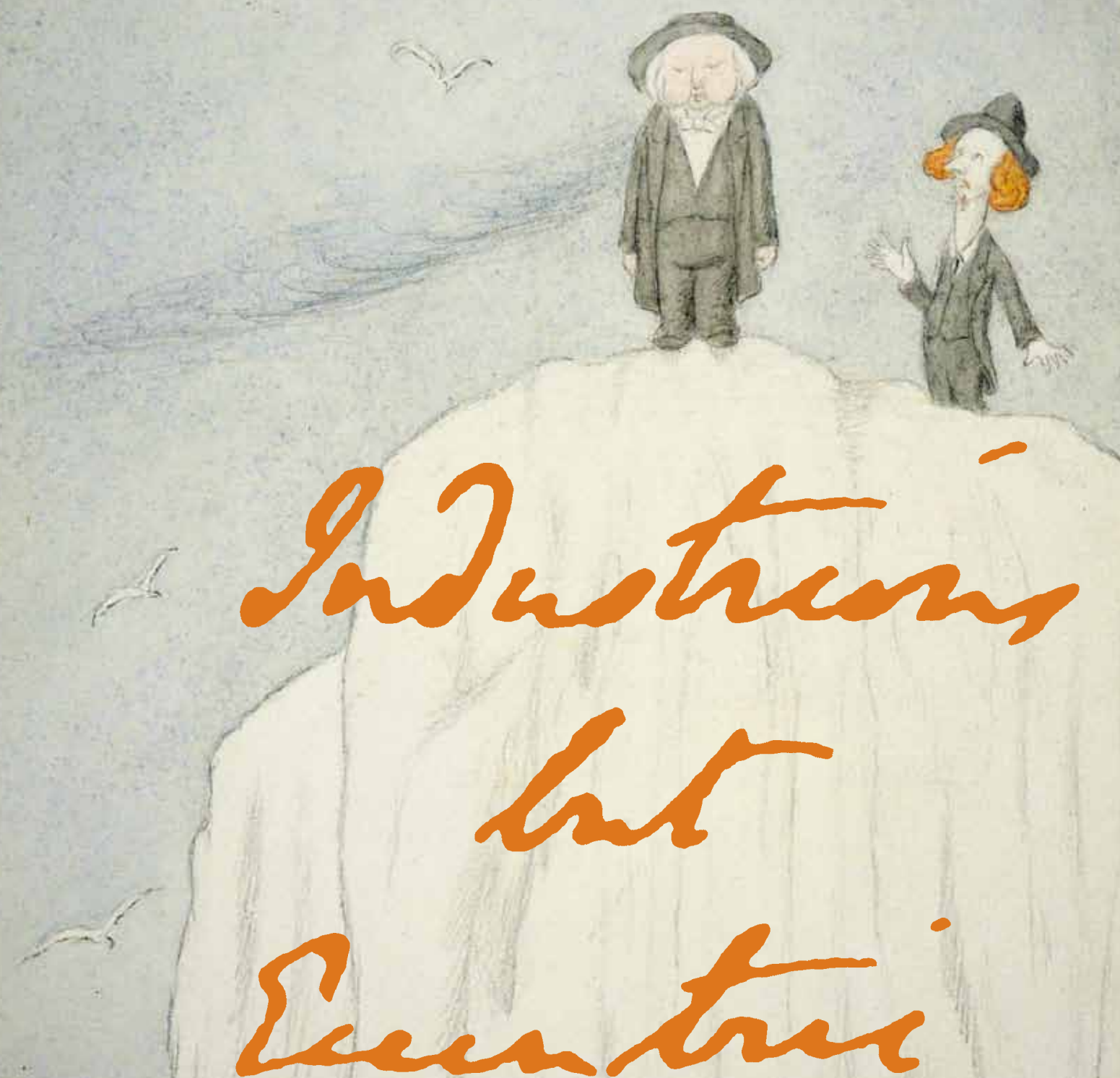




ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE
AT BALLIOL



An exhibition held at
BALLIOL COLLEGE
HISTORIC COLLECTIONS CENTRE
ST CROSS CHURCH, ST CROSS ROAD, OXFORD

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COVER ILLUSTRATIONS:

FRONT COVER Caricature of Benjamin Jowett and Algernon Charles Swinburne © The Estate of Max Beerbohm

BACK COVER Golden 'roundels' designed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti for the cover of *Atalanta in Calydon* (London: Edward Moxon, 1865).

INTRODUCTION

*'the grandest thing ever yet
done by a youth – though he is
a Demoniac youth'*

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE (1837-1909) may not be a household name today, but in the past he was infamous for his shockingly republican and sexual poetry, introduced to children as a standard author at school, and so highly regarded by his fellow writers that he was repeatedly nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature. He remains one of Balliol's most distinguished former students, and this exhibition marks his connection with Balliol College and celebrates the 150th anniversary of *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), one of his earliest and most significant works. The critic John Ruskin claimed that it was 'the grandest thing ever yet done by a youth—though he is a Demoniac youth'.

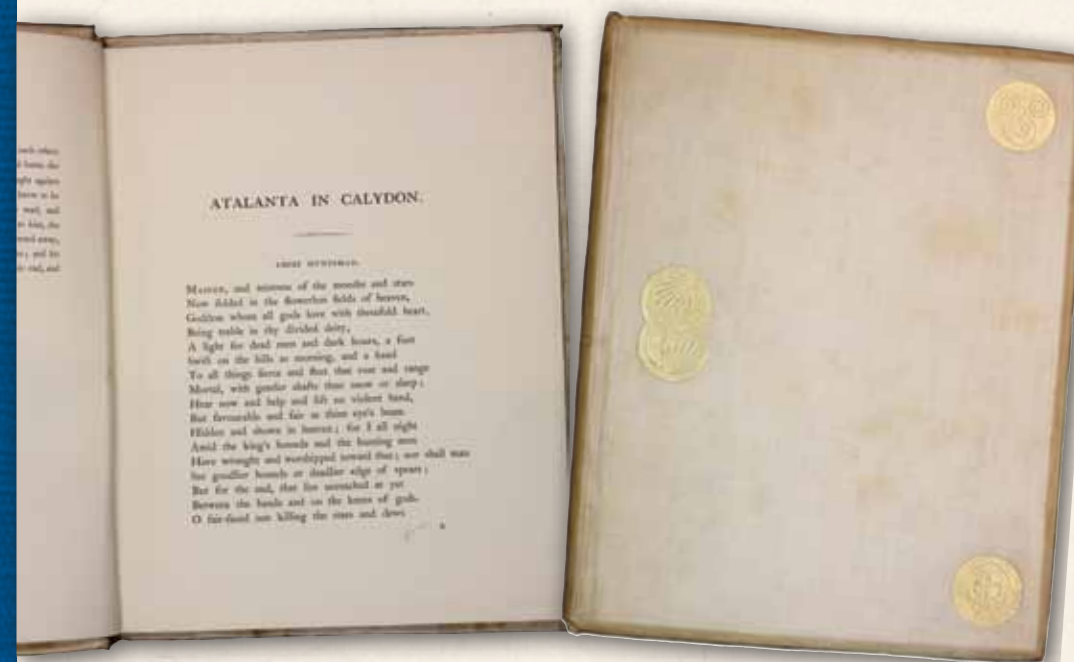
He studied Greek and Latin with influential tutor and subsequent Master of Balliol, Benjamin Jowett, so it is perhaps unsurprising that *Atalanta in Calydon* is based on a myth and written in the form of a Greek tragedy. The golden 'roundels' on the cover were designed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, one of the most important Pre-Raphaelite artists, whom Swinburne met as a student whilst several of them were working in Oxford. His collection of

verse, *Poems and Ballads* (1866) is, in part, a result of the mutually influential friendships he formed with them.

The interest in radical politics that led Swinburne to write *A Song of Italy* (1867) and *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871), was also fuelled by friendships made at Balliol, and so in spite of leaving Balliol without a degree, the connections made during Swinburne's time here had a significant and long-lasting influence on his life and work.

These connections are explored in this booklet using items from the collection of Swinburne material in the College's Library and Archive that has been built up both by donation and purchase. The most recent acquisition was that of the library of Swinburne expert Rikky Rooksby in 2013, who collected a near-complete set of publications by and about the poet. This addition makes Balliol's Swinburne collection one of the largest and most important collections of Swinburne material in the world.

EXHIBITED: Swinburne, A.C., *Atalanta in Calydon* (London: Edward Moxon, 1865) [Swinburne Collection c 001/01]; [Swinburne Collection a 05].



Atalanta in Calydon page 1, front cover and detail of roundel.
(London: Edward Moxon, 1865)



SWINBURNE AT BALLIOL

'industrious but eccentric'

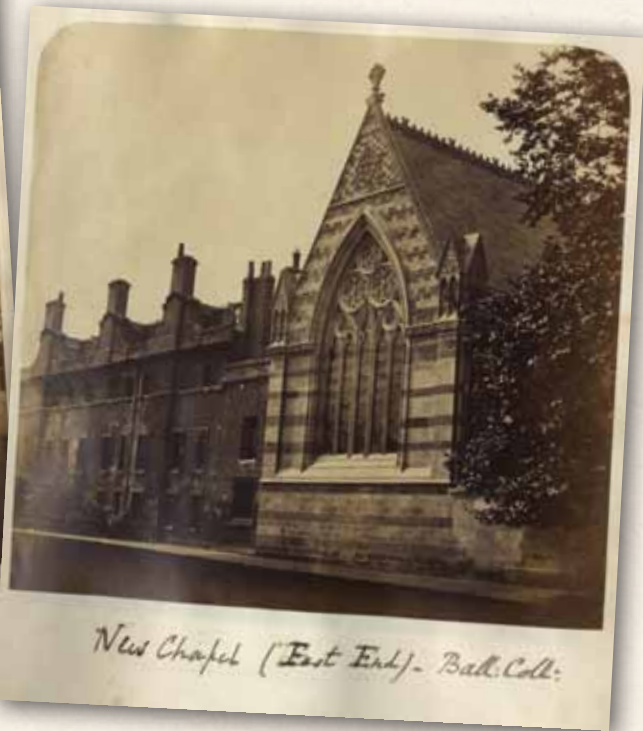
SWINBURNE CAME TO BALLIOL in 1856, when the College was the most prestigious college in the University of Oxford. From being one of the least distinguished in 1800, the move away from giving places by personal favour to the first open and meritocratic admissions process in the University meant that by the time Swinburne arrived, Balliol was Oxford's academic powerhouse. Several new buildings, including a Chapel to replace the existing medieval one, were built in the 1850s, contributing to the feeling that Balliol was a dynamic and modernising place.

Benjamin Jowett, one of Swinburne's tutors, had been involved in educational reform across the University, and although he did not become Master until 1870, he was a popular and influential teacher and very much at the heart of the College while Swinburne was here.

Swinburne's academic career started well enough – in one of his earliest college examinations, the Master, Robert Scott declares

him to be 'industrious but eccentric'. This initial verdict was perhaps more apt than Scott realised, as it describes Swinburne's life and career quite accurately. Later essays were judged 'very respectable but peculiar', and Swinburne himself was found to be 'well-disposed but very irregular in his habits', though the details of these habits are unknown. He won a prize for work in French and Italian, but began to neglect his studies and failed the first set of University exams. Jowett tried to intervene, but his work continued to decline and he was 'admonished for irregularity'. After two formal warnings for neglecting his studies, he was temporarily dismissed or 'rusticated' from the College in 1859. He returned briefly, but finally chose to leave without a degree.

EXHIBITED: Balliol College Archives, Examinations Register IVa, 1852-1868; Photograph of the new Salvin Building c.1860 [Phot57-2 'Shadows of Balliol' album] ; Photograph of the new Balliol Chapel c.1860 [Phot57-4 'Shadows of Balliol' album].



LEFT Photograph of the new Salvin Building c. 1860
RIGHT Photograph of the new Balliol Chapel c. 1860

Balliol College Archives, Examinations Register IVa, 1852-1868

Steele	11 Luke 1-200	Boards: 1. Hofay 1-10 Thurs 1-10	Boards 1-10	Logic		very diligent
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Steele	11 Luke 1-200	Boards 1-10 Thurs 1-10	Boards 1-10	Logic		very respectable in attention
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Follett	11 Luke 1-200	Boards 1-10 Thurs 1-10	Boards 1-10	Logic		very respectable in attention
Reibey	11 Luke 1-200	Boards 1-10 Thurs 1-10	Boards 1-10			very respectable in attention
Swinburne	11 Luke 1-200	Boards 1-10 Thurs 1-10	Boards 1-10	Logic		very respectable in attention
Wallace	11 Luke 1-200	Boards 1-10 Thurs 1-10	Boards 1-10	Logic		very respectable in attention

'He was strangely tiny'

'He was strangely tiny. His limbs were small and delicate, and his sloping shoulders looked far too weak to carry his great head, the size of which was exaggerated by the tousled mass of red hair standing almost at right angles to it.'

(Swinburne's cousin, Lord Redesdale, to Swinburne's friend and biographer, Edmund Gosse)

MANY PEOPLE REMARKED on Swinburne's small size and odd physical appearance, which included fluttering movements of his hands. In *Boswell's Clap and other essays: Medical Analyses of Literary Men's Afflictions*, Dr William Ober suggests that he was born prematurely and with mild brain damage and hydrocephaly, which would explain these and other symptoms including problems with eyesight. As this essay, written while he was a student at Balliol, shows, he consistently misjudged the width of the page and has to curve his writing downwards to fit, something that can be seen in his writing throughout his life.

The essay, 'On the source of false impressions', has not been marked, only initialled by a tutor, so it is hard to know whether it was considered a good piece of work, but it is certainly true that by 1858 Swinburne's academic performance was in decline

because of other interests. He was involved in political debates at the Oxford Union, and was also a founding member of a student society based in Balliol called 'The Old Mortality Club', named because each member had recently been seriously unwell. Members wrote essays and poems to read to each other, and the results were printed in three issues of *Undergraduate Papers*. Swinburne's contributions show the breadth of his interests, as they include essays on Elizabethan literature and contemporary poetry, as well as a humorous review of a non-existent book, and part of a poem on an Arthurian subject, 'Queen Yseult'.

EXHIBITED: Exhibited: Swinburne, A.C., Essays written while an undergraduate, 'On the source of false impressions' [MS 415 (2)]; *Undergraduate Papers*, issues 1-3, the printed journal of The Old Mortality Club [Swinburne Collection r 01]. Pellegrini, Carlo, *Before Sunrise*, published in *Vanity Fair*, 21 November 1874.



ABOVE One of Swinburne's undergraduate essays, 'On the source of false impressions'
RIGHT *Undergraduate Papers* cover and title page

'the song saluting friends'

THE LOFTY AIM of 'The Old Mortality Club' was 'the interchange of thought among its members on the more general questions of literature, philosophy and science', with particular attention to English literature. Whilst Swinburne (seated, centre left) looks mildly at the camera in their group photograph, the exaggeratedly stern expressions of other members suggest it may not have been quite as serious as it appears. It did, however, have a lasting effect on Swinburne because of the abiding friendship he established with its founder, John Nichol (seated, centre right), who would become a professor of English Literature at Glasgow University.

Nichol was a confirmed republican and sceptical towards religion, and Swinburne, strongly

influenced, described him as 'the guide of my boyhood in the paths of my free thought and republican faith'.

This early draft of 'To John Nichol' shows the poet at work, for example repeatedly switching between the words 'clear', 'full', and 'sweet' in the fourth line. Written around twenty-five years after their time at Balliol, the poem nostalgically recalls their youth and another member of the Club who had drowned at the age of twenty-six (G.R. Luke, seated, left), and celebrates their enduring friendship in spite of time and distance.

EXHIBITED: Swinburne, A.C., 'To John Nichol' [Literary MSS fascicle, fol.3]; Photograph of 'The Old Mortality Club' c.1858, from the Club's minute book [Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. d. 242, inside back cover].

BELOW Photograph of 'The Old Mortality Club' c.1858
© The Bodleian Libraries, the University of Oxford.
RIGHT Draft of Swinburne's poem, 'To John Nichol'.



SWINBURNE AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

'light and song and wind'

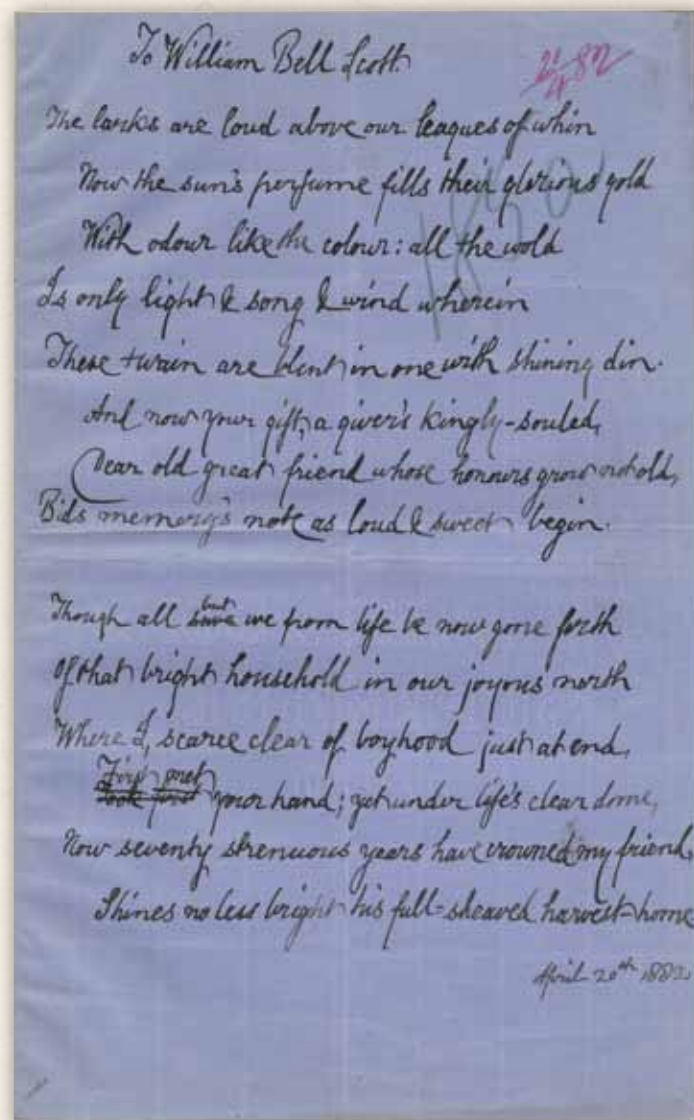
SWINBURNE SPENT PART of his childhood enjoying the wild landscape of Northumberland, and returned there for tutoring in preparation for beginning his studies at Balliol. It was at this time that he met the artist and poet William Bell Scott.

Scott was closely associated with the Pre-Raphaelite circle of artists, and shared their commitment to detailed studies of nature, and interest in historic subjects for painting. He was in particular a close friend of fellow artist-poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti – soon to become a good friend of Swinburne too – and his siblings, Christina and William Michael Rossetti.

After Swinburne was dismissed or 'rusticated' from Balliol in November 1859 he went almost immediately to stay with Scott in Northumberland, and again in early 1860. During the latter visit the pair visited the rocks where lighthouse-keeper's daughter Grace Darling had famously rescued sailors from a shipwreck – Swinburne would later write a poem on the subject – and Scott began this portrait, presumably inspired by his friend's enjoyment of the coast.

Though they remained close friends and correspondents until Scott's death, Swinburne was offended by comments made about him in Scott's posthumous memoir. In this poem, published after 'seventy strenuous years have crowned my friend', Swinburne nostalgically recalls those visits to,

*that bright household in our joyous north
Where I, scarce clear of boyhood just at end,
First met your hand.*



ABOVE Manuscript of Swinburne's poem 'To William Bell Scott'.
RIGHT Portrait of Swinburne by William Bell Scott



EXHIBITED: Scott, William Bell, Portrait of Swinburne (1860); Swinburne, A.C., Facsimile of 'To William Bell Scott' [Literary MSS fascicule, fol. 8]

'I would fain be worthy to sit down at his feet'

IN 1857, THE OXFORD UNION debating society commissioned a group of artists to paint a mural around the ceiling of their new debating chamber (now the Union's Library). The group, which included William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, spent a chaotic few months creating scenes from Arthurian myth.

Swinburne met William Morris during his stay in Oxford through a friend from 'The Old Mortality Club', and friendships with Burne-Jones and Rossetti swiftly followed. Morris was never really a painter and struggled with his part of the mural, depicting the doomed lovers Tristan and Iseult. One of the other painters claimed Iseult looked 'like an ogress', but it is interesting to note that Swinburne's poem on the same theme, 'Queen Yseult', was written around the same time. Morris's collection of Arthurian poems, *The Defence of Guinevere* (1858), also had a significant

impact. Swinburne wrote of Morris that 'I would fain be worthy to sit down at his feet'; Swinburne wrote several poems of his own in the same vein, although he later chose not to publish them.

Morris's real talents lay in design and the decorative arts, culminating in the books of the Kelmscott Press. In 1894 he chose to produce a beautiful edition of just 250 copies of Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*, using font and decorations he had designed himself. Swinburne wrote to him that it was 'certainly one of the loveliest examples of even your incomparable press', and in return dedicated his volume *Studies in Prose and Poetry* to Morris later the same year.

EXHIBITED: Swinburne, A.C., *Atalanta in Calydon*, Kelmscott Press, 1894 [Swinburne Collection c 001/03]; Postcards of the Oxford Union murals: William Morris, *Sir Tristram and La Belle Yseult*; Edward Burne-Jones, *The Death of Merlin*; Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Sir Lancelot's Vision of the San Grail*.

'A Record of Friendship'

IN THE YEARS immediately after Swinburne left Balliol, he became very close to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the most well-established artist amongst the Oxford Union painters, and his unpublished poem, 'Lancelot', seems to have been directly inspired by Rossetti's section of the mural. Apart from Rossetti himself, Swinburne was the last person to see Rossetti's wife, Lizzie Siddal, alive, having had dinner with them just hours before she was found to have taken an overdose of laudanum. Soon afterwards, the two friends, along with Rossetti's brother William Michael, began sharing a house in London.

Rossetti was the centre of the group of artists and writers known as Pre-Raphaelites who were trying to break away from the established Victorian artistic conventions, and were often inspired by medieval and mythological sources. This circle was later satirised by caricaturist Max Beerbohm – Benjamin Jowett is portrayed missing the point of the beauty of the murals, asking "And what were they going to do with the Grail when they found it, Mr. Rossetti?" Swinburne is shown

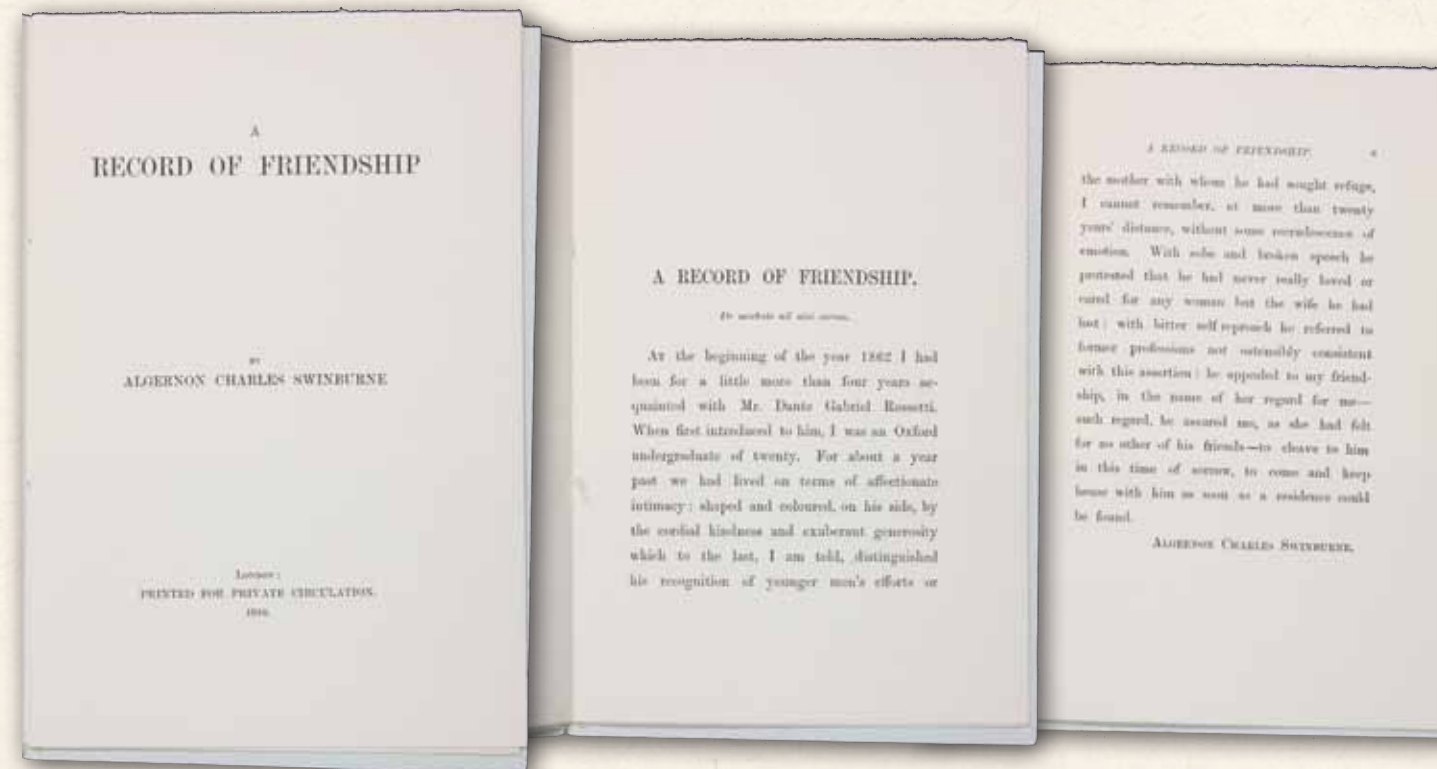
ecstatically reading his work to his housemates, and almost worshipping his friend amongst Rossetti's menagerie of wombats and kangaroos. The influence was not all in one direction, however; Rossetti's iconic painting 'Proserpine' came several years after Swinburne's poems on the same subject.

Published following Swinburne's death, and nearly thirty years after Rossetti's, *A Record of Friendship* is Swinburne's account of their relationship. T.J. Wise, who arranged for it to be published, forged a number of works by Swinburne and others, and was also keen to add value to books by adding items of personal association – in the copy sent by Wise as a gift to Balliol, he pasted in one letter from Swinburne and one from Rossetti that provide good examples of their signatures.

EXHIBITED: Swinburne, A.C., *A Record of Friendship* (London: For private circulation, 1910) [Swinburne Collection g 001] and facsimiles; Beerbohm, Max, *Rossetti and his Circle* (London: Heinemann, 1922) [0076 f 012].



William Morris's Kelmscott Press edition of *Atalanta in Calydon*, title page and page 1



A Record of Friendship title page and interior text pages

*'I did not see the
naughtiness till pointed out'*

EDWARD BURNE-JONES was another of the lifelong friends that Swinburne made during the painting of the Oxford Union murals, and Swinburne was a frequent visitor to the Burne-Jones' house in the 1860s, often carrying newly-composed poems which he would read from the manuscript. Eight years later, Swinburne dedicated his collection *Poems and Ballads* (1866) to Burne-Jones, publicly associating himself with the artistically unconventional and avant-garde Pre-Raphaelites. It is not known why Swinburne chose Burne-Jones in particular because the painter later burned all of the letters he received from Swinburne.

Poems and Ballads shocked most who read it. Its mix of radical republican politics, anti-Christian

sentiments, and unconventional sexuality offended almost every value of mainstream Victorian society. 'Hymn to Proserpine', for example, portrays a pagan lamenting the loss of his joyful and sensuous religion at the moment that Christianity became the official religion of ancient Rome, 'Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath'. Swinburne's pagan misappropriates the Lord's Prayer by preferring the old gods 'who give us our daily breath' to the image of the Crucifixion, the 'dead limbs of gibbeted Gods'. *Poems and Ballads* also includes a poem from the ancient Greek poet Sappho to her female lover, another called 'Hermaphroditus', and several demonstrating Swinburne's masochistic tendencies, 'pleasure's twin-born pain'. Reviewers and readers were almost united in condemnation of what they called 'prurient trash' and 'a hundred lurid horrors', but none could deny Swinburne's extraordinary talent. The great critic John Ruskin wrote about *Poems and Ballads* to Swinburne's parents, saying 'It is diseased – no question', but that the corrupting elements did not affect the beauty of the whole, and that 'The more I read it – the nobler I think it is'. Balliol's copy belonged to Swinburne himself, and was amongst the books dispersed after his death.

'The Triumph of Time', also included in *Poems and Ballads*, is Balliol's most important Swinburne manuscript, and is the account – probably autobiographical – of a rejected lover. Lines such as,

*But if we had loved each other – O sweet,
Had you felt, lying under the palms of your feet,
The heart of my heart, beating harder with pleasure*

were simply more sensuous and sexually explicit than many Victorian readers could accept and, most tellingly, one reader of *Poems and Ballads* recorded that 'the beauty of diction and masterpiece of craft in melodies really at first so dazzled me, that I did not see the naughtiness till pointed out'.

EXHIBITED: *Poems and Ballads* (London: Moxon, 1866) [Swinburne Collection b 010/02]; 'The Triumph of Time' [MS 471].

TO
MY FRIEND
EDWARD BURNE JONES
THESE POEMS
ARE AFFECTIONATELY AND ADMIRINGLY
DEDICATED.

Poems and Ballads dedication



HERMAPHRODITUS.
I.
LIFT up thy lips, turn round, look back for love,
Blind love that comes by night and casts out rest;
Of all things tired thy lips look weariest,
Save the long smile that they are wearied of.
Ah sweet, albeit no love be sweet enough,
Choose of two loves and cleave unto the best;
Two loves at either blossom of thy breast
Strive until one be under and one above.
Their breath is fire upon the amorous air,
Fire in thine eyes and where thy lips aspire:
And whosoever hath seen thee, being so fair,
Two things turn all his life and blood to fire;
A strong desire begot on great despair,
Great despair cast out by strong desire.

HYMN TO PROSERPINE. 79
More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all
these things!
Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it
may?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of
his tears:
Why should he labour, and bring fresh grief to blacken
his years?
Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has
grown grey from thy breath;
We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the
fulness of death.
Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day,
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives
May.
Sleep, shall we sleep after all! for the world is not so
in the end;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin
rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock
abides;
But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face
the foam of the tides.
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of
and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted

The Triumph of Time
Before our lives divide for ever,
While time is with us a hand is free,
(Time, might to part us a night to part,
From from hand, as we stand by the sea)
I will say no word that a man might say
whose whole life has gone down in a day;
For this could never have been; & never,
Though the gods in the years release, shall be.
2
Firm with a tear, is it worth an hour,
To think of things that are well outworn?
Of fruitless lust, a fugitive flower,
Had dream foregone a dead foregone?
Though joy be done with a grief he avain,
Time shall not sever wholly in twain
Earth is not a spoil for a single flower;
But the rain has ruined the unground corn.
3
It will grow not again, this fruit of my flesh,
I written with seedtime, ruined with rain.
The singing seasons divide & depart,
Winter & summer depart in twain.
It will grow not again, it is ruined at root,
The worldlike blossom, the dull red fruit;
Though the heavy golden life yet, more,
With sudden sorrow of poisonous pain.
4
Have given me none of my fruit to eat:
I had the grapes, I had the dainties the wine
Had you eaten a drunken of the feast,
This would have grown of the corn & wine
This wine should have been, let us leave,
We had grown no gods, as the gods in heaven,
Fools fair to look upon, foolish to grow,
One splendid spirit, your soul & mine.

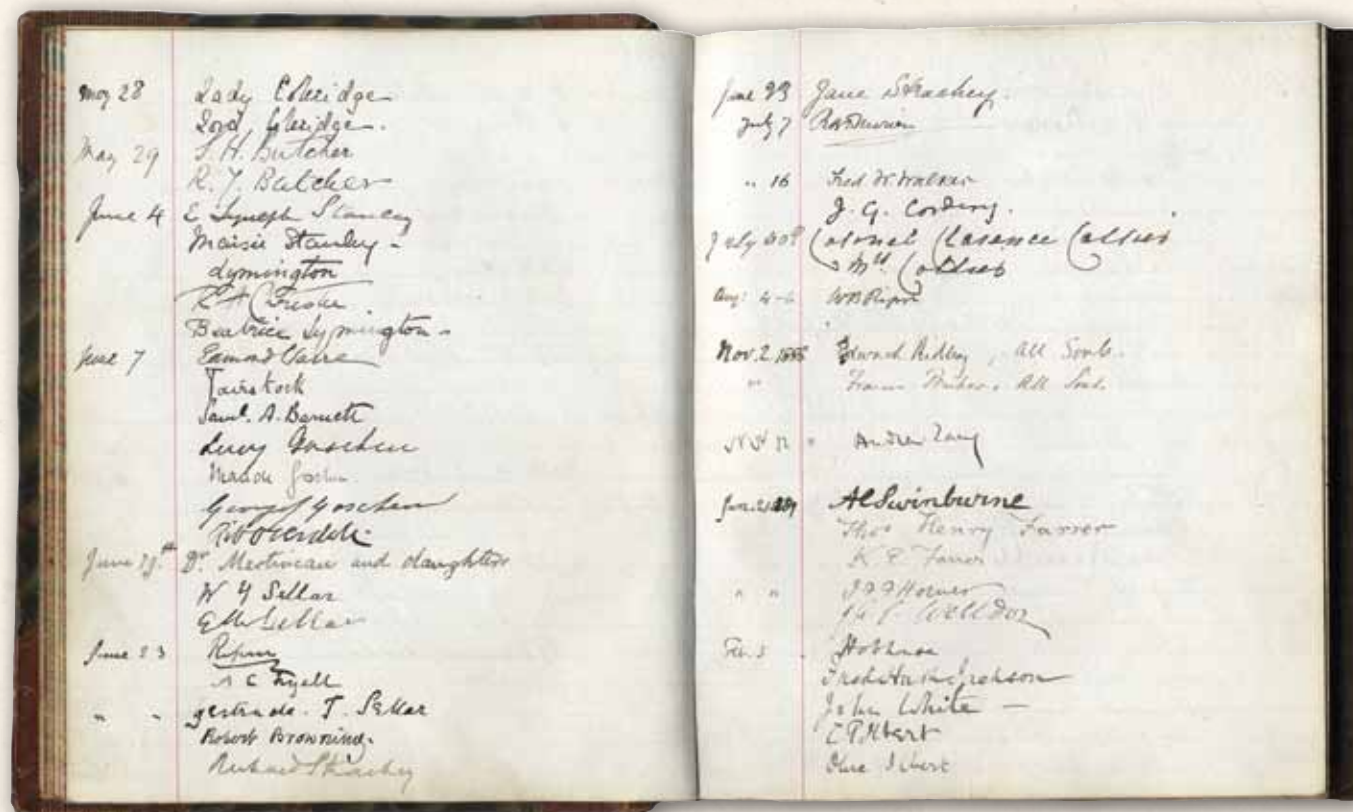
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Bookplate from Balliol's copy of *Poems and Ballads*; 'Hermaphroditus' from *Poems and Ballads*; Manuscript of 'The Triumph of Time'; 'Hymn to Proserpine' from *Poems and Ballads*.

'he put new blood into the veins of
an old university'

The book he asked his visitors to sign gives an indication of the scope and variety of his contacts. On a single page, recording just a few months in

George Goschen (left page, line 15) was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Coleridge (left, line 2) was a former Balliol student and Lord Chief Justice, and Lord Ripon (left, line 20) had been Viceroy of India, and by 1889 was the First Lord of the Admiralty. Robert Browning (left, line 23) was another of the most important poets of the day and Balliol's first Honorary Fellow, Andrew Lang (right, line 10) was a novelist, poet, and collector of fairy tales, and Swinburne appears just below, visiting Jowett nearly thirty years after the undistinguished end of his studies.

EXHIBITED: Benjamin Jowett's Visitors' Book [Archives Misc 23].



Benjamin Jowett's Visitors' Book

'What could be more improbable?'

The unlikely friendship between Benjamin Jowett, and Swinburne, 'the oddest of Balliol's children', was real and long-lasting, and they went on a number of trips together, including a visit to Cornwall in 1874. The thought of the eminent scholar of Plato holidaying with the firebrand poet was odd enough to be chosen as a subject by the preeminent caricaturist, Max Beerbohm, who met Swinburne as an old man. Underneath the drawing, Beerbohm quotes Swinburne's touching 'Recollections of Professor Jowett'.

Twice at least during a week's winter excursion in Cornwall I knew, and had reason to know, what it was to feel nervous: for he would [...] stand without any touch of support at the edge of a magnificent precipice, as though he had been a younger man bred up from boyhood to the scaling of cliffs and the breasting of breakers.

EXHIBITED: Beerbohm, Max, Caricature of Benjamin Jowett and Algernon Charles Swinburne on a cliff [Art 18.2].



Caricature of Benjamin Jowett and
Algernon Charles Swinburne on a cliff
© The Estate of Max Beerbohm

'incorrigibly vain and has no religion'

BENJAMIN JOWETT had a long and regular correspondence with Florence Nightingale, and their friendship was one of the most important in Jowett's life. He first wrote to her about a book she intended to publish in 1861, by which time both were increasingly important public figures, and they continued to correspond until his death. Her family believed that Jowett had proposed marriage, but it seems that they simply found themselves to be kindred spirits; intelligent and devout people driven by a duty to help others. In his last letter to her he wrote, 'How large a part has your life been of my life.'

Jowett wrote to Nightingale during the visit to Cornwall that was drawn by Beerbohm, saying,

I am not quite certain whither we are going, probably to the Lizard which Swinburne has a great desire to see,

having no idea that his fearlessness would worry Swinburne.

Jowett was also doing some worrying in the other direction. Along with many other people, he was concerned by the level of Swinburne's drinking. On an earlier holiday to Scotland, he had told Nightingale,

Swinburne is very good & I begin to think that he may be saved from drinking – he is decidedly better than last year,

but he was still concerned eighteen months later:

I find Swinburne very meek & childlike; drinking a glass or two of claret. He is coming with me to Cornwall, on condition that 'we drink fair' & nothing but claret. He is incorrigibly vain & has no religion, but he is devoted to his family (who are certainly charming people) & this may yet save him.

Florence Nightingale's letters to Jowett were burned at his instruction, but she seems to have asked him more about Swinburne's lack of religion. He replied,

To your question there is no answer except that he is in the hands of God, where we soon shall be – may we have done our work when that time comes.

EXHIBITED: Letter from Benjamin Jowett to Florence Nightingale, 25 Jul 1872, [Jowett Papers III.N.359 (vol. 4)]; Letter from Benjamin Jowett to Florence Nightingale, 15 Jan 1874, [Jowett Papers III.N.409 (vol. 5)]; facsimile of Letter from Benjamin Jowett to Florence Nightingale, Jan 1874, [Jowett Papers III.N.404 (vol. 5)].

Letters from Benjamin Jowett to Florence Nightingale

'Another howler, Master!'

WHEN JOWETT DIED in 1893, Swinburne wrote an essay, 'Recollections of Professor Jowett', illustrating the personality of his friend.

In the published version he recalls that Jowett once asked a former pupil to look over his translation of Plato, which was being revised for a new edition. The pupil thought he had found a mistake in the renowned scholar's work, 'a view which no one but an impudent booby would have been ready or willing to put forward', but after hesitatingly suggesting the correction,

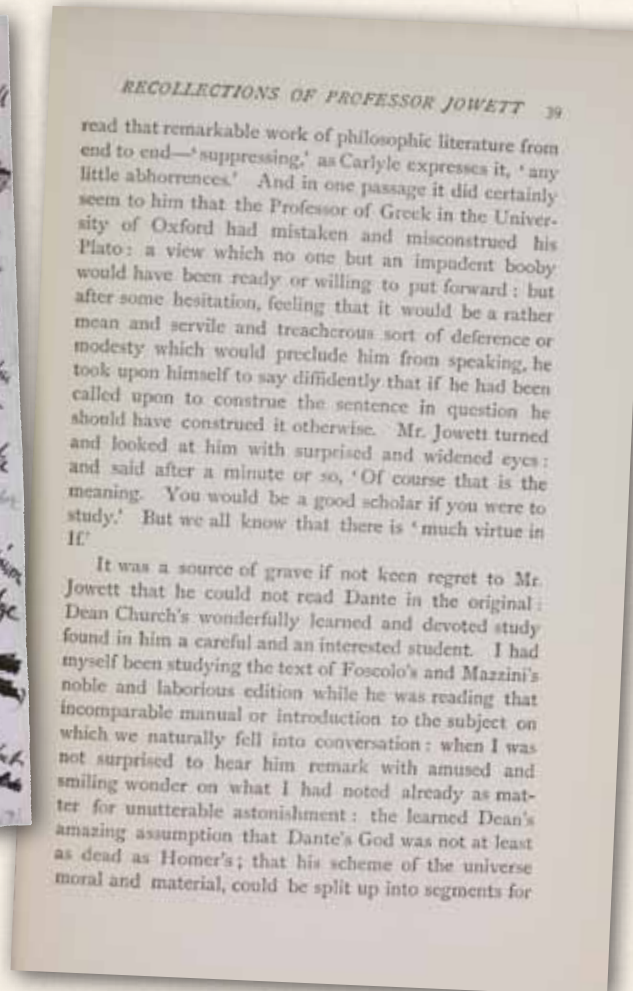
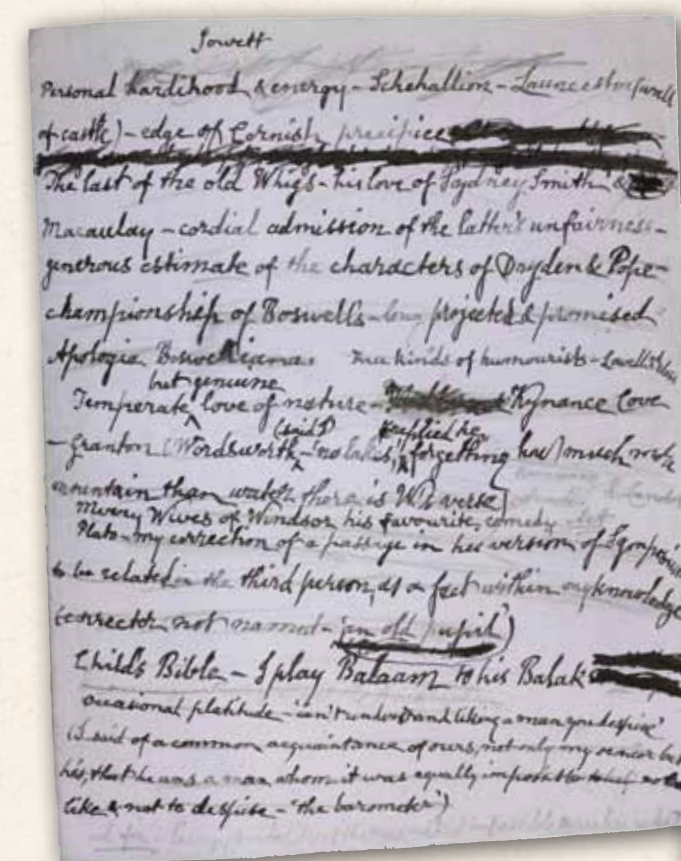
Mr Jowett turned and looked at him with surprised and widened eyes: and said after a minute or so, 'Of course that is the meaning. You would be a good scholar if you were to study.

Balliol has the notes Swinburne made in preparation for writing the essay, crossed out in pencil as he incorporated them into the text, and they illuminate the anecdote further.

Swinburne writes (line 12) 'Plato – my correction of a passage in his version of *Symposium*, to be related in the third person as a fact within my knowledge.' Swinburne didn't want this to be a story about Jowett being wrong, or being bested by his student, or even about Swinburne himself, but about Jowett's intellectual modesty and encouragement of others.

This was not, however, the case when the incident originally occurred. Swinburne's biographer writes that he was checking the book for mistakes while Jowett was teaching in the next room. The class was interrupted more than once when he cried out 'Another howler, Master!' and poor Jowett patiently replied, 'Thank you, Algernon, thank you'.

EXHIBITED: Swinburne's notes on Jowett, [MS 421]; Swinburne, A.C., *Studies in Prose and Poetry* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1894), [Swinburne Collection a 75].



ABOVE Swinburne's notes for his 'Recollections of Professor Jowett'
RIGHT The finished work printed in *Studies in Prose and Poetry*

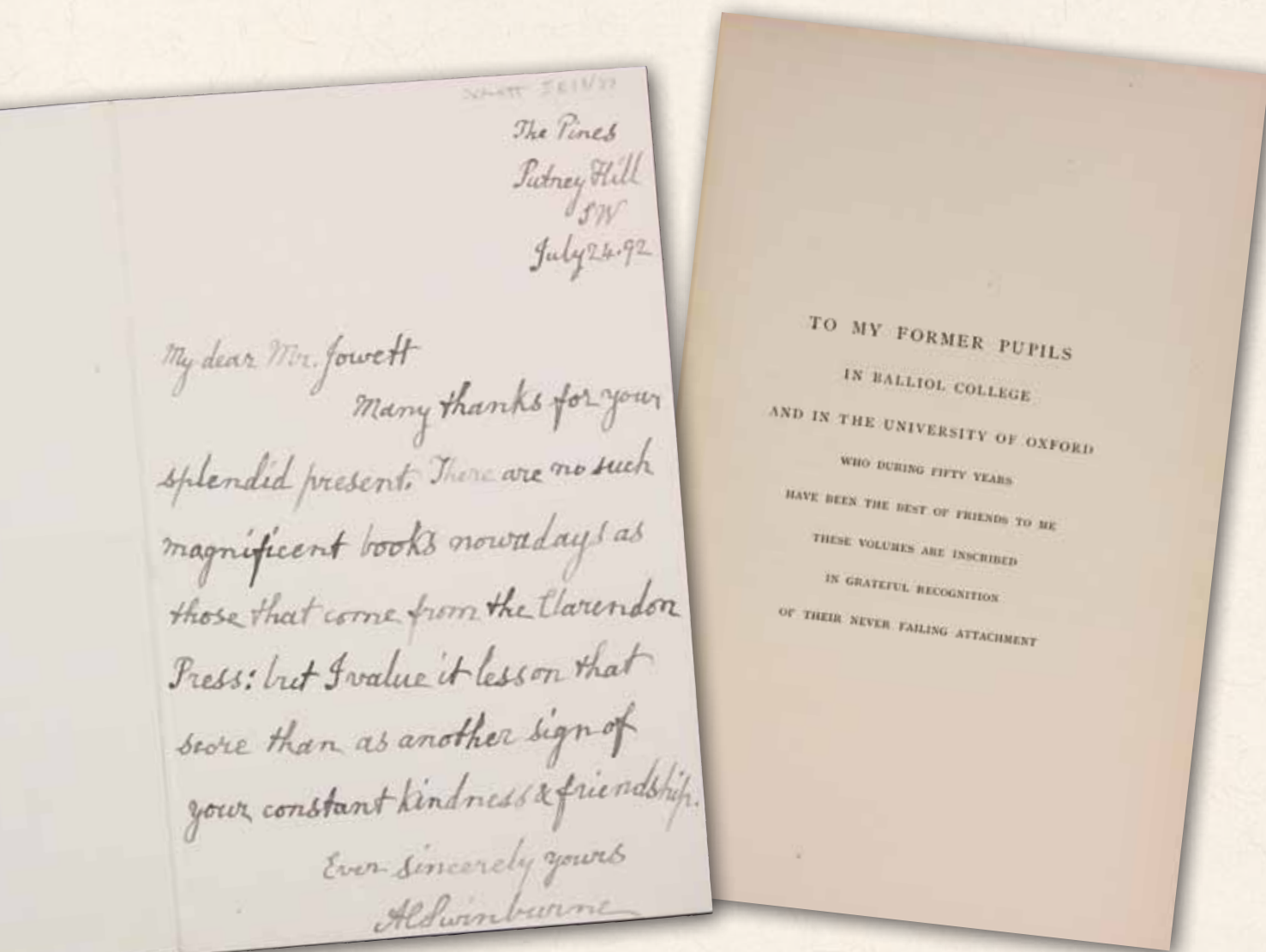
‘your constant kindness and friendship’

THE TRANSLATION that Swinburne corrected was just one section of a much larger collected edition of Plato’s works. The edition as a whole is dedicated to all the former students ‘who during thirty years have been the best of friends to me’, and although Jowett does not acknowledge Swinburne’s help individually, he certainly thought of him, and presented him with a copy. Swinburne’s letter of thanks for the gift survives, and shows his pleasure in receiving ‘another sign of your constant kindness and friendship’.

Plato was not the only book on which the pair collaborated, and given his opposition to religion, Swinburne was perhaps an unlikely person to be

involved with *The School and Children’s Bible*. He had, however always had an affinity with children and was pleased when Jowett asked him to help select passages for inclusion. He felt that Jowett had made boring choices and had forgotten ‘the delight that a child may take in things beyond the grasp of his perfect comprehension’, and persuaded his friend to include many more interesting stories.

EXHIBITED: Letter from A.C. Swinburne to Benjamin Jowett, July 24, 1892 [Jowett Papers I.E11.37]; Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*, translated in to English with analyses and introductions by B. Jowett, 3rd ed. (1892) [J.L. 2 e 10]. Ward, Sir Leslie, Greek, published in *Vanity Fair*, 26 February 1876.



LEFT Letter from A.C. Swinburne to Benjamin Jowett
RIGHT *The Dialogues of Plato* acknowledgement

SWINBURNE AND REPUBLICANISM

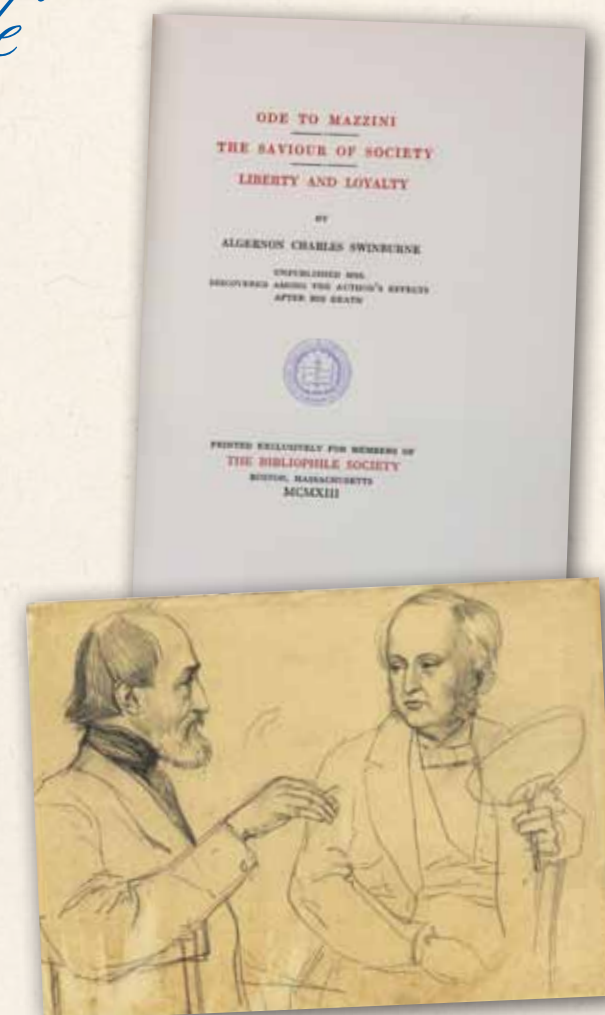
‘Songs for the Crusade’

AS NATIONALIST AND REPUBLICAN feeling spread across Europe in the 1850s and 1860s, a movement to unite the separate states of the Italian peninsula grew, largely under the leadership of Giuseppe Mazzini. Along with many other people in Britain, Swinburne was extremely interested in Italian unification, feeling that the moment for republicanism had come. He wrote an ‘Ode to Mazzini’ during his time at Balliol, and in spite of the Pre-Raphaelites’ opposition to using art for political purposes, his interest remained. In the wake of the scandal of *Poems and Ballads*, Swinburne was in need of a new poetic direction, and began working on *A Song of Italy*, which was published in three different coloured bindings so readers could match it with whichever of his earlier works they already owned (*Atalanta in Calydon* was reprinted in red and blue, and *Poems and Ballads* was green).

As his drinking became more problematic, a number of Swinburne’s friends met with Mazzini to discuss ‘what could be done with and for Algernon’. One of the friends was Jowett, and their meeting was captured in a lively sketch, showing Mazzini’s cigarette, and Jowett screening himself from the fire with a fan. The result was that Mazzini agreed to try and harness Swinburne’s energies for his own cause.

After their first meeting, Swinburne wrote excitedly to his mother that ‘I did as I always thought I should and really meant not to do if I could help – went down on my knees and kissed his hand’, and was soon referring to Mazzini as ‘my Chief’. Mazzini was keen for Swinburne to be the English voice of his cause and produce some ‘Songs for the Crusade’, and Swinburne delighted in the attentions shown to him. It seems that Jowett had seen that the pair could be of benefit to each other, and *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) was the direct result of what Jowett’s biographer called this ‘typically Jowettian contrivance’.

EXHIBITED: Howard, George James, 9th Earl of Carlisle, Sketch of Benjamin Jowett and Giuseppe Mazzini [Balliol Portraits 79]; Swinburne, A.C., *Songs before Sunrise*, with gilt roundels designed by D.G. Rossetti (London: F.S. Ellis, 1871) [Swinburne Collection b 14/02]; Swinburne, A.C., *Ode to Mazzini* (Boston, Mass.: Bibliophile Society, 1913) [Swinburne Collection b 008]; Swinburne, A.C., *A Song of Italy* (London: John Camden Hotton, 1867) [Swinburne Collection a 017]; Swinburne, A.C., *A Song of Italy* (London: John Camden Hotton, 1868) [Swinburne Collection a 018]; Swinburne, A.C., *A Song of Italy* (London: John Camden Hotton, 1868) [Swinburne Collection a 019].



FROM TOP
Ode to Mazzini title page;
Sketch of Giuseppe Mazzini and Benjamin Jowett;
A Song of Italy various coloured covers;
Songs before Sunrise cover with ‘roundels’ by Dante Gabriel Rossetti



SWINBURNE'S LEGACY

'the best poet in my dominions'

IN 1921, T.S. ELIOT wrote of Swinburne that, 'at one period of our lives we did enjoy him and now no longer enjoy him'. As literary tastes changed in the early twentieth century, Swinburne's work fell out of favour, with the result that he is not widely read today. This can mask the truth that, during his lifetime, he was extremely highly regarded.

Queen Victoria is reported to have said to Gladstone, 'I am told that Mr. Swinburne is the best poet in my dominions'. When the post of Poet Laureate became vacant at Tennyson's death, he was seen as Britain's pre-eminent poet and Gladstone wrote, 'I have always been deeply impressed by his genius', but his avowed republicanism and the still-remembered scandal of *Poems and Ballads* ruled him out. He was also seen to have world-wide standing, as he was nominated

by fellow British writers for the Nobel Prize for Literature in every year between 1904 and 1909.

The fact that, by 1930, Swinburne had become an author studied by schoolchildren shows just how widely he was known and appreciated, and his work had also been translated into French, German, Dutch, Polish, Danish, and Swedish.

More recently, as critical interest in Swinburne has grown again, works by and about him have been translated further, and can now be read in more languages, including Italian, Spanish, and Japanese.

EXHIBITED: Swinburne, A.C., *Atalanta in Calydon* (London: Macmillan, 1930) [Swinburne Collection h 018]; Swinburne, A.C., *Atalanta in Calydon* (London: Macmillan, 1930) [Swinburne Collection h 019]; Swinburne, A.C., カリドンのアタランタ (Tokyo, 1988) [Swinburne Collection g 25]; Swinburne, A.C., *Atalanta i Kalydon* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers, 1908) [Swinburne Collection g 20].

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
カリドンのアタランタ;
Atalanta i Kalydon;
Atalanta in Calydon school
text cover and school stamp



*'finished this 25th day of November 1961
in the perishing cold'*

ALTHOUGH SWINBURNE'S WORK became far less well-known in the mid-twentieth century, his poetry has always had its champions.

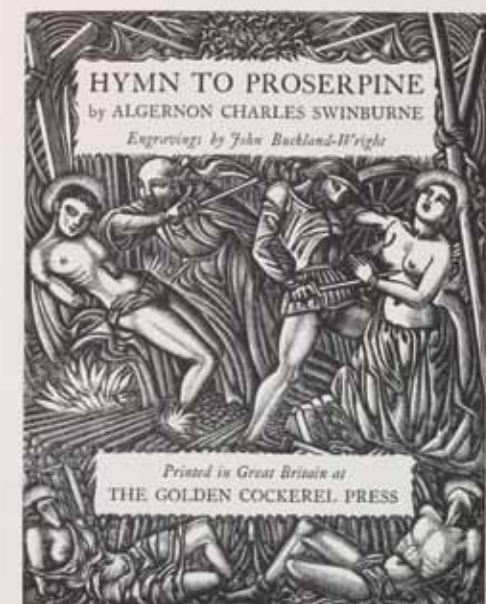
There has been a steady stream of his works produced by private presses – that is, printing by hand, with the emphasis on crafting a beautiful object from high-quality materials, rather than a purely commercial product. William Morris's Kelmscott Press, which produced the 1894 version of *Atalanta in Calydon*, was one of the earliest and most important examples.

It is hard to say exactly why Swinburne should have been so popular with private presses. Almost all of them chose to print something from *Poems and Ballads*, and it could be that the poems' subversive or scandalous content, or even, at times, their unfashionableness has

appealed to private and small-scale printers. Even Swinburne's sternest critics have always admired his richly textured use of language, so this aspect may have appealed aesthetically to printers who want to make relatively short books that are works of art in every aspect; font, layout, materials, decoration, binding, and, of course, the words they contain. Similarly, his poetry conjures vivid mental images without prescriptive descriptions, which leaves space for artists to create their own interpretations.

Each copy is a labour of love, and private press books often contain extra details such as the name of the font used, the papermaker, or, as in Pandora Press edition of *The Garden of Proserpine*, that the work was 'Finished this 25th day of November 1961 in the perishing cold'.

EXHIBITED: Swinburne, A.C., *Hymn to Proserpine* (London: Golden Cockerel Press, 1944) [Swinburne Collection i 03]; Swinburne, A.C., *The Garden of Proserpine* (Leicester: Pandora Press, 1961) [Swinburne Collection i 19].



Frontispiece to *Hymn to Proserpine*, entitled 'Joys of Christianity'. © Permission granted by the estate of John Buckland Wright.

'rather shabby but was Swinburne's'

SWINBURNE CONTINUES TO INSPIRE.

The 1980 printing of *On the Cliffs* has Swinburne's poem combined with a mural illustration by John Tuska on a single sheet of Japanese handmade paper, and the paper sculpture on the box is also part of what the artist called his 'visual interpretation' of the poem.

Swinburne is one of Balliol's most important former students, and the College has been fortunate to receive several donations of his books and manuscripts, including many of those on display. The most important gift came in 1963, when the wife of Balliol student George Madan gave us her husband's collection of printed books and manuscripts. His interest was kindled, at least

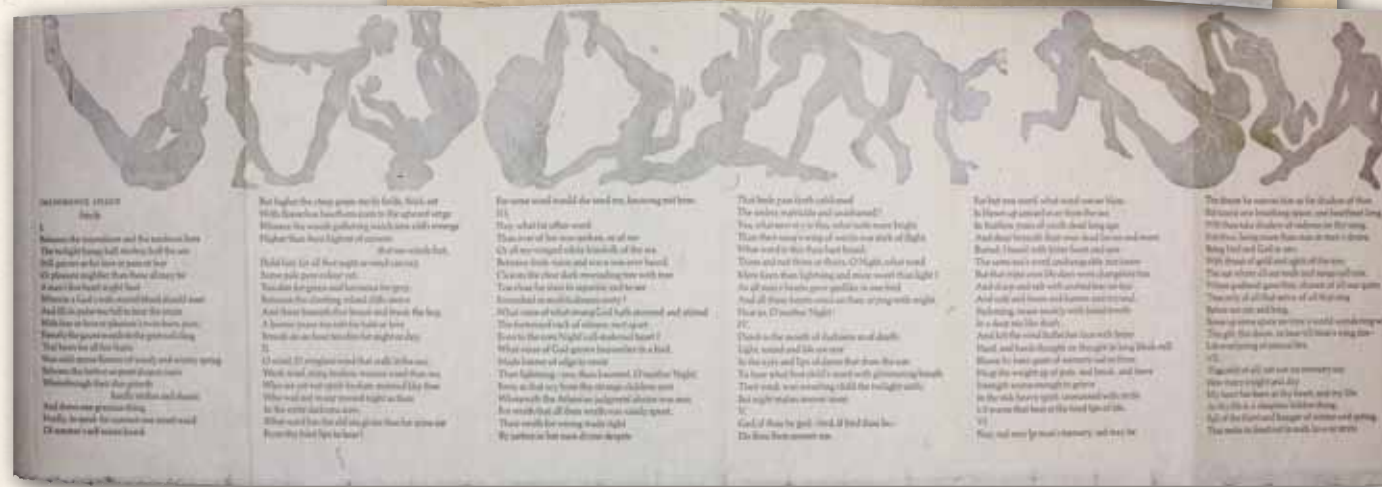
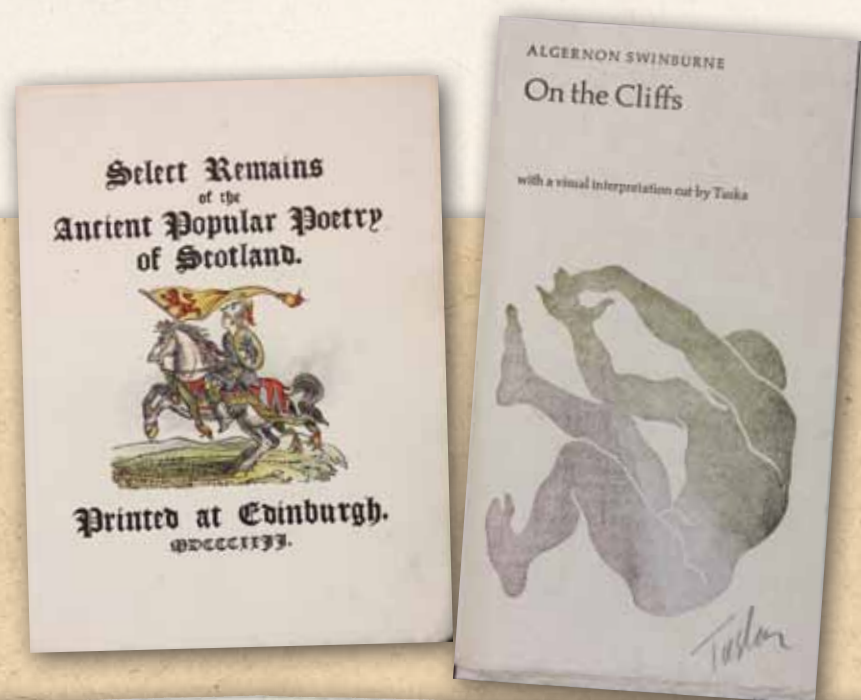
in part, by attending Swinburne's college in 1913, when his prestige was still high.

Madan is not the only Balliol member to have appreciated the connection. Kyril Bonfiglioli's anarchic *Mortdecai* novels (and the 2015 film based on them) have made him one of Balliol's best-loved writers of the twentieth century. He was also an antiquarian bookseller, and from one Balliol writer to another, he saw the value to Balliol in owning one of Swinburne's own books and donated this copy of *Select Remains of the Ancient Popular Poetry of Scotland* to the College Library.

Balliol College continues to build and supplement its Swinburne collection through gifts and purchases.

EXHIBITED: Swinburne, A.C., *On the Cliffs*, with a visual interpretation cut by John Tuska (Lexington: The King Library Press, 1980) [Swinburne Collection i 01]; Laing, D., ed., *Select Remains of the Ancient Popular Poetry of Scotland* (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1884) [Swinburne Collection g 013]; facsimile of letter from Kyril Bonfiglioli to J.N. Bryson 27th, November 1956, accompanying his donation of *Select Remains* [within Swinburne Collection g 013].

RIGHT *Select remains of the Ancient Popular Poetry of Scotland* title page
FAR RIGHT AND BELOW
On the Cliffs title page and foldout,
© Permission granted by the
Tuska Estate.



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