hugo, who, as we have seen, exerted a deep influence on Swinburne in the 1860s and 70s. Swinburne also wrote essays on the outstanding French poet Charles Baudelaire. When he heard the (incorrect) news of his death, Swinburne produced an elegy entitled "Ave Atque Vale" (1867–8), which is often "praised as Swinburne's finest achievement" (Clements 1981, 20).

Swinburne's essays and articles were sometimes written in response to the critical attacks he received for his own works: some examples of this are the previously-mentioned *Notes on Poems and Reviews*, about the first series of *Poems and Ballads*, or *Under the Microscope* (1872), a response to Robert Buchanan's critical work "Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr. D. G. Rossetti" (which appeared in *The Contemporary Review* in October 1871), which, as the title clearly indicates, was written against Rossetti's Pre-Raphaelite "carnal" poetry.

When Swinburne was enthusiastic about a writer and/or their work, his positive judgement was inspiring as well as contagious; yet the same enthusiasm which made his poetic art unique and sublime totally conflicted with his achievements as a literary critic. Effectively, Swinburne was unable to have a reasoned and "objective" judgement, and consequently his critical essays and studies tend to be full of partialities

for those authors he simply liked reading, as well as fierce attacks towards those writers he did not appreciate at all.

Two examples can contribute to making this point clearer. When talking about Victor Hugo ("Victor Hugo: L'Homme Qui Rit," in *Essays and Studies*, 1875), Swinburne goes as far as describing their encounter in mystical and sublime tones:

> Once only in my life I have seen the likeness of Victor Hugo's genius. Crossing over when a boy from Ostend, I had the fortune to be caught in mid-channel by a thunder-storm, strong enough to delay the packet some three good hours over the due time. About midnight the thunder-cloud was right overhead, full of incessant sound and fire, lightening and darkening so rapidly that it seemed to have life, and a delight in its life. At the same hour the sky was clear to the west … Eastward, at the same moment, the space of clear sky was higher and wider, a splendid semicircle of too intense purity to be called blue … Underneath and about us the sea was paved with flame; the whole water trembled and hissed with phosphoric fire; even through the wind and thunder I could hear the crackling and sputtering of the water-sparks. In the same heaven and in the same hour there shone at once the three contrasted glories, golden and fiery and white, of morn-light, and of the double lightnings, forked and sheet; and under all this miraculous heaven lay a flaming floor of water.
>
> That, in a most close and exact symbol, is the best possible definition I can give of Victor Hugo's genius. And the impression of that hour was upon me the impression of his mind—physical, as it touched the nerves with a more vivid passion of pleasure than music or wine; spiritual, as it exalted the spirit with the senses, and, above them, to the very summit of vision and delight. It is no fantastic similitude, but an accurate likeness of two causes working to the same effect. There is nothing but that delight like the delight given by some of his works. (1–2)

Conversely, when wishing to defend his friend Rossetti ("The Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti," collected in *Essays and Studies*, 1875, first appearing in *The Fortnightly Review*, May 1, 1870) against the attacks aimed at discrediting his poetry, Swinburne manifests genuinely flat-out scorn:

> It is said sometimes that a man may have a strong and perfect style who has nothing to convey worth conveyance under cover of it. This is indeed a favourite saying of men who have no words in which to convey the thoughts which they have not; of men born dumb, who express by grunts and chokes the inexpressible eloquence which is not in them, and would fain seem to labour in miscarriage of ideas which they have never conceived. But it remains for them to prove as well as assert that beauty and power of expression can accord with emptiness or sterility of matter,

> or that impotence of articulation must imply depth and wealth of thought. This flattering unction the very foolishest of malignants will hardly in this case be able to lay upon the corrosive sore which he calls his soul: the ulcer of ill-will must rot unrelieved by the rancid ointment of such fiction. Hardly could a fool here or a knave there fail to see or hope to deny the fullness of living thought and subtle strength of nature underlying this veil of radiant and harmonious words. (63)

Certainly, as is clear from the above-mentioned examples, Swinburne was a skilful phrasemonger and, just like King Midas who turned everything he touched into gold, he could touch a subject, enhance it with his critical genius, and penetrate it with brilliant suggestions which clarified its confused interpretative limits.

Nevertheless, none of his critical work seems to be complete, since his excesses of disproportion, and his lack of impartiality and objectiveness, which he did not exercise nor seek, prevented him from being able to provide a lucid interpretation of the lights and shades of the objects of his criticism. Moreover, if this often happens for "blind" positive judgements, the same occurs every time Swinburne is heavily criticizing an author and/or their work. The flood of his invective never stops in the name of tact and respect. His aversions are as deeply vehement as his likings and, although positive and negative judgements both contain interesting reflections for any other critics, thus highlighting Swinburne's multifaceted and intrepid personality, his negative judgements can rarely be considered as an objective critical path to follow.

T. S. Eliot read Swinburne's essays on Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and other Elizabethan dramatists in *The Age of Shakespeare*, *The Contemporaries of Shakespeare*, and other critical works about early-modern playwrights. In *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920), Eliot dedicated an essay to him entitled "Swinburne as Critic," which is included in the section devoted to the imperfect critics. T. S. Eliot admits that, for a poet who wrote comments on poets, Swinburne had been very sharp: "[Swinburne] was more inward with the Tudor-Stuart dramatists than any man of pure letters before or since; he is a more reliable guide to them than Hazlitt, Coleridge, or Lamb; and his perception of relative values is almost always correct" (Eliot 1998, 10). Nevertheless, Eliot did not appreciate Swinburne's prose: "the style is the prose style of Swinburne, and the content is not, in an exact sense, criticism. The faults of style are, of course, personal; the tumultuous outcry of adjectives, the headstrong rush of undisciplined sentences, are the index to the impatience and perhaps laziness of a disorderly mind" (Eliot 1998, 10).

Temperament and style

As one can probably infer from the events of Swinburne's life, the poet was a nervous and physically frail boy since his birth, but he was also so bold and excitable that he sometimes put his own life in danger for excesses of enthusiasm. Due to his unruly nature, Swinburne was considered a nineteenth-century decadent poet, even if stories about his vicious attitudes were sometimes exaggerated.

It is clear that Swinburne had a strong and contagious disposition, and that he was almost incapable of moderating himself. His marked temperament could not but affect his works as a writer and a critic. Although sensitive and valuable, his criticism is definitely biased and, as a result, it tends to lack objectiveness. As previously mentioned, Swinburne's poetic production reached its peak in the first part of his life, parallel to his uncontrollable lifestyle of excesses, and it declined later on, when the poet was recovering in Putney under the guidance of his friend Watts-Dunton. Some of the finest poems included in the second and third series of *Poems and Ballads* were actually written during his days at Balliol College.

Swinburne was especially appreciated for his highly skilled metrical technique, possessing a flexibility which surpassed even his contemporary Tennyson, although Swinburne sometimes exceeded in formal concerns and neglected a consistent emotional variety. At times, Swinburne's obsessions defy comprehension, thus reminding us of the metaphysical poetry by John Donne or Andrew Marvell. The consequence is that once Swinburne's verses do not strike the reader with the disproportionate imagery they evoke or try to evoke, hardly anything else remains.

When it comes to Swinburne's poetry, making a distinction between his sources of inspiration and his manner is of paramount importance. This is because if his inspiration was derivative—for instance, he alternated between periods when his work was influenced by Elizabethan literature to phases full of admiration for the French romantics or symbolists—his manner was unquestionably original. Swinburne brought a completely new and fresh spirit to nineteenth-century poetry as well as remarkable prosodic innovations, and his method of versification is even more original. Swinburne invented the roundel form—a variation of the French *rondeau*, made up of three stanzas rhyming ABA+Refrain, BAB, and ABA+Refrain, and included some of them in *A Century of Roundels*—and contributed to the ninth and eleventh editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (respectively published in 1877 and 1910–1, this latter edition when Swinburne was already dead). Moreover, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature six times from 1903 to 1907, and once again in

1909, the year of his death, and he was awarded an honorary degree from the University of Oxford in 1906, which he refused.

The inner soul of Swinburne's poetry was always a revolutionary one and he can be righteously considered the symbol of the mid-Victorian poetic revolt. For example, at the beginning of his career his hatred for kings, dukes, priests, and the Pope himself was biting, and his language was sometimes marked by extravagance and a pinch of bitterness. Moreover, while, in *Poems and Ballads*, Swinburne rebels against any moral conventions of the Victorian compromise, in *Songs before Sunrise* he revolts against the political and religious situation during the Italian *Risorgimento*.

Surel, the main and most evident quality of Swinburne's work is a powerful lyricism. All the critics, both early and modern, agree on his tortuously comprehensive and highly suggestive imagery, metrical virtuosities, and his massive if not at times excessive use of insistent alliterations, assonances, and composite rhythms. However, critics have also noticed that the imagery Swinburne creates and employs is occasionally ambiguous, and his rhymes are sometimes too superficial and predictable (Collier Willcox 1909).

As already mentioned, after moving to The Pines with Watts-Dunton, Swinburne gradually abandoned those pathological sex-related themes which had marked much of his earlier works. His new poetic production included themes such as nature and landscapes, and childhood re-emerged. Even if the majority of critics unanimously agree that the poetry written after the *annus horribilis* of 1879 lost all the vividness and strength of Swinburne's first works, others agree that poems like "By the North Sea" (*Studies in Song*) or some of the lyrics included in the 1904 collection *The Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, like "Evening on the Broads," "A Nympholept," "The Lake of Gaube," and "Neap-Tide," are precious gems among his last works.

Besides, there are other scholars who have stated that Swinburne's change of themes was already evident after the first series of *Poems and Ballads*, when he started to write poetry with a stronger focus on philosophical and political matters. Even if he does not stop writing about other themes altogether (i.e. the lengthy epic poem about the Matter of Britain, *Tristram of Lyonesse*), the content of his poetry is definitely less obscene and scandalous, but his formal skills and his rhyming method remained excellent until the end of his life.

During Swinburne's lifetime, *Poems and Ballads: First Series* had always been considered the poet's finest and most representative poetic achievement both by the critics and the public, while his later production

was often marginalized. However, starting from the first half of the twentieth century (see, for example, Praz's pivotal 1933 study, *The Romantic Agony*) scholars have been revaluating Swinburne's entire career by focussing on single poems instead of analysing entire, long collections.

Even if Swinburne's prose can be disregarded as too rich in poetic language as well as boring and difficult to read, there is no question about the excellence of his poetry and his prominent position in the evolution of this textual genre in English. As a matter of fact, his technique has completely revolutionised the entire system of versification. English Victorian poetry was bound to the old and abused iambic, and Swinburne contributed to set it free it with the anapaest, the choriambus, the dactyl, and much more. The poet managed to create new and interesting musical effects which blend together with an incredible mastery of language and an irresistible urge towards beauty of form and elegance of fancy.

List of Swinburne's works (with dates and genres)

Unhappy Revenge (1849, tragedy)
Undergraduate Papers (1857, essays and poems for this Oxford journal)
William Congreve (1857, article first published in the *The Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography*, later appearing in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1877)
Ode to Mazzini (1857, poetry)
Lesbia Brandon (1859–68, unfinished prose, published posthumously in 1952)
The Queen Mother and Rosamond (1860, tragedy)
The Spectator (1862, poems, essays, and reviews for the journal)
Dead Love (1864, poetry)
The Children of the Chapel (1864, prose, written with his cousin Mary Gordon)
Atalanta in Calydon (1865, poetry)
Chastelard (1865, tragedy)
Laus Veneris (1866, poetry)
Poems and Ballads: First Series (1866, poetry)
Notes on Poems and Reviews (1866, essay)
Ave Atque Vale (1867–8, poetry)
William Blake: A Critical Essay (1868, essay)
Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic (1870, poetry)
Songs Before Sunrise (1871, poetry)
Under the Microscope (1872, essay)
Bothwell (1874, tragedy)

Songs of Two Nations (1875, poetry)
Essays and Studies (1875, essays)
George Chapman: A Critical Essay (1875, essay)
Erechtheus (1876, tragedy)
Note of an English Republican on the Muscovite Crusade (1876, essay)
A Note on Charlotte Brontë (1877, essay)
A Year's Letters (1877, prose, later *Love's Cross-Current*, 1905)
Poems and Ballads: Second Series (1878, poetry)
A Study of Shakespeare (1880, essay)
Songs of the Springtides (1880, poetry)
Studies in Song (1880, poetry)
Specimens of Modern Poets: The Heptalogia or Seven Against Sense (1880, poetry)
Mary Stuart (1881, tragedy)
Tristram of Lyonesse (1882, poetry)
A Century of Roundels (1883, poetry)
A Midsummer and Other Poems (1884, poetry)
Marino Faliero (1885, poetry)
Miscellanies (1886, essays)
A Study of Victor Hugo (1886, essay)
Locrine (1887, tragedy)
Whitmania (1887, essay)
Mr. Whistler's Lecture on Art (1888, article)
A Study of Ben Jonson (1889, essay)
Poems and Ballads: Third Series (1889, poetry)
The Sisters (1892, tragedy)
Astrophel and Other Poems (1894, poetry)
Studies in Prose and Poetry (1894, essays)
A Tale of Balen (1896, poetry)
Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards (1899, tragedy)
A Channel Passage and Other Poems (1904, poetry)
The Poems of Algernon Swinburne (1904, collection of his poetry, 6 vols.)
Love's Cross-Current: A Year's Letter (1905, prose, earlier *A Year's Letters*, 1877)
The Tragedies of Algernon Swinburne (1905, collection of his tragedies, 5 vols.)
Duke of Gandia (1908, tragedy)
The Age of Shakespeare (1908, essay)
Three Plays of Shakespeare (1909, essay)
Contemporaries of Shakespeare (posthumously in 1919, essay)

The Statue of John Brute: Textual Neighbourhood

As has been noted, Swinburne's fame is mainly due to his critical, poetic, and theatrical output. Except for one epistolary novel, *Love Cross-Currents: A Year's Letters*, the unfinished pornographic novel *Lesbia Brandon*, published posthumously in 1952, a few unpublished or little-known short narratives, and other letters and non-fictional works, the author did not write other books in prose—or at least no other books in prose have come down to us.

Swinburne possessed a pure poetic talent which made him famous among his contemporaries for the unconventionality and sublime musicality of his verses; so much so that T. S. Eliot once said that "what we get in Swinburne is an expression by sound … What he gives is not images and ideas and music, it is one thing with a curious mixture of the suggestions of all three" (Eliot 1998, 85).

Chronological matters: looking for a probable date of composition

As mentioned above, *The Statue of John Brute* is one of the rare attempts by the Victorian writer to experiment with a genre that he did not favour. Its date of composition is uncertain, while it is certain that the story was never published by Swinburne in the course of his lifetime, and that no one else took care of it after his death, at least until the time of Latham's transcript.

More recent criticism seems to ignore the existence of this short story, probably because of the limited circulation of the Erlin publication. In the 1920s and 30s, although it was never transcribed, *The Statue of John Brute* was considered a parody of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and its writing was thought to have taken place after July 1890 when Wilde published a first, partly-censored version of his masterpiece. It is not clear on what this assumption is based since Swinburne's story survives in a single extant manuscript that is kept in the McLennan Library of McGill University in Montreal, Canada. It would have been strange if the critics of the 1920s and 1930s had verified the estimated time of writing of the short story by analysing the manuscript personally.

In 1928, French critic Lafourcade published one of his first studies on Swinburne (*La Jeunesse de Swinburne*), and wrote that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* had been "délicieusement parodié par Swinburne dans quelques pages inédites; *The Statue of John Brute*" (79). In 1933, the Italian Mario Praz echoed the French critic, probably having read Lafourcade's