

UNIVERSITY OF READING

Publishing Swinburne; the poet, his
publishers and critics.

Vol. 1: Text

Submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English Language and Literature

Clive Simmonds

May 2013

Abstract

This thesis examines the publishing history of Algernon Charles Swinburne during his lifetime (1837-1909). The first chapter presents a detailed narrative from his first book in 1860 to the mid 1870s: it includes the scandal of *Poems and Ballads* in 1866; his subsequent relations with the somewhat dubious John Camden Hotten; and then his search to find another publisher who was to be Andrew Chatto, with whom Swinburne published for the rest of his life. It is followed by a chapter which looks at the tidal wave of criticism generated by *Poems and Ballads* but which continued long after, and shows how Swinburne responded. The third and central chapter turns to consider the periodical press, important throughout his career not just for reviewing but also as a very significant medium for publishing poetry. Chapter 4 on marketing looks closely at the business of producing and of selling Swinburne's output. Finally Chapter 5 deals with some aspects of his career after the move to Putney, and shows that while Theodore Watts, his friend and in effect his agent, was making conscious efforts to reshape the poet, some of Swinburne's interests were moving with the tide of public taste; how this was demonstrated in particular by his volume of *Selections* and how his poetic oeuvre was finally consolidated in the Collected Edition at the end of his life. The thesis shows that popular interest was mainly on his earlier poetry, and suggests his high contemporary reputation (which was not fully reflected in sales) was maintained by the periodical press.

Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Signed

Date

Some material from my article ‘Swinburne’s first book: *The Queen-Mother and Rosamond* (1860)’ *Publishing History*, 66 (2009) pp.63-76, and from my Open University M.A. Thesis entitled *The Publication and Reception of Swinburne’s Poems and Ballads* (1866) is incorporated in Chapters 1, 2 and 4 of this thesis.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the Special Collections staff at the University of Reading for their patient and frequent retrieval of the Hotten and Chatto ledgers and letter books over the last few years, and my supervisor, Dr Andrew Nash for his guidance throughout this thesis.

Contents

Vol. 1: Text

Introduction	7
 Chapter 1: Swinburne and his publishers, 1860 – 1874	
(a) Pickering	10
(b) Moxon: <i>Atalanta in Calydon</i> and <i>Chastelard</i>	18
(c) Moxon: <i>Poems and Ballads</i>	34
(d) Hotten	45
(e) The search for a new publisher	66
 Chapter 2: Criticism and response, 1866 – 1878	
(a) <i>Poems and Ballads</i>	80
(b) Criticism and response 1867-1878	103
 Chapter 3: The Periodical Press	126
(a) Reviewing Swinburne	127
(b) Swinburne's poetry and articles in the periodical press	145

Chapter 4: Selling Swinburne	167
(a) Publishing the books: payments, costs and editions	168
(b) Copyright and the American market	185
(c) Swinburne the pamphleteer	199
(d) A note on Swinburne's readership	215
 Chapter 5: Reshaping the poet, 1878 – 1909	 220
(a) The guidance of Watts	221
(b) <i>Selections</i> (1887)	234
(c) Patriotic themes	244
(d) Swinburne's Collected Edition, 1904-1905	256
 Conclusion	 274
 Note on Sources and Bibliography	 278

Vol. 2: Annexes 1-22

Annex 1	Swinburne's Print Runs and Publication prices	4
Annex 2	Swinburne's Publications in the Periodical Press	14
Annex 3	Reviews of Swinburne's books listed by journal	40
Annex 4	Statements of account from Hotten to Swinburne	82
Annex 5	Hotten's print runs and binding records	84
Annex 6	Comparison of Hotten's recorded print runs with accounts	88
Annex 7	Text of Chatto Agreement 1874	90
Annex 8	The <i>Poems and Ballads</i> press furore, July 1866- January 1867	92
Annex 9	Review lists for <i>Poems and Ballads</i> (1889) and <i>Studies in Prose and Poetry</i> (1894)	103
Annex 10	Some statistics of poetry published in Victorian periodicals	104
Annex 11	Poetry published in <i>The Nineteenth Century</i> 1877-1902	108
Annex 12	<i>Publishers' Circular's</i> annual poetry publishing statistics	112
Annex 13	Swinburne's earnings from Chatto royalties, 1874-1916	113

Annex 14	Mudie's Select Library	117
	14a: Swinburne's titles stocked by Mudie's Select Library, 1865-1884	117
	14b: Subject breakdown of Mudie's stock, 1869	119
	14c: Poetry, reviews and journals listed in <i>Catalogue of the Principal Books in Circulation at Mudie's Select Library</i> , January 1872	120
Annex 15	List of Pamphlets	124
Annex 16	Contemporary criticism of pamphlets	128
Annex 17	Contents of <i>Selections</i> (1887) and two later anthologies	133
Annex 18	Print runs of <i>Selections</i>	145
Annex 19	Contemporary reviews of <i>Selections</i> (1887) and of <i>Selections from A.C. Swinburne</i> (1919)	146
Annex 20	The arrangement of the Collected Edition	149
Annex 21	Print runs of the Collected Edition	154
Annex 22	Reviews of the Collected Edition	157

Introduction

Surprisingly little has been written about the publication of individual Victorian poets or indeed about that of Victorian poetry generally. This thesis addresses that conspicuous gap by examining the publishing history of Algernon Charles Swinburne during his lifetime (1837-1909), a highly controversial figure at the opening of his career but a Grand Old Man of English letters by its end. The first chapter presents a detailed narrative from his first book in 1860 to the mid 1870s: it includes the scandal of *Poems and Ballads* in 1866; his subsequent relations with the somewhat dubious John Camden Hotten; and then his search to find another publisher who was to be Andrew Chatto, with whom Swinburne published for the rest of his life. It is followed by a chapter which looks at the tidal wave of criticism generated by *Poems and Ballads* but which continued long after, and shows how Swinburne responded. The third and central chapter turns to consider the periodical press, important not just for reviewing but also as a very significant medium for publishing poetry. Chapter 4 on marketing looks closely at the business of producing and of selling Swinburne's output. Finally Chapter 5 deals with some aspects of his career after the move to Putney, and shows that while Theodore Watts, his friend and in effect his agent, was making conscious efforts to reshape the poet, some of Swinburne's interests were moving with the tide of public taste; how this was demonstrated in particular by his volume of *Selections* and how his poetic oeuvre was finally consolidated in the Collected Edition at the end of his life.

The existing literature on all this is very thin indeed. T.J. Wise published his *Bibliography of Algernon Charles Swinburne* in two privately printed volumes between 1919 and 1920, and this remains the fullest listing of Swinburne's output. Although it contains an apparent wealth of information, that wealth is, in part, counterfeit coin. For in addition to being a tireless bibliographer Wise was no less industrious as a forger and shameless authenticator of his own spurious first editions. His *Bibliography* lists seventy-two *editiones principes*; of these only fifty are in fact genuine. Swinburne's few biographers have usually had something to say in passing about his publishing. They nearly all rely on the first, Edmund Gosse, who wrote less than a decade after the

poet's death:¹ his biography benefited from close friendship with his subject during the 1870s – which gives it its particular value – and from his graceful style and easy authority; it was handicapped by the proprieties of the day, by Sir Edmund's uncertain grasp of detail and by misplaced confidence in his friend Wise.² There has been no discussion of Swinburne's output in the periodical press, only on his reception as reflected in it, and that was written eighty years ago.³ Nor have the main themes of my subsequent chapters previously attracted investigation.

I have used three principal sources for my research. First, contemporary letters, diaries and memoirs, above all the two invaluable collections of Swinburne's letters edited by Lang and by Meyers, the latter only published within the last decade. Second, the archives of Hotten and of Chatto & Windus held at Reading University Library. Although these have been consulted before (both Lang and Meyers include some of the letters) it is clear no-one has ever worked through them systematically or consulted the relevant printing and account ledgers. And my third source is the Victorian press. Thanks to digitisation this vast contemporary source that previously could only be searched with the greatest labour, is gradually opening up.

Various annexes present statistical and other information referred to in the body of the thesis. In particular: Annex 1 is a comprehensive list all Swinburne's volumes with details of price, editions and size of print runs; Annex 2 lists all of Swinburne's contributions to the periodical press, correcting and enlarging on Wise's list in the second volume of his *Bibliography* and including payment details where known; and Annex 3 cites contemporary reviews of Swinburne's volumes, augmenting very considerably the most recent listing which comprises a part of the bibliography published by Beetz thirty years ago, and indentifying many anonymous reviewers.⁴

¹ Edmund Gosse, *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1917).

² Philip Henderson, *Swinburne; portrait of a poet* (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.117 tells how Moxon had issued *Laus Veneris* as a pamphlet in advance of the publication of *Poems and Ballads* in order to test contemporary opinion, a story which appeared in Gosse's biography (*Life*, p.141). But the pamphlet was forged by Wise (see Annex 15).

³ C.K. Hyder, *Swinburne's Literary career and fame* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1933).

⁴ Kirk H. Beetz, *Algernon Charles Swinburne; a bibliography of secondary works, 1861-1980* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1982).

The outline of Swinburne's publishing career has been familiar since Gosse. This thesis gives a far more accurate and detailed picture, drawing on sources that have not been used before. The *Poems and Ballads* scandal and the dispute with Hotten receive what is their first detailed attention anywhere, despite being central to Swinburne's career. The significance for Swinburne of publishing in the periodical press, which I examine in Chapter 3, has hitherto been entirely overlooked. Nor has there been any discussion of the practical sides of publishing his work, which I discuss in Chapter 4. The Putney years have always been very much ignored because even during his lifetime Swinburne's reputation rested on his earlier output: they make the traditional final (and usually rather thin) chapter in most books on Swinburne, but there is a lot to say.

The space available to me and the extent of Swinburne's output has meant that a number of his books have been barely touched upon and some interesting themes entirely ignored.⁵ Nor, since this is not an exercise in literary criticism, have I discussed or evaluated his work. A significant proportion of his contemporaries would have placed him with Tennyson and Browning as one of the great poets of the Victorian age. There is no doubt that none of them would have discussed their age's poetry and criticism without reference to him: and if we want a better understanding of the Victorian literary publishing scene neither should we.

⁵ E.g. his anonymous epistolary novel first published serially as *A Year's Letters*, and his uncompleted novel, published posthumously as *Lesbia Brandon*; the later verse-dramas; the Shakespearean and later criticism; the pornographic writing. Swinburne's posthumous publishing history, much of it guided by Gosse and Wise, is also of particular interest.

Chapter 1: Swinburne and his publishers 1860 – 1874

(a) Pickering

Swinburne matriculated at Balliol College, Oxford in January 1856. Although his academic career was to be a failure – he eventually left the university in May 1860 without graduating – these years were to be an important time in his life both for his intellectual development and socially for the friends he made. He became one of the first members of the Old Mortality Society, in some ways a counterpart to the Apostles at Cambridge. It was formed in 1857 by John Nichol (who remained a close friend for forty years), and in the course of its ten year existence included Walter Pater, J.A. Symonds, T.H. Green and James Bryce. Swinburne contributed more papers to their meetings than any other member¹ and first appeared in print in their short-running *Undergraduate Papers* in 1858. In response to a query thirty years later Swinburne told the enthusiastic young bibliophile, T.J. Wise:

... in the three numbers of the luckless ‘Undergraduate Papers’ I published, as far as I remember, four crudities (certainly no more): a paper on Marlowe and Webster, some awful doggerel on the subject of Tristram and Iseult; a boyish bit of burlesque, and a terrific onslaught on the French Empire and its clerical supporters ...²

All of these subjects were pointers to the future: the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists became an important focus of his critical writing and models for his own tragedies; Tristram and Iseult prefigured *Tristram of Lyonesse*; the burlesque was a spoof review of an imaginary poet, Ernest Wheldrake, complete with excerpts,

¹ Gerald C. Monsman, ‘Old Mortality at Oxford,’ *Studies in Philology*, v.67, no.3 (1970), p.364.

² Cecil Y. Lang, ed., *The Swinburne Letters*, vols 1-6 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959-62).

Letter 1471 (27 Apr. 1888). Further references to this multi-volume work are given in the form: Lang, *Letters* 1471 (27 Apr. 1888).

where the number is the letter number assigned by Lang and the date is that on, or assigned to, the letter.

something Swinburne was to repeat a few years later in the pages of the *Spectator*; and Swinburne's loathing for Napoleon III remained a fixation for many years.

The Old Mortality was not just an essay-reading society. In May 1857 the members went up-stream for a picnic at Godstow where the Fair Rosamond, mistress of Henry II was reputedly buried in the Abbey.³ Less than a year later there is mention of his own *Rosamond*. And that autumn he first met Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris who were painting the murals at the Oxford Union. Morris published his collection *The Defence of Guenevere* the following year in 1858 and the twenty-one year old Swinburne was immensely impressed by it. 'Reading it, I would fain be worthy to sit down at his feet' he told a mutual friend. 'Such however is the invincible absurdity of all poets that he ventured to prefer *Rosamond* to *Peter Harpdon* in a repeatedly rebuked and resolutely argued statement. It appears to me simple mania; but certainly I am glad of his words, for *Rosamond* is about my favourite poem, and is now verging on a satisfactory completion. The first scene as rewritten is an acknowledged improvement.'⁴ ('Sir Peter Harpdon's End' is a dramatic poem in blank verse from *The Defence of Guenevere*.)

In November 1859, after two warnings and a failure in his Classics Pass School the college authorities sent Swinburne down, with instructions not to return to Oxford before the examination in the following year. He went to stay for some months at Navestock Parsonage in Essex for tutoring by William Stubbs, afterwards Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford and eventually Bishop of Oxford. Edmund Gosse, a friend of Swinburne from the 1870s onwards, and his first biographer, relates a colourful anecdote of Swinburne reading out an historical tragedy in blank verse – 'we may conjecture that it was the original draft of *Rosamond*' – to Stubbs and his wife. Stubbs, it seems, found the tone of the amatory passages somewhat warm and said as much; the outraged poet fled upstairs and burnt the entire manuscript in the grate then, having second thoughts, sat up all night and re-wrote it from memory.⁵ It could have been *Rosamond*, since that had already been read to D.G. Rossetti; but it might have

³ Monsman, p.363.

⁴ Lang, *Letters* 10 (17 Feb. [1858]).

⁵ Gosse, *Life*, pp. 62-63.

been *Catherine*, an early version of *The Queen-Mother*. Shortly after arriving at the Parsonage Swinburne wrote to his friend William Bell Scott (another of the Pre-Raphaelite circle):

... I am staying for some weeks to read law and history for my degree, which comes on in the spring. I have got nothing ready for publication yet, and when I have I see no chance of getting funds to defray the cost – much less of discovering a judicious publisher to take the risk ... I had a jolly fortnight in London ... and saw D.G.R[ossetti]’s new poems and pictures ... I read my *Rosamond* to the party in question and he was pleased to approve of it much more than it deserves. I have put in an addition to it in the comic line – viz. a kid [Arthur, a boy of the choir] – which I want to show you as I am rather proud of him. It wanted some chaff in it. Besides this, and some more of that interminable *Catherine* I have written a new ballad ...⁶

Just what Swinburne was hoping to publish at this stage is uncertain, but a couple of months later he reported to Scott: ‘I have just finished dressing up *Catherine* with a view to publication in the spring or autumn ... I am in dealings with Pickering, who is willing to do it. If I must pay I must, but I shall bear them down to the lowest charge’.⁷ This, he later recalled, ‘was paid for out of my own pocket, and cost me I remember something under £40 or £50: of which of course it never repaid me a penny.’⁸ Swinburne had no income beyond any allowance that his father, Admiral Swinburne, was giving him, so the Admiral must be the ultimate source of finance for the volume.

Swinburne’s chosen publisher was Basil Montagu Pickering who, following his father William Pickering’s bankruptcy and death in 1853, had revived his parent’s business in 1858. The son’s list showed no particular poetic or literary interests, and it may well have been the case, as has been suggested, that Swinburne went to him

⁶ Lang, *Letters* 19 (16 Dec. 1859).

⁷ Lang, *Letters* 21 (24 Feb. 1859).

⁸ Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 Dec. 1872).

because he had been buying books from the firm since his days at Eton.⁹ Swinburne's uncle, Lord Ashburnham, one of the great book collectors of the mid nineteenth century, could have introduced him to William Pickering who had also been one of the main suppliers of antiquarian books to the British Museum,¹⁰ and Basil Montagu had resumed book dealing as well as publishing.¹¹

Returning to Oxford from Navestock in April or May Swinburne re-sat and passed the exam he had previously failed but then, following a fall from a horse and confined to his bed, he decided to go no further and in June left the University for good without taking his degree. Gosse reports that the Admiral opposed his son's intention of living in London and devoting himself to literature, but gradually came around. Swinburne received an allowance, 'small at first, but ultimately (I believe) of £400 a year'.¹² Perhaps this made publication possible, for by the autumn Pickering had composition underway, and in September 1860 Swinburne was asking his friend John Nichol where his copy should be sent. 'Write me word when you do get it, what extent of badness you think it reaches – what exact medium point between Martin Tupper and Stanyan Bigg.' (Bigg was one of the Spasmodic poets so, no less than Tupper, a figure of fun.) Pickering he characterised as 'a reasonable and friendly Jew thus far.'¹³

Relations with Pickering may shortly have become a little less easy. *The Queen Mother and Rosamond* had reached Gabriel Rossetti by 1 November, when he drew William Bell Scott's attention to it.¹⁴ But just two days later 'Titles and errata' were being run off by Pickering's printer, the Chiswick Press.¹⁵ At the end of the month

⁹ Georges Lafourcade, *La Jeunesse de Swinburne* v.1, (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1928), p.183.

¹⁰ Bernard Warrington, 'William Pickering' in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* v.106 (Detroit, Gale Research Inc: 1991), p.249.

¹¹ E.g. a whole page advertisement 'A Second List of Books from the Stock of Basil Montagu Pickering,' *Examiner*, 13 Apr. 1861 p.240.

¹² Gosse, *Life*, pp.65-66.

¹³ Lang, *Letters* 25 (18 Sept. 1860).

¹⁴ William E. Fredeman (ed.), *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, vols 1-8 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002-2009), letter 60.46 (1 Nov. 1860). Hereafter cited in the same style as Lang.

¹⁵ Chiswick Press Ledger, BL Add. MS 41895/372.

Rossetti told another correspondent: 'Swinburne's volume is in print certainly as I have one, but I doubt if yet issued or even all printed, as I believe he proposed some corrections.'¹⁶ Pickering advertised the volume a month later in December: '*The Queen Mother, and Rosamond. Two Plays.* By Algernon Charles Swinburne.'¹⁷ The errata are minor typographical blemishes and only required an additional leaf; the change to the title page is a little more significant: the title page was removed and replaced. *The Queen Mother and Rosamond* becomes *The Queen Mother. Rosamond. Two Plays*. Most copies of Pickering's edition which survive have this cancel title-page, plus an additional fly-title before each play.¹⁸ The implication is either that Swinburne only saw the title-page at a very late stage in publication, or that he only then realised it suggested a single play about the Queen Mother and Rosamond. The Chiswick Press ledgers show that the costs to 1 November 1860 for the volume totalled £27.18.6,¹⁹ but they do not record a cost for the 'Titles and errata' printed three days later. So perhaps the printer absorbed the cost, though a major change to the title page seems more likely to have been required by the author's wish than through the printer's error. There were further mistakes on the spine: Pickering's paper spine-label gave the author's name as *A.G. Swinburne*, and the date as 1861. These could have been replaced very easily, but were not, giving the impression that someone – publisher or author – lost patience. Whatever happened, Swinburne never published with Pickering again.

Of the 250 copies that were printed 'it may be stated', according to Wise, 'upon the authority of B.M. Pickering ... that less than twenty copies of the book had passed into circulation before it was withdrawn, and the above [i.e. the first] title-page cancelled.'²⁰ This is quite plausible, though the information is surely unlikely to have been passed directly from Pickering (d. 8 Feb 1878) to the teenage Wise (b. 7 Oct

¹⁶ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 60.49 ([22 Nov. 1860]).

¹⁷ *Athenaeum*, 22 Dec. 1860, p.852; *Examiner*, 22 Dec. 1860, p.814; *Notes & Queries*, 22 Dec. 1860, p.503; *Saturday Review*, 22 Dec. 1860, p.813. The *Athenaeum* advertisement was repeated 29 Dec. 1860, p.894.

¹⁸ Simon Nowell-Smith, 'Swinburne's *The Queen-Mother* [and] *Rosamond*, 1860,' *Book Collector*, 13 (1964), pp.357.

¹⁹ BL Add. MS 41929/25.

²⁰ Wise, *Bibliography* v.1, p.47.

1859), so in the absence of any knowledge of Wise's source, it cannot be regarded as certain.

Swinburne's friends received copies. 'I am very glad you like my book,' he wrote to Lady Trevelyan, acknowledging her thanks; 'if it will do anything like sell I shall publish my shorter poems soon: they are quite ready.'²¹ (Pauline Trevelyan who took a close interest in the emerging poet was chatelaine of Wallington Hall, Northumberland and neighbour to Swinburne's grandfather at Capheaton Hall.) And to Scott he wrote: 'I am very glad you approve the *Queen Mother* on revision. (What did Rossetti say of it to you? You say you have heard from him about it.) ... On the whole I like *Rosamund* better than the five-acter ... My father's criticism is that it is altogether far worse than useless – most pernicious. I quote literally.'²² There was to be no call for his shorter poems for this first book was hardly noticed. And while Rossetti's reaction was much more positive than the Admiral's, even he thought Swinburne's talents much better suited to ballad writing.²³

Both plays were in blank verse and in the style of Elizabethan drama. *The Queen Mother* dealt with events immediately preceding the Massacre of St Bartholomew, and Catherine de Medici was the eponymous Queen. With 23 Scenes spread across 5 Acts and a cast of 23 it was considerably longer than *Rosamond* in just 5 scenes and six roles. The Fair Rosamond was mistress of Henry II and she, in the course of the play is tracked down by Queen Eleanor to die in the arms of the King.

Only four reviews have come to light. The first appeared in the *Literary Gazette* at the end of December 1860. It is worth quoting in its entirety as it may well be the first review Swinburne ever received and already it identifies some features – sensuality and blasphemy – that were remarked upon in reviews for the next twenty years.

²¹ Lang, *Letters* 26 (19 Jan. 1861).

²² Lang, *Letters* 27 ([Late Jan.] 1861).

²³ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 60.54 (29 Nov. 1860).

After their own peculiar fashion these are two very clever plays. They have a most Shakespearian air and method about them. Unfortunately they follow after his conceits and mannerisms rather than his excellences; and yet there are many pages which are evidently the product of a thoughtful, cultivated mind. The more indecent portions of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Henry V* appear, however to have been the author's models and far from toning down his thoughts to suit the more refined tastes of the nineteenth century, his characters are more inclined to grossness and forcible swearing than any that defile the scenes of our great poet. Indeed we can with sad conscience say that the unblushing voluptuousness of some of his passages are unequalled in the pages of Dumas or George Sand, while we are quite certain that Voltaire never uttered such hideous blasphemies. Unlike the French philosopher Mr. Swinburne does not appear to have even the excuse of Atheism. We positively dare not quote in support of our indictment. We will allow that it is highly probable that his characters, who are mainly historical, did really use very bad language and think very corrupt thoughts. But dramatic proprieties are not thus to be sustained at the expense of all moral proprieties. We think that Mr. Swinburne is really capable of something very better. He has been very unfortunate in his choice of subjects. The intrigues of the Guises should be left to their proper historians – the French novelists; and as far as Fair Rosamond, we would that our streets and villages had heard much less of her than they have already.²⁴

A notice such as this was surely as likely to awaken interest in its readers as to warn them off it, so could be regarded as a positive review. Such was not the case with the piece from the *Spectator's* critic that appeared in the second week of January in the course of an article that also considered the merits of volume two of *Legends and Lyrics* by Adelaide Ann Proctor, *Edwin and Ethelburga* by Fred W. Wyon, *Songs of the Covenanters' Times* by an 'Ayrshire Minister', *The Worn Wedding-Ring* by W.C. Bennett, and *Daily Hymns* by the Archdeacon of Westmoreland. It was not distinguished company. 'In feeling and in thought, the daring, the disagreeable, and the violent, are in these dramas, substituted for boldness beauty and strength. We do not

²⁴ *Literary Gazette*, 29 Dec. 1860, p.566.

believe any criticism will help to improve Mr Swinburne.’²⁵ *John Bull* thought otherwise. It had listed the volume in its ‘Books Received’ column before Christmas (with the title as revised), but only got around to reviewing it in April. Its reviewer was critical, but more positive: ‘... the author evidently loves to delineate the morbid aspects of human nature, and he delineates them in a highly spasmodic style of art. If, however, you are willing to overcome your repugnance to this sort of thing, and will take the trouble of construing Mr Swinburne’s difficult scenes, you will be forced to own in many places the signs of a rich fancy, and a powerful grasp of ideas.’²⁶ Henry Chorley, writing anonymously in the *Athenaeum* found nothing to compliment. He started with *The Queen-Mother*: ‘We should have conceived it hardly possible to make the crimes of Catherine de’ Medici dull, howsoever they were presented. Mr Swinburne, however, has done so.’²⁷ His review – a single paragraph – then concludes abruptly and confesses that after reading the first of the two plays he felt quite unable to cope with the second.

Review copies had certainly gone to other journals. Volumes inscribed to the editor of the *Morning Post* and to the *Times* survive, though neither noticed it in their pages.²⁸ It is not unlikely that other reviews appeared elsewhere in the extensive mid-Victorian press, but if so they made no impact either. Swinburne was unknown and neither he nor his reviewers had provoked any interest. Consequently the book did not sell. Henry Adams recalled discovering, when he met the author almost two years later in November 1862, that ‘if Swinburne was not joking, Pickering had sold seven copies.’²⁹ This was not the volume that would launch his career.

²⁵ *Spectator*, 12 Jan. 1861, p.42.

²⁶ *John Bull*, 15 Dec. 1860, p.94; 6 Apr. 1861, p.218.

²⁷ *Athenaeum*, 4 May 1861, p.55.

²⁸ Copy in Senate House Library: [S.L.] I [Swinburne - 1860]; Nowell-Smith, p.358.

²⁹ Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin, 1918) p.123.

(b) Moxon: *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Chastelard*

The breakthrough did not come until 1865, when *Atalanta in Calydon* was published. Waiting for publication by this time were a good number of poems and the tragedy *Chastelard*, as well as *Atalanta*. Finding a publisher, one who would pay rather than be paid to publish, was not at all easy. In March 1864 Gabriel Rossetti tried to interest Alexander Macmillan. His poetry, he wrote, ‘inspires a certainty that Swinburne, who is still very young, is destined to take in his own generation the acknowledged place which Tennyson holds among his contemporaries. I should like you much to be the first to have submitted to you the work which both Swinburne and I think the best adapted to come first before the public. It is a tragedy on the subject of Chastelard and Mary Queen of Scots.’³⁰ Macmillan apologised a few months later for his delay in replying, but ‘I had wanted very much to have read Swinburne’s poem again carefully, and if possible to my wife and sister-in-law. I certainly thought it a work of genius, but some parts of it were queer – very.’³¹ Macmillan’s verdict – he was also considering some poems – was not reached hastily. In September Rossetti told Swinburne that there ‘was a sort of talk of my looking up and putting together those [poems] against which there could be no possible objection in reason and sending them again. He seems half inclined to the *Chastelard* still.’³² But two months later he told the journalist John Skelton who was planning to write an article on Swinburne that Macmillan had ‘ended by funk[ing] it.’³³

The following May, Swinburne’s friend Richard Burton, the explorer and orientalist, took him to meet Edward Tinsley of Tinsley Brothers, Burton’s own publishers.³⁴ ‘Rumour speaks of another volume of poems from the pen of Mr. Swinburne,’ the *London Review* told its readers just a few weeks later. ‘On this

³⁰ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 64.45 ([Mar.] 1864).

³¹ Lona Mosk Packer, ed., *The Rossetti-Macmillan Letters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963). Letter dated 3 June 1864.

³² Lang, *Letters* 62 (15 Sept. 1864).

³³ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 64.156 (15 Nov. 1864).

³⁴ Terry L. Myers (ed.), *Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 3 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005), letter no. 76A (3 May [1865]). Hereafter cited in the same style as Lang.

occasion the Messrs. Tinsley will undertake the publication.’³⁵ William Tinsley’s reminiscences published some thirty five years later recalled what happened: ‘I think in about 1860, or a year or two later, Mr Swinburne sold the MS of his poem *Chastelard* to me and my brother. However a few days after he had done so, Mr Swinburne called with a friend and pleaded to have his MS back. It seemed that Monckton Milnes (afterwards Lord Houghton) and some friends had assured him that his works should be issued from Mr Moxon’s in Dover Street ... I gave up the excellent bargain, which was one hundred pounds for the copyright.’³⁶

The reason Tinsley was ready to take *Chastelard* was that *Atalanta* had been published at the end of March, just a couple of months previously, and it was making a stir. But *Atalanta* had not been a commercial undertaking. ‘In ’65 [sic] my father offered to pay the expense of any book I might bring out’. Swinburne recalled some years later.³⁷ His choice could have been *Chastelard*, or *Atalanta* or a collection of the poems. Somehow he made the right choice. ‘It is good news indeed to hear of *Atalanta*’s approaching publication,’ Rossetti wrote to him in Nov. 1864. ‘I really believe on the whole that this is the best thing to bring out first. It is calculated to put people in better humour for the others’.³⁸ This was because there was none of the sensuousness, impropriety or wantonness that the critics were shortly to identify in *Chastelard* and *Poems and Ballads*.

Just before its publication Swinburne told Lady Trevelyan something of *Atalanta*’s history:

It was begun last autumn twelvemonth [i.e. autumn 1863], when we were all freshly unhappy, and finished just after I got news in September last, of Mr Landor’s death, which was a considerable trouble to me, as I had hoped against

³⁵ *London Review*, 27 May 1865, p.572.

³⁶ William Tinsley, *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher*, vol. 1 (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co, 1900), pp.232-233.

³⁷ Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 Dec. [1872]).

³⁸ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 64.161 (18 Nov. 1864).

hope or reason that he who in the spring at Florence had accepted the dedication of an unfinished poem would live to receive and read it.³⁹

The unhappiness of autumn 1863 to which he refers was the death of his sister Edith on 25 September from consumption. Walter Savage Landor, whom he held in extravagant regard, was the dedicatee of *Atalanta*, and Swinburne had visited him in Italy early in 1864.

‘At the beginning of 1865’ writes Gosse with all his authority as one of the poet’s oldest friends and as his first biographer,

the printing of *Atalanta in Calydon* was completed, but there followed a long delay in connection with the binding, which D.G. Rossetti had designed. Bertram [sic] Payne, who was now responsible for the firm of Moxon, believed that the only hope of success which the poem offered lay in the beauty of its appearance, and accordingly no pains were spared to adorn the ivory-white sides of the buckram cover with mystic golden spheres. A limited number of copies, it is said one hundred, were manufactured, and the drama was at length issued towards the end of April, with no anticipations on the publisher’s part.⁴⁰

Much of this needs qualification and correction. In actual fact Swinburne was still at work on the proofs in early February, and Moxon’s first publicity had appeared only a week earlier.⁴¹ Rossetti’s hand in the design is documented in a couple of passing references in his letters.⁴² What is presented as Payne’s rationale is quite probably Gosse’s surmise, and since Admiral Swinburne was paying for publication, *Atalanta*’s success, commercial or otherwise, was not imperative. It is far more likely that the impetus came from Rossetti who had recently become interested in binding and had made his first book design just three years before for his own volume of translations, *The Early Italian Poets*, another for his sister’s *Goblin Market* in 1862, and a third for

³⁹ Lang, *Letters* 73 (15 Mar. 1865).

⁴⁰ Gosse, *Life* p.107.

⁴¹ Lang, *Letters* 71 (7 Feb. 1865); *London Review*, 28 Jan. 1865, p.163.

⁴² Fredeman, *Correspondence* 65.69 (28 Apr. 1865), 65.55 (4 Apr. 1865).

his brother William's translation *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Part I – The Hell* in the same year as *Atalanta*.⁴³ The story of one hundred copies which Gosse retells has been shown to originate from Wise, and was falsified by a census shortly after the Second War which counted 164 copies in public collections, and by the gradual private acquisition of a further one hundred copies over the following thirty years.⁴⁴ Swinburne quite specifically told Watts in 1872 that his father 'paid for me to Moxon for the expenses of the first edition (500 copies) of *Atalanta* considerably more than £100.'⁴⁵ And the drama was issued at the end of March, not April, with the first reviews appearing on 1 April.⁴⁶ There was no 'long delay.'

In the course of a letter to Bertrand Payne about the *Atalanta* proofs in February, Swinburne had added: 'I am expecting the residue (unbound) copies of my former book, which according to your suggestions I will forward to you as they come, to be readvertised with a fresh title-page.'⁴⁷ Moxon's advertised *The Queen-Mother and Rosamond* with *Atalanta*, and then subsequently listed it in the *Publishers' Circular* in the fortnightly list of new works as a new edition.⁴⁸ It was not: the only change was the new title page, though the title reverted to Pickering's original version – *The Queen-Mother and Rosamond* – but the date of publication, 1860, stayed the same. This date led Wise to conclude that Moxon's had taken over publication in 1860, though Pickering's advertising in 1861 makes it clear that this was not the case.⁴⁹ Moxon's printer must have reset the title page from one of the earliest of Pickering's copies and simply transferred the date too, or perhaps, as has been suggested,

⁴³ Alastair Grieve, 'Rossetti's Applied Art Designs. 2: Book Bindings', *Burlington Magazine*, v.115, no 839 (Feb. 1973) pp.79-84.

⁴⁴ John S. Mayfield, 'A Swinburne Collector in Calydon', *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, 37 (Winter 1980), pp.25-34.

⁴⁵ Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 Dec. [1872]).

⁴⁶ *Publishers' Circular*, 1 Apr. 1865 p.171 where it appears in list of new books published 15-31 March. *John Bull*, 18 Mar. 1865, p.171 includes it in a list of 'books received.'

⁴⁷ Lang, *Letters* 71 (7 Feb. [1865]).

⁴⁸ *Athenaeum*, 29 Apr. 1865, p.598; *Publishers' Circular*, 15 July 1865, p.372.

⁴⁹ *Bookseller*, 26 Jan 1861, p.57.

Swinburne may have specifically wanted the earlier date to remain on the title-page in order to distinguish his juvenile from his mature work.⁵⁰

That Swinburne, or rather his father, was paying for *Atalanta's* publication indicates Payne did not see it as a viable commercial publication. He had good reason: a short tragedy (less than 2,500 lines) on a classic model, prefaced by several pages of Greek elegiacs, spread across just over 100 pages and selling for nine shillings could be expected to appeal only to a small, educated audience with a deep pocket. *Atalanta* was a retelling of the myth of the hunting of a wild boar, sent to ravage Calydon by Artemis. Meleager kills it, presents the spoils to the virgin huntress Atalanta and then dies himself. It was indeed to be one of Swinburne's most celebrated works, with some of his most lyrical and impassioned writing. But it still needed attention in the literary world to be noticed. In 1860 Swinburne was largely unknown: five years later this was not the case.

In 1862 Rossetti had been about to contribute to the *Spectator*, but the death of his wife, Lizzie Siddal, led him to withdraw. Informing its editor Richard Holt Hutton of his decision he put in a forcible recommendation of Swinburne as a substitute – ‘and much more than substitute.’⁵¹ Over the course of the following Spring and Summer seven signed poems appeared; four unsigned articles on modern French literature by him were also published, three on *Les Misérables* and one on *Les Fleurs du Mal*. On 7 June Hutton also published a defence by Swinburne of his friend Meredith's *Modern Love* which a fortnight earlier had received a savage review in the *Spectator's* columns. Hutton added a note describing Swinburne as someone ‘whose opinion on any poetical question should be worth more than most men's.’⁵² He had quickly made his mark. Almost as quickly he offended Hutton. Trading on the fact that no-one knew more about contemporary French literature than he did he submitted at least one spoof article (‘Les Abîmes; par Ernest Clouët’). His friend William Michael Rossetti saw the danger: ‘after introducing into his review imaginary quotations from phantasmal French

⁵⁰ Wise, *Bibliography*, v.1, pp.47-48; Nowell-Smith, pp.358-359.

⁵¹ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 66.22 ([28 Mar. 1862]).

⁵² *Spectator*, 7 June 1862, pp.632-633. Swinburne's text but not Hutton's note is reprinted in Lang, *Letters* 33 (7 June 1862).

poets of the dishevelled class he has now actually taken to writing entire reviews of these nonentities, much to his present chuckling, and, I should fear, future confusion.’⁵³ He was quite right: Swinburne was never published there again. Writing to Lord Houghton about the *Spectator*’s response to *Atalanta* three years later, Swinburne commented: ‘I recognise in that attack the avenging hand of outraged virtue, mindful how nearly that paper was induced, through a shameless trick ... to admit into its chaste pages a flaming eulogy of M. le marquis de Sade.’⁵⁴

Although his reviews appeared anonymously this does not mean that their authorship could not have been known. The mid Victorian literary scene was relatively small, and at least one incident later in Swinburne’s career – the Fleshly Poets controversy – suggests that anonymity could not be easily maintained when there was interest in uncovering the author. Often an author would have been quite happy to have his name linked with a review. In the case of these *Spectator* articles Hugo wrote to thank Swinburne, and so ten months later did Baudelaire (though this letter was, by chance, never delivered to its recipient.)⁵⁵ The author had most probably sent them copies.

Apart from one further appearance in *Once a Week* in October 1862 with a prose piece, Swinburne had nothing further printed until *Atalanta* came out in March 1865. But publishing was not the only way for Swinburne and his poetry to become known. Throughout his life, right up until his final year, he declaimed or gave readings to his friends. At the outset of his career in 1861 he had met Richard Monckton Milnes (created Lord Houghton in 1863) who over the next few years invited him to many of his celebrated breakfasts in Upper Brook Street, and for visits to his country seat, Fryston in Yorkshire. In February 1862 Swinburne was breakfasting with Browning, Palgrave and others; a year later Ruskin was there too; at a dinner party also in 1863 Matthew Arnold met Swinburne and that Easter Thackeray and his daughters were with him at Fryston.⁵⁶ A number of visitors to Fryston recalled their encounters with the

⁵³ Peattie, *Letters* 79 (31 Aug. 1862).

⁵⁴ Lang, *Letters* 76 ([c.20 Apr. 1865]).

⁵⁵ Lang, *Letters* 42 footnote 2: note from Hugo dated 26 Dec. 1862; 49 (10 Oct. 1863).

⁵⁶ James Pope-Hennessy, *Monckton Milnes: the flight of youth* (London, Constable: 1951), pp.136-137.

poet, and although some of these were written up many years later they do suggest how Swinburne was becoming known. The American Henry Adams was there in November 1862 and Milnes introduced him:

... [He] lingered a moment in Adams' room to add that Swinburne had written some poetry, not yet published, of really extraordinary merit ... In due course this party of five men sat down to dinner ... the talk drifted off into other channels, until Milnes thought it time to bring Swinburne out ... For the rest of the evening Swinburne figured alone ... They could not believe his incredible memory and knowledge of literature, classic, medieval and modern; his faculty of reciting a play of Sophocles or a play of Shakespeare, forward or backward, from end to beginning; or Dante or Villon or Victor Hugo. They knew not what to make of his rhetorical recitation of his own unpublished ballads – 'Faustine'; the 'Four Boards of the Coffin Lid', the 'Ballad of Burdens' – which he declaimed as though they were books of the *Iliad* ... Late at night when the symposium broke up Stirling of Keir wanted to take with him to his chamber a copy of *Queen Rosamond* [sic] the only volume Swinburne had then published, which was on the library table ...⁵⁷

Thackeray's daughter recalled another occasion (admittedly after a similar gap of years) for Gosse: 'One Sunday evening after dinner, he was asked to read some of his poems. His choice was injudicious; he is believed to have recited 'The Leper'; it is certain that he read 'Les Noyades.' At this the Archbishop of York made so shocked a face that Thackeray smiled and whispered to Lord Houghton, while the two young ladies, who had never heard such sentiments expressed before, giggled aloud in their excitement'.⁵⁸ And a third report is the memory of a thirteen year old Johnston Forbes-Robertson (later the distinguished Shakespearean actor).

Just before *Atalanta in Calydon* was published Swinburne proposed to read it to my people and a few friends, so, one night, he spread the manuscript before him, and in a sort of chant, read the poem to some fifteen or twenty in my mother's

⁵⁷ Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), pp.139-141.

⁵⁸ Gosse, *Life*, pp.95-96.

drawing room. I can see the faces of the audience now all lit up with their delight and enthusiasm, as the beauty of the work was unfolded by the young poet. There was a scene of the greatest enthusiasm as he closed the manuscript.⁵⁹

Although the detail of all such anecdotes may well be suspect – especially when dealing with events of forty, fifty or more years earlier – the point is that while at this stage of his career Swinburne's poetry could not be first encountered in print because it had not been published a circle of friends, acquaintances and influential literary people had heard it, or about it.

In February 1865 just as *Atalanta* was about to come out Swinburne was complaining to Payne: 'I see no recent advertisement in the weekly papers. I must request that there may be enough of them inserted – as many as you think fit or useful, and as prominently.'⁶⁰ Of the weeklies the most important was (and remained for the rest of the century) the *Athenaeum*; it was followed by the *Spectator* and then by a new title, the *Saturday Review*. It must have been a problem to know how to publicise a work from an author whose previous volume had met with total indifference. There had in fact been one advertisement for *Atalanta* in the *Athenaeum* in January: 'Shortly. In fcp 4to. Elegantly bound.' Four days after Swinburne's protest another appeared. '*Atalanta in Calydon*. Nearly ready. Handsomely bound. By Algernon C. Swinburne, Author of "Sapho" [sic].'⁶¹ This reference to 'Sapho' is explained in the course of an account of the new celebrity poet submitted two years later to a New York journal by Swinburne's friend Winwood Reade. Reade, then living in America, wrote to *The Galaxy* to rebut inaccurate details printed there shortly after the publication of the scandalous *Poems and Ballads*. His sketch of the poet included the following:⁶²

⁵⁹ Johnston Forbes-Robertson, *A Player under Three Reigns* (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1925), pp.101-102.

⁶⁰ Lang, *Letters* 71 (7 Feb. 1865).

⁶¹ *Athenaeum*, 14 Jan. 1865, p.63; 11 Feb. 1865, p.208.

⁶² Reade explained to Swinburne this was his reason for writing about him, that he had done so most carefully and that he had asked the publishers to send Swinburne a copy of his article. Meyers, *Letters*, 192A (1 Apr. 1867).

He is willing to recite his poems before publication. His voice is monotonous in tones but it is very earnest. Before this last volume [*Poems and Ballads*] came out, he kept the celebrated poems in a fire-proof box, in loose sheets, and, plunging his arm in up to his elbow, used to bring out his favourites. ‘Have you heard ‘Sappho’?’ was a common question among his friends. ‘Sappho’ was the name that ‘Anactoria’ went by. We did not think that he would ever dare to publish this poem with ‘Dolores’, ‘The Leper’, etc.⁶³

So ‘Sappho’ could be referred to in an advertisement eighteen months before it was eventually in print and published as ‘Anactoria’ in *Poems and Ballads*.

A number of the reviewers had personal knowledge of the poet. Back in November 1864 William Rossetti had been publicising *Atalanta* and Froude, editor of *Fraser’s Magazine*, thought he was going to offer an article. Rossetti reports that he did not, because the *Pall Mall Gazette* was considering it. But there ‘it was considered too exuberant in praise, and not inserted.’⁶⁴ Instead *Fraser’s* published the article that Gabriel Rossetti had been pushing John Skelton to write, and the *Pall Mall Gazette’s* anonymous review was supplied by Hutton.⁶⁵ He had also supplied the piece in the *Spectator*.⁶⁶ (What happened to William Rossetti’s rejected review is uncertain.) The first notice had appeared in the *Athenaeum*, and that was from Westland Marston,⁶⁷ a critic, dramatist and friend of Gabriel Rossetti. The *Reader* was edited by Thomas Bendyshe who may not have been a friend of Swinburne at this stage but certainly was within a few years and was entertaining him in Cambridge over Christmas 1868. In the *Edinburgh Review* Lord Houghton reviewed his protégé and, according to Gosse, was directed by him to refer the Greek elegiacs that precede the tragedy to Connop Thirlwall, Bishop of St David’s (one of the noted Greek scholars of the day), to ensure

⁶³ *Galaxy*, 15 Mar. 1867, p.683.

⁶⁴ W.M. Rossetti, *Rossetti Papers, 1862-1870* (London: Sands, 1903), pp.63-64.

⁶⁵ Robert H Tener, ‘R.H. Hutton: some attributions,’ *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 20 (June 1973), p.[16].

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.[20].

⁶⁷ Identified in the marked up file copy of the *Athenaeum* held at City University, London.

they were not overlooked.⁶⁸ So among the reviewers who can be identified there was a core that knew Swinburne, or at the very least must have heard much about him.

Not all the reviews were unqualified praise. Marston in the *Athenaeum* began his review by examining *Atalanta*'s weaknesses, for he found 'much that is admirable – much too that is defective.' Though now all but forgotten Marston was well known in his day and the author of at least a dozen plays, including one, *The Patrician's Daughter*, which had been performed at Drury Lane in 1842. Accordingly he criticised dramatic failings, lack of clarity, and of individuality in the characters, and noted quite correctly that it would be the Choruses – the lyric element – that would command attention. He quoted the First Chorus in its entirety, and remarked of the scene in which the boar is killed: 'we yet know not to what poet since Keats we could turn for a representation at once so large in its design and so graphic in its particulars.'⁶⁹ Perhaps alerted by this, the following Saturday the *London Review* turned its attention to the new book and produced a rave review. There was no mention of dramatic weakness though there was some shock at the tragedy's anti-theism. But, 'If, as we are given to understand, Mr Swinburne is a young writer, we do not hesitate to assert that his volume is extraordinary not simply for strength and vividness of imagination, but (what is far more remarkable with inexperience) for maturity of power, for completeness of self-control, for absolute mastery over the turbulent forces of adolescent genius. *Atalanta in Calydon* would be considered a work of unusual beauty even if it came forth under the signature of the most established reputation: as the work of a new poet it is surprising.'⁷⁰

The following week saw Hutton's two reviews (both anonymous), the first in the *Spectator* and the second in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Both made this point:

⁶⁸ Gosse, *Life*, p.114. Letters to Milnes from the Bishop giving his opinion are in R. Wemyss Reid, *The Life, Letters and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton*, v.2. (London: Cassell, 1890), pp.138-140.

⁶⁹ [John Westland Marston], *Athenaeum*, 1 Apr. 1865, pp.450-451.

⁷⁰ *London Review*, 8 Apr. 1865, pp.382-383.

... while there is scarcely a passage in the play which has not either great force or rare beauty, the effect left on the mind is incongruous and unsatisfactory. We read it and re-read it ... with an increasing wonder why a drama so full of fine passages interests us on the whole so little, why we read it for the sake of its fine passages, and not its fine passages for the touches they contribute to the main passion of the play.⁷¹

And both saw the form in which it was cast as unsuccessful, because the play was in many ways so very un-Greek, and unlikely to win a large audience.

The *Reader*, a few days later thought it still uncertain if Swinburne would turn out to be, as his friends predicted, the Tennyson or Browning of the next generation ‘but undoubtedly he has written one of the most extraordinary poems which our times have seen. It bears the stamp of genius ...’⁷² The *Saturday Review* devoted several thousand words to a demonstration of why *Atalanta* was not really a Greek tragedy but concluded with a paragraph praising him as a poet of ‘great grace, flexibility and power of expression.’⁷³

One of the most curious notices appeared in the very first issue of the new *Fortnightly Review*, a journal that was to become one of Swinburne’s strongest supporters. It did not start as such (and it was one of the few reviews to ignore *Poems and Ballads* on its publication.) A special feature of the new journal was that its articles were to be signed. This review was by J. Leicester Warren, Lord de Tabley, a poet just two years older than Swinburne who had published pseudonymously and who would publish his own Greek tragedy, *Philoctetes* the following year. (Almost thirty years later in 1892, on the death of Tennyson, he was thought to be a serious contender for the Laureateship.) He entirely ignored the Choruses and discussed the blank verse; faults were detected in the natural history – Warren was a keen botanist – ‘Mr Tennyson,’ he says, drawing a contrast not in Swinburne’s favour, ‘is most careful never to have a flower out at the wrong time;’ and the final sentence wrapped up the

⁷¹ *Spectator*, 38 (15 Apr. 1865), pp.413.

⁷² *Reader*, 22 Apr. 1865, pp.447-448.

⁷³ *Saturday Review*, 19 (6 May 1865), p.542.

review with a splendid line in condescension: ‘Even from this early effort Mr Swinburne may claim a place among contemporaneous minor poets, and very possibly may hereafter work his way to a still further eminence.’⁷⁴ After reading this Swinburne declared he had at last discovered *the* typical British fool.⁷⁵ Gosse claims that the editor G.H. Lewes had toned down Warren’s enthusiasm and introduced ‘one or two slighting phrases’ – which sounds like one of Gosse’s embroideries considering the *Fortnightly*’s advertising was making such a big point of its writers’ independence and the significance of its articles being signed.⁷⁶ His assertion that Warren was embarrassed by it for the rest of his life is more convincing.⁷⁷

When John Skelton’s article finally appeared (anonymously) in *Fraser’s Magazine* it gave a measured appraisal of *The Queen Mother and Rosamond* as well as *Atalanta*, and if it was not one of the most enthusiastic, it still detected ‘the strength, vigour, and passionateness of a highly-charged and really imaginative temperament ... the copious resources of and subtle richness of a vocabulary which, if not sufficiently disciplined, has been at least abundantly cultivated.’⁷⁸ The *Times* noticed the volume in June, more than two months after its publication and printed one of the longest reviews, quoting more lines than any other. After a careful account of the action it concluded that ‘Mr Swinburne has fully entitled himself by this performance to rank among the younger poets of our day, but that as a dramatist he has comparatively failed. He is gifted with no small portion of the all-important Divine-fire without which no man can hope to achieve poetic success.’⁷⁹

The review from Lord Houghton appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in its July issue and the author sent Swinburne a copy. ‘Nothing yet said or written about the book has given me nearly as much pleasure. Especially I have to thank you for the tone

⁷⁴ J. Leicester Warren, *Fortnightly Review*, 13 May 1865, pp.75-80.

⁷⁵ Peattie, *Letters* 91 (14 Aug. 1865).

⁷⁶ *Athenaeum*, 25 Mar. 1865, p.436.

⁷⁷ Edmund Gosse, *Critical Kit-Kats* (London: William Heinemann, 1896) pp.196-197.

⁷⁸ [John Skelton,], ‘Mr Swinburne’s Poems [*Atalanta in Calydon*; *The Queen Mother. Rosamond*], *Fraser’s Magazine*, 71 (June 1865) p.772.

⁷⁹ *Times*, 6 June 1865, p.6.

in which you refer to my expressed regard for Landor.’⁸⁰ Houghton opened with some words on the place of classical learning in contemporary teaching, made some gratifying allusions to Swinburne’s ancestry, and devoted a couple of paragraphs to the elegiacs in tribute to Landor. The bulk of the article was a tour through the poem, amply illustrated with quotation before turning to critical comment. He found the anti-theism un-Greek. ‘Without hope and free-will, imagination stiffens into madness; and there is no student of the fate of the genius of Lord Byron who will not recognise the injurious effect of this order of thought on his poetical career’. (‘I only regret that in justly attacking my Antitheism you have wilfully misrepresented its source,’ commented Swinburne; ‘I should have bowed to the judicial sentence if instead of “Byron with a difference” you had said “de Sade with a difference.”’) Milnes also found an exuberance of language ‘which has the double defect of often confusing or drowning the thought, and of inducing the poet to content himself with presenting the same image in varieties of words so accumulated as to convey the impression of poverty of ideas.’ There was obscurity too.

The impact of these reviews undoubtedly helped exhaust the first edition much more speedily than Payne had anticipated. An undated letter from Swinburne to his friend Howell in the early summer of 1865 makes a passing reference to the ‘proof of a new edition’ of *Atalanta*, and, Swinburne told Lord Houghton, this second edition, which was due to appear with *Chastelard* in the autumn, was also to have ‘an etching of me by Whistler prefixed, much to the publisher’s excitement.’⁸¹ Announced at the end of September,⁸² the new ‘and cheaper’ edition of *Atalanta* was reset from the first edition’s small quarto to the smaller foolscap octavo format. (*The Queen Mother and Rosamond* was already published in this size.) It was issued in a standard binding and reduced in price from eight to six shillings but never included the Whistler etching.⁸³ This second edition of *Atalanta* comprised 1,000 copies.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *Edinburgh Review*, July 1865, pp.202-216; Lang, *Letters* 79 ([14? July 1865]).

⁸¹ Lang, *Letters* 77 ([1865: May/June]); 80 (27 June [1865]).

⁸² *Reader*, 30 Sept. 1865, p.766; *London Review*, 30 Sept. 1865, p.371.

⁸³ The only known etching of Swinburne by Whistler was made at least ten years later. Edward G. Kennedy, *The Etched Work of Whistler*, (New York: Grolier Club, 1910) Catalogue no: 136.

⁸⁴ Lang, *Letters* 137 ([Early Sept. 1866]).

Chastelard appeared in late November 1865 at 7/-,⁸⁵ with Moxon's paying Swinburne 100 guineas in advance for an edition of 1000 copies.⁸⁶ But it had been begun some years before. Swinburne told Wise in 1888 that 'I began it – that is, I thought it out as a subject – at Oxford, and wrote possibly an act or two before leaving, but nothing of it was ever printed till '65; and then I had pretty thoroughly recast (not by any means cancelled) all the first and more boyish parts.'⁸⁷ His Oxford career had begun in 1856 and ended in April 1860 and it seems that it was only towards the end of this time that he began to think about and to work on *Chastelard*. 'Don't you think a good dramatic subject would be Mary Stuart's amour with Chatelet?' he wrote to Scott in December 1859. 'One might end with cutting off his head on the stage. I want to find facts about it: do you know of any?'⁸⁸ Clearly the play was then still at a very early stage, but just over a year later, updating Scott on the work he had been doing in Mentone while on holiday, Swinburne claimed to have finished 'about three-fourths of *Chastelard* in the rough.'⁸⁹ Another two years on in January 1863 Victor Hugo agreed to accept the dedication so presumably Swinburne felt the work was now very nearly completed.⁹⁰

Moxon's announced in June 1865 that they would publish *Chastelard* in the autumn.⁹¹ By July Swinburne had finished working on the proofs, and in August reminded Hugo that he had accepted the dedication.⁹² Publication followed in November. Swinburne's decision to publish *Atalanta in Calydon* before *Chastelard* had been shrewd, for *Atalanta* displayed many of his great strengths as a poet without seriously provoking mid-Victorian prudery. Although Alexander Macmillan was known as somewhat straight-laced, his reaction to *Chastelard* was very typical, and the

⁸⁵ *Athenaeum*, 11 Nov. 1865, p.642. The advertisement gives 22 Nov. as the date for publication.

⁸⁶ Lang, *Letters* 95(4 Jan. 1866), 453 (20 Dec. [1872]).

⁸⁷ Lang, *Letters* 1471 (27 Apr. 1888).

⁸⁸ Lang, *Letters* 19 (16 Dec. 1859).

⁸⁹ Lang, *Letters* 27 ([Late] Jan. [1861]).

⁹⁰ Lang, *Letters* 42 (2 Jan [1863] footnote 2).

⁹¹ *Athenaeum*, 17 June 1865, p.805.

⁹² Lang, *Letters* 80 (27 July [1865], 81 (10 Aug. 1865)).

strictures of the reviews that followed *Chastelard*'s appearance were a foretaste of the storm that was to break in August 1866 on the publication of *Poems and Ballads*.

Advertisements for the new volume appeared in November and December 1865 in the *Athenaeum*, but come February 1866 Swinburne was complaining to Payne, the manager at Moxon's, that he had seen 'in none of the papers any of the promised advertisements of *Chastelard*. When the materials are ample [by which he meant the reviews – there had been at least a dozen to this date, and more were to come] such neglect seems to me a disadvantage; but it is for you to decide, having bought the edition; and for myself I care nothing about puffs.'⁹³ There was indeed some contrast with how Moxon's had advertised *Atalanta in Calydon*. *Chastelard* appeared in the *Athenaeum* twice in November, once in December and then not again until May 1866, on this occasion with quotes from the notices in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Fortnightly Review*. In June 1866 Moxon's were announcing *Poems and Ballads* and listed Swinburne's other publications too.⁹⁴ *Atalanta* had not only had more advertisements⁹⁵ – some were also much more detailed: that in May 1865 had quoted from seven reviews, and the next in June had included no less than 65 lines from the *London Review* and, after three other enthusiastic reviews, concluded defiantly with an absurdly hostile notice from *Press*: '... a spasmodic effort at originality ... full of passages entirely devoid of meaning – mere nonsense verse in fact ...' This had evidently caught Swinburne's sense of humour, and when *John Bull* responded to *Chastelard* in a similar vein he passed it on to the Rossetti brothers. 'It is a treasure which I envy you,' wrote Gabriel to Swinburne. 'Couldn't it be quoted in the advertisements?'⁹⁶

Swinburne's professed detachment about advertising is belied by his writing at all on the subject. His words on 'puffs' are disingenuous too. Shortly before publication he was telling his friend the journalist Joseph Knight how pleased he was to

⁹³ Lang, *Letters* 104 (17 Feb. [1866]).

⁹⁴ *Athenaeum*, 11 Nov. 1865, p.642; 18 Nov. 1865, p.701; 5 May 1866, p.584; 30 June 1866, p.877.

⁹⁵ *Athenaeum*, 14 Jan. 1865, p.62; 11 Feb. 1865, p.208; 25 Feb. 1865 p.285; 4 Mar. 1865, p.325; 20 May 1865, p.696; 17 June 1865, p.804; 11 Nov. 1865, p.642.

⁹⁶ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 66.3 (7 Jan. 1866).

hear that *Chastelard* 'is to fall, once at least, into the hands of a critic [i.e. Knight himself] whose praise would give me pleasure as coming from a quarter whence praise is worth having.' And immediately after publication of *Chastelard* he sent Knight a note of a correction to a printer's error in the text which he hoped would be noticed in the review.⁹⁷ Then the *Reader* and Knight fell out: 'I am sorry you are not to review me after all,' Swinburne wrote 'but quite agree with you against working under constraint.'⁹⁸ Yet Knight's piece appeared – it is probably that in the *Sunday Times* – as two weeks later Swinburne was writing to thank him 'for your splendid eulogy of *Chastelard*.'⁹⁹

The review in the *Reader* dated 2 December 1865 was among the first to appear.¹⁰⁰ That journal's proprietor and editor was, for the last year of its life, Thomas Bendyshe, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and a Vice-President of the Anthropological Society. (Richard Burton was another of its Vice-Presidents, and Swinburne had become a Fellow that year.) It is unlikely that Bendyshe wrote the review for though the book is given a generally favourable reception the writer thinks that, but for the elegance of expression, the constant exhibitions of passion would demand a severe rebuke – and Bendyshe was no more likely to think this than Burton or Swinburne himself. The *Spectator* – Hutton once again – on the same day found it 'a forcing house of sensual appetite' and remarked that Swinburne penetrated only the animal side of human nature.¹⁰¹ These comments anticipated what was to come when *Poems and Ballads* was published the following August, and formed the major strand of the criticism of *Chastelard* in the reviews that followed. While the *London Review* found it almost passing the bounds of propriety it also acknowledged much fine writing and saw evidence of a writer of genius. 'Of power, he has abundance; of passion perhaps more than enough; of poetry, in its fierce, luminous and fiery shapes, a powerful and prodigal richness. But as yet we see no evidence of that firm and abiding centre of pure thought and noble sympathy without which all the rest is but a glorious

⁹⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 86A ([Early Nov. 1865]); 88C (21 Nov. [1865]).

⁹⁸ Meyers, *Letters* 89C ([25 Nov. 1865]).

⁹⁹ Lang, *Letters* 94A (18 Dec. 1865). Lang suggests this review is that in the *Sunday Times*, 3 Dec. 1865.

¹⁰⁰ *Reader*, 2 Dec. 1865, pp.621-622.

¹⁰¹ [R.H. Hutton,] *Spectator*, 2 Dec.1865, pp.1342-1344.

shell ... Whatever his faults however, he is a man of genius of the most unmistakable mark.'¹⁰² 'Passion, at times, obtains from him a startling utterance' said the *Athenaeum* and confessed itself shocked by 'how often the Divine Name is sported with in scenes that are essentially voluptuous.' It concluded: 'Upon such persons and events as those which we now gladly lose sight of, the powers of the highest dramatist would be wasted. If *Chastelard* be remembered at all, it will be solely for its detached beauties of expression.'¹⁰³

1865 was the year that, thanks to *Atalanta* and *Chastelard*, established Swinburne's literary reputation and name; 1866 with *Poems and Ballads* threatened to blacken and destroy it.

(c) Moxon: *Poems and Ballads*

The first reference to poems that were to appear in *Poems and Ballads* comes in a letter to Lady Trevelyan, back in January 1861, shortly after the publication of *The Queen Mother and Rosamond*. She had evidently just received a copy of the new volume and sent the author an appreciative letter. Writing from Mentone, where he was travelling with his parents, Swinburne responded:

I am very glad you like my book; if it will do anything like sell I shall publish my shorter poems: they are quite ready. I have done a lot of work since I last saw you – Rossetti says some of my best pieces: one on St. Dorothy and Theophilus (I wanted to try my heathen hands at a Christian subject, you comprehend, and give a pat to the Papist interest); also a long one out of Boccaccio, that was begun ages ago and let drop. Item – many songs and ballads.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² *London Review*, 9 Dec. 1865 pp.621-622.

¹⁰³ [John Westland Marston,] *Athenaeum*, 23 Dec. 1865, pp.880-881.

¹⁰⁴ Lang, *Letters* 26 (19 Jan. [1861]).

And answering a similar letter from Scott, Swinburne detailed the work he had done while staying in Mentone. These included various serious and not so serious prose works (including the spoof *La Fille du policeman*: ‘Rape, perjury, murder, opium, suicide, treason, Jesuitry, are the mildest ingredients. The atrocious conduct, public and private of Prince Albert is branded with deserved and scathing indignation’).¹⁰⁵ Perhaps more significantly he had ‘furnished and corrected all loose (in either sense) poems lying by me.’ With the letter he included ‘my finished song for the revolution of which you heard the first part, I think the last time we were together. I hope you will like it – I think it about my best lyrical piece of work.’¹⁰⁶

But his book did not sell and Swinburne must have realised it would not help in publishing his poetry; indeed it may have made it more difficult: a potential publisher could see the market had found him wanting. Nevertheless, friends were rallying around. Thanks to George Meredith he submitted a number of pieces to *Once a Week* in October 1861¹⁰⁷ which published his ballad, ‘The Fratricide’ on 15 February 1862, (this became ‘The Bloody Son’ when collected in *Poems and Ballads* five years later) and a short story ‘Dead Love’ the following October. Meanwhile Gabriel Rossetti was working on his behalf too, also with periodical publication in mind. A letter to Theodore Martin dated 4 January 1862 included this paragraph:

Now here comes a petition. A young friend of mine – 23 years of age [he was then actually 25] – Algernon Swinburne, son of Admiral Swinburne – is a poet not promising in the common sense only, but certainly destined to be one of the two or three leaders who are to succeed Tennyson and Browning ... At present he has his way to make, and plenty of unpublished poems and tales – all truly admirable – à placer: remuneration as well as fame being of importance to him ... Now were I to send you some of his MSS, and you thought as we do of them, would it be possible to you, without taxing your kindness with too much trouble, to give him an introduction to *Fraser* or some other vehicle of publicity ?¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ This was posthumously published in Lang, *New Writings*, pp.119-174.

¹⁰⁶ Lang, *Letters* 27 ([Late] Jan. [1861]).

¹⁰⁷ Lang, *Letters* 29 (15 Oct. [1861]).

¹⁰⁸ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 62.1 (4 Jan. 1862).

Fraser's Magazine was one of the monthly Victorian general and literary journals, and was then being edited by J.A. Froude. Martin replied that there was no mistake as to the poems being of no common sort; and he thought that a couple of the prose tales were told with a rare directness, simplicity and graphic power. 'But alas! for a magazine they are, I fear quite useless. The general public would stare and exclaim with the eyes and tongue of prurient prudery, if they were to come across them.' Despite this, he told Rossetti, he was sending them on to Froude with as strong a recommendation as he could give. 'He, however, is autocrat in *Fraser* – his judgement is pure and severe, but his feeling is catholic; and I hope he may like your friend's poems, and give some of them, at least, a place; or, even if he doesn't, that he may indicate his readiness to accept contributions, which he may think more suited for his public.'¹⁰⁹ But the autocrat must have decided against, for nothing ever appeared.

Then a few months later in March 1862 Rossetti followed this up with the introduction to the *Spectator*¹¹⁰ which was to prove so promising until Swinburne squandered the opportunity by his own over-confident cleverness. He did not always know his own best interests, but his friends continued to support him. A year after that debacle Monckton Milnes proposed to Chapman and Hall, the publishers of Browning, that they should take on the younger poet. After asking Browning for advice they declined to proceed. Browning explained, in some embarrassment, to Milnes:

Of his works, since his first volume, I know not a line, except a poem which I looked over a long while ago at Rossetti's, and the pieces he recited the other night: I could only have an opinion, therefore on these. I thought them moral mistakes, redeemed by much intellectual ability. They may be a sample of the forthcoming book – or just the exceptional instances – I hope so.

When I was abruptly appealed to, some days after, for my estimate of Mr. Swinburne's powers – I don't know what I could do but say "that he had genius, and wrote verses in which to my mind there was no good at all" ... It was a shame

¹⁰⁹ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 62.1, note 3.

¹¹⁰ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 66.22 ([28 Mar. 1862]).

in this case for Chapman to quote my blame of two or three little pieces – given on demand for unqualified praise which was impossible – as the reason for rejecting a whole book-full of what may be real poetry for aught I am aware.¹¹¹

The following year, 1864, between March and September Rossetti made his sustained but unsuccessful attempt to interest Alexander Macmillan in Swinburne's poems, and in his new verse drama *Chastelard*. Macmillan saw *Chastelard* first and quickly shied away, but with further encouragement from Rossetti asked to see 'the minor poems.'¹¹² These proved similarly disturbing, so Rossetti then considered pruning the collection. There was another rejection. 'Mac has spoken', wrote Rossetti to Swinburne. 'Don't swear more than you can help. I have your MSS safe again. There was a sort of talk of my looking up and putting together those against which there could be no possible objection in reason ... I mentioned St. Dorothy as an unobjectionable poem, but Mac had some funky reminiscences of the allusions to Venus, so really it seemed a bad look out.'¹¹³

Rossetti did not give up. He sent *The Queen Mother and Rosamund* to John Skelton, who might submit an article to *Fraser's Magazine*. Skelton's reply is lost, but Rossetti responded to it on 13 November:

I think I agree in every word you have said of Swinburne's first volume, but no doubt you, with me, are astounded that, with all its faults it should have hitherto had no justice done whatever done to its beauties ... Among the mass of work he has in MS is a tragedy on the subject of Chastelard and Mary Queen of Scots ... But he finds the greatest difficulty, indeed hitherto impossibility, of getting his work accepted by a publisher. Macmillan took them into some consideration, but ended by finking it. Everyone finds him too outspoken on the passionate side. I think nothing could serve him or please him better than such an article as you

¹¹¹ Lang, *Letters* 47 (7 July 1863).

¹¹² Packer, ed., *The Rossetti-Macmillan Letters*, letter 8 ([Ma]rch 1864).

¹¹³ Lang, *Letters* 62 (15 Sept. 1864).

would be likely to write in *Fraser* ... There is no present prospect of his fresh works appearing, but an article might help him on.¹¹⁴

But hearing that a new volume – this was to be *Atalanta* – was in the offing Skelton decided to defer writing.¹¹⁵ Swinburne had taken *Atalanta* to Moxon, a publisher whose name had a special resonance for any up-and-coming poet as he had published Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats, Browning and Tennyson. Edward Moxon, the firm's founder, had died in 1858 and from 1864 it was managed by J. Bertrand Payne on behalf of the widow and her son. Swinburne quite likely had an introduction to Payne through Lord Houghton as Moxon's had been publishing him for many years; this included several volumes of his poetry (which is surely unlikely ever to have been a commercial venture) and more significantly the *Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats* that appeared in two volumes in 1848 and in various later reissues. A new edition of Keats with a memoir by Lord Houghton appeared from Moxon in 1864.

Thanks to the success of *Atalanta* and *Chastelard* Payne naturally wanted Swinburne's Poems too. 'He has more than once applied to me on the matter,' Swinburne told Joseph Knight the journalist who was now becoming his literary adviser.¹¹⁶ Knight suggested that a hint of competition could only encourage Payne, and to that end he approached John Murray on Swinburne's behalf in November 1865; and he toyed with the idea of trying Longmans too. Murray, he reported, but for the breach of professional etiquette in snatching a now valued Moxon author, appeared interested.¹¹⁷ But three months later things were not much further advanced. 'I should like much to meet Mr Murray,' Swinburne told Knight, 'but do not overmuch like the idea of having my poems sent as it were for approval like those of a novice. Under the circumstances I cannot object to his seeing them in confidence, especially as he behaved by implication with so much courtesy to me in the matter of Byron.'¹¹⁸ (Swinburne was preparing a Byron selection for *Moxon's Miniature Poets*. It appeared

¹¹⁴ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 64.156 (13 Nov. 1864).

¹¹⁵ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 64.161 (18 Nov. 1864).

¹¹⁶ Meyers, *Letters* 88C (21 Nov. [1865]).

¹¹⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 88B (21 Nov. [1865]).

¹¹⁸ Meyers, *Letters* 103A (12 Feb [1866]).

in March 1866 with both book and advertising acknowledging ‘the kind permission of John Murray Esq.’)¹¹⁹ Payne also proposed Swinburne might edit a volume of Keats too, displacing one already delivered by Robert Buchanan, and even hinted at the editor’s chair of a proposed *Moxon’s Magazine*.¹²⁰ Swinburne was being courted. Yet neither of these latter two suggestions ever came to anything; and Buchanan’s selection was published in due course.

Swinburne had given Moxon’s two other new works. Since late 1863 he had been working on a review-essay on *The Life of William Blake*, ‘*Pictor Ignotus*’ written by Alexander Gilchrist and completed by the Rossetti brothers for publication in November 1863.¹²¹ A party probably hosted by Moxon’s on 13 December 1865 was the occasion for a rebuke from Lord Houghton to the drunken Swinburne who denied being rude to the Laureate who was also present, recalling only a ‘few words of civility’ with him followed by a discussion of Blake and Flaxman in another room with Lewes, then editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, and Palgrave.¹²² The essay had gradually expanded, proved far too long for journal publication and early in 1866 was sent off to Moxon’s.¹²³

There was another book too, and this threatened to derail Swinburne’s relations with Moxon’s. In February 1866 Swinburne wrote to Payne in high dudgeon:

Some months since you asked to be allowed to consider yourself the natural publisher of my future works, on terms which appeared not unreasonable. I then told you that I never meant to publish anonymous poetry; that I very probably might desire to send you, without my name and without in any way committing myself to their authorship, MSS which I should wish you to print as though they were avowedly or probably mine. To this you assented with some show of eagerness. ... You then received from me two MSS, at various times, which you

¹¹⁹ *Athenaeum*, 17 Mar. 1866, p.377.

¹²⁰ Lang, *Letters* 95 (4 Jan. [1866]).

¹²¹ Lang, *Letters* 51 (15 Dec. [1863]).

¹²² Lang, *Letters* 94 ([?15 Dec. 1865]).

¹²³ Lang, *Letters*, 96 (5 Jan. [1866]); Peattie, *Letters* 96 (14 Jan. [1866]).

undertook at once to publish on the terms proposed by yourself: the last sent was my Essay on Blake. The first, after hearing its nature, you accepted as an anonymous work, of doubtful authorship, backed up in private by my name, and sent unread to the printer's, promising to return it in type. You are at liberty to change your mind and refuse to fulfil an unwritten engagement. But I find with astonishment that you have done another thing which you were not at liberty to do. I hear from Mr Winwood Reade that you have actually shown him the anonymous manuscript as a work of mine, and read him extracts from it as such.

...

If you still desire to publish my Poems, my Essay on Blake, my Notes on Art or any other book signed by my name, you will let me know your terms in writing, and I will consider them fairly. But I will not run blindly into a verbal agreement, made without witnesses, and depending upon memory in which no confidence is to be placed.¹²⁴

The manuscript Payne had received and now declined to publish was an epistolary novel, *A Year's Letters* ('my first attempt at serious prose work' written back in 1862, as Swinburne later told William Rossetti.)¹²⁵ Joseph Knight supposed this rejection had something to do with its hints of flagellation and oblique references to the Marquis de Sade.¹²⁶ Another publisher, one who would have had no qualms about this sort of thing, was considered then turned down. 'On second thoughts,' Swinburne told Knight, 'I have made up my mind not to put any MS of mine, anonymous or pseudonymous or signed into the hands of Hotten under any circumstances. Through Lord Houghton I have found out such an instance of his audacious rascality that I would not trust him

¹²⁴ Lang, *Letters* 104 (17 Feb. [1866]). The 'Notes on Art' appeared eventually as 'Notes on Designs of the Old Masters at Florence,' *Fortnightly Review*, July 1868, pp.16-40 and were subsequently reprinted in *Essays and Studies*. Swinburne had stayed in Florence, where he met the elderly W.S. Landor and visited the Uffizi, in Spring 1864. Lang, *Letters* 55 (31 Mar. [1864]).

¹²⁵ Lang, *Letters* 106 ([20 Mar. 1866]).

¹²⁶ Meyers, *Letters* 105A (25 Feb. 1866).

with anything of mine ...'¹²⁷ Yet just over six months later Hotten had taken over as Swinburne's publisher.

And it was, after all, to be Moxon's who published *Poems and Ballads*. Early in March Swinburne forwarded to Knight the rejection he had received from John Murray¹²⁸ and, very soon after that, must have reached an understanding with Payne, as within a few weeks he was returning 56 pages of revised proofs of his poems.¹²⁹ Swinburne recalled a few months later: 'I agreed with him to issue an edition of 1000 copies, he undertaking to print, publish and sell them, and if the edition sold off, I was to have two-thirds of the profits.'¹³⁰ When it came to business matters Swinburne relied on advice from friends, since he was quite incapable of dealing with them himself. In due course after he had met T.W. Watts all this passed to him; but that was still some years in the future. The earlier intention, not to 'run blindly into a verbal agreement, made without witnesses, and depending upon memory,' was admirable – and quite likely had been Knight's recommendation – but does not appear to have been acted upon.

Judging from everything he says in his correspondence, throughout his life Swinburne loathed proof-reading. 'If you have never passed through the ordeal of this purgatory I hope you never may; for I know nothing more wearisome and bewildering,' he told his friend George Powell; 'blunder follows blunder with these unblessed printers.'¹³¹ Here Gosse takes up the story:

The volume had been announced to appear early in May; by the middle of July it had still not made its appearance ... it seems that an early copy of the bound volume being sent to the author in May, he immediately detected in it between twenty and thirty serious misprints, which had escaped him in the revise ... This involved a great deal of expense and delay. Mr. T. J. Wise, who discovered this

¹²⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 106A (20 Mar. 1866).

¹²⁸ Meyers, *Letters* 105C (4 Mar. 1866).

¹²⁹ Lang, *Letters* 106 [20 Mar. 1866].

¹³⁰ Lang, *Letters* 125 (13 Aug. 1866).

¹³¹ Lang, *Letters* 112 (19 Apr. [1866]; 117 ([? 8 July 1866]).

fact, and who has carefully compared the original corrections in the poet's handwriting with the final text, tells me that 'to effect this revision some of the sheets had to be reprinted "in toto"; in some cases portions only of the sheets were reprinted; in other instances where punctuation only was involved the missing stops were inserted by hand.' At any rate, it was an exasperating business, which delayed the final appearance of the book until late in the summer.

132

Wise records in his *Bibliography* that he has seen this early bound copy with Swinburne's handwritten corrections, and he details the cancellations and corrections that were made.¹³³ Despite what Gosse says, there is no sign of any announcement that the new volume was 'to appear in May.' But there was delay. *Poems and Ballads* first appears in Moxon's advertisement (available 'immediately') and in the 'List of New Books' in the *Athenaeum* for 30 June 1866. The *London Review* also had it in its 'List of New Books Published this week' on the same day; but the following week it repeated the announcement.¹³⁴ Another week after that the *Reader* published excerpts 'from among the forthcoming poems of Mr. A.C. Swinburne.' These were two stanzas from the 'Dedication' and the complete 'Hendecasyllabics.' And a week after that on 21 July Moxon's inserted an advertisement in the *Athenaeum* and the *Reader* headed 'July 25th ... Poems and Ballads by Algernon Charles Swinburne.' It looks as though there may have been a month's delay.

The first review so far uncovered is in the *Morning Star* dated 23 July. But it was on Saturday 4 August that a group of particularly influential, damning reviews appeared. And the following Monday Swinburne wrote to Joseph Knight: 'That damned hound Payne writes me word that "he cannot continue the issue of my poems." What am I to do with him or them? Pray write to me at once and give me some hint.'

135

¹³² Gosse, *Life*, p. 149.

¹³³ Wise, *Bibliography* v.1, pp.115-116.

¹³⁴ *Athenaeum*, 30 June 1866, p.866 and p.877; *London Review*, 30 June 1866, p.1; 7 July 1866, p.27.

¹³⁵ Meyers, *Letters* 122A (6 Aug. 1866).

The reason was not simply that Payne was discouraged by the hostile reviews, though this was what Swinburne told his sister Alice.¹³⁶ He gave Lord Lytton another explanation: Payne had ‘said to a friend who called on him as my representative that, on hearing there was to be an article in *The Times* attacking my book as improper he could not continue the sale.’¹³⁷ Some more details appear in the letters of William (later Sir William) Hardman, a Victorian man-about-town, written to a college friend who had emigrated to Australia, and posthumously published.

On Thursday November the 8th [1866] I gave a select dinner-party at my club. It was composed of Hinchliff, Morison, Morley, Shirley Brooks, Dallas (of *The Times*), Hamilton and Verdon ... At the dinner we had much talk about Swinburne, Brooks chaffing Dallas (who detests the youthful poet and his works) ... In my 88th letter I sent you some quotations from Swinburne’s *Poems* and told you that his publisher, Moxon, had withdrawn the book from circulation. It seems that Dallas was the cause of this: he had written a crushing review for *The Times* in which both Poet and Publisher were held up to the execration of all decent people. The article was in type, when a private hint was given to Moxon, in order that he might, if so inclined, disconnect himself from the bawdry. It would have been a serious thing for a man, whose name on the title-page and on the well-known green covers, is a guarantee for the propriety of any book, and ensures its admission into the most respectable families, to have such an attack in a leading journal. So he wisely threw the whole thing up.¹³⁸

This is endorsed by a letter from Froude to Skelton dated 15 August. Skelton was already working on a more positive review of *Poems and Ballads* for *Fraser’s Magazine* (of which Froude was editor), a piece that was to be published in the November issue. ‘Your difficulty’, thought Froude ‘will be in choosing passages that justify your interpretation.’ Then he adds: ‘What about Dallas? Is the book ever

¹³⁶ Lang, *Letters* 126 (13 Aug. 1866).

¹³⁷ Lang, *Letters* 125 (13 Aug. 1866).

¹³⁸ S.M. Ellis, ed. *The Hardman papers; a further selection, 1865-1868* (London: Constable, 1930), pp. 191-192.

coming out, or is the article to be broken up?’¹³⁹ No such article ever appeared, so it is plausible that when Payne stopped the sale on 6 August it was spiked. On 18 August the *Atheaneum* did not know if author or publisher had withdrawn the book; by the following week it could report it ‘was entirely the act of Messrs Moxon & Co.’¹⁴⁰ That the part played by *The Times* was not generally known is indicated by the need felt by some close to Swinburne’s circle to exonerate themselves. Woolner, one of the original Pre-Raphaelite brothers, believed that he was being accused in some quarters of having persuaded Payne to withdraw the book; Palgrave – a close friend of Woolner – thought he too was under suspicion, and declared his innocence.¹⁴¹ And Woolner offered an alternative culprit in a letter to William Rossetti: ‘It seems to me your opinion of Payne is severe: it appears he did it on compulsion: for there was a strong party of Exeter Hall sneaks meant to prosecute him “with the utmost vigour of the law” and he had high legal advice that he would not be able to stand against it.’¹⁴² (Exeter Hall was the centre of Evangelical London, the home of pious middle class orthodoxy.)

Although the review copies had been sent out relatively few were distributed to the trade or sold before it was withdrawn. Froude evidently supposed that it had never been on sale at all. At the end of August John Camden Hotten, Swinburne’s new publisher, found that Moxon’s still had 700 copies in hand,¹⁴³ and this, it will be remembered, was from a print-run of 1,000. *Poems and Ballads* did not reappear until November under the new imprint.

Payne may have been worried about the reputation of the firm, and he will certainly have known that twenty five years before, in 1841, Edward Moxon had been charged with blasphemous libel for publishing an uncut *Queen Mab* by Shelley. The jury found him guilty and, though no sentence was imposed, thereafter all Moxon’s

¹³⁹ John Skelton, *The Table talk of Shirley* (Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1895), p.136.

¹⁴⁰ *Athenaeum*, 18 Aug. 1866, p.211; 25 Aug. 1866, p.249.

¹⁴¹ Peattie, *Letters*, 106 (30 Sept. [1866]).

¹⁴² *Ibid.* footnote 6 which quotes a letter dated 25 Nov. 1866.

¹⁴³ Meyers, *Letters* 134A (28 Aug. [1866]).

editions of Shelley were printed without the offending passages.¹⁴⁴ But he would not have counted upon losing Swinburne entirely. Swinburne recalled later that when ‘without warning or notice to me before the very day of the withdrawal the volume of *Poems and Ballads* was withdrawn, I obtained a letter of injunction forbidding them to continue the sale of my other books, then in their second editions.’¹⁴⁵ Just when this was is uncertain, but no advertisements for any of his titles appeared in the month after that on 4 August (which had listed all four titles) and they did not reappear until September (omitting *Poems and Ballads*), by which time another publisher was in discussions with Moxon for the other titles.¹⁴⁶

(d) Hotten

In addition to review copies for the press, Swinburne had sent copies of *Poems and Ballads* to friends and acquaintances, including the politician and novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton (ennobled just a few weeks previously as Baron Lytton of Knebworth). Lytton returned an effusive if rather vague reply, speaking of the ‘power and fascination of your genius’, of the poet’s ‘richness of diction’ and inviting him to Knebworth for a few days.¹⁴⁷ Swinburne, receiving it just as the three hostile reviews appeared, was grateful for the words of support and seems to have overlooked that Lytton had confessed to have done little more than skimmed the surface of the volume. A week later he wrote again to Lytton when Payne had actually withdrawn the book:

I am much obliged by the letter of advice you wrote me, and if Lord Houghton had not gone off to Vichy, I should certain take counsel with him. As it is, I am compelled to decide without further help. I have no relation with Messrs. Moxon except of a strictly business character, and considering that the head of their firm

¹⁴⁴ Harold G. Merriam, *Edward Moxon, Publisher of Poets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), pp.101-103.

¹⁴⁵ Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 Dec. [1872]).

¹⁴⁶ *Athenaeum*, 4 Aug. 1866, p.156; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 Sept. 1866, p.12; *Athenaeum*, 8 Sept. 1866, p.292.

¹⁴⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 121B ([5 Aug. 1866]).

has broken his agreement by refusing to continue the sale of my poems, without even speaking to me on the matter, I cannot but desire, first of all, to have no further dealings with any one so untrustworthy ... As to the suppression of separate passages or poems, it could not be done without injuring the whole structure of the book, where every part has been as carefully considered and arranged as I could manage, and under the circumstances, it seems to me that I have no choice but to break off my connection with the publisher.¹⁴⁸

But just four days after this on 17 August John Camden Hotten wrote to Swinburne confirming that Knight and Howell had called on him to say that Swinburne was satisfied with his offer to publish his works, and setting out the understanding they had reached.¹⁴⁹ Since Swinburne had earlier reconsidered a decision to give his *A Year's Letters* to Hotten for anonymous publication on hearing about him from Lord Houghton, it seems probable that this was Hotten's initiative. Even Swinburne must have realised that while it had not been straightforward to find a publisher for his poems in the first place, now it would be more difficult than ever and that if he wanted them reissued he would not have much choice in the matter.

Hotten was a publisher who sailed close to the wind and was quite prepared to take risks unappealing to mainstream publishers such as Moxon's. His dubious reputation resulted from his exploitation of American writers in unauthorized, but legal, editions (with no copyright agreement between the United Kingdom and the United States, authors on either side of the Atlantic were unprotected from publishers on the other); from the equally cavalier approach to the texts he had pirated; from the unhappy relations that developed with so many of his authors; from occasions when he was actually caught behaving illegally (Tennyson had taken him to court in 1862 for the unauthorized republication of poems suppressed by the laureate on the reissue of some of his early collections – and Hotten had lost); and from his activity as supplier and publisher of pornography. 'I think it an infernal pity for him to go to Hotten at any price, although he is not Holywell Street [the notorious London venue for the sale of pornography],' wrote Scott to William Rossetti. 'Doing so is taking a step that his

¹⁴⁸ Lang, *Letters* 125 (13 Aug. 1866).

¹⁴⁹ Meyers, *Letters* 129A (17 Aug. [1866]).

numerous enemies will make as bad, easily ... Better let the book go out of sale, and become “rare” than reissue by a questionable agent.’¹⁵⁰ Despite all this a case has been made in recent years that Hotten should be taken much more seriously on account of his role in championing difficult material (such as *Poems and Ballads*), and because of the sheer quantity and breadth of his output.¹⁵¹

This is the offer that Hotten made:

The understanding, I believe, is this: I am to pay you £200 for 1000 copies of the *Poems*, and to publish your other books – either in the form of a new edition – when Moxon's editions are sold out; – or to purchase of Moxon's at once, at cost price, the entire stock ... Neither Mr Howell nor Mr Knight knew very clearly the exact terms of the agreement existing between yourself and Moxon's, but you will doubtless know, and I shall be very glad to assist in any way I can the negotiation which must – I suppose – be entered into with them for transfer of stock, and payment.¹⁵²

Swinburne's indication to Lord Lytton that he had no one to turn to for advice with Lord Houghton away was quite untrue. Both of the Rossetti brothers were involved, and so was Joseph Knight. In fact too many people were involved. Much of the negotiation with Hotten was done through C.A. Howell who was also a general factotum and adviser to D.G. Rossetti and Ruskin. Hotten wrote a confidential letter to Howell dated 28 August 1866 setting out his terms, which Swinburne may or may not have seen, and Swinburne made a formal acceptance a week later:¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ William E. Fredeman, ‘The Letters of Pictor Ignatus: William Bell Scott's Correspondence with Alice Boyd, 1859-1884: Part I,’ *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, v.58 (1975), p.96. Letter dated 2 Sept. 1866.

¹⁵¹ Simon Eliot, ‘Hotten: rotten: forgotten? An apologia for a general publisher.’ *Book History*, 3 (2000), pp.61-93.

¹⁵² Meyers, *Letters* 129A (17 Aug. 1866).

¹⁵³ Meyers, *Letters* 134A (28 Aug. 1866); Lang, *Letters* 139 (4 Sept. 1866).

I accept the terms offered by you for my books now in type – viz. £200 in ready money for 1000 copies of my *Poems and Ballads* – 9d per copy for the second edition (1000 copies) of *Atalanta in Calydon* – 1 sh. per copy for 1000 copies of *Chastelard* – 2 sh. per copy the remaining copies of the *Queen Mother* first edition etc: and one fourth of the published price of 1000 copies of my forthcoming book on the *Life and Works of Blake*.

This does not directly respond to the letter to Howell. In it Hotten was less definite about the Blake volume, proposing a royalty between £50 and £100 for printing a thousand copies. He also explicitly made two further points which became part of the wrangle a few years on: ‘... I propose that after the editions now in contemplation are sold out that we go on at such terms, viz: I pay Mr S. one fourth of the publication price for all copies printed, bear all risks and pay all expenses.’ ‘Mr Swinburne would guarantee me the publication of his works, so long as I fulfilled the conditions of the agreement between us.’ These letters are the only surviving written documents setting out Hotten’s and Swinburne’s agreement: not only is there is no written contract that survives, neither is there any reference to one. Swinburne’s arrangements with Payne had been equally informal.

The payment Hotten was offering for *Poems and Ballads* to start with was generous. With a cover price of nine shillings a copy, a payment of £200 for one thousand copies represents a royalty of four shillings a copy. The royalties of 9d on the six shilling *Atalanta*, and 1/- on *Chastelard* at seven shillings were less liberal; while two shillings on each copy of the *Queen Mother* selling at five shillings is because the author paid to have it published in the first place. Hotten’s intention to move to a standard royalty of a quarter of the published price was adopted in due course by Chatto when he took over as Swinburne’s publisher, and from 1877 these were consistently royalties in the modern sense – payment per copy sold – rather than payment for the printing of an edition of a certain number of copies.

A transfer of stock from Moxon to Hotten took place. Each title was reissued using the sheets of Moxon’s editions (or, in the case of *The Queen Mother and*

Rosamund, Basil Pickering's original issue) and printing new titles pages.¹⁵⁴ A whole page advertisement in the *Bookseller* was taken on 31 October and another in the *Publishers' Circular* the following day. 'The Trade is respectfully informed that Mr Swinburne's works will in future be published by Mr Hotten.'¹⁵⁵ It listed first a forthcoming *Essays on the Life and Character of William Blake*; then *Poems and Ballads*; a pamphlet newly commissioned from Swinburne *Notes, and Poems and Reviews* [sic]; *Chastelard*; *The Queen Mother and Rosamund*, and finally William Rossetti's Swinburne's '*Poems and Ballads*'. *Atalanta in Calydon* is missing which may suggest Moxon's attempted to retain this title; but if so the attempt failed as it soon appears in Hotten's later advertisements.¹⁵⁶ When a similar transfer of stock occurred seven years later, as Andrew Chatto took over from Hotten, Chatto remarked that the only fair way to do it was for Swinburne to forego his claim on the old publisher but look to it from the new publisher, 'the course adopted in the transfer of Mr Swinburne's poems from Messrs Moxon to Mr Hotten'.¹⁵⁷

All this had taken some time to arrange – most of August, September and October which was far longer than Swinburne had anticipated. ('My book will be reissued in a few days,' he had told his friend George Powell at the end of August.)¹⁵⁸ Hotten must have been aware that he needed to keep *Poems and Ballads* in the public eye as it was not yet available to buy. Early in September he appears to have asked Swinburne for a response to his critics, and then to have briefed the *Publishers' Circular*: 'Mr. Swinburne is preparing a reply to his severer critics, which like Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* will, we believe, pay no respect to persons.'¹⁵⁹ The *Athenaeum* drew a false inference and reported the following week it was to be in verse, only to be corrected again via the *Publishers' Circular*.¹⁶⁰ This was picked up around the press. Swinburne noticed 'these printed impertinences' and in his lordly

¹⁵⁴ Wise, *Bibliography*, v.1, pp.121, 50, 81, 94.

¹⁵⁵ *Bookseller*, 31 Oct. 1866, p.929; *Publishers' Circular*, 1 Nov. 1866, p.694; similar (but not full page) advertisements appeared in the reviews e.g. *Athenaeum*, 3 Nov. 1866, p.580.

¹⁵⁶ *Athenaeum*, 1 Dec. 1866, p.726.

¹⁵⁷ Chatto Letter Book 7/597 (18 Sept. 1873).

¹⁵⁸ Lang, *Letters* 133 (25 Aug. 1866).

¹⁵⁹ Lang, *Letters* 137 ([Early Sept. 1866]); *Publishers' Circular*, 15 Sept. 1866, p.541.

¹⁶⁰ *Athenaeum*, 22 Sept. 1866, p.371; *Publishers' Circular*, 1 Oct. 1866, p.565.

way told Hotten that he did not ‘care to see my affairs handled by absurd scribblers in the newspapers,’¹⁶¹ unaware that this was valuable publicity.

Hotten had also taken a critique from William Michael Rossetti. Both *Notes on Poems and Reviews* (a one shilling pamphlet) by Swinburne and *Swinburne’s ‘Poems and Ballads’* by Rossetti were out in November to coincide with the reissue of the original volume. These were widely reviewed as Hotten must have anticipated.

So far Swinburne’s relations with his new publisher looked promising. His books were all back in circulation, and Hotten was keen to issue the William Blake volume which Moxon had set up in type, though somewhat frustrated in this by Swinburne who for the next three or four months was constantly requiring changes and losing proof-sheets.¹⁶²

Hotten also added to its delay himself by proposing something that had hitherto not been considered: illustration. He had a line in historical reprints and facsimiles (e.g. *The Little London Directory of 1677* (1863)), and in illustrated books (*The History of Sign Boards* (1866), Rowlandson’s *Pretty Little Games for Young Ladies & Gentlemen* (1871) – this also included erotic prints, another Hotten speciality). A work on Blake was a good opportunity for facsimile illustration and the evidence suggests the impetus all came from Hotten: Swinburne’s text had not been written with illustration in mind, and at points it suggests he saw the artistic side as secondary: ‘... this decorative work is after all the mere husk and shell of the Songs.’ ‘... these books are not each a set of designs with a text made by order to match, but are each a poem composed for its own sake and with its own aim, having illustration arranged by way of frame or appended by way of ornament.’¹⁶³ The first reference to illustration is on 6 November 1866 when Swinburne proposed a joint visit to the British Museum with Howell, Hotten and William Rossetti to choose some.¹⁶⁴ ‘Two or three I presume will suffice’ he told

¹⁶¹ Lang, *Letters* 147 ([c.4 Oct. 1866]) .

¹⁶² Lang, *Letters* 159 ([4 Nov. 1866]); 162 ([9 Nov. 1866]); 170 ([2 Jan. 1867]); 180 (20 Feb. [1867]).

¹⁶³ *William Blake*, pp.113-114; p.186.

¹⁶⁴ Lang, *Letters* 159A (6 Nov. [1866]).

Rossetti, not sounding very enthusiastic about the project.¹⁶⁵ When they finally got there in January 1867 a slightly more generous selection was made,¹⁶⁶ and eight were finally included.

The facsimilist has since been identified as Henry J. Bellars who did other such work for Hotten, including Hotten's subsequent edition of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.¹⁶⁷ Bellars was cheap and hardworking. 'I know we are charged at least one third the price charged by Harris, Dangerfield, Nethercliff, and the other British Museum experts' Hotten had told a correspondent a few years earlier in 1865 when discussing facsimiles.¹⁶⁸ Well regarded at the time, Bellars was quickly forgotten after his early death just the following year, 1868, at the age of 44, apparently in great poverty. (This may have been what frustrated Hotten's plans – discussed with Swinburne and advertised in the press – for an extensive series of Blake facsimiles.)¹⁶⁹

But there were long delays in publishing the volume. In April 1867 advertisements appeared for *William Blake, Poet and Artist*, once again available 'shortly'.¹⁷⁰ They were still premature, and the title then vanished from Hotten's publicity for another six months. William Rossetti, enquiring of Hotten in September what had become of the volume was told it was awaiting the facsimiles.¹⁷¹ From late October the book resurfaced in Hotten's advertisements, now with the title *William Blake, Artist and Poet*.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁵ Lang, *Letters* 163 (12 Nov. [1866]).

¹⁶⁶ *Rossetti Papers* (diary entry for 16 Jan. 1867), p.221.

¹⁶⁷ Morton D. Paley, 'John Camden Hotten, A.C. Swinburne and the Blake Facsimiles of 1868', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 79 (1975/1976), pp.273-274.

¹⁶⁸ A.N.L. Munby, *The Formation of the Phillips Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p.141.

¹⁶⁹ Lang, *Letters* 259 (28 Mar. 1868); *Spectator* 28 Mar. 1868, p.392.

¹⁷⁰ *Athenaeum*, 13 Apr. 1867, p.494; 20 Apr. 1867, p.529; *Bookseller*, 30 Apr. 1867, p.299; *Spectator* 20 Apr. 1867, p.456.

¹⁷¹ Peattie, *Letters* 137 (22 Sept. [1867]).

¹⁷² *Athenaeum*, 26 Oct. 1867, p.546.

Swinburne had also presented Hotten with a new poem, the *Song of Italy*, which was published in April 1867. It was a paean addressed to Italian Republicanism in general and Mazzini in particular, written in Swinburne's most grandiose, rhetorical style. Naturally enough with the furore over *Poems and Ballads* scarcely over, it received a lot of attention in the press. All in all, with the successful reissue of the earlier works and with these new publications either out or on the way, this looked like a very promising publishing relationship between a dynamic, innovative publisher and a radical young poet. Yet only a few months later the first notes of discontent are heard. In an aside to a long letter to William Rossetti in September 1867 Swinburne wrote:

... and is it not, don't you think, *oddish* to hear nothing of sales or editions of any of my books? I have only had the money agreed on for 1,000 copies of the *Poems* – £200 and £50 more on account: and I know he has sold more than the first edition, without changing title pages as I should think he ought ...¹⁷³

Rossetti replied:

I had not reflected – nor probably known – about your fresh issue of *Poems and Ballads* not being marked 2nd Edition. It seems quite obvious it ought to be so on all possible grounds, and I think you would be well warranted in requiring it. It is very seldom I have so much as seen Hotten this 8 or 10 months past: but, whenever the subject has casually turned up, he has seemed to me fully satisfied with the sales of *Poems and Ballads*: the *Song of Italy*, he told me the other day, has been a disappointment as regards sale.¹⁷⁴

Wise's Swinburne *Bibliography* lists the following five editions of *Poems and Ballads* published by Hotten:¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Lang, *Letters* 220 (17 Sept. 1867).

¹⁷⁴ Peattie, *Letters* 127 (22 Sept. 1867).

¹⁷⁵ Wise, *Bibliography* v.1, pp.121-132.

- the Moxon edition taken over by Hotten and reissued with a new title and half-title page
- an unmarked Second edition of 1866-67 with an identical title page to that of his reissued Moxon (and so with no indication on the book that it was a second edition, hence Swinburne's complaint), with the body of the book a line for line reprint of the Moxon
- a Third edition (1868)
- a Fourth edition (1871)
- and a Fifth edition (1873)

Hotten's ledger records the following print orders:¹⁷⁶

8 Nov 1866	3000	[Second edition]
9 Apr 1868	[2000]	(Third edition)
13 Jun 1871	1000	(Fourth edition)
15 Aug 1873	1000	(Fifth edition)

It is probable that Moxon had printed just 1000 copies, for Swinburne recalled later that his agreement had been to receive 100 guineas for an edition of 1000.¹⁷⁷ When Hotten found that Moxon still had some 700 copies in hand it is unlikely that this meant 700 bound volumes for Moxon would almost certainly have bound them gradually according to sales.¹⁷⁸ And although cancelling the title page would not have been

¹⁷⁶ Print Ledger 1/172 and 1/273.

¹⁷⁷ Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 Dec. [1872]).

¹⁷⁸ Meyers, *Letters* 134A (28 Aug. 1866).

difficult or expensive, Hotten could not easily convert bound volumes because the Moxon monogram was on the front board and their name was on the spine. So there would have been a number of volumes that Hotten did not want and Moxon could not sell legally and this perhaps explains why a remainder bookseller, S. & T. Gilbert, was advertising 'the suppressed *Poems & Ballads* by Algernon Charles Swinburne. 7/6 published at 9/-,'¹⁷⁹ and why Bertrand Payne of Moxon's had a few copies to sell under the counter, though in his case with a mark-up rather than a mark-down.¹⁸⁰

At the end of November 1866 William Rossetti recorded: 'Hotten says that his first lot of Swinburne's poems, which I understand to be all he got from Moxon, has sold, and he is going to have-in another lot.'¹⁸¹ This second lot was, presumably, the order for 3000 copies made at the beginning of the month – the unmarked 'second edition' – which Wise's description presents as practically a facsimile of the Moxon edition with Hotten's title page, though with some differences mainly in the eight preliminary pages, and printed on heavier paper. Hotten's other new editions for Swinburne in 1867 were 3000 copies of the newly written *Song of Italy* (1 Apr 1867) and reprints of former Moxon editions: 1500 copies of *Chastelard* (9 Oct 1867), and 1500 of *Atalanta in Calydon* (2 Nov 1867).¹⁸²

Rossetti must have tackled Hotten about Swinburne's concerns as he received some sort of emollient memorandum from Hotten in October 1867 which he forwarded to Swinburne, but which does not survive.¹⁸³ A month later Rossetti's diary records: 'Met Swinburne at Hotten's, to talk over the business relations between them – Swinburne having as yet received from Hotten only the stipulated £200 for 1000 *Poems and Ballads* and £50 on account. Hotten will now send in a statement of sales etc.'¹⁸⁴ But it seems that he did not do so, and Swinburne was not to receive one until the middle of the next year, 1868. By then *William Blake* had finally been published (in

¹⁷⁹ *Athenaeum*, 17 Nov. 1866, p.653; *Times*, 31 Jan.1867, p.12.

¹⁸⁰ Peattie, *Letters* 117 (22 Dec. 1866).

¹⁸¹ *Rossetti Papers* (20 Nov. 1866), p.197.

¹⁸² Print Ledger 1/198, 1/176 and 1/174.

¹⁸³ Peattie, *Letters* 128 (10 Oct. [1867]).

¹⁸⁴ Peattie, *Letters* 145. Footnote 2: extract from William Rossetti's manuscript diary for 7 Nov. 1867.

time for Christmas 1867),¹⁸⁵ and Hotten had just issued Swinburne and William Rossetti's joint *Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition*. Swinburne's disquiet must have increased as lawyers were now involved. 'I think it would be well you should inform your solicitor of having seen me,' wrote Hotten following a visit by Swinburne on the 18 June 1868, 'and of the arrangement that shall be gone into upon the return of Mr W.M. Rossetti [who was just then abroad], that gentleman having had to do with the arrangement under which I published your books.'¹⁸⁶ But Ranken, Ford, Longbourne & Longbourne, (the Swinburne family solicitors) took a more active role, and Hotten replied to them:

I certainly understood, after Mr Swinburne's visit on Thursday last that he would communicate with you. As, however you have written to me again I send you draught of our last annual balance of his a/c. This would have been supplied for you on Saturday last, but for the fact of Mr Swinburne's representative calling here with a message on that day and yesterday.

We cannot make up an a/c to the 31 May because our returns are not made to us in this way, and there are copies of some of the books abroad on sale, but I may say – for the satisfaction of your client – that our next statement will show to his credit another issue of *Poems*, with royalty on further copies of *Song of Italy*, *Notes on the Royal Academy* and the royalty on a new edition of the *Queen Mother and Rosamund* which is now being printed and proof sheets of which will be forwarded to Mr Swinburne at once.

The *Essay on Blake* has not yet paid the cost of production mainly to the expenses with which it was burdened by Messrs Moxon and Co. ...¹⁸⁷

The Statement of Account (which is given in full in Annex 4) headed Jan 1868 and sent to Ranken and Co with the letter at the end of June 1868 is not a precise or detailed document. It first gives a rounded, un-itemised figure for the royalty due from

¹⁸⁵ *Spectator*, 21 Dec. 1867, p.1464

¹⁸⁶ Lang, *Letters* 265 (18 June 1868).

¹⁸⁷ Chatto Letter Book 3/292 (24 June 1868).

Moxon's following payment of expenses. This is followed by the royalties on Hotten's new editions of *Poems and Ballads*, which had been agreed at £200, and on *Song of Italy*, *Atalanta* and *Chastelard*. Neither the percentage of the royalty nor the number of copies involved is stated: but the negotiations with Hotten had stated that royalties would be 25% of the edition printed. The entry for *Song of Italy* says 'royalty on copies sold;' if the same royalty of a quarter of the published price is assumed then this would be equivalent to 750 copies. Entirely missing is Swinburne's 1/- pamphlet, *Notes on Poems and Reviews* which Hotten had issued in November 1866. (Wise claims that 1,000 copies were printed, the royalty paid and then, due to demand, a second edition – but unmarked as such – run off. He cites no evidence to support any of these statements.)¹⁸⁸ The debit side lists payments already made to Swinburne, three sums of £100 and one of £50. There are two other debits, the first a private account. Because of Hotten's activity as a publisher and purveyor of Victorian pornography this private account sounds rather tantalising, but Swinburne would almost certainly have used him as a newsagent and bookseller just as he had with Moxon and would do so with Chatto.¹⁸⁹ The final debit is to Dalstons, the solicitors who had in all probability been involved in Hotten's negotiations with Moxon.

The printing ledgers (see Annex 5) show that Hotten's edition – the 'second edition' – of *Poems and Ballads* comprised 3000 copies, not 1,000. He also printed 3,000 copies of *Song of Italy* (obviously expecting a heavy demand which never came as there were still 1,715 left in 1875), 1,500 of *Atalanta* in November 1867 rather than 1000; and not 1000 but 1,500 of *Chastelard* in October 1867. *Notes on Poems and Reviews* which is missing from the account is also absent from the ledger.

When William Rossetti returned from abroad in July 1868 he sent Swinburne a copy of notes he, Rossetti, had made summarising Hotten's terms set out in the 28 August 1866 letter to Howell, 'which my memory testifies were accepted as they stood.'¹⁹⁰ Swinburne, still no clearer in his grasp of the agreement, wrote back saying

¹⁸⁸ Wise, *Bibliography* v. 1, p.151. The publication of this pamphlet is discussed further in Chapter 4.

¹⁸⁹ Chatto's 'Author's retail and statement ledger 1874-1892' shows him debiting Swinburne for books, newspapers, magazines, book-binding and cab fares.

¹⁹⁰ Peattie, *Letters* 145 ([12 July 1868]).

that Longbourne, his solicitor, needed the accounts checked but that he himself was not the best person to do this:

And indeed – I say it to my shame – my own ideas are confused as to what was to have been, as well as to what has been. As for accounts – you know how I keep them ... If you would once see and tackle H (it is useless my tackling him – the b. refers to you always) as to how many editions of how many copies each he has (by his own count) sold – *and* as to what were the original terms – and let me have these, together with your own remarks and corrections ... it would be as great a kindness as could be done ...¹⁹¹

Hotten may have given Rossetti and Swinburne assurances; all goes quiet and there is no further documentation until the following year, when in January 1869 he sent his second statement of account. The bottom line there was a credit to Swinburne of only £46.9.9.

There are just three publications on the January 1869 account. The first is the *Poems and Ballads* which in this new third edition no longer attracted the special rate of £200 for 1000 copies, but rather the standard 25% of the retail price. This would yield a royalty of £112.10.0 for a thousand copies. However, the print ledger shows a run of 2000 copies. The *Notes on the Royal Academy 1868* had been projected by Hotten as an annual publication taking up from Ruskin, written jointly between William Rossetti and Swinburne.¹⁹² The agreed payment is unrecorded, but for this 1/- pamphlet (of which 3,000 appear to have been ordered and 2,000 delivered)¹⁹³ the account shows Swinburne received £20. The final credit is for a royalty ‘on 250 copies’ of the *Queen Mother* which Hotten printed in his own edition in June 1868 which is correct for 25% of the cover price.

¹⁹¹ Lang, *Letters* 267 ([14 July 1868]).

¹⁹² *Rossetti Papers* (23 Apr. 1868), p.305.

¹⁹³ Chatto Print Ledger 3/284.

Wise believes that Hotten issued many of these titles in editions which were grossly excessive or with later, extra editions which were unmarked as such.¹⁹⁴ He offers two arguments to support this. The first is simply an inference based on an assumption: despite what is thought to have been very heavy demand, Hotten's Swinburne did not go through many editions. And secondly Wise claims that close bibliographic analysis of copies supposedly of the same edition reveal differences which would not be found in a single edition. The print ledgers do show that Hotten was printing some editions with more than a thousand copies; but they also reveal that Swinburne was not selling in anything like Tennysonian quantities. Wise gives no detail to substantiate his second claim and it would be necessary to examine a large number of copies to test it. What constituted a 'new edition' was by no means a clear cut matter anyway: at this period it did not necessarily signify a new setting of the text, but could just be a new impression, although this new impression could differ from previous impressions either by deliberate changes to correct misprints or by wear and tear to the stereotype. And a 'new edition' might not even be a new impression. The 3,000 copies of the *Song of Italy*, failing to sell well (as the binding record shows) had 1,000 new cancel title pages for a 'second edition' printed a year later. *William Blake* too failed to sell: 1,500 were printed in 1867; 500 cancel titles for the 'second edition' were printed in 1869.¹⁹⁵ Hotten's ledger reveals these were not isolated cases restricted to Swinburne; and his letter book shows that at the same time he was condemning this – fictitious second and third editions when only one had been printed – as a practice of the 'old rotten publishing system.'¹⁹⁶

Swinburne's acceptance letter to Hotten of 7 September 1866 and his letter of complaint to William Rossetti of 22 September 1867 indicates that he was thinking in terms of editions of 1,000 copies and his later explanation of his affairs with Hotten to Watts says specifically that 'each issue of 1000 copies was to count as a new edition.'¹⁹⁷ Most of Hotten's royalty payments in the two accounts imply this too,

¹⁹⁴ Wise, *Bibliography* v.1, pp.50-53, 82-84, 94, 129-131, 151.

¹⁹⁵ Print Ledger 1/168, 2/155.

¹⁹⁶ See Eliot, *Hotten: Rotten: Forgotten*, p.86, which highlights this conflict of precept and practise.

¹⁹⁷ Lang, *Letters* 366 (7 Sept. 1866); Peattie, *Letters* 127 (22 Sept. 1867); Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 Dec. 1872).

except in the first where that for the *Song of Italy* is for 'copies sold', and on the second for 250 copies of the *Queen Mother*. As neither of these titles was selling at all well it appears that Hotten had decided to change to copies sold, rather than copies printed since that was more to his benefit. And Swinburne never earned a penny from *William Blake* because Hotten found he had not covered his expenses: which, as Hotten told Ranken and Co, was why he had not been able 'to place anything to Mr Swinburne's credit as we had hope to have done.'¹⁹⁸ But this is the only title where expenses are known to have been brought into consideration. With no formal agreement in place Hotten was able to re-interpret his arrangement with Swinburne as best suited him. This was sharp practice.

A comparison of Hotten's print ledgers with the two surviving accounts is set out at Annex 6. Together the print ledgers record 5,000 not 2,000 copies of *Poems and Ballads*; 1,500 not 1,000 of *Atalanta*; 1,500 not 1,000 copies of *Chastelard*. Swinburne was right to be suspicious – Hotten was cheating him.

By the early summer of 1869 Swinburne had decided he did not want to write a second year's *Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition* and Hotten was also told at the same time that Swinburne thought his account not as favourable as he might expect. Indeed he referred to that £40 or so payment from the January 1869 account repeatedly over the next few years. 'What has led you to adopt this position I cannot now comprehend' replied Hotten, as though astonished; 'but to prevent any misunderstanding upon this matter I shall be glad if you will appoint someone to go over our accounts and see vouchers when we make up our next balance, which will be immediately after 1st prox. Twelve months ago this matter was gone into, and a bill of particulars up to that date sent, which I was given to understand was in every way satisfactory.'¹⁹⁹

Four months later, in November 1869, the solicitors were again involved. What had brought matters to a head was that Swinburne wanted to publish a new volume of poems (which would become *Songs before Sunrise*) but certainly not with Hotten. His

¹⁹⁸ Chatto Letter Book 3/292 (24 June 1868).

¹⁹⁹ Lang, *Letters* 299 (14 July 1869).

replacement was to be F.S. Ellis, publisher of William Morris and D.G Rossetti. Hotten wrote to Benham and Tindell (later described by Swinburne as ‘my (Ellis’s) lawyers’)²⁰⁰ that a return of Swinburne’s sales for the last three years had been drawn up, but that he was ‘now waiting for a written statement of the terms upon which I undertook their publication from the gentlemen who negotiated the business with me in 1866. The agreement was in the main a verbal one’.²⁰¹ William Rossetti replied to Hotten that he did not remember the details, but recalled writing a memo and giving it to Swinburne.²⁰² Howell even claimed to be unable to confirm Hotten’s statement that the royalty was to be a fourth of the published price: ‘indeed I was only present during the discussion of a preliminary agreement which I understood would be the basis of a written one between you and Swinburne.’²⁰³ It is clear that Hotten was trying to see what he could get away with, since an honest publisher in doubt about the details of his agreement with his author could hardly have issued his books, let alone made payments, without resolving them. Hotten saw that Swinburne and his friends had no clear record of the agreement and proceeded to take advantage of it.

Another account was drawn up, though this one does not appear in Hotten’s letter books and does not survive. The flurry of letters that followed between Swinburne and the Rossetti brothers reveal that Swinburne could not account for all the payments Hotten claimed to have made,²⁰⁴ and that Hoare’s the bankers had told him that nothing had been paid into his account by or from Hotten.²⁰⁵ Tindell the solicitor looked into this but nothing further came of it.²⁰⁶ With Swinburne’s hopeless domestic disorder his complaint cannot have carried much weight. (Twenty years later Chatto was not infrequently writing to observe that royalty cheques had not been cashed, and offering to cancel and reissue them if necessary.)

²⁰⁰ Lang, *Letters* 358 (4 Aug. 1870).

²⁰¹ Chatto Letter Book 6/100 (15 Nov. 1869).

²⁰² Peattie, *Letters* 173 (15 Nov. 1869).

²⁰³ Helen Rossetti Angeli, *Pre-Raphaelite Twilight* (London, Richards Press: 1954), p.169. Letter dated 16 Nov. 1869.

²⁰⁴ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 69.211 (8 Dec. 1869); Lang, *Letters* 331 (22 Dec. 1869).

²⁰⁵ Lang, *Letters* 327 (2 Dec. 1869).

²⁰⁶ Meyers, *Letters* 337E (28 Jan.1870), 337F (30 Jan.1870).

Tension mounted when Hotten realised Swinburne was going ahead with his plans to publish *Songs before Sunrise* with Ellis. Hotten had included it in his advertisement for Swinburne's works two years before, then with the title *Songs of the Republic* and marked as available 'shortly'.²⁰⁷ A letter went off to Swinburne's solicitors (presumably from Hotten's solicitors, since there is no copy in Hotten's letter book) with a copy to William Rossetti, to which Rossetti replied promptly. Hotten had referred to a meeting where it had been agreed he would have Swinburne's future publications. Rossetti wrote:

I perfectly recollect the colloquy on your second floor (though I can't speak to the date): my brother, I think, was also present. I confirm in a general sense your account of the matter – with this qualification. To the best of my recollection, you said that you would like to have something like a stipulation that Swinburne would continue to publish with you; and the reply was that, although no express *promise* to that effect would be given, still it might be clearly understood that, as long as he considered himself properly dealt with by you, he would, as a matter of fact so continue.²⁰⁸

This meeting must have occurred following Hotten's letter to Howell dated 29 Aug 1866 proposing terms, and before Swinburne's letter of acceptance dated 4 September 1866.

Two months later – it was now June 1870 – Hotten was threatening to take out an injunction to stop publication of Swinburne's books by anyone except himself, and Swinburne told Rossetti that although his lawyers advised him Hotten would probably be unsuccessful it could still be a very expensive business.²⁰⁹ Perhaps Hotten's solicitors told him the same for he agreed to their proposal that Howell and Rossetti should examine his records to decide if he, Hotten, had acted honestly by Swinburne. 'I will say to you', Hotten commented to Hughes (his solicitor), 'that to leave it in the

²⁰⁷ *Athenaeum*, Aug. 1868, p.164.

²⁰⁸ Peattie, *Letters* 186 (12 Apr. [1870]).

²⁰⁹ William Michael Rossetti, *The Diary of W.M. Rossetti 1870-1873*, ed. Odette Bornand (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.12 (10 June 1870).

hands of the two gents named to say whether Swinburne could better himself by leaving me or not, is an arrangement I would rather not make. Therefore I think it will be best for you to define what they have to decide upon. Of course now Swinburne has been whitewashed – or rather rubbed off his dirt – many publishers would be glad of him. And having borne the heat of the day I am entitled to the cool of the evening.’²¹⁰

Following these objections the plan was modified to include someone to represent Hotten, a Mr Moy Thomas (‘a person utterly unknown to me, and as much concerned in my affairs as the Archbishop of Canterbury,’ commented Swinburne to Rossetti, quite misunderstanding his role.)²¹¹ Rossetti, having heard nothing except from Swinburne of any of the proposals for arbitration, advised conciliation if possible and suggested offering Hotten an indemnity of £50 to cover any expenses already incurred, but also giving notice that whether he accepted this or not, *Songs before Sunrise* and future volumes would be published by another firm.²¹² Swinburne liked this idea and asked Rossetti to call on Hotten and sound him out.

From this meeting Rossetti reported that Hotten claimed that there were rumours circulating that he had cheated Swinburne, and that should Swinburne change to another publisher they would have all the greater currency. He was still willing for two referees, one appointed by Swinburne, the other by himself, to look into the affair. On the threat of legal proceedings he, Hotten, had seriously considered a libel action, and might revert to this if other legal measures failed. He said he had a document written by Swinburne from Lord Lytton’s house ‘on which he relies for the support of his cause’, following a definite form of agreement which Howell had sent him there following the interview with Hotten and Rossetti. But, he said, he was willing to separate from Swinburne, though it must be done so as not to leave any slur on him: a date should be arranged, but that up to that time Swinburne should continue to publish with him.

²¹⁰ Chatto Letter Book 5/378 (28 June 1870).

²¹¹ Lang, *Letters* 358 (4 Aug. [1870]).

²¹² Peattie, *Letters* 192 (5 Aug. [1870]).

Swinburne forwarded Rossetti's lengthy report of this meeting both to Ellis and to Tindell, his solicitor, suggesting that Hotten should retain all his current titles until the end of the year, but that *Songs before Sunrise* should be issued by Ellis immediately.²¹³ Tindell appears to have pushed the idea of arbitration, and Swinburne then felt the best person to represent his interests would be Howell and was gratified on relaying this to Howell that Howell had told him that 'if Hotten's claim is based on the transaction in which *he* [i.e. Howell himself] took part, the thing is at an end – and he is quite ready to act for me.'²¹⁴

This was relayed to Rossetti in the course of an excited letter following the defeat of Swinburne's *bête noire*, Napoleon III, at Sedan on 1 September 1870 and the subsequent proclamation of the Third Republic three days later. 'An Ode literally burst out of me, which I have sent to Ellis today to print as a loose sheet or pamphlet. I am nine tenths out of my mind with joy and pride in Paris.'²¹⁵ The next week it was being advertised for one shilling.²¹⁶ Hotten saw it: 'I thought we were going to settle matters amicably,' he told Howell. 'If the advertisement continues to appear I must adopt such a course as I am advised, for the agreement between us is clear enough.'²¹⁷ But of course the agreement was not clear at all, hence the dispute. And so the proposed arbitration was arranged for 2 p.m. on 22 November in the St James' Hotel, Piccadilly, next to Hotten's shop and office.²¹⁸ If Moy Thomas and Howell failed to reach an agreement, Swinburne told Howell, Hotten suggested an ultimate umpire should be chosen whose decision would be final. And meanwhile Ellis had been advised not to publish *Songs before Sunrise* while arbitration was still pending.²¹⁹

²¹³ Meyers, *Letters* 362B (26 Aug. [1870]).

²¹⁴ Lang, *Letters* 364 (30 Aug. [1870]); 366 (7 Sept. [1870]).

²¹⁵ Lang, *Letters* 366 (7 Sept. [1870]).

²¹⁶ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 Sept. 1870, p.16; 15 Sept. 1870, p.16; and 17 Sept. 1870, p.16.

²¹⁷ Lang, *Letters* 369 (15 Sept. 1870). The advertisement did not reappear: a whole page advertisement from Ellis in the *Athenaeum* 17 Sept. 1870, p.357 was given over to Morris and Rossetti, with no mention of Swinburne.

²¹⁸ Chatto Letter Book 6/49 (18 Nov. 1870).

²¹⁹ Lang, *Letters* 375 (18 Nov. [1870]).

It is frustrating that the only report at the time on the outcome is this note in William Rossetti's diary which seems to refer to a meeting following the arbitration itself:

Brown tells me that Swinburne is back from Holmwood [his parents' home] and has been seeing to the settlement of his affairs with Hotten. An appointment was made the other day for a meeting at Swinburne's lawyers – with Swinburne himself, Hotten and Howell and Moy Thomas as the respective referees. Swinburne having breakfasted with Powell [one of his closest friends and drinking companion] arrived in such a muddled state that it was found impossible to proceed with the business, and the affair still hangs over. It seems however that the referees agree that Swinburne ought to give Hotten the publishing of his next two books – including (as Brown understands) the *Songs before Sunrise*, now on the eve of publication by Ellis. The latter is said to be quite tired of Swinburne and his affairs and more than willing to resign him.²²⁰

Another entry three weeks later makes it clear that no such agreement concerning *Songs before Sunrise* can have been made. 'Swinburne came more especially to consult me' wrote Rossetti, 'as proposed by Ellis the publisher, on the contract Ellis offers regarding the publication of the *Songs before Sunrise*. I saw nothing that occurs to me as unfair or objectionable'.²²¹ And at the end of the month Swinburne told John Morley (now editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, where he had been publishing Swinburne) that he had been 'rent in twain between two midwives or publishers – as it might be Mrs Gamp and Mrs Prig – contending over me prostrate. Now – thank something – all that is settled, Mrs Gamp dismissed as (metaphorically) drunk and incapable – and in ten days I hope a book if not a man "will be born into the world."'²²²

²²⁰ Rossetti, *Diary*, p.33 (24 Nov. 1870). Ellis had reasons for annoyance with Swinburne over the contents of *Songs before Sunrise* which are discussed in the following chapter.

²²¹ Rossetti, *Diary*, p.36 (15 Dec. 1870).

²²² Lang, *Letters* 376 (28 Dec. 1870). Ellis advertised it in the *Athenaeum*, 17 Dec. 1870, p.819 as to be published on 9 Jan.1871.

So what was the settlement? Chatto recalled three years later that ‘Mr Hotten’s contention was that so long as he fulfilled certain conditions he had the right of publishing for you exclusively – this view was confirmed, insofar as the books he had already published, at an arbitration held between your representative and his – that is between Mr Howell and Mr Moy Thomas.’²²³ This is endorsed by subsequent events: when Ellis published the new volume in January 1871, Hotten, far from showing annoyance, wrote to ask Ellis to supply fifty copies, ‘if you would let me have the usual wholesale commission off the trade price ... viz. 15% off.’²²⁴ And Swinburne’s pamphlet *Under the Microscope*, his contribution to the Fleshly School controversy, appeared in July 1872 under the imprint D. White, (whom Ellis had just taken into partnership) without any protest from Hotten.

Did the arbitrators also examine Hotten’s accounts? The surviving evidence that Hotten defrauded Swinburne rests on a comparison between his ledger and the two accounts to Swinburne, which show that the editions were larger than the accounts imply. (Annex 6.) But since the accounts fail to give the size of the edition or the royalty agreed Hotten had room for manoeuvre should he be challenged. Whether or not such discrepancies continued between 1869 and 1873 is uncertain because Hotten’s later accounts do not survive. (It is also just possible that royalties on these oversized editions were paid retrospectively and documented in these later accounts.) By design or habit Hotten’s accounting was clearly inadequate: not only did he fail to issue regular statements, he had difficulty in doing so when pressed, and when they were produced the details was skimpy. When Swinburne could not recall sums that Hotten had paid him the Rossetti brothers considered that Hotten may have been issuing uncrossed cheques payable to Swinburne or the bearer, then sending someone else to cash them.²²⁵ But they thought the more likely explanation was that Swinburne had simply received a number of smaller payments which he had subsequently forgotten.

Just before the arbitration Hotten had told Rossetti of the ‘charges which had been made against him of ‘overprinting... not paying sums of money which he *had*

²²³ Meyers, *Letters* 498A (20 Jan. 1874).

²²⁴ Chatto Letter Book 6/100 (14 Jan. 1871).

²²⁵ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 69.211 (8 Dec. 1869).

paid, and the vexation and detriment which he had suffered from a running fire of repetitions of these charges, and the triumphant disproof of them which he had produced'.²²⁶ The arbitrators appear to have upheld this. In February 1873 Swinburne told Howell that while he wanted to leave Hotten he wanted to remain on amicable terms: 'in spite of the considerable trouble and expense to which he has put me by advancing and supporting utterly groundless and unjustifiable claims on my property in my own writings ... I have never had to bring, and assuredly never have brought, any charge against him of dishonest dealing during the date of that connection'.²²⁷ Hotten had vindicated himself – or got away with it.

The arbitration had achieved some sort of *modus vivendi*. Swinburne remained with Hotten for another two and a half years.

(e) The Search for a new publisher, 1872-1874

Although Hotten and Swinburne had reached an uneasy understanding following the arbitration in November 1870, Swinburne was still far from happy with the situation, and in October 1872 his friends arranged a meeting with Theodore Walter Watts, a solicitor with strong literary interests, at a dinner given by Madox Brown specifically to bring them together.²²⁸ Watts took up Swinburne's concerns on an informal basis (he was not charging for his services) and within a few weeks had requested a statement from Hotten and followed this up with the threat of legal proceedings when Hotten delayed.²²⁹ He also began to investigate Swinburne's legal position *vis-à-vis* Hotten and at the same time approached Ellis on Swinburne's suggestion, as Swinburne thought Ellis would be willing to buy the back stock of his

²²⁶ Peattie, *Letters* 195 (24 Aug. [1870]).

²²⁷ Lang, *Letters* 462 (Feb. [1873]).

²²⁸ Thomas Hake and Arthur Compton-Rickett, *Life and Letters of Theodore Watts Dunton* (London, T.C. and E.C. Jack, Limited: 1916) v.1, p.105.

²²⁹ Meyers, *Letters* 431A (30 Oct. 1872); 446C (5 Dec. 1872); Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 Dec. 1872); Meyers, *Letters* 453A (21 Dec. 1872).

books from Hotten.²³⁰ In this he was mistaken. Ellis told Watts that ‘Hotten has always reaped the chief advantage connected with most publication business: i.e. that of the quick and ready sale of a *new* book’ and, he said, taking over the old stock could only benefit Hotten but not Swinburne (and nor, by implication, himself.) But, should another publisher take the back stock, he, Ellis, would be happy to surrender his Swinburne titles too.²³¹ In fact, as William Rossetti discovered at the time of the arbitration and the publication of *Songs before Sunrise*, Ellis had soon had more than enough of Swinburne, and would have been happy to lose him.²³²

Sales were sluggish, Ellis had told Watts, with ‘poetry being, during the last year or two, almost a drug [on the market].’ Swinburne for his part thought that while Ellis had been straightforward, honest and reasonable – in marked contrast to Hotten – he ‘certainly does *not* seem to have the art of making *my* books at least go off, being as I suspect far too much of an antiquarian bookseller to be a thoroughly good working publisher.’²³³ This contrasted with the experience of Gabriel Rossetti, as Rossetti must surely have told him. Within less than a month of publication in April 1870 Ellis had sold the first thousand of Rossetti’s *Poems* and paid the author for the second thousand.²³⁴ Six months later he had paid Rossetti for the third thousand.²³⁵

Swinburne also pointed Watts towards Henry S. King and Co as another publisher who could be interested in taking over Hotten’s stock. The previous year King had included ‘Tristram and Iseult: Prelude of an Unfinished Poem’ in an annual. Swinburne told Watts that this had followed a pressing request from King for something to publish, and that he had complied because ‘he had applied to me through a friend [Purnell] as being himself on terms of friendship with Mazzini.’ In reality he had asked Purnell to find someone to publish the ‘Prelude’ and to investigate simultaneous American publication, almost certainly motivated by his difficult

²³⁰ Meyers, *Letters* 430E (25 Oct. [1872]).

²³¹ Meyers, *Letters* 437B (9 Nov. 1872).

²³² Rossetti, *Diary*, p.34 (24 Nov. 1870).

²³³ Lang, *Letters* 432 (31 Oct. 1872).

²³⁴ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.138 (4 May 1870); 70.165 (24 May 1870).

²³⁵ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.226 (3 Oct. 1870).

financial situation.²³⁶ Watts called on King shortly afterwards and King expressed interest but, before committing himself, wanted to see the statement of the stock on hand which Watts was trying to extract from Hotten.²³⁷ Then Swinburne himself had second thoughts:

With King I should on one account especially, of which I spoke to you before, have been very glad to come to terms ... as having been a good friend in the past to Mazzini ... But I observe with surprise and I must honestly add with disgust, that his name appears now as a purchaser seemingly of the very sweepings of Messrs Strahan's refuse stock – of periodicals which have for some time been persistently and constitutently devoted to the defamation of Rossetti and myself not merely by means of insult and reviling but by means also of flat falsehood and calumny – and as publisher of the collected "Works" of Mr Robert Buchanan.²³⁸

What had happened was that King had taken over as the publisher of the *Contemporary Review* from Strahan in June 1872, the journal which in October 1871 had published 'The Fleshly School of Poetry.' Watts replied to Swinburne:

Mr King, who has the kindest feelings towards you and seems to have a genuine admiration of your poems, is making a great push in business, and indeed is (between ourselves this) buying, at prices that speak for his enthusiasm more than for his judgement, and among other ventures he has taken Strahan's stock. This is a purely commercial speculation ... and a necessary part of this commercial speculation was taking the *Contemporary Review* and the offal called 'Buchanan's poetry.' As to 'Buchanan's poetry' you have no more to do with that than you have to do with Hotten's ineffable trash. And with regard to the *Contemporary Review*, Strahan [the publisher] and not Knowles (the editor) was answerable for the insertion of Buchanan's libel.²³⁹

²³⁶ Lang, *Letters* 432 (31 Oct. [1872]); 412 (18 Nov. 1871).

²³⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 437B (9 Nov. 1872).

²³⁸ Lang, *Letters* 447 (6 Dec. 1872).

²³⁹ Meyers, *Letters* 447B (11 Dec. 1872)

Swinburne let himself be convinced by this, but Watts then discovered King had also taken on Strahan as his manager, and he realised this must make him unacceptable.²⁴⁰ For Strahan had not only published the article: he had also attempted a cover-up by writing to the *Athenaeum* denying by implication that the pseudonymous author ‘Thomas Maitland’ was Robert Buchanan. This letter did not have the impact Strahan intended because above it the *Athenaeum* printed one from Buchanan, acknowledging the article as his, and claiming his name had been inadvertently suppressed.²⁴¹ (A decade later in 1881, when the feud with Buchanan was no longer at the forefront of Swinburne’s mind, Chatto became Buchanan’s publisher. His new three-decker novel *God and the Man* opened with a dedicatory verse ‘To an Old Enemy’ – an apology to Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Buchanan recanted his ‘Fleshly School’ attack more explicitly six months later, shortly after Rossetti’s death.²⁴² Chatto remained Buchanan’s main publisher until the end of Buchanan’s life.)

Watts had a further publisher in mind, Chapman and Hall who, he said, were very rich and able to outbid almost any competition. So being on good terms with Frederick Chapman he had then discussed Swinburne’s situation with him. And this looked very promising indeed:

Chapman says he would rather publish for you than for any other poet, and the terms he offered were the most liberal I have heard of. He will buy out Hotten; and suggests that he should bring out a cheap edition of your entire poems, in conformity with his celebrated cheap edition of Carlyle and other writers – the subscribers to which would, he thinks, buy your poems, thus issued ‘by themselves’. I send you a specimen copy of Carlyle. He would if you thought well, issue a very large number of the proposed volume with your portrait, and he will pay you most liberally.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Lang, *Letters* 449 (12 Dec. 1872); Meyers, *Letters* 447C (13 Dec. 1872).

²⁴¹ *Athenaeum*, 16 December 1871, p.794.

²⁴² *Academy*, 1 July 1882, p.12 This letter was in response to a review of his next novel *The Martyrdom of Madeline*.

²⁴³ Meyers, *Letters* 447C (13 Dec. 1872).

Ten years earlier Chapman had turned down Swinburne's poems following an unenthusiastic report from Robert Browning.²⁴⁴ But circumstances had changed: Swinburne was now the most talked about poet of the day, and there were commercial possibilities of large potential markets.

Chapman and Hall were experienced with cheap editions. Their 'Household Edition' of Dickens (just one element in a whole suite of Dickens editions) came variously packaged, starting from weekly parts priced at one penny. Chapman's 'Peoples' Edition' of Carlyle had begun to appear at much the same time as the Dickens 'Household Edition' in early 1871 with monthly volumes at two shillings each, following (claimed his advertising) 'urgent applications from large classes of readers interested in Mr Carlyle's writings to whom the existing editions are not accessible because of their price.'²⁴⁵ According to the advertising, this new edition was printed from the Library Edition; the first volume, *Sartor Resartus*, had been issued in January 1869, price 7/6d, and this continued to be published and advertised alongside the new cheap edition.²⁴⁶ Already by July 1871 Chapman claimed to have printed 30,000 copies of *Sartor Resartus* in the Peoples' Edition.²⁴⁷

Poetry too could be issued cheaply. Hotten was planning his Shelley edition in 1870. He told a correspondent:

For some time past there has been a call for a cheap uncastrated edition of this great poet, and I propose to give two volumes of the poetical works and one volume of prose. The books would be got up in best style, but would be sold at exceedingly low rate – we thought of 1/8d per volume. In this way we think 10,000 of these splendid compositions could be place in the hands of all who care to read them – rich and poor. Of course the profit would be very trifling, if any

²⁴⁸
...

²⁴⁴ Lang, *Letters* 47 (7 July 1863).

²⁴⁵ *Athenaeum*, 11 Dec. 1871, p.192.

²⁴⁶ *Athenaeum*, 23 Jan. 1868, p.146.

²⁴⁷ *Athenaeum*, 1 July 1871, p.28.

²⁴⁸ Chatto Letter Book 5/203 (7 Feb. 1870).

Hotten advertised the first volume two years later.²⁴⁹ His price of 1/8d was for a paper bound volume of some four hundred pages; bound in cloth it was 2/2d. Large sales would clearly be needed to make a profit, and if the author was out of copyright that was one major expense less.²⁵⁰ Rossetti had suggested to Ellis that his own *Poems* priced at twelve shillings would benefit from a cheap edition, even though sales had been good. ‘What do you think of making the next edition a cheap one when needed – say even 6/- ? Would it not be likely to get a new class of buyers, whereas the first class is already supplied?’²⁵¹ This would have been a cheaper, rather than a cheap edition; even so Ellis proved uninterested.

Chapman and Hall did not have a distinguished poetry list. They had lost Browning after *Dramatis Personae* (1864). (He left thinking them careless to the point of dishonesty with his friend Miss Isa Blagden’s royalties.) Chapman had published William Allingham, Sir Henry Taylor, Bryan Walter Proctor, Owen Meredith and George Meredith, though they had now gone elsewhere. All the same Swinburne was thrilled with Chapman’s suggestion for a cheap edition of his poetry, foreseeing large sales. ‘Apart from the profit and credit,’ he told his friend George Powell, ‘please imagine me stalking triumphant through the land and displaying on every Hearth and in every Home of my country, naked and not ashamed, the banner of immorality, atheism and revolution!’²⁵² Meanwhile Watts had further discussions with Chapman, who promised to pay royalties on any edition as printed before sale, and who requested copies of each of Swinburne’s books. But he also wanted to see Hotten’s account.²⁵³

By mid January 1873 Watts had at last extracted an account from Hotten of how many books he had on hand, and Chapman then insisted Watts should try to negotiate reasonable terms to take over his stock. His plans were now for ‘an elegant cheap

²⁴⁹ *Athenaeum*, 13 Apr. 1872, p.476.

²⁵⁰ Copyright extended for forty-two years after publication of the work, or for the life of the author plus seven years, whichever was longer. Shelley had died in 1822 so was out of copyright.

²⁵¹ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.177 (17 June 1870).

²⁵² Lang, *Letters* 455 (22 Dec. 1872).

²⁵³ Meyers, *Letters* 453A (21 [Dec.] 1872).

edition of about three or four volumes' and a specimen page was set up and printed. But Hotten was not inclined to be reasonable and maintained that Swinburne could not take the books now with him.²⁵⁴ Having satisfied himself that Hotten had no contract, written or oral with Swinburne, Watts went to Hotten and (as he later summarised for Swinburne's benefit)

... told him of our determination to take the matter out of his hands, but I told him that we were willing to buy his stock, at a fair and reasonable valuation. He still refused to listen to reason, when I gave him notice that we should in that case, immediately issue a cheap edition of your entire works, ignoring him, and leaving him to get out of his heavy stock as best he could; upon this, he came to, and the only open question then was what we were to pay for the stock, which his account showed amounted to 5000 volumes! Chapman naturally wanted to buy such a heavy stock (the sale of which would be immediately slackened by his projected cheap edition) as cheaply as possible, while Hotten's last chance of getting anything out of you was to demand the uttermost farthing for the stock. Just as I was about seeing a man skilled in this kind of business to act as arbitrator, Chapman told me it had better remain in abeyance for a little time, owing to certain information that had reached him in connection with Hotten.²⁵⁵

Watts spelt this out to William Rossetti: Chapman believed Hotten to be in financial difficulties and so was holding back because he expected him 'to go bankrupt at an early date and a more advantageous bargain for themselves would thereby become feasible.'²⁵⁶ Yet the sale of his business after his death for £25,000²⁵⁷ hardly suggests he was on the edge of insolvency.

²⁵⁴ Meyers, *Letters* 456B (16 Jan. 1873); 456C (16 Jan. 1873); 457A (29 Jan. 1873).

²⁵⁵ Meyers, *Letters* 485A (23 June 1873).

²⁵⁶ Meyers, *Letters* 470 B (27 Mar. 1873); Rossetti, *Diary*, p.25 (8 Apr. 1873).

²⁵⁷ Simon Eliot, 'Hotten, John Camden (1832–1873).' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online edn. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13859>>. Accessed 8 June 2010.

Swinburne had three other immediate concerns about Hotten. One was the publication of *Bothwell*, the vast verse drama which he had been working on for years and which Hotten had announced back in 1868.²⁵⁸ This was now completed, and Hotten had become aware of it and was including it in his lists again. Watts was disturbed by this and, following Swinburne's confession that he had given Hotten permission to announce it (but, Swinburne said, that had been before the arbitration which had nullified such an authorization), he dictated a letter for Swinburne to send Hotten requesting him to remove the announcement.²⁵⁹ There was also a matter of Hotten's proposed edition of George Chapman, the Elizabethan poet and dramatist. This had been Swinburne's idea back in 1868. His contribution was to be an introduction,²⁶⁰ but he had also lent Hotten various original editions without taking receipts or security and now wanted them returned. And writing to Howell, Swinburne introduced a rather more delicate subject, which does not appear to have been mentioned to Watts. He was willing, indeed he was anxious, to remain on good terms with Hotten despite wanting to withdraw his business. There were good reasons:

I think he may have some papers relating to me in the mass of his collection of which an unscrupulous man might possibly make some annoying use ... I remember that when he was busied about his abortive book on 'Flagellation' some sort of communication on the topic passed between us, and that I once gave him, what I think he never returned to me, a list drawn up in my hand of scenes in school which he was to get sketched from me on approval ... in which list, though there was nothing equivocal or dirty in any way, I had explained the postures and actions of 'swishing' ...²⁶¹

Although he was ignorant of this complication Watts was prepared for more difficulties before Swinburne was extracted from Hotten's clutches, and was advising Swinburne to take copies of his letters to Hotten about *Bothwell* and have them 'examined.'²⁶²

²⁵⁸ *Athenaeum*, Aug. 1868, p.164.

²⁵⁹ Lang, *Letters* 474 (10 Apr. 1873) 475 (10 Apr. 1873); Meyers, *Letters* 477B ([1 May 1873]).

²⁶⁰ Chatto Letter Book 3/344 (25 July 1868).

²⁶¹ Lang, *Letters* 462 (February [1873]).

²⁶² Meyers, *Letters* 477C (4 May 1873).

Then, suddenly, Hotten died on 14 June 1873, aged only 40. ‘Is there anything in connection with the affairs between you and him which I do not know and which it may be important for me now, to know?’ asked Watts, as though he had got wind of those flagellation notes. ‘Has he any property of yours which should be demanded of the executors? You once mentioned some old plays.’²⁶³ Swinburne kept quiet about the notes, but listed six Chapman editions dating between 1607 and 1654.²⁶⁴ Watts soon discovered this was not quite everything. ‘I saw Purnell yesterday and he seemed to think that there were two novels in manuscript, of yours, lying at Hotten’s place,’ he wrote a couple of days later, in the course of a long letter. ‘What can this mean?’²⁶⁵ No reply survives, but one was probably the epistolary novel *A Year’s Letters* that Hotten had declined to publish anonymously back in 1869²⁶⁶ (as had Payne in 1866) and that Purnell later arranged to be published serially and anonymously in *The Tatler* in 1877. The other was possibly the incomplete novel, published posthumously as *Lesbia Brandon*.²⁶⁷ (Both contain flagellation scenes though neither was written specifically for that particular niche market.)

Watts called round at Hotten’s office about a week after his death and spoke to Andrew Chatto, Hotten’s manager, whom he found wanting to take over the business and ‘naturally anxious (should he take the business) to publish something for you’.²⁶⁸ Chatto wrote formally to Swinburne a month later, hoping to have the publication of future works in addition to those already issued by Hotten, and seeking to place business relations on a more satisfactory basis than hitherto. He enclosed a cheque for £50, royalties earned since Hotten’s last account.²⁶⁹ At the same time he wrote to Watts in rather more detail: Watts had given him the impression that, should he take over

²⁶³ Meyers, *Letters* 484B (19 June 1873).

²⁶⁴ Lang, *Letters* 485 (20 June [1873]).

²⁶⁵ Meyers, *Letters* 485A (23 June 1873).

²⁶⁶ *Rossetti Papers* (25 Jan. 1869), p.380.

²⁶⁷ Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Lesbia Brandon*, ed. by Randolph Hughes (London: Falcon Press, 1952).

²⁶⁸ Meyers, *Letters* 485A (23 June 1873).

²⁶⁹ Lang, *Letters* 487 (23 July 1873).

Hotten's business, Swinburne would abandon negotiations with Chapman; Chatto very much wanted to publish *Bothwell* which Hotten had been advertising for years; and as they had discussed, there were difficulties in transferring Swinburne's works to another publisher, so it would benefit all parties to continue with Chatto.²⁷⁰

Still two months later nothing seems to have been settled. Chatto wrote to Watts in September:

I enclose an account of the stock of Mr Swinburne's works on hand reckoned at trade price, out of which Mr Swinburne is entitled to his royalty amounting to £433.2.6. It appears to me that the only fair way of effecting a transfer of this sort to another publisher is for Mr Swinburne to forego his claim to the royalty from Mr Hotten's estate in which case the above payment would be deducted from the same by the person taking it and Mr Swinburne could look to the new publisher for the former royalty ... I am very desirous of continuing to publish for Mr Swinburne and I am certain that I can work his books much more effectively than any other publisher and I am therefore prepared to make more advantageous proposals to Mr Swinburne than anyone else could afford to do which are as follows: that if Mr Swinburne will let me have the publication of his forthcoming works – *Bothwell* and *Tristan and Iseult*. I will pay him cash in advance a royalty of a fourth of the publishing price on the entire number printed of each edition and I should be further willing to anticipate to a certain extent the payment of prospective royalty on the unsold copies of *Poems and Ballads*, *Atalanta*, and *Chastelard* now on hand.²⁷¹

On 1 November Chatto started advertising as 'Chatto and Windus Publishers (Successors to John Camden Hotten).' Their first advertisement, a full-page in the *Athenaeum*, listed Hotten's titles but there was no mention of Swinburne, perhaps because Chatto had received no reply to his September letter. Nor had Watts heard further from Chapman, so he planned to call on him at the end of November.²⁷² They

²⁷⁰ Chatto Letter Book 7/484 (23 July 1873).

²⁷¹ Chatto Letter Book 7/597 (18 Sept. 1873).

²⁷² Meyers, *Letters* 489A (21 Nov. 1873).

appear to have discussed *Bothwell*. ‘... I have just seen Chatto and Windus’ December catalogue of books,’ wrote Swinburne to Watts, ‘in which a page (p.40) is filled by advertisements of my books, and among them of ‘Bothwell: a New Poem; in preparation.’ This, after the interview with Chapman, appears to me even more audacious and inexplicable than before.’²⁷³ Chatto bound up his new catalogue with his books, as Hotten had done, so some survive.²⁷⁴ Most – perhaps all – of it uses Hotten’s letter-press: the page that Swinburne had seen was headed by a vignette that Hotten had placed on the title-page of *William Blake* and subsequently used when advertising Swinburne in his catalogues. Chatto’s first advertisement for Swinburne appeared in the *Athenaeum* at the end of December, listing all seven of Swinburne’s titles that had been published by Hotten.²⁷⁵ It described five of them as ‘New Editions’ but these were simply the titles that Hotten had reset, not new editions from Chatto. There was no mention of *Bothwell*.

On 1 January 1874 Chatto wrote separately to both Swinburne and Watts, repeating the offer made in his September letter – to which he had still received no reply – about royalties for future works.²⁷⁶ ‘We have made up the account of the sales of Mr Swinburne’s works up to the present day’ he told Watts, ‘and have sent it to him together with a cheque for the balance of £173.10.10. We trust that the increased sales due to our renewed efforts in pushing his works and more expensive advertising will prove satisfactory.’²⁷⁷ Hotten does not appear to have advertised Swinburne in the press after 1868, and as only his accounts dated January 1868 and January 1869 survive the increase this balance represents cannot be known. Nevertheless it provoked an immediate response – now lost – from Watts, to which Chatto replied by return:

²⁷³ Lang, *Letters* 493 (4 Dec. 1873).

²⁷⁴ *A List of Books Published by Chatto & Windus, Season 1874* (Chatto & Windus: London, [1873]), p.40.

is bound at the back of: Michael Faraday, *The Chemical History of a Candle* (Chatto & Windus: London, [1874]).

²⁷⁵ *Athenaeum*, 20 December 1873, p.835.

²⁷⁶ Meyers, *Letters* 494B (1 Jan. 1874).

²⁷⁷ Chatto Letter Book 7/738 (1 Jan. 1874).

I am astounded by your letter of the 2nd inst. It is so entirely different from all the correspondence and conversations that I have had with you – After what has passed between us I have all along distinctly understood that I was Mr Swinburne's present publisher – and it was from yourself that I learnt that in all probability the negotiations commenced during Mr Hotten's lifetime for a transfer of the stock to Messrs Chapman & Hall would now fall through.

Neither Mr Hotten nor myself have ever received any notification that Mr Swinburne's mind was absolutely made up to take his books away – in the manner he could do so was long the subject of controversy between Mr Hotten and Mr Swinburne, and even if I were to accept Mr Swinburne's view of the case, the transfer would have to be made in accordance with my letter to you of the 18th of September last – which letter was written as you will remember at your special request that you might bring matters to an issue with Chapman and then decide whether Mr Swinburne would change or not. You also told me that you did not think that Mr Swinburne would do any good by taking his books away.²⁷⁸

The dispute became more heated. 'I must know,' responded Watts, 'whether you mean to deny that all the correspondence, oral as well as written, which has passed between us has been based upon the understanding that Mr Swinburne and I did not consider you as his publisher whatever might have been your imaginings as to your position as Mr Hotten's successor.'²⁷⁹ And he advised Swinburne not to bank his royalty cheque, but too late.²⁸⁰ A fortnight later Chatto wrote to Swinburne:

The enclosed copy of a letter received from Mr Watts with the previous correspondence will show you that I cannot consistently with my own self respect have any more communication with that gentleman.

You will remember that my position with regard to yourself is simply that of the representative of the late Mr Hotten and that if he was the publisher of your

²⁷⁸ Chatto Letter Book 7/743 (3 Jan. 1874).

²⁷⁹ Meyers, *Letters* 497A (7 Jan. 1874).

²⁸⁰ Lang, *Letters* 498 (8 Jan. 1874).

books I am equally so. It is of course my duty to maintain all agreements as understood by Mr Hotten himself; but I think I have shown that it is my desire to place the most liberal construction upon them. Mr Hotten's contention was that so long as he fulfilled certain conditions he had the right of publishing for you exclusively – this view was confirmed, insofar as the books he had already published, at an arbitration held between your representative and his – that is between Mr Howell and Mr Moy Thomas – I further consider that should you desire to remove your publishing from me, the books and stereos already on hand might be taken at prices quoted in my letter of [blank] to Mr Watts...

... I think you will admit that my conduct apart from words, has evinced a desire to act honestly by you ... I appeal to you now if such conduct in any way merits the opprobrium expressed in Mr Watt's letter? However much I may wish to retain you I have done nothing to throw obstacles in the way of your leaving me, though I am convinced I can do more for you – certainly financially – than any other publisher.²⁸¹

Since the beginning of the year Chatto had included Hotten's seven Swinburne books in his advertisements on 3 January 1874; the next appearance was 21 February (and this one left out *William Blake*, for no obvious reason – it reappeared subsequently).²⁸² That an advertisement appeared at all perhaps indicates that Chatto had reached some sort of interim understanding. Watts had not yet given up hope that Chapman was still in the running, and asked John Morley who as a friend of Swinburne and the editor of the *Fortnightly Review* (which was published by Chapman and Hall) was in a good position to negotiate further. Chapman was inclined to take *Bothwell* and leave what he described as 'the dead stock' in the hands of Chatto,²⁸³ and Chatto would not reduce his terms which, he told Chapman, were already 'very liberal'.²⁸⁴ Watts consulted Swinburne and reported back to Chapman:

²⁸¹ Meyers, *Letters* 498A (20 Jan. 1874).

²⁸² *Athenaeum*, 3 Jan. 1874, p.31; *Academy*, 3 Jan. 1874, p.3; *Athenaeum*, 21 Feb. 1874, p.267.

²⁸³ Meyers, *Letters* 516A (14 Apr. 1874).

²⁸⁴ British Library Ashley 5763/188 (16 Apr. 1874).

He asked me whether I had not yet closed with you, and on my telling him that you declined to buy the old stock upon the only terms on which Messrs Chatto & Windus would consent to sell it (and however disadvantageous to you, based it would seem upon the general custom of the trade) he would not hear of the matter remaining any longer in abeyance but wished me to close with Messrs Chatto & Co whose offer was even more liberal than your own.²⁸⁵

An agreement was signed with Chatto three days later.²⁸⁶ It first covered the publication of *Bothwell* and then addressed the issues where Hotten had so conspicuously failed: giving Swinburne the right to buy out the stock and move to another publisher at a sum to be agreed by referees; engaging not to reprint editions without giving Swinburne a week's notice; and promising to provide accounts of sales and to pay the due royalties every six months. The royalty of 25% of the publishing price on all the titles inherited from Hotten was confirmed (with a proviso that *William Blake* must first cover its publishing costs – it never did). The forthcoming new book was advertised within the week.²⁸⁷

Swinburne stayed loyal to Chatto for the rest of his life.

²⁸⁵ Meyers, *Letters* 516B (18 Apr. 1874).

²⁸⁶ Chatto Swinburne Contracts: Folder 1 (23 Apr. 1874). The full text is at Annex 7, below.

²⁸⁷ *Athenaeum*, 25 Apr. 1874, p.549; *Academy*, 25 Apr. 1874, p.[447].

Chapter 2: Criticism and response 1866 – 1878

(a) *Poems and Ballads*

It was surely no surprise either to Swinburne or his friends that *Poems and Ballads* excited hostile criticism. It had after all taken almost five years to have the volume published, during which time a number of firms had been too nervous to take it on. Swinburne knew what he was doing: ‘I have added yet four more jets of boiling and gushing infamy to the perennial and poisonous fountain of Dolores’ he had crowed to his friend Howell in the summer of 1865.¹ Lady Trevelyan a more conventional (and more trustworthy) friend advised him a few months later ‘... do be wise in which of your lyrics you publish ... It is not worthwhile for the sake of two or three poems to risk the widest circulation of the whole.’² Shortly after, Ruskin visited the young poet. ‘I went to see Swinburne yesterday’ he reported to Lady Trevelyan ‘and heard some of the wickedest and splendidest verses ever written by a human creature ... I don’t know what to do with him or for him, but he mustn’t publish these things.’³ Meredith, in a letter a few months later, advised him: ‘As to the Poems – if they are not yet in the press, do be careful of getting your reputation firmly grounded; for I have heard “low mutterings” already from the Lion of British prudery; and I, who love your verse, would play savagely with a knife among the proofs for the sake of your fame; and because I want to see you take the first place, as you may if you will.’⁴

That *Poems and Ballads* was finally published was thanks to the success of *Atalanta in Calydon*, brought out by Moxon in March 1865. Many critics had noted *Atalanta*’s anti-theism, and *Chastelard*, issued some months later in November 1865, was widely attacked as over-passionate. But this was as nothing that was to come.⁵

¹ Lang, *Letters* 77 ([May or June 1865]).

² Lang, *Letters* 92 (5 Dec. [1865]) Letter in reply quoted in footnote dated 6 Dec. 1865).

³ Lang, *Letters* 93 (10 Dec. 1865) Lady Trevelyan’s letter dated 8 Dec. 1865) quoted in the footnote.

⁴ C.L. Cline, ed., *The Letters of George Meredith*, v. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), letter 359 ([? End of Feb. - early Mar. 1866]) Hereafter cited in the same style as Lang.

⁵ The press furore over *Poems and Ballads* is documented in Annex 8.

The first review of *Poems and Ballads* that has been traced appeared in the *Morning Star* on 23 July 1866 and it sounded the note that was taken up by many of the others in the course of the next six months or so. Initially very positive it then changed key:

These poems and ballads are fine, finished, elaborate, full of thought, originality and the true, unmistakable something for which there is no formal name which constitutes poetry as distinguished from even the most admirable verse-making ... Everyone must confess the fire, the fervour, the bold, vigorous imagination by which the writer forces or coaxes language to obey his behests, to serve his needs, to hang jewels on his thoughts and softly and sweetly drape his fancies. But those fancies! It is deeply to be regretted that they are what they are – that a true poet should abandon his mind to the worship, his muse to the ministry, of the senses. Mr Swinburne does not only sin in this way – that, perhaps is his own concern – but he offends, which is ours. The beauty of many of these poems is as repulsive as it is undeniable ... How unnecessary it is for such a writer to resort to such objectionable subjects as Mr Swinburne too often selects is made manifest by the infinitely superior beauty of the few poems in his volume which are free from what we must, though with sincere regret, call absolute indecency ... Nothing purer, sweeter, more fanciful, more musical than many of them, as for example ‘Madonna Mia’, ‘April’, ‘August’, ‘The Sun-dew’ and ‘A Ballad of Burdens’; nothing less pure, less admirable, though undeniably powerful, than ‘Faustine’, ‘Félice’ and ‘Dolores’ – indeed, the latter is in the highest degree profane and painful.⁶

But the *Morning Star*, though the first off the mark, was a daily paper, not a literary journal and the entire review of just some 500 words constituted slightly less than half of that day’s gossip column. A piece in *The Reader* for 28 July 1866, headed ‘The Last Pagan’, had a text of much the same length though with the addition of quotations of some 200 lines. It remarked upon and outlined (using a paraphrase

⁶ *Morning Star*, 23 July 1866, pp.4-5.

constructed from the quoted lines) Swinburne's atheism, but made no negative criticism. This has been attributed (plausibly perhaps, though without evidence) to the pen of his atheist friend, the paper's editor Thomas Bendyshe.⁷

The critical impact was really felt with the cumulative blow of three substantial and hostile reviews in the *Athenaeum*, the *Saturday Review* and the *London Review* all of which appeared in their issues dated 4 August 1866. Swinburne appears to have shrugged off the piece in the *Athenaeum* which found him insincere, prurient, impertinent and shallowly imitative:

I have exhausted myself with a quasi-venereal enjoyment of the incomparable article in the *Athenaeum* today' he wrote to Joseph Knight. 'Do pray, if you can, find out the gifted author and present to him my warmest thanks for such delicious and exquisite amusement as I never ventured to anticipate. "Absalom – Gito – filth – most disagreeable – very silly – parrot of Mr. Browning (!)" I succumb, and acknowledge that God can create greater fools than we can imagine.'⁸

The story goes that his reaction to the *Saturday Review* was somewhat different. Meeting at Moxon's on 4 August, Swinburne and Payne walked along Piccadilly where Swinburne bought the new issue, just out. As he read its review of *Poems and Ballads* his excitement mounted and Payne, to avoid a scene in the street, ushered the poet into a café. Inside, Swinburne's language became so intemperate that the Jersey born, francophone Payne begged him to continue in French. (Swinburne was fluent too.) It is a colourful anecdote, but perhaps not documented before 1928.⁹ Why should the *Saturday Review* be so upsetting when the *Athenaeum*'s review simply provoked scorn? Gosse, in his biography of 1917, claimed that this single article 'not merely transformed the fortunes of that particular edition or volume but created a prejudiced conception of the poet from which it is not too much to say that he suffered until the end of his life.'¹⁰ But though this review may have made an impact it can have influenced neither the

⁷ Lafourcade, *La Jeunesse de Swinburne*, v.1, p.240.

⁸ Lang, *Letters* 121 (3 Aug. [1866]).

⁹ Lafourcade, *La Jeunesse de Swinburne*, v.1, p.239.

¹⁰ Gosse, *Life*, p. 151.

others which appeared on the same day, nor that in the *Morning Star* a week or so earlier. Nor had it provoked the advance warnings of his friends. And, as will become clear, certain aspects of the poems found so offensive by many others were barely remarked upon by the *Saturday Review*.

The third review of 4 August appeared in the *London Review*. Its reaction was one more of sorrow than of anger, finding an assault on the commonest decencies but recognising beauty and lyric sweetness in many poems, and ending with a plea to the poet to reconsider his course. Moxon had withdrawn the book within days but another lengthy attack appeared a fortnight later, this time in the *Pall Mall Gazette* for 20 August 1866, under the heading 'Swinburne's Folly'. It made no reference to the book's withdrawal, which only appears to have been reported in the press on 18 August, a fortnight after the three damning reviews.¹¹

'Swinburne's book has been withdrawn by Moxon quite unjustifiably from a business point of view' wrote D.G. Rossetti to John Skelton at just about this time. 'It will immediately be reissued (unaltered I regret to say) by another publisher. The attack in the press has been stupid for the most part and, though with some good grounds, shamefully one-sided.'¹² Although his sympathies were very much with Swinburne, Gabriel Rossetti was horrified to hear that Tennyson had told Burne-Jones that some of Swinburne's unpleasing qualities probably stemmed from Rossetti. 'As no one delights more keenly in his genius than I do, I have also a right to say that no one has more strenuously combated its wayward exercise in certain instances, to the extent of having repeatedly begged him not to read me such portions of his writing when in M.S.'¹³ And as the letter to Skelton implies, Rossetti thought withdrawal was justified, though not on commercial grounds.

But there was a reaction to the hostile press. Froude, editor of *Fraser's Magazine* wrote to Skelton on 19 August and spoke of much that was objectionable, but

¹¹ *Athenaeum*, 18 Aug. 1866, p.211.

¹² Fredeman, *Correspondence* 66.148 [late Aug. 1866].

¹³ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 66.163 (6 Oct. 1866).

also finding real beauty and true genius.¹⁴ Skelton responded to this by writing his own lengthy piece – fourteen sides when published in *Fraser's Magazine* for November 1866 – under the heading 'Mr Swinburne and his critics.' Skelton's view was that the criticism had been overdone rather than misplaced; that there was indeed some objectionable material but 'Let Mr Swinburne in the next volume, suppress 'Les Noyades', 'Anactoria', 'Hermaphroditus', 'Faustine', 'The Leper', 'Felise' and 'Aholibah'. When thus weeded a volume of very remarkable poetry will remain, for the poems we have named do not occupy more than 40 pages of a volume consisting of upwards of 340. The publication of these 40 pages is doubtless a blunder'.¹⁵

Stronger, less qualified support appeared in the *Examiner* for 22 September which looked at both *Chastelard* (which had been published the previous year) and at *Poems and Ballads*. It found the withdrawal of the volume an act of which any publisher should be ashamed, and even detected a scriptural lesson in the tone of the whole.¹⁶ 'I am delighted to find from the *Examiner*,' wrote William Rossetti to Swinburne just a few days later, clearly somewhat surprised at this turn of criticism, 'that foes and friends were alike deluded in you, and that your morality more nearly resembles that of Lot when he fled from the Cities of the Plain than when he was domesticated with his daughters in a cavern'. He continues: 'I hope you are getting on with your vindication, or perhaps you have got it wholly out of hand by now ... I am going well ahead with my review'.¹⁷

The vindication, Swinburne's response to his critics, was completed and dispatched to Hotten by 28 September¹⁸ to appear as a separate pamphlet with the title *Notes on Poems and Reviews* in the last week of October, Swinburne having resisted Hotten's suggestion that it should be printed as an appendix to the reissue of *Poems and Ballads*.¹⁹ Hotten also issued William Rossetti's review originally destined for the

¹⁴ Skelton, pp.136-137.

¹⁵ [J. Skelton,] 'Mr Swinburne and his critics', *Fraser's Magazine*, Nov. 1866, p.641.

¹⁶ [H. Morley,] *Examiner*, 22 Sept. 1866 pp.597-599.

¹⁷ Peattie, *Letters* 104 (25 Sept. [1866]).

¹⁸ Lang, *Letters* 144 (27 Sept. 1866).

¹⁹ Lang, *Letters* 149 (9 Oct. 1866), 155 (2 Nov. 1866).

Boston quarterly, the *North American Review* but declined by its editor: 'I am puritan enough to believe that good art cannot exist without good morals' he had told Rossetti.²⁰ So instead Hotten published it as a separate pamphlet with the title *Swinburne's 'Poems and Ballads'; a criticism* simultaneously with Swinburne's *Notes* and the reissue of *Poems and Ballads* itself.²¹ This stirred up another wave of criticism during November and December as each was reviewed.

There were two principal reasons why *Poems and Ballads* was found offensive, and a number of other, less violent complaints that were more the usual stuff of reviews. The two causes of scandal were perceived indecency and blasphemy. Undoubtedly what made things worse was the poet's desire to shock and his relish in his own powers. Swinburne's friends had, pre-publication, urged him to tone things down. He had a somewhat disingenuous answer:

... my perplexity is this: that no two friends have ever given me the same advice ... I have been advised to suppress *Atalanta*, to cancel *Chastelard*, and so on till not a line of my work would have been left ... Some for example which you told me were favourites of yours [he was writing to Lady Trevelyan], such as the Hymn to Proserpine of the 'Last Pagan' – I have been advised to omit as likely to hurt the feelings of a religious public.'²²

But in fact the subsequent outcry was concentrated on scarcely more than a half dozen poems from a collection of sixty-two. And, after the immediate scandal had died down a little, he was thinking of stirring things up again. 'I have in hand a scheme of mixed verse and prose' he wrote to Richard Burton early in January 1867, 'a sort of *etude à la Balzac* plus the poetry, which I flatter myself will be more offensive and objectionable to Britannia than anything I have yet done. You see I have now a character to keep up, and by the grace of Cotytto I endeavour not to come short of it – at least in my writings.

²⁰ Peattie, *Letters* 105 (30 Sept. [1866]), Footnote 1.

²¹ *Bookseller*, 31 Oct. 1866, p.929.

²² Lang, *Letters* 93 (10 Dec. 1865).

Tell me if you have time', he adds 'what you think of 'Dolores' and 'Anactoria' in full print.'²³

Swinburne had certainly known which poems would shock. 'It is impossible to deny the power of such poems as 'Laus Veneris', 'Phaedra', 'Les Noyades', 'Anactoria', 'Fragoletta', 'Faustine', 'Dolores' etc, but it is equally impossible to see why they should have been written. 'Anactoria' and 'Dolores' are especially horrible. The first is supposed to be uttered by Sappho, and, beginning with an insane extravagance of passion, it ends in raging blasphemy. The second is a mere deification of incontinence. Both are depraved and morbid in the last degree.'²⁴ This was the *London Review*. The *Saturday Review* told its readers that Swinburne had 'revealed to the world a mind all aflame with the feverish carnality of a school boy over the dirtiest passages in Lemprière [the standard classical dictionary of the time] ... And no language is too strong to condemn the mixed vileness and childishness of depicting the spurious passion of a putrescent imagination, the unnamed lusts of sated wantons, as if they were the crown of character and their enjoyment the great glory of human life. The only comfort about the present volume is that such a piece as 'Anactoria' will be unintelligible to a great many people'.²⁵

Indeed many – but by no means all – of Swinburne's subjects were controversial. 'Anactoria' explores Sappho's lesbian passion for Anactoria; 'Dolores' is a litany to Our Lady of Pain, clearly a dominatrix; 'Laus Veneris' has the knight of the Tannhäuser legend return to Venus, unrepentant; 'Les Noyades' tells how, during the French Revolution a rough working man and a young noblewoman are tied together naked and are to be flung into the Loire to be executed – and the man appears to relish the prospect; 'Hermaphroditus' considers the double gendered classical statue in the Louvre; in 'The Leper' a clerk who has long loved his lady from a distance tends her when she catches leprosy, then kisses and embraces her after her death: the whole poem having a strong whiff of necrophilia. This was all a far cry from 'The Lady of Shalott' or 'The Angel in the House.'

²³ Lang, *Letters* 174 (11 Jan. 1867).

²⁴ *London Review*, 4 Aug. 1866, p.130.

²⁵ *Saturday Review*, 4 Aug. 1866, pp.23-24.

As the *Saturday Review* remarked though, Swinburne's matter was by no means always easy to grasp. The sweep and vigour of the verse, the music and splendour of the words are apparent, but they can hurtle the reader across the surface, scarcely leaving time to take it in. And the reader coming to 'Anactoria' without some background knowledge might easily miss the implications. Even the educated reader could go astray. Skelton, concluding his review in *Fraser's Magazine*, turned to look at about a dozen of the poems he thought particularly successful. One of these was 'Itylus.' Here, says Skelton, 'an old Greek story is very charmingly outlined'²⁶ apparently unaware that the poet has fastened on one of the nastier Greek myths with a *mise en scène* of rape, mutilation, murder and cannibalism.

But the complaint went beyond unpleasant subjects. Though Swinburne was often vague he could be suggestive. The *Athenaeum* was particularly upset by the sonnet 'Love and Sleep'. Having declared that 'The glory of our modern poetry is its transcendent purity'²⁷ the sonnet's sestet, quoted a little later, obviously was not going to please:

And all her face was honey to my mouth,
 And all her body pasture to mine eyes;
 The long lithe arms and hotter hands than fire,
 The quivering flanks, hair smelling of the south,
 The bright, light feet, the splendid supple thighs
 And glittering eyelids of my soul's desire

This 'charming book of verses,' it continued, 'bears some evidence of having been inspired in Holywell Street [the Soho of its day], composed on the Parade in Brighton [a promenade for prostitutes], and touched up in the Jardin Mabille [the famous Parisian pleasure garden with a sordid reputation] ... Here, in fact, we have Gito, seated in the tub of Diogenes, conscious of the filth and whining at the stars.'²⁸ Here too was a

²⁶ [J. Skelton,] 'Mr Swinburne and his critics', *Fraser's Magazine*, Nov. 1866, p.645.

²⁷ [R. Buchanan,] *Athenaeum*, 4 Aug. 1866, p.137.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p.131.

reviewer parading himself a man-of-the-world, with knowledge of the disreputable present and able to name-drop from the classical past: the homosexual Gito features in the *Satyricon* – much of which is grossly obscene by Victorian standards – though nowhere in *Poems and Ballads*. The *Pall Mall Gazette* found this ‘a volume full of mad and miserable indecency ... there are many passages in this book which bring before the mind an image of a mere madman, one who has got maudlin drunk on lewd ideas and lascivious thoughts.’²⁹

Was *Poems and Ballads* actually obscene in the Victorian context? The *London Review*, in its reaction to Rossetti’s critique in December, thought it equivalent to pornography: ‘... when it descends to the merest incitement of animal passion, or the wildest ravings against the order of things ... it is not better, morally than the literature contemplated in Lord Campbell’s Act, however much it may be illuminated by the baleful fires of a genius not wholly sane.’³⁰ This Act was the *Obscene Publications Act* of 1857, introduced by Lord Chief Justice Campbell into the Lords in May 1857. Campbell made it clear then that, though he might disapprove of some of it, he was not seeking to prevent the circulation of literature as opposed to pornography.³¹ And there is little evidence to suppose that anything of literary merit was legally suppressed until the last twenty years of the century.³² William Rossetti’s diary for 20 November 1866 records: ‘Hotten showed me a confidential letter addressed to him by one of the Police-magistrates, saying that he is satisfied Swinburne’s book is not seizable nor indictable ...’³³ Just two years later Mr Justice Alexander Cockburn enshrined in law as the test of obscenity ‘the tendency of the matter charged ... to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort might fall.’³⁴ Had this existed earlier some of Swinburne’s critics would almost certainly have wanted to use it against *Poems and Ballads*.

²⁹ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 Aug. 1866, p. 553.

³⁰ ‘Mr Rossetti’s Criticism’, *London Review*, 1 Dec. 1866, p.610.

³¹ M.J.D. Roberts, ‘Morals, Art and the Law: the passing of the Obscene Publications Act, 1857’, *Victorian Studies*, 28 (1984-85), pp. 609-629.

³² Donald Thomas, *A Long Time Burning; the history of literary censorship in England* (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1969), p.239.

³³ *Rossetti Papers* (Diary entry for 20 Nov. 1866) , p.197.

³⁴ Roberts, p.627

Blasphemy, as in the case of Shelley's *Queen Mab*, when Moxon was successfully charged in 1841, could also be a matter for prosecution. Yet the climate of opinion was changing. In 1842 Common law judges had agreed that a decent denial of the Christian religion was not criminal,³⁵ and there was certainly a great deal of questioning going on. For the early Victorian period was one of great religious ferment as Belief was undermined from two directions. On one hand were scientific theories from Robert Chambers (*Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, 1844), Charles Lyell (*Principles of Geology*, 1830) and Darwin (*Origin of Species*, 1859). And on the other was a new wave of biblical criticism, originating from abroad: D.F. Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* (1835), translated into English as the first published work of George Eliot in 1846, and Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1863). In 1860 Jowett, who was Swinburne's tutor at Balliol, had contributed to *Essays and Reviews* with 'On the Interpretation of Scripture', which amounted to a plea for treating the Bible as a historical document. But from the 1830s onwards also came a religious revival, seen both in the high church Oxford Movement and an upsurge from the evangelical churches.

Three or four poems in particular attracted the epithet 'blasphemous'. The *Athenaeum* thought the 'Hymn to Proserpine', a despairing cry of the last pagan, insincere. 'It is quite obvious that Mr Swinburne has never thought at all on religious questions, but imagines that rank blasphemy will be esteemed very clever.' It was shocked that in 'Faustine' he had depicted the Almighty and the Devil as throwing dice for Faustine's soul; and it quoted the following lines from 'Laus Veneris' – seemingly finding them bad enough to offend, yet not too offensive to reprint:³⁶

Lo, she was thus when her clear limbs enticed
All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ,
 Stained with blood fallen from the feet of God,
The feet and hands whereat our souls were priced.

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great and fair,

³⁵ Thomas, p.230.

³⁶ [R. Buchanan,] *Athenaeum*, 4 Aug. 1866, pp.137-138.

But lo, her wonderfully woven hair!
 And thou didst heal us with thy piteous kiss;
 But see now, Lord: her mouth is lovelier.

She is right fair; what hath she done to thee?
 Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine eyes and see;
 Had now thy mother such a lip – like this?

‘Anactoria’, thought the *London Review*, ‘beginning with an insane extravagance of passion ... ends in raging blasphemy.’³⁷ It did not quote, but what it had in mind was Sappho’s attack on the Almighty:

Is not his incense bitterness, his meat
 Murder? his hidden face and iron feet
 Hath not man known, and felt them on their way
 Threaten and trample all things and very day?
 Hath he not sent us hunger? who hath cursed
 Spirit and flesh with longing? filled with thirst
 Their lips who cried unto him? ...
 ... Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,
 Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,
 And mix his immortality with death [ll.171-177, 182-184]

Perhaps what made it so much worse was that Swinburne often used the language and cadences of the King James Bible, and with consummate skill; when he employed them on more traditional themes the critics were moved. Having spent most of its review complaining of indecency and blasphemy the *Pall Mall Gazette* then closed by saying that ‘we have no space to dwell any further upon Mr Swinburne’s defects and excellencies. They are both very great and very remarkable; and while we declare much of this his last volume to be merely despicable, we must also declare that much of it is of great and lasting worth. Here, for example is one poem which to our minds is

³⁷ *London Review*, 4 Aug. 1866, p.37.

really noble.’³⁸ It then quoted all sixteen verses of ‘A Litany’. So too did the *Eclectic Review*, equally struck by it after the atheism and despair it had found in his other works.³⁹

The *Saturday Review* though so strident about indecency had nothing whatever to say about blasphemy for the simple reason that its author was entirely in sympathy with the poet on this issue. Much of the criticism in the weekly and monthly journals was, at this period, anonymous, though authorship of controversial pieces often leaked out. In this instance the reviewer was John Morley, just one year younger than Swinburne and at the very start of a career that blossomed when he became editor of the *Fortnightly Review* in 1866 and later embarked on a distinguished political career. Morley, brought up in a strictly religious household, lost his faith, was cut off by his father as a consequence and, without the wherewithal to train as a lawyer, took to journalism.⁴⁰ And if he was unperturbed by what some of his colleagues saw as blasphemy, his scruples about indecency soon evaporated too. Under his editorship the *Fortnightly* saw frequent contributions from Swinburne and in a letter to the poet six years later referring in passing to this *Saturday Review* article he wrote: ‘... I have regretted both my tone and the jist of the criticism ever since.’⁴¹ Perhaps in writing it Morley was exploiting popular prejudices in order to write a hard-hitting piece of criticism, even though he did not entirely share them.

A second hostile reviewer who can be identified is Robert Buchanan, responsible for the scathing review in the *Athenaeum* – one of the very few that could find nothing whatsoever to praise. In addition he submitted a skit, ‘The Session of Poets – August 1866’, eight verses of doggerel published in the *Spectator* in September describing a meeting of the country’s leading dozen poets (he included himself, but modestly preferred to sign it with the pseudonym ‘Caliban’). It ends with Swinburne

³⁸ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 Aug. 1866, p.555.

³⁹ ‘Mr. Swinburne, his crimes and his critics,’ *Eclectic Review*, n.s. 11, Dec. 1866, pp.505-508.

⁴⁰ John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (Penguin Books: London, 1991) pp.112-113.

⁴¹ Myers, *Letters* 426A (25 Aug. 1872).

carried out drunk.⁴² ‘Immorality in Authorship’ which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, was signed by him, while a review of Swinburne’s *Notes on Poems and Reviews*, again in the *Athenaeum* was not.⁴³ Swinburne was not impressed by the latter. ‘I saw RB the second in the *Asinaeum* [sic]’ he told William Rossetti. (RB the first was of course Robert Browning.) ‘He seems to have attempted a combination of Charles Reade’s style with mine, to no great purpose.’⁴⁴ This response – sarcastic, yet very bland for Swinburne – rather suggests he had not realised Buchanan was behind all the earlier pieces too. Relations were to become much more strained in 1871 when Buchanan made a savage attack on D.G. Rossetti in a pseudonymous article in the *Contemporary Review* entitled ‘The Fleshly School of Poetry’. Swinburne then responded in kind and the dispute escalated, to include a libel action, and in all probability contributed to Rossetti’s breakdown and the total rupture of his close friendship with Swinburne.⁴⁵

A number of other criticisms were common to many of the reviews, though hardly the matter of scandal, and so they covered far fewer column inches. The judicious William Rossetti made a clear but tactful summary in his pamphlet *Swinburne’s Poems and Ballads*.⁴⁶ He identified four general defects: a lack of broad human sympathies which meant that Swinburne was indifferent, even hostile, to what most of his readers cared for; a tendency to ‘over-do’ things whether in over-emphasis, or simply in not knowing when to stop; monotony, in terms of subjects, images, even certain words and phrases, and alliteration; and finally occasional and partial obscurity. He advanced eight poems under this last heading, and wrote of ‘Hesperia’ that ‘we read it through, exulting in its exultant flow of rhythm, and find at the end that we scarcely know what the poem is about; it is only a second perusal, and that an attentive one,

⁴² [R. Buchanan,] ‘The Session of Poets - Aug. 1866,’ *Spectator*, 15 Sept. 1866, p.1028. The relevant verses are quoted in Annex 8.

⁴³ [R. Buchanan,] ‘Immorality in Authorship’, *Fortnightly Review*, 15 Sept. 1866, p.33; *Athenaeum*, 3 Nov. 1866, pp.564-565.

⁴⁴ Lang, *Letters* 163 (12 Nov. 1866).

⁴⁵ Christopher D. Murray, ‘D.G. Rossetti, A.C. Swinburne and R.W. Buchanan: the Fleshly School revisited’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 65 (1982-83), pp.206-234.

⁴⁶ W.M. Rossetti, ‘Swinburne’s Poems and Ballads’, in *Swinburne; the critical heritage*, ed. Clyde K. Hyder (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp.57-91.

which is likely to clear up the vaporous verses, and clear, in the proper sense of the word, they never become.⁴⁷

These criticisms Swinburne by and large ignored: those to which he responded were the more substantial issues of indecency and blasphemy and he set out his position with force and eloquence. What took him by surprise was Moxon's immediate capitulation to pressure and – perhaps – the strength of the furore that continued for several months after that, which his own *Notes on Poems and Reviews* and William Michael Rossetti's able critique, *Swinburne's Poems and Ballads*, seemed only to prolong. Yet although he enjoyed engaging with his critics, he did not want the *Notes* published as an appendix to the reissued *Poems and Ballads*. For to do so would, he told Rossetti, 'be making far too much of an ephemeral and contemptible subject. If the poems are fit to live they must outlive the memory of this.'⁴⁸ So, however much he courted controversy – and there is no doubt that before publication he knew he was going to offend and relished the prospect – he was not motivated principally by a desire to shock but by the desire to enlarge poetry's scope and range.

The proofs of *Notes on Poems and Reviews* were shown to W.M. Rossetti who made just six or so specific criticisms, half of which Swinburne adopted.⁴⁹ By and large these were all matters of phrasing and emphasis, rather than changes to the general tenor of the whole. Overall Swinburne put his case in three sections. First was the claim that he is writing what are now called dramatic monologues; then he answers claims of indecency and blasphemy making specific reference to seven poems; finally he argues that real poetry cannot be narrow or prudish although that is what this country expects, and he draws a comparison with France. This is his first argument:

With regard to any opinion implied or expressed throughout my book, I desire that one thing should be remembered: the book is dramatic, many-faced, multifarious and no utterance of enjoyment or despair, belief or unbelief, can

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.85.

⁴⁸ Lang, *Letters* 149 (9 Oct. [1866]).

⁴⁹ R.W. Peattie, 'William Michael Rossetti and the Defence of Swinburne's Poems and Ballads', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 19 (1971), pp.45-54.

properly be assumed as the assertion of its author's personal feeling or faith ... Byron and Shelley, speaking in their own persons, and with what sublime effect we know, openly and insultingly mocked and reviled what the English of their day held most sacred. I have not done this. I do not say that, if I chose, I would not do so to the best of my power; I do say that hitherto I have seen fit to do nothing of the kind.⁵⁰

He expanded on this in his reply to Rossetti, writing specifically about the antitheism of 'Félise': 'I know of course that you know that the verses represent a mood of mind and phase of thought not unfamiliar to me; but I must nevertheless maintain that no reader (as a reader) has the right (whatever he may conjecture) to assert that this is my faith and that the faith expressed in such things as the 'Litany' or 'Carol' or 'Dorothy' is not. Of course it is a more serious expression of feeling; and of course this is evident; but it is not less formally dramatic than the other'.⁵¹ Both the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *London Review* in reviewing *Notes* pointed out that the poet chose his own subjects, and the former asked 'Does he really maintain that a man may blamelessly write anything who writes dramatically?'.⁵² Something not very different was indeed Swinburne's position, but it was not what he was advancing at this point of his defence.

After this opening claim about the dramatic nature of his writing Swinburne then asks rhetorically what reasonably might be thought offensive in his volume. He turns to one of the 4 August reviews, not that by Morley in the *Saturday Review* which he had found so distressing, nor Buchanan's in the *Athenaeum* which he judged absurd, but to that in the *London Review*, 'the work (I admit) of an enemy, but the work (I acknowledge) of a gentleman. I cannot accept it as accurate, but I readily and gladly allow that it neither contains nor suggests anything false or filthy'.⁵³ The *London Review* had found itself unable to deny the power of 'Laus Veneris', 'Phaedra', 'Les

⁵⁰ A.C. Swinburne, *Notes on Poems and Ballads* reprinted in Kenneth Haynes, ed. *Algernon Charles Swinburne: Poems and Ballads and Atalanta in Calydon* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2000), p.404.

⁵¹ Lang, *Letters* 149 (9 Oct. [1866]).

⁵² 'Mr Swinburne's Defence', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 Nov. 1866, pp. 9-10; 'Mr Swinburne's Defence', *London Review* 3 Nov. 1866 pp.482-483.

⁵³ Swinburne, *Notes*, p.404.

Noyades', 'Fragoletta', 'Faustine' and 'Dolores', but was equally unable to see why they had been written. 'Anactoria' and 'Dolores' it thought were especially horrible. Swinburne set out to rehabilitate the pair.

The first stumbling block for 'Anactoria' was its subject of lesbian passion. Initially Swinburne had thought to challenge his critics to name a tabooed subject. 'What is it that these nameless (and unmentionable) persons find assailable or objectionable in these verses of mine? I for one cannot conceive. They talk of something 'foul', or something 'unspeakable'. What is it? They refuse to explain. I challenge them to the proof'. Rossetti, rather more level headed, saw that this was not a good idea. 'It certainly does appear to me', he told Swinburne 'that if you strongly aver that you cannot conceive anything assailable in passionate writing about the sexual passion of one woman for another, the critics will have a very easy retort.'⁵⁴ Swinburne accepted his point, though what then appeared was his still less than honest assertion: 'What certain reviewers have imagined it to imply I am incompetent to explain, and unwilling to imagine.'⁵⁵ His case for the poem is that Sappho's surviving 'Ode to Anactoria' is a great classic, that generations of school boys have been obliged to memorise it, and that he is by no means the first since Catullus to attempt a translation. 'I have striven to cast my spirit into the mould of hers, to express and represent not the poem but the poet ... Here and there, I need not say, I have rendered into English the very words of Sappho. I have tried also to work into words of my own some expression on their own effect: to bear witness how, more than any others, her verses strike and sting the memory in lonely places, or at sea, among all loftier signs and sounds – how they seem akin to fire and air'.⁵⁶ Neither the *Pall Mall Gazette* nor the *London Review* were much impressed with this. The former denied Swinburne's premiss about the status of Sappho's surviving verse; the latter conceded that Sappho had indeed fashioned a wonderful poem from a 'grievous aberration; [but] is that any reason why a modern Englishman should seek to rival her in her Bedlam flights of eroticism? ... What Sappho dismissed in the briefest form, Mr Swinburne expands in a poem of 305 lines. His production is really far worse than its prototype ... Where the

⁵⁴ Peattie, *Defence*, p.359.

⁵⁵ Swinburne, *Notes*, p.405.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.406.

Lesbian simply cried out in an intolerable and monstrous pain, Mr Swinburne investigates with a literary zest. He analyses, he curiously inquires, he tastes, he lingers round every detail, he contemplates this case of morbid anatomy from every conceivable point of view; he exhausts the language of wantonness, and recruits himself in a riot of blasphemy'.⁵⁷

The charge of blasphemy, although partially covered by the Dramatic Monologue argument, is revisited by Swinburne in a footnote after dealing with 'Anactoria'. 'I do not question the right, which hypocrisy and servility would deny, of author and publisher to express and produce what they please. I do not deprecate, but demand for all men freedom to speak and freedom to hear.'⁵⁸ But, he goes on, even those who do not accept this are inconsistent in what they do and do not allow: Shelley overstepped the accepted limits (in 'Queen Mab') more than he, Swinburne, has done yet Messrs. Moxon and Co. are continuing to draw profit from that work. The *London Review* came back at this last point with the claim that Shelley had sincerely believed in his opposition to established dogmas, and that he had a coherent philosophy, whereas Swinburne simply 'raves and curses'.⁵⁹ An accusation of insincerity had formed much of the *Athenaeum's* case against Swinburne in its 4 August review; its cause was Swinburne's evident delight in provoking. The *London Review*, forty-four years after the earlier poet's death and with a large body of works published might have reasonably expected that Shelley's position had become clear; Swinburne, with his second major work barely off the press a few months could hardly have hoped to have established his philosophy before the world in that time.

From 'Anactoria' Swinburne turned to 'Dolores'. Protesting and defending the virtue of this shameless creature – basking among those 'four more jets of boiling and gushing infamy,' as he had told Howell so gleefully just eighteen months previously⁶⁰ – was going to be quite a challenge. His strategy was two-pronged and faintly

⁵⁷ 'Mr Swinburne's Defence', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 Nov. 1866, p.10; 'Mr Swinburne's Defence', *London Review* 3 Nov. 1866, p.483.

⁵⁸ Swinburne, *Notes*, p.407.

⁵⁹ *London Review*, *ibid.*.

⁶⁰ Lang, *Letters* 77 ([May or June 1865]).

reminiscent of the traditional clerical way with awkward biblical texts: establish a relevant context then treat the difficult matter allegorically. ‘The gist and bearing of this [‘Dolores’] I should have thought evident enough, viewed by the light of others which precede and follow it,’ says Swinburne. ‘I have striven here to express that transient state of spirit through which a man may be supposed to pass, foiled in love and weary of loving, but not yet in sight of rest; seeking refuge in those ‘violent delights’ which ‘have violent ends’, in fierce and frank sensualities which at least profess to be no more than they are. This poem, like ‘Faustine’, is so distinctly symbolic and fanciful that it cannot justly be amenable to judgement as a study in the school of realism.’⁶¹ ‘Dolores’ is followed by ‘Hesperia’ (the poem that had so baffled W.M. Rossetti on first acquaintance) which, it turns out, is the next act in this lyrical monodrame of passion. ‘The worship of desire has ceased; the mad commotion of sense has stormed itself out; the spirit ... dreams now of truth discovered and repose attained.’ In between the two, Swinburne tells us he has deliberately inserted ‘The Garden of Proserpine’, expressing a total pause in passion and thought. This structure was suggested by Rossetti together with a title ‘The Trilogy of Desire’, but rejected by Swinburne, when responding to Rossetti’s comments on the proofs;⁶² but although the title went, the structure remained. Since neither ‘Hesperia’ nor ‘The Garden of Proserpine’ attracted any seriously hostile criticism harnessing them together with ‘Dolores’ served to give her cover. The contextual and symbolic argument sounds very much more like an *a posteriori* justification than the generating force behind these poems.

‘I have proved “Dolores” to be little less than a second Sermon on the Mount, and “Anactoria” than an archdeacon’s charge,’ wrote Swinburne to Rossetti at the end of September 1866, sounding rather pleased with himself. ‘I am delighted to hear of a critic who takes the same view.’⁶³ This was Henry Morley in the *Examiner* whose minority view was that these controversial poems were entirely moral – indeed practically scriptural – since Swinburne clearly demonstrated that lust entailed pain and death. ‘The verses last analysed’, continues Swinburne in the *Notes*, (perhaps now

⁶¹ Swinburne, *Notes*, p.408.

⁶² Lang, *Letters* 149 (9 Oct. [1866]).

⁶³ Lang, *Letters* 144 ([28 Sept. 1866]).

deliberately focusing on ‘Hesperia’ and ‘The Garden of Proserpine’ rather than ‘Anactoria’ and ‘Dolores’) ‘were assuredly written with no moral or immoral design.’⁶⁴

The position Swinburne seems to be taking here is that of ‘art for art’s sake’, a phrase first formulated some thirty years earlier in the preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835) where Gautier had denied that art either should or could be useful. In fact this was not exactly Swinburne’s view. The opening paragraph of his 1862 review of Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* sounds as though it is when it complains that ‘... the mass of readers seem actually to think that a poem is the better for containing a moral lesson or assisting in a tangible and material good work. The courage and sense of a man [i.e. Baudelaire] who at such a time ventures to profess and act on the conviction that the art of poetry has absolutely nothing to do with didactic matter at all are proof enough of the wise and serious manner in which he is likely to handle the materials of his art.’ Yet, he continues towards the end of the review, ‘those who will look for them may find moralities in plenty behind every poem of M. Baudelaire’s ... Like a medieval preacher, when he has drawn the heathen love, he puts sin on its right hand, and death on its left. It is not his or any artist’s business to warn against evil; but certainly he does not exhort to it, knowing full well enough that the one fault is as great as the other.’⁶⁵ But then his essay on William Blake, completed in 1865 but not published until 1868 due to the rupture with Moxon, was less equivocal (and, it is believed, first introduced the phrase ‘art for art’s sake’ to the context of English art⁶⁶):

Art for art’s sake first of all, and afterwards we may suppose all the rest shall be added to her ... but from the man who falls to artistic work with a moral purpose shall be taken away even that which he has – whatever of capacity for doing well in either way ... Once let art humble herself, plead excuses, try at any compromise with the Puritan principle of doing good, and she is worse than dead. Once let

⁶⁴ Swinburne, *Notes*, p.410.

⁶⁵ ‘Charles Baudelaire,’ *Spectator*, 6 Sept. 1866, reprinted in *Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise, v. 13 (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1926) p.417, p.423.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art’s Sake* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp.6, 37.

her turn apologetic, and promise or imply that she really will now be 'loyal to fact' and useful to men in general (say by furthering their moral work or improving their moral nature) she is no longer of any human use or value. The one fact for her which is worth taking account of is simply mere excellence of verse or colour ... That is the important thing; to have her work supremely well done, and to disregard all contingent consequences.⁶⁷

Yet even before this was published, Swinburne had shifted somewhat due to his renewed enthusiasm for Italian independence in general and Mazzini in particular, causes that had been dear to him even as a boy. The same letter that responded to W.M. Rossetti's comments on the proofs of *Notes* also reported:

I have begun verse again after many months of forced inaction through worry and weariness. I am writing a little song of gratulation for Venice ... and hope to wind up the scheme of the poem by some not quite inadequate expression of reverence towards Mazzini ... It is nice to have something to love and to believe in as I do in Italy. It was only Gabriel and his followers in art (*l'art pour l'art*) who for a time frightened me from speaking out ... I know the result will be a poem more declamatory than imaginative; but I'd rather be an Italian stump-orator than an English prophet ... As far as I can judge, I think it contains already some of my best verses.⁶⁸

Six years later, in the course of an article in the *Fortnightly Review* on Victor Hugo's *L'Année Terrible* Swinburne finally set out his position more clearly when he distinguished between the formula of art for art's sake in a positive, and in a negative sense. 'Taken as an affirmative, it is a precious and everlasting truth. No work of art has any worth or life in it that is not done on the absolute terms of art... but on the other hand we refuse to admit that art of the highest kind may not ally itself with moral or religious passion, with the ethics or the politics of a nation or an age ... in a word, the

⁶⁷ 'William Blake' reprinted in *Complete Works*, v. 16, pp.138-139.

⁶⁸ Lang, *Letters* 149 (9 Oct. [1866]).

doctrine of art for art is true in the positive sense, false in the negative: sound as an affirmation, unsound as a prohibition.’⁶⁹

Having dealt with ‘Anactoria’ and ‘Dolores’, Swinburne then moves on to ‘Faustine’ (which, as he remarks, though having frozen the blood of some critics when read in *Poems and Ballads* went quite unremarked four years before when it had appeared in the pages of the *Spectator*); ‘Laus Veneris’ (where he refers to Baudelaire’s magnificent passage on the ‘fallen goddess grown diabolic among ages that would not accept her as divine’ from his pamphlet on Wagner’s ‘Tannhäuser’); and ‘Hermaphroditus’ (‘... the sad and subtle moral of this myth ... is that perfection once attained on all sides is a thing thenceforward barren of use or fruit; whereas the divided beauty of separate woman and man – a thing inferior and imperfect – can serve all turns of life.’)⁷⁰ Having done this he has now, he says, dealt with the poems which incurred the most blame, quietly overlooking ‘The Leper’, ‘Love and Sleep’ and ‘Les Noyades’.

After this engagement with some specific criticisms of indecency Swinburne next turns to the general point ‘whether or not the first and last requisite of art is to give no offence.’ In no previous age, he claims, had this ever been the case; and nor is it so anywhere else now, except in Britain. This is in part a rhetorical exaggeration, since governments before and since have often sought to control their artists; and, as he must have been well aware, Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* had been prosecuted in France in 1857, and though found innocent of blasphemy it was judged guilty of immorality, with six poems specifically condemned and suppressed. But Swinburne was hardly exaggerating the climate in England. It was very much the case that the Victorians saw literature in terms of family reading, a convention that Dickens and Hardy were obliged to follow, and by which Swinburne had already been judged. ‘I had wanted very much to read Swinburne’s poem [*Chastelard*] again carefully,’ wrote Alexander Macmillan to D.G Rossetti when Rossetti was trying to arrange publication early in 1864, ‘and if possible aloud to my wife and sister-in-law’.⁷¹ Having done so and been somewhat

⁶⁹ ‘Victor Hugo: L’Année Terrible’, *Fortnightly Review*, Sept. 1872, p.257.

⁷⁰ A.C. Swinburne, *Notes*, pp.410-412.

⁷¹ Packer, ed., *The Rossetti-Macmillan Letters*, letter 8 ([Ma]rch 1864).

disturbed he then asked to see some of the other poems (which were to form *Poems and Ballads*). Whether or not he ventured to read these with his family is unknown, but publication was very quickly declined. After the furore of 1866 it must have been many years before Swinburne would have been welcomed to the family circle again.

Purity and prudery do not mix, continues Swinburne, casting his eyes on the virtue of the critical journals, which he depicts as a raddled old dowager of dubious antecedents. Perhaps what he had in mind here was Buchanan's review in the *Athenaeum*, which revelled in knowing references to what he was supposedly condemning. 'Literature, to be worthy of men must be large, liberal, sincere; and cannot be chaste if it be prudish ... And if literature indeed is not to deal with the full life of man and the whole nature of things, let it be cast aside'.⁷²

Part of the problem, it seemed to Swinburne, was the dominance of one particular type of poetry. 'Thus, with English versifiers now, the idyllic form is alone in favour. The one great and prosperous poet of the time [Tennyson did not need to be named] has given out the tune, and the hoarser choir takes it up ... We have idylls good and bad, ugly and pretty; idylls of farm and the mill; idylls of the dining room and deanery [which would fit Patmore's *The Angel in the House*], idylls of the gutter and gibbet [and this could be Buchanan's verse, *London Poems*, which had been published at very much the same time as *Poems and Ballads* and even, in one case, reviewed with it]'.⁷³ In private correspondence Tennyson got short shrift, and when thinking about writing his own Arthurian narrative (which appeared as *Tristram of Lyonesse* only in 1882) Swinburne remarked to D.G. Rossetti that at any rate it ought to 'lick the *Morte d'Albert* [sic]'.⁷⁴

It was not just Tennyson with whom he was out of sympathy. Passing comments in the introduction to his edition of Byron (published by Moxon in early 1866) about Wordsworth using nature as a vegetable in his pot for didactic and culinary purposes brought a sharp retort from the *Eclectic Review* which reviewed it in

⁷² A.C. Swinburne, *Notes* pp.413-414.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp.414; 'Our Library Table', *Fun*, 18 Aug. 1866, p.236.

⁷⁴ Lang, *Letters* 334 (22 Dec. [1869]).

a single article with *Poems and Ballads, Notes* and Rossetti's *Swinburne's Poems and Ballads*. 'Mr Swinburne', it said 'is hopelessly blind, deaf and senseless to that sublimity of moral grandeur which, to Wordsworth's mind, made all nature and all ages, and every form, flower, cloud and mountain, and especially human souls alive and aglow, and inspired with an infinite breath and purpose and power.'⁷⁵ Swinburne, reprinting the introduction in a later collection of essays added a footnote simply reiterating his claim and emphasising the early subsidence of Wordsworth's simple delight in nature, and its replacement by 'a meditative and moralising spirit too apt to express itself in the tone of a preacher to whom all the divine life of things outside man is but as raw material for philosophic or theological cookery.'⁷⁶ In his own circle any mention of *The Excursion* was an occasion for hilarity: one of his skits was still circulating years later where a young Queen Victoria confesses in French an unfortunate lapse from virtue to the Duchess of Kent: 'Ce n'était pas un prince; ce n'était pas un milord, ni même Sir. R. Peel. C'était un misérable du peuple, en nomme Wordsworth, qui m'a récité des vers de son *Excursion* d'une sensualité si chaleureuse qu'ils m'ont ébranlée – et je suis tombée.'⁷⁷

The final paragraph of *Notes* again makes it clear that Swinburne's sympathies were to be found across the Channel: 'When England has again such a school of poetry ... as she has had at least twice before, or as France has now; when all higher forms of the various art are included within the larger limits of a stronger race then, if such a day should ever rise or return upon us, it will be once more remembered that that the office of adult art is neither puerile nor feminine but virile; that its purity is not that of the cloister or the harem; that all things are good in its sight, out of which good work may be produced.'⁷⁸ His 1862 review of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* had claimed the right for poetry to deal with unorthodox subject matter ('even of the loathsome bodily putrescence and decay he can make some noble use...'); asserted a brotherhood of poets with international, not just national loyalties; and showed that the language of

⁷⁵ 'Mr. Swinburne, his crimes and his critics', *Eclectic Review*, n.s.11, Dec. 1866, p.496.

⁷⁶ 'Byron', reprinted in *Complete Works*, vol. 15, p.126.

⁷⁷ Lang, *New Writings*, p.229.

⁷⁸ Swinburne, *Notes*, p.415.

contemporary criticism was entirely inadequate to deal with this.⁷⁹ These were all points that four years later *Poems and Ballads* would implicitly assert.

In 1862 Swinburne's hoax review of 'Les Amours Étiques. Par Félicien Cossu' (a remarkably Baudelairean poet) was suppressed by Hutton of the *Spectator*. One critic regards it as a parody of his own Baudelaire review.⁸⁰ The first two sentences from its conclusion could have been reprinted in many of the notices of *Poems and Ballads* four years later:

Accusations are often put forward, at home and abroad, against the restrictions imposed by a possibly exaggerated sense of decency on the English literature of the present day. We have seen what are the results of a wholly unfettered licence: base effeminacy of feeling, sordid degradation of intellect, loathsome impurity of expression, in a word every kind of filth and foolery which a shameless prurience can beget on a morbid imagination. Surely, whatever our shortcomings may be, we may at least congratulate ourselves that no English writer could for an instant dream of putting forth such a book as M. Félicien Cossu.⁸¹

From this and from the arguments of *Notes* we are surely justified in concluding that Swinburne planned deliberately to outrage the literary establishment and that he had good reasons for what he was doing beyond a delight in provoking his opponents. The very strength and duration of the outcry demonstrate the validity of such a position.

(b) Criticism and response 1867 – 1879

Over the next twelve years, before his health finally gave way from years of alcoholic excess and after which he withdrew to sober reclusion in Putney, Swinburne

⁷⁹ *Complete Works*, v.13, p.421.

⁸⁰ Patricia Clements, *Baudelaire and the English Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.43.

⁸¹ Lang, *New Writings*, pp.95-96.

consolidated his position as the country's most promising poet and enjoyed his greatest period of celebrity. The reputation he had acquired stayed with him; but the poet of the late 1870s was a somewhat different man to that of the mid 1860s. Part of this change was just Swinburne growing older; but perhaps some of it was a response – whether conscious or unconscious – to the temper of the time, to criticism, to what could be published and even to what would sell.

During these years Swinburne published a little over 100 articles or poems in periodicals,⁸² principally in the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Examiner* and the *Athenaeum* with whose editors, John Morley and Norman MacColl in particular, he enjoyed good relations despite their occasional reluctance or refusal to publish all that he offered them. There were three collections of poetry in this period: *Songs before Sunrise* in 1871, *Songs of Two Nations* in 1875 and *Poems and Ballads, Second Series* in 1878; two verse dramas: *Bothwell* (1874), an enormous piece about the length of five of Shakespeare's plays, and the more modest *Erechtheus* (1876); and various other prose works. All of this was extensively noticed in the press – and not only in the sort of literary journal where Swinburne himself published. Then there were the very public controversies: Buchanan's attack on the 'Fleshly School,' directed principally at Rossetti but with Swinburne clearly in view too; the activities of the Society for the Suppression of Vice; and Furnivall's assault on Swinburne's credentials as a scholarly critic.

Although the reputation gained from *Poems and Ballads* was a matter of some pride to the poet (or so he maintained),⁸³ his friends were more concerned. According to Gosse a deliberate effort was made by Benjamin Jowett and others including Mazzini (a hero of Swinburne's since his youth) to divert the poet's energies and enthusiasms into other channels. 'What,' they wondered 'could be done *with* and *for* Algernon?'⁸⁴ Their solution was to encourage his long standing devotion to the republican movement in Italy. In a letter kept by Swinburne for the rest of his life Mazzini wrote to him:

⁸² Wise, *Bibliography* v.2, pp.210-242, gives a chronological list of publication in journals. Annex 2 below gives a more complete list arranged by journal..

⁸³ Lang, *Letters* 174 (11 Jan. 1867).

⁸⁴ Gosse, *Life*, pp.165-166.

‘Don’t lull us to sleep with songs of egotistical love and idolatry of physical beauty: shake us, reproach, encourage, insult, brand the cowards, hail the martyrs ... Give us a series of “Lyrics for the Crusade”.’⁸⁵ At a follow-up meeting with his hero a few weeks later Swinburne was swept off his feet. He wrote to his mother the next day in a state of high excitement. ‘I am not going to try and tell you what he did me the honour to say about my poetry and the use of my devotion and belief to his cause.’⁸⁶ Jowett’s plan – if indeed there was one, and it was his – seemed to have worked.

Yet Swinburne had consciously changed direction before this. As early as October 1866, while the storm over *Poems and Ballads* was still raging, he had told William Rossetti he was ‘writing a little song of gratulation for Venice’ which would conclude with ‘an expression of reverence towards Mazzini’.⁸⁷ This *Song of Italy* appeared in April 1867, dedicated to Mazzini. Many reviewers commented upon a distinct change of key from his previous volume, though the *Pall Mall Gazette* while recognising fine passages and exquisite workmanship still noted that ‘... even here the carnality of idea which disfigures most of his work is not absent. He cannot personify Freedom or Italy and make women of them, without betraying the delights of a fribble over lips and breasts, fair limbs and flower-like breath.’⁸⁸ The *Saturday Review* too, in the course of a very hostile review, made a passing reference to his ‘inveterate habit of gloating over the more carnal and sensuous aspects of passion.’⁸⁹ But this volume was not a continuation of *Poems and Ballads*. There were two political poems in that collection – ‘A Song in Time of Order’ and ‘A Song in Time of Revolution’. This was a single poem on a political theme with no opportunity for sexually charged subjects. And in fact such scenes as in the previous volume, whether from Antiquity (‘Anactoria,’ ‘Faustine’,) or later (‘Laus Veneris,’ ‘Les Noyades,’ ‘Dolores’), were abandoned, never to be revisited. *A Song of Italy* comprised almost 850 lines of rhetorical exhortation:

⁸⁵ BL Ashley A4424 (10 Mar. 1867).

⁸⁶ Lang, *Letters* 191 (31 Mar. [1867]).

⁸⁷ Lang, *Letters* 149 (9 Oct. [1866]).

⁸⁸ ‘Mr Swinburne’s New Poem,’ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 Apr. 1867, p.11.

⁸⁹ ‘Swinburne’s Song of Italy,’ *Saturday Review*, 20 Apr. 1867, pp.503-504.

Italia! by the passion of the pain
 That bent and rent thy chain;
 Italia! by the breaking of the bands,
 The shaking of the lands;
 Beloved, O men's mother, O men's queen,
 Arise, appear, be seen!
 Arise, array thyself in manifold
 Queen's raiment of wrought gold;
 With girdles of green freedom, and with red
 Roses, and white snow shed
 Above the flush and frondage of the hills ... [ll.167-177]

Hotten had not unreasonably expected the first new poetry he published for his notorious new author to sell quickly. While many of the reviewers were hostile, none of them found the poem a matter of scandal, which would surely have been good for sales. And while some of them were enthusiastic (the *Contemporary Review* thought it a piece unrivalled since Shelley)⁹⁰ most could only find it good in parts. The publisher complained it was anything but a commercial success, and the records show that of the 3,000 copies he printed 1,715 were still unsold in 1875.⁹¹

In the criticism a note was heard that was to recur throughout Swinburne's career: 'Of thought in it there is none,' wrote the *Pall Mall Gazette* caustically. Yet a few paragraphs later it quoted 90 lines and followed them with the appreciative comment: 'The pomp of rhythm, the beauty of diction in this passage are altogether remarkable ... it adds another example of exquisite workmanship to many which Mr Swinburne has already given us.' The point would be made explicitly in reviews of other, later works, and made with increasing frequency too: Swinburne wrote fine music, but it meant nothing. And eventually (but not until the Dedicatory Epistle that prefaced the Collected Edition of 1904) he would answer the charge directly.

⁹⁰ *Contemporary Review*, July 1867, p.385.

⁹¹ *Rossetti Papers*, p.240; Chatto Print Ledger 3/284.

Another poetical outpouring was released on the fall of the Second Empire following the defeat of France by Prussia at Sedan in September 1870. The *Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic* did not go to Hotten since relations between them were now not good. 'I have been in a state of lyric discharge with brief intermission ever since the news came on Monday afternoon,' Swinburne told Gabriel Rossetti. 'An Ode literally burst out of me, which I have sent Ellis today to print as a loose sheet or pamphlet'.⁹² The reviews again found passages of splendour and command of language but not much else to praise. The *Saturday Review* took the opportunity for another comprehensive attack on the poet, and had a lot of fun in the process. 'In reading his poems we think we can often notice that the particular form his folly takes is fixed rather by an apt rhyme than by anything else. Rhyme and reason with him are almost synonymous, but if the choice lies between the two he prefers rhyme.'⁹³

But it was with his next volume that Swinburne really courted trouble. The 'Lyrics for the Crusade' that Mazzini had proposed eventually appeared in January 1871 as *Songs before Sunrise*, delayed not only by Swinburne's disagreement with Hotten but also because of strong reservations by Ellis, his new publisher. A year earlier it seemed to be just a matter of completing three or four unfinished pieces;⁹⁴ three months after that it was expected to be out in May 1870.⁹⁵ William Rossetti's diary reveals the problem:

Gabriel had told me yesterday that two poems of Swinburne's for the forthcoming *Songs before Sunrise* – one raising a comparison between the birth of L Napoleon and that of Christ ['The Saviour of Society', a pair of sonnets] and the other blaspheming the three Persons of the Trinity ['Celaneo'] – are so alarming to the publisher Ellis that, when it comes to the scratch, he will absolutely decline to publish them or the book with them included. I named this matter to Swinburne and find that he is a little put out by Gabriel's course of action in more than once (as he believes) pressing upon Ellis the objections to the

⁹² Lang, *Letters* 366 (7 Sept. [1870]).

⁹³ 'Swinburne's Ode,' *Saturday Review*, 24 Sept. 1870, pp.403-404.

⁹⁴ Meyers, *Letters* 337E (28 Jan. [1870]).

⁹⁵ *Rossetti Papers* (Diary entry 5 Apr. 1870), p.504.

publishing of these poems. Swinburne exhibited considerable excitability on this subject ... He repudiates the idea that Ellis will – or in accordance with his engagements, now can – decline to publish the book.⁹⁶

Gabriel Rossetti had indeed written to Ellis at least twice; and he had also singled out ‘Before a Crucifix’, though this, he suggested, was not as objectionable as the sonnets. ‘The one thing which would induce me in your place (all this considered) to object to publish’, he told Ellis ‘would be any serious apprehension of legal results.’⁹⁷ Rossetti approached Swinburne from a different direction:

I have just happened to see the proof-sheet of your Sonnets – ‘The Saviour of Society’ – glorious pieces of poetic diction, as no one knows better than I. But they resolve me to risk even your displeasure by one earnest remonstrance as to their publication. I cannot but think absolutely that a poet like yourself belongs of right to a larger circle of readers than this treatment of universal feelings can include. You know how free I am myself from any dogmatic belief; but I can most sincerely say that ... I do myself feel that the supreme nobility of Christ’s character should exempt it from being used ... in contact with anything so utterly ignoble as this...

... If you withdraw these consummately written Sonnets from your volume and print them separately for private gift, they can still be made available in all quarters where no misconception is possible; and you will not involve yourself (or, I may add, your publisher, to whom I think you owe some consideration) in an obloquy which I do not myself think (after the most serious reflection on a point so serious) that just poetic canons can altogether repel. Do, do, my dear Swinburne, withdraw these 4 Sonnets.⁹⁸

Across the 3 May letter sent to him from Rossetti, Ellis noted that he had declined to publish the volume unless certain sonnets were withdrawn, and that accordingly they

⁹⁶ Bornand, *Rossetti Diary*, pp.7-8 (entry for 11 May [1870]).

⁹⁷ Fredeman, *Letters* 70.135 (3 May 1870).

⁹⁸ Fredeman, *Letters* 70.153 (12 May 1870).

were left out. Swinburne had lost one publisher (Moxon), quarrelled with Hotten, and consequently could not afford to upset Ellis. Yet it is perhaps possible that the buccaneering Hotten would have been prepared to publish what the more cautious and scrupulous Ellis avoided.

As Rossetti had realised, 'Before a Crucifix' was found objectionable. So too was the anti-theistic 'Hymn of Man' which concludes with this paean of defiance:

Shall God then die as the beasts die? who is it hath broken his rod?
 O God, Lord God of thy priests, rise up now and show thyself God.
 They cry out, thine elect, thine aspirants to heavenward, whose faith is as flame;
 O thou, the Lord God of our tyrants, they call thee, their God, by thy name.
 By thy name that in hell-fire was written, and burned at the point of thy sword,
 Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten; thy death is upon thee, O Lord.
 And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds through the wind of her wings

—

Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things.

Of these two poems, according to the *Athenaeum*, 'the less said the better. In both, not content with expressing his own views, the writer assails the beliefs and the most consecrated associations of other people with a wanton virulence that it would be lenity itself to call merely offensive.'⁹⁹ But it went no further than that, and elsewhere in the volume it found 'power of the highest kind – power without strain and without limit'; and summing up found the whole stamped 'with the seal of genius.' *Tinsley's Magazine* – a magazine for the general reading public rather more than the intellectual *Athenaeum* – some months later specifically denied the *Athenaeum's* accusation: 'regarded with a fair degree of intelligent sympathy, neither poem is either wanton or virulent.'¹⁰⁰ Applying such sympathy, it thought it no more than a matter of taste what language a poet used against ideas in which he sincerely disbelieved and for those ideas he regarded as the only salvation for society. The real insult to common propriety, it suggested, would have been the re-publication of Swinburne's sonnets from the

⁹⁹ *Athenaeum*, 14 Jan. 1871, p.42.

¹⁰⁰ 'Songs before Sunrise', *Tinsley's Magazine*, June 1871, pp.561-562.

November 1869 *Fortnightly Review*, which had supplicated Death to allow the dying Napoleon III to live a little longer that he might suffer the more. (It is very probable that Ellis had baulked at these too.) William Rossetti, usually so supportive, had deprecated their initial publication.¹⁰¹

‘We must do him the justice at once to admit that he is not indecent,’ said the *Saturday Review* of *Songs before Sunrise*. ‘Offensive, indeed he is, as he always is; and silly, as he often is ... We shall not gratify him nor shock our readers by quoting any of his poems on sacred things.’¹⁰² Yet after another destructive review, quoting lines and phrases ‘so utterly devoid of sense as to force his readers to believe that they must spring from a disordered brain,’ and a wearisome repetition of pet words, it too found ‘lines, stanzas and poems which are in every way admirable.’

Perhaps the most virulent attack on *Songs before Sunrise* was that which appeared anonymously in the *Edinburgh Review* for July 1871 as part of a comprehensive appraisal of all Swinburne’s work since *Atalanta*.¹⁰³ It identified Swinburne as belonging to ‘the modern sensational school’ which deals with bodily rather than mental pleasures, and seeking the strongest effects tends towards the extreme and horrible. (The ‘sensation novels’ of the 1860s from Wilkie Collins, Mrs Braddon, and Mrs Henry Wood, with their plots hanging on bigamy, murder and insanity were clearly in mind here.) ‘Much of his poetry is sensationalism run mad, foaming at the mouth, snapping rabidly at everything in its way, especially at the sanctities and sanities of life, avoiding all natural food, and seizing with morbid avidity on what is loathsome and repulsive, mere orts and offal.’ *Songs before Sunrise* it thought (with some justification) showed an attempt to meet the criticism of his earlier poetry, that it contained no great conceptions, no impulse of faith, hope or effort. Yet his deification of humanity had, with his belief in the ultimate authority of appetite and impulse, resolved into the deification of appetite and impulse. ‘The practical recognition of this doctrine is called by Mr Swinburne liberty, freedom, and he expresses his admiration of it, after his fashion, in a dazzling coruscation of verbal and

¹⁰¹ Peattie, *Letters* 172 (29 Oct. [1869]).

¹⁰² *Saturday Review*, 14 Jan. 1871, p.54.

¹⁰³ *Edinburgh Review*, July 1871, pp.71-99.

metrical effects ... the conception thus glorified is a negative not a positive one, and ought to be called license, lawlessness, not liberty.’ Like other reviews it refused to quote poems such as ‘Before a Crucifix’ and ‘Hymn of Man’ which it stamped as atheism: wild, blasphemous and intolerant. The review concluded with this peroration:

What is most distinctive in Mr Swinburne’s work is derived from the corrupted school of French art and French poetry, which, with other influences traceable to a common root, has contributed to the temporary ruin of the finest country and most gifted people in Europe. The principles of the school which Mr Swinburne represents would, indeed, if successful, not only overturn all existing order, but in the end prove fatal to art, literature and civilisation itself.

A lot of this reappeared in the Fleshly School controversy which broke later in the year. Gabriel Rossetti had published his volume of *Poems* with Ellis in 1870, and Swinburne gave it an extravagant review in the *Fortnightly Review*.¹⁰⁴ The following year the critic and poet Robert Buchanan attacked Rossetti in the *Contemporary Review*.¹⁰⁵ He saw Rossetti as one of a school who set out to ‘extol fleshliness as the distinct and supreme end of poetic and pictorial art; to aver that poetic expression is greater than poetic thought, and by inference that the body is greater than the soul, and the sound superior to sense.’ This ‘Fleshly School’ had greeted *Poems* with a eulogy of praise: Morris in the *Academy* and ‘a hysteria of admiration ... in Mr Swinburne’s well-known manner when reviewing his friends.’ While Swinburne in *Poems and Ballads* was the more outrageous and blasphemous, because he went so far that disgust turned to comic amazement; Rossetti in poems such as ‘Nuptial Sleep’ and ‘Jenny’ was simply nasty. Buchanan’s piece had been signed with the pseudonym ‘Thomas Maitland’ and it was a little while before his authorship was confirmed. Rossetti did not revel in public controversy as did Swinburne; he was very disturbed by the attack and the following December replied, commenting first on the pseudonymous authorship, then

¹⁰⁴ *Fortnightly Review*, May 1870 pp.551-579.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Maitland [Robert Buchanan,] ‘The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr D.G. Rossetti’, *Contemporary Review*, Oct. 1871, pp.334-350.

looking specifically at some of the criticisms made of his poems, but making no references to Swinburne or any other poets.¹⁰⁶

Swinburne was working on a reply almost from the moment Buchanan's article came out and was quite disappointed to hear (erroneously as he quickly discovered) that Buchanan was not after all the author. His essay just begun, he told William Rossetti, 'would have thrown into the shade the strongest colouring and made insipid by comparison the highest flavours of Juvenal's, Swift's and Landor's satire combined.'¹⁰⁷ In May 1872 Buchanan reissued the article as a substantially augmented pamphlet, *The Fleshly School of Poetry, and other phenomena of the day*, and perhaps this encouraged Swinburne to pursue the publication of his reply, *Under the Microscope*. He had read it to Gabriel Rossetti, who remarked that it showed a somewhat too intimate acquaintance with the minutiae of hostile writing, and urged him to say nothing about Rossetti himself,¹⁰⁸ a request Swinburne could hardly follow unless he dropped all reference to the Fleshly School controversy.

Once again there were difficulties in publication. Swinburne still had no intention of giving new work to Hotten, but Ellis was not keen to take it on.¹⁰⁹ The inference must be that Ellis felt his initial misgivings over some of the *Songs before Sunrise* had turned out to be only too justified. If controversy had helped sell the volume he might have been more eager. But it appears that 1000 were published and three years later 108 were transferred to Chatto.¹¹⁰ Rossetti's new volume of *Poems* (also published by Ellis) had, in contrast, its second thousand print run after just a few months.¹¹¹ What would have concerned any cautious publisher about *Under the Microscope* was not just the lively demolition of Buchanan which comprises the final twenty pages or so, but also the assault on what Swinburne liked to refer to as

¹⁰⁶ D.G. Rossetti, 'The Stealthy School of Criticism', *Athenaeum*, 16 Dec. 1871.

¹⁰⁷ Lang, *Letters* 405 (27 Oct. [1871]).

¹⁰⁸ Bornand, *Rossetti Diary*, p.194 (3 May 1872); p.202 (21 May 1872)

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.204, (27 May 1872).

¹¹⁰ *Wise Bibliography* v. 1, p.210. (Wise says 500 were printed, but see Annex 1. He does not give his source for this print-run. It seems a surprisingly low number for the most talked-about poet of the day.) Chatto Print Ledger 2/218 gives the number transferred.

¹¹¹ Fredeman, *Letters* 70.164 (20 May 1870).

Tennyson's 'Morte d'Albert.' Legal opinion confirmed it was not libellous – or at least this is what Swinburne told a friend six months later.¹¹² Even so Ellis distanced himself by arranging for the pamphlet to come out with the imprint 'D. White, 22, Coventry Street,' so nominally not from him. This was more appearance than reality as he was just then in the process of forming a partnership with White, following which his later publications were issued as 'Ellis & White'. And when Swinburne in his usual way reported errors following publication – Jowett had detected an error in the Greek on page 61 – he asked Ellis (not White) to arrange the errata slips.¹¹³ This was not the only post publication correction. Shortly after the pamphlet was printed a page was cancelled to remove Swinburne's description of Lady of the Lake as 'the very vilest figure in all that cycle of strumpets and scoundrels, broken by here and there an imbecile, which Mr Tennyson has set revolving round the figure of his central wittol.'¹¹⁴

Under the Microscope began and concluded with Swinburne classifying and describing some (of his) critics as though in an exercise of comparative entomology – hence the title. In the manner of much of his prose writing, substantial digressions on related themes took him elsewhere: here a comparison of Byron and Tennyson that had been made by Austin led him to a discussion of their relative merits; then comes an extended discussion of Walt Whitman and some reflection on criticism of Lowell before the final stretch, the dissection (if not vivisection) of Buchanan. An overall purpose of the pamphlet is not clear to the reader. Some years later Swinburne characterised it as a discussion of the relative excellencies and shortcomings of Byron and Tennyson, and of the merits and demerits of Whitman to which 'I prefixed a few pages of comment on anonymous critics ... and appended by way of epilogue some observations on a writer of many books and names [i.e. Buchanan].'¹¹⁵ Nor does Swinburne's unremitting, weighty irony assist quick understanding. Even the look of the page – one huge central paragraph extends across some twenty seven sides – is off-putting. As a piece of prose it is much inferior to his two other major replies to his

¹¹² Meyers, *Letters* 435A (5 Nov. [1872]) .

¹¹³ Lang, *Letters* 433 (18 July [1872]).

¹¹⁴ Wise, *Bibliography*, v.1, p.223.

¹¹⁵ Lang, *Letters* 615 (3 Apr. 1875).

critics, the *Notes on Poems and Reviews* of 1866 and the 'Dedicatory Epistle' which would preface the *Collected Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne* of 1905.

Despite these shortcomings it does give some response to his critics, though generally it aims more to make them look absurd than to answer them. Swinburne's first target is the unsigned *Quarterly Review* article, published a few months after Buchanan's piece, which considered his own *Songs before Sunrise*, Rossetti's *Poems*, and Morris's *Earthly Paradise*.¹¹⁶ This falls into his first category, the Class 'anonyms.' Swinburne quotes a number of phrases directly from the review which referred to two of Rossetti's sonnets: 'No terms of condemnation could be too strong ... for the revolting picturesqueness' of A's 'description of the sexual relation;' 'gross profanity', 'emasculate obscenity.'¹¹⁷ ('A' was Rossetti, but Swinburne avoids naming him here, though he does so in the section on Buchanan.) He makes no apology for Rossetti's choice of subject, but does have some fun with the virtuous reviewer's references to Priapus. Previously the *Quarterly's* complaint against Swinburne in *Poems and Ballads* had been 'uncleanness'; it now – in the review of *Songs before Sunrise* – notes that he has taken leave of these themes. And in this new volume it found fine rhetoric and a command of metre, yet no expression of genuine conviction. As for his attacks there on a God in whom he does not believe, 'instead of being astounded at the poet's blasphemous daring, the reader is disgusted at his shameless indecency.' Everything, it said, was pitched in the highest key, and generally far too long. Swinburne's only response to all this is to say that it would be absurd to attack and denounce a God he believes in or adored. And then he resumes his task of classification.

The next class he presents is that of coprophagi – dung-eaters – creatures too filthy to approach and so safe from attack. And from this tantalising reference – a class named and described but with no specimens on display – Swinburne jumps to another – a class described but unnamed – the critic who thinks nothing good is possible from his own generation. His target is Alfred Austin the author who first wrote a series of

¹¹⁶ 'The Latest Development of Literary Poetry,' *Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1872, pp.59-84.

¹¹⁷ 'Under the Microscope' in *Swinburne Replies*, ed. Clyde Kenneth Hyder (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1966), p.42.

articles, 'The Poetry of the Period,' in *Temple Bar* (including one on Swinburne) and then republished them as a volume with that title.¹¹⁸ It is particularly with Austin's comparison of Byron and Tennyson to the latter's disadvantage that Swinburne disagrees. Austin, he thinks, has made comparisons of good passages of Byron with poor passages of Tennyson. And why does Byron need defending? He is only attacked by the sort of critic who, when a naked nerve of his religious feelings of professional faith is touched upon, likens you to a boy rolling in a puddle – a clear reference here to the *Saturday Review* article on *Songs before Sunrise* which had used this image. Byron's worst friends, says Swinburne, are those who praise him for the wrong reasons. Austin had reported Swinburne's judgement that Byron could not sing. 'He means,' says Austin, 'a singer who did not and would not screech, as poor Shelley now and then unfortunately did; and who positively could not indulge in those falsetto notes which appear to compose most of Mr Swinburne's emasculated poetical voice.'¹¹⁹ Swinburne prided himself on his ear, and commented witheringly on the confidence with which those 'who have absolutely no sense whatever of verbal music will pronounce judgement on the subtlest questions relating to that form of art.'¹²⁰ Austin was simply no judge.

The next section turns to Tennyson: his real friends, claims Swinburne, are not those who judge him uncritically. And with this Swinburne makes a fierce attack on the *Idylls of the King* explaining that he is not afraid to do so as he has shown himself to be an ardent and loyal admirer. Like some others he dislikes Tennyson's Vivien:

I am of course aware that this figure appears the very type and model of a beautiful and fearful temptress of the flesh, the very embodied and ennobled ideal of danger and desire, in the chaster eyes of the virtuous journalist who grows sick with horror and disgust at the license of other French and English writers; but I have yet to find the French or English contemporary poem containing a passage that can be matched against the loathsome dialogue in which Merlin and Vivien discuss the nightly transgressions against chastity, within doors and without, of

¹¹⁸ Alfred Austin, *The Poetry of the Period* (London: Bentley, 1870).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.114.

¹²⁰ *Under the Microscope*, p.54.

the various knights of Arthur's court. I do not remember that any modern poet whose fame has been assailed on the score of sensual immorality – say for instance the author of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* or the author of the *Fleurs du Mal* – has ever devoted an elaborate poem to describing the erotic fluctuations and vacillations of a dotard under the moral and physical manipulation of a prostitute.¹²¹

(This caught and returned an argument by Buchanan. The pamphlet version of the 'Fleshly School' attack had a section entitled 'Charles Baudelaire and A.C. Swinburne' where Buchanan argues that all the worst in Swinburne – offensive choice of subject, obtrusion of unnatural passion, blasphemy, 'wretched animalism' – comes from the *Fleurs du Mal*. Common both to Buchanan's pamphlet and his original review is the claim that the fleshliness of Vivien, while safe in the hands of the laureate, is expanded by the erotic school into a whole system of poetry. The Fleshly School is, in fact, a sub-Tennysonian school.)

A section appreciative of Walt Whitman and a side swipe at Lowell is followed by the final part of the pamphlet, the main attack on Buchanan. This ridicules him at length for publishing pseudonymously, and for praising his own work while making absurd criticism of major figures. Swinburne claims never to have read any book by Buchanan, though from the references he is able to make, he was evidently familiar with much of his journalism. And he scorns Buchanan's claim of mutual 'puffing' by members of the school, though Swinburne's fulsome review of Rossetti's *Poems*¹²² and Morris's more controlled enthusiasm gives Buchanan solid grounds for accusation.

The satisfaction Swinburne derived from writing this polemic was rather spoilt by the indifference of the literary world. There appears to have been just one review, which thought the most interesting parts were the digressions on Byron, Tennyson and Whitman.¹²³ 'How is it (if I may ask without impropriety),' Swinburne asked his journalist friend Joseph Knight, 'that you have never given the least notice of my

¹²¹ *Under the Microscope*, pp.59-60.

¹²² 'The Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti,' *Fortnightly Review*, May 1870, pp.551-579.

¹²³ 'Mr Swinburne among the Fleas', *Examiner*, 6 July 1872, pp.673-674.

“microscopic” pamphlet?’¹²⁴ Nor was Watts much impressed with it, thinking that Buchanan was dignified by being noticed, and later opposed its complete reprint, reporting that Tennyson had been very hurt by the attack.¹²⁵ Perhaps realising that much of what he had most enjoyed writing would be lost if the sections on Buchanan and Tennyson were omitted, and already trusting Watts’ judgement, Swinburne did not include it in *Essays and Studies*, his first collection of previously published prose which appeared in 1875.

What Swinburne had not done was to engage directly with charges of ‘fleshliness’ and blasphemy. But the former certainly goes from his poetry: in the years until his retreat to Putney, there was very little that could be so described. When ‘At a Month’s End’ had been offered to *Fraser’s Magazine* in September 1870, Froude (the editor) found a passage objectionable. ‘Surely it’s absurd to object as if the passage were directly descriptive of a man having a girl’ wrote Swinburne, ‘whereas it’s a mere figure or symbol of two leopards gambolling.’¹²⁶ And though tempted to yield up the poem to the editor’s castrating knife because he needed the money, Froude then demanded fiercer cuts, and these Swinburne would not sanction. It was published the following year in the *Dark Blue* with a slightly different title.¹²⁷ Collected in *Poems and Ballads, Series 2* in 1878 it had one extra stanza (stanza 28) which must have been one of Froude’s sticking points.

Till the acrid hour aches out and ceases,
 And the sheathed eyeball sleepier swims,
 The deep flank smoothes its dimpling creases,
 And passions loosens all the limbs

But on its reappearance the poem went almost unnoticed, and the extra verse entirely unremarked. Most of the reviews of *Poems and Ballads, Series 2* pointed out that

¹²⁴ Meyers, *Letters* 430B (20 Oct. 1872).

¹²⁵ Lang, *Letters* 449 (12 Dec. [1872]; Meyers, *Letters* 485A (23 June 1873).

¹²⁶ Lang, *Letters* 365 ([? Sept. 1870]).

¹²⁷ ‘The End of the Month,’ *The Dark Blue*, Apr. 1871, pp.217-220 .

collection's change of tone from the first series. One, the *Westminster Review*, seemed to suggest not so much that Swinburne but the times had changed:

It is worth noticing how different is the reception which has been given to the second series of Swinburne's poems to that which was accorded to the first. The age has certainly grown during the last twenty years less puritanical. Subjects which were forbidden are now freely handled. Art wears her shackles more lightly than she did ... Most certainly if this second series of Swinburne's poems had appeared even a decade of years earlier, we should have had a howl raised over the exquisite translations from Villon and the sonnet on Mademoiselle de Maupin.¹²⁸

Yet the translations from Villon were neither published in full here or indeed in full anywhere during Swinburne's life. He hoped at one stage to incorporate them all into an essay in the *Athenaeum*, though with asterisks to replace what could not be printed.¹²⁹ MacColl, the editor, only took two, and one of these made him anxious for its lack of moral qualities and fearful of the response of the Society for the Suppression of Vice.¹³⁰ Chatto published another eight in *Poems and Ballads, Series 2* but the first of these, 'The Complaint of the Fair Armouress,' had three lines from the seventh stanza and the last three from the ninth replaced by asterisks. This is the ninth stanza:

Thus endeth all the beauty of us.
The arms made short, the hands made lean,
The shoulders bowed and ruinous,
The breasts, alack! all fallen in;
The flanks too, like the breasts grown thin;
As for the sweet place, out on it!
For the lank thighs, no thighs but skin,
They are specked with spots like sausage meat.

¹²⁸ 'Contemporary Literature,' *Westminster Review*, Oct. 1878, p.563.

¹²⁹ Lang, *Letters* 837 (24 May 1877).

¹³⁰ Lang, *Letters* 813 (11 Feb. 1877).

(The 1904 collected edition, the *Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, restores the final two lines of this stanza, but still leaves the sixth line as a row of asterisks.)

The age had not loosened up all that much, as the activity of the Society for the Suppression of Vice indicates. Founded in 1802, it had originally interested itself in profanation of the Sabbath, the publication of obscene and blasphemous books, and in taking action against betting shops and race-courses. By the mid Victorian era its focus was obscene literature, and it was behind much of the information and drafting for Lord Campbell's Obscene Publications Act in 1857.¹³¹ It had shown no interest in Swinburne but in the 1870s tried to suppress Rabelais and Boccaccio and there had been a controversy between the Secretary of the Society and Swinburne's friend Joseph Knight in the pages of the *Sunday Times* in 1874.¹³² Swinburne wrote to Chatto, hoping that he would resist the Society's attempts to interfere with his publication of a Rabelais with Doré illustrations. (But, he added, the reflections that had been made on Chatto's reissue of some seventeenth century titles, *Rump Songs* and *Musarum Deliciae* were not entirely groundless. These books 'are undoubtedly very dirty, very dull, and of no literary value ... therefore the frequent issue of such reprints would be likely to give a rising firm a somewhat unsavoury reputation, such as I should be sorry my publisher should incur...' Chatto entirely agreed – he had inherited these facsimile reprints from Hotten – 'such books,' he told Swinburne, 'are better avoided by a house who has its way to make.'¹³³ The following year the controversy spread to the *Athenaeum* with Swinburne suggesting in his heavily ironic vein that on its own criteria the Society should suppress the Bible too.¹³⁴

A further indication that Swinburne of the 1870s was rather different to the Swinburne of the 1860s is seen in his reaction to Zola. Between 9 July 1876 and 7 Jan 1877 Zola's *L'Assommoir* was published in *République des Lettres*. Swinburne was horrified by the novel and wrote to the *Athenaeum* to protest, sounding like some

¹³¹ M.J.D. Roberts, 'Making Victorian morals? The Society for the Suppression of Vice and its Critics, 1802-1886,' *Australian Historical Studies*, 21 (1984), pp.153-173.

¹³² *Sunday Times*, 28 June 1874, p.2; 12 July 1874, p.2 and p.7; 19 July 1874, p.2.

¹³³ Lang, *Letters* 540 (24 July [1874]); Meyers, *Letters* 540A (25 July 1874).

¹³⁴ Lang, *Letters* 619 (26 May 1875).

outraged curate from the provinces, not a European man of letters. Zola's novel (though not his character, Swinburne was at pains to point out) was

... comparable only for physical and moral abomination to such works as, by all men's admission, it is impossible to call into such a court as the present, and there bring them forward as sole fit subjects of comparison; for the simple and sufficient reason, that the mention of their very names in print is generally, and not unnaturally, considered to be of itself an obscene outrage on all literary law and prescription of propriety.

To bring proof that I have said no harsh or unjustifiable word on this subject is – unluckily for myself, and obviously to my reader – a thing utterly out of the question. To transcribe the necessary extracts would for me – I speak seriously, and within bounds – would for me be physically impossible. For the editor of any known publication in England to print them would be morally impossible. But this much, I think, it is but proper and necessary to say of them. They are divisible into two equally horrible and loathsome classes. Under the one head I rank such passages as deal with physical matters which might almost have turned the stomach of Dean Swift. The other class consists of those which contain such details of brutality and atrocity practised on a little girl, as would necessitate the interpolation of such a line as follows in the police report of any and every newspaper in London: – ‘The further details given in support of the charge of cruelty were too revolting for publication in our columns.’

One question remains to ask: Whether anything can justify, whether anything can excuse, the appearance of such a book as this again...¹³⁵

The spoof review that Swinburne had submitted to the *Spectator* in 1862 comes to mind. But this was no burlesque: by 1877 he was entirely serious and even wrote to Lord Houghton about ‘Zola's damnable dunghill of a book.’¹³⁶ *L'Assommoir* [‘The Drinking-Shop’] deals with rough, working class life; significantly the major theme of

¹³⁵ *Athenaeum*, 16 June 1870, p.768. Reprinted in Lang, *Letters* 864 ([?7 June 1877]).

¹³⁶ Lang, *Letters* 866 ([8 June 1877]).

the book is the destructive and degrading effect of addiction to alcohol. Swinburne had been a notorious drunkard almost as long as he had been famous, but now was rapidly descending into the alcoholism that the following year almost killed him. This violent reaction to the book seems more explicable in such a context.

If 'fleshliness' goes from Swinburne's poetry from the early 1870s, 'blasphemy' persisted a little longer. The sonnets that Ellis would not print in *Songs before Sunrise* were not forgotten. In early 1873 the editor of the *Examiner* approached Swinburne asking for contributions, and was quite happy in principle to print a condemnation of the recently deceased Napoleon III, promising to make no changes to the text he was given.¹³⁷ Perhaps he had forgotten those published in the *Fortnightly Review* four years earlier which *Tinsley's Magazine* had been so thankful were not reprinted in *Songs before Sunrise*.¹³⁸ The series of sonnets began appearing in the *Examiner* from March 1873 with the title 'Dirae,' including those that had so upset Gabriel Rossetti and which Ellis had refused to print. 'The Saviour of Society' brought a protest in the *Spectator* at 'a deadly and indecent insult to the faith of the vast majority of Christians' and at 'this horrible attempt to outrage the most tender and sensitive of religious associations.'¹³⁹ The first of this pair of sonnets opens:

O son of man, but of what man who knows?
 That broughtest healing on thy leathern wings
 To priests, and under them didst gather kings,
 And madest friends to thee of all men's foes ...

Throughout Napoleon is scornfully pilloried as 'the Saviour of Society.' The ensuing uproar led Bourne the editor to delay publication of the next of the series, Swinburne to write to the *Spectator* and for the *Examiner* to print two of his letters in his own defence. Swinburne claimed that the *Spectator* asserted his sonnet was attacking Jesus, rather than Napoleon III. But reading Hutton's relatively few words it seems clear that

¹³⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 469A (8 Mar. 1873); 470A (17 Mar. 1873).

¹³⁸ 'Songs before Sunrise,' *Tinsley's Magazine*, June 1871, pp.561-562.

¹³⁹ *Spectator* 24 May 1873, p.655.

he was protesting against a parody – implying that the imagery was offensive, not the object of the attack.¹⁴⁰

Two years later Swinburne was collecting his political verse for his first new volume of poetry with Chatto, bringing together the ‘Song of Italy,’ the ‘Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic’ and ‘Dirae.’ Watts had misgivings about ‘The Saviour of Society’ but these were brushed aside.¹⁴¹ If Chatto had doubts these are unrecorded, though he will have known that the *Song of Italy* had not sold well. But by now the storm about the ‘Dirae’ had blown over: there were just two reviews of the new volume and the author of one these was the youthful Edmund Gosse, an eager new friend of the poet (who wrote: ‘if these sonnets are not great I do not know what it is that constitutes poetical greatness’); the second was a brief notice in the *Academy* which remarked of the ‘Dirae’ that when political foes were dug up to be exposed on the dunghill or gibbet this was the office of the hangman, not of great poets, but made no harsher comment than that.¹⁴² But thereafter Swinburne’s willingness to offend religious sensibilities was no more flourished in the public’s face.

Swinburne’s other substantial publications of these years, *Bothwell* (1874), and *Erechtheus* (1876) displayed none of the fleshliness, blasphemy or offensiveness that had come to be expected of him. The *Saturday Review* which had been consistently hostile since John Morley’s article on *Poems and Ballads* eight years earlier wrote of *Bothwell* that ‘... we welcome the reappearance of Mr. Swinburne clothed and in his right mind.’¹⁴³ Since *Chastelard* and *Atalanta in Calydon* a decade before had broadly similar settings to these two – mid sixteenth century Scotland and classical Greece – and one had been assailed for its sensuousness and the other for its atheism, it was not the case that these new works simply offered no opportunity.

¹⁴⁰ *Examiner*, 7 June 1873, pp.585-586 reprinted in Lang, *Letters* 481 [2 June 1873].

¹⁴¹ Lang, *Letters* 592 (24 Jan. 1875).

¹⁴² Edmund W. Gosse, ‘Mr Swinburne’s New Volume,’ *Examiner*, 27 Mar. 1875, pp.354-35; *Academy*, 10 Apr. 1875, p.371.

¹⁴³ *Saturday Review*, 6 June 1874, pp.719-721.

Essays and Studies, published in 1875, reprinted various articles Swinburne had published mainly in the *Fortnightly Review* since 1867, plus introductions to selections from Byron and Coleridge. The critical response was gratifying although not only the *Spectator* noted ‘the grotesque vehemence of his invective ... his often unmeasured praise, which he endeavours to make more intense by crowding adjective upon adjective.’¹⁴⁴ Swinburne’s loves and hates never mellowed; nor did his style improve with the years. (In fact it worsened. In 1902 *Punch* satirised his intemperate prose in a parody.)¹⁴⁵ But shortly after *Essays and Studies* was published, Swinburne’s critical writing came under attack from a more technical standpoint. The *Fortnightly Review* published a couple of his articles on ‘The Three Stages of Shakespeare’ where Swinburne argued against Fletcher having a large contribution to *Henry VIII* because the play did not, so he said, contain the triple terminations that were a feature of Fletcher’s style.¹⁴⁶ This brought a letter from F.J. Furnivall, founder of the New Shakspeare [sic] Society with a list of words in the play with triple terminations.¹⁴⁷ Swinburne penned a lengthy reply, some 3,000 words of heavy irony. It claimed that many of Furnivall’s words were metrically disyllabic, made fun of ‘Parnassian pedagogues’ who count with their fingers, and generally ladled on the sarcasm in generous measure. The letter opens:

The courtesy with which Mr Furnivall has referred to my critical studies in the field of Elizabethan poetry seems to me to claim such recognition at my hands as may be implied by the infraction of a rule which I find it generally necessary to observe; the rule which warns us to refrain from answering the answers, criticising the criticisms and commentating on the commentaries which any work or word of our own may have elicited from others. Not only a conviction of the wisdom of this rule, but a deep sense of my own inadequacy to contend with the neo-Shakespearian school of commentators on their own peculiar ground of metre, withholds me on principle from entering into debate which turns upon a

¹⁴⁴ *Spectator*, 3 July 1875, pp. 855-857.

¹⁴⁵ ‘An Imaginary Correspondence’, *Punch*, 30 July 1902, p.60.

¹⁴⁶ *Fortnightly Review*, May 1875, pp.613-632; Jan. 1876, pp.24-22.

¹⁴⁷ *Academy*, 8 Jan. 1876, pp.34-35.

question of verbal music – the harmonies or the melodies of verse. Upon this subject I would not presume to join issue...¹⁴⁸

In not observing his own principle in this case – and Watts told Swinburne that he thought Furnivall's 'first letter was couched in a language too respectful and was altogether too urbane in its temper to quite merit the scornful tone of yours',¹⁴⁹ – Swinburne set going a feud that was played out in London's literary papers on this and kindred matters for the next five years, with each party becoming more abusive of the other. In part it was a collision between a new technical, critical tool (where Swinburne proved to be wrong in matters of detail) and more traditional criticism; in part it was just the clash of two exceptionally difficult, strong-minded, temperaments.¹⁵⁰

If the nature of Swinburne's poetry changed over the period from the appearance of *Poems and Ballads* in 1866 to his retreat to Putney in 1879 as the licentious poet became less fleshly, the reputation remained: Gilbert and Sullivan's 1881 satire on the Aesthetic movement, *Patience*, features 'Reginald Bunthorne, a fleshly poet' whose very name is surely an echo of Algernon Swinburne. The print-runs for Swinburne's major works at this time show that *Poems and Ballads*, the most 'fleshly' of his volumes, was his most popular work with some 10,000 printed between 1866 and 1878. Whatever the critics might have said, this was what sold and what maintained his reputation. In 1876 Swinburne suggested to Chatto that some of his more youthful works from that volume should be extracted and added to *The Queen Mother and Rosamund* to create a new volume, which would also have some hitherto unpublished early poems.¹⁵¹ Since *Poems and Ballads* remained Swinburne's best seller for the rest of his life Chatto was probably wise not to follow up this suggestion. The books of political poetry, *Songs before Sunrise* and *Songs of Two Nations* were in less demand: the print run of 1,000 copies of the first of these lasted six years; the same run for the second was sufficient for almost twenty years. There were to be no more

¹⁴⁸ Lang, *Letters* 686 (10 Jan. 1876).

¹⁴⁹ Meyers, *Letters* 703A (6 Feb. 1876).

¹⁵⁰ Oscar Maurer, 'Swinburne vs. Furnivall: a case study in Aesthetic vs. Scientific criticism,' *Studies in English*, 31 (1952) pp.86-96.

¹⁵¹ Lang, *Letters* 752 (20 July [1876]).

volumes dedicated entirely to political verse; but nor were there to be further volumes of ‘fleshly poetry’ whatever the titles of *Poems and Ballads, second series* and *Poems and Ballads, third series* seemed to promise in 1878 and 1889 respectively.

The move to Putney in 1879 following his breakdown can be seen as the watershed in Swinburne’s career, with the restored and reformed poet saved from the bottle but thereafter less inspired, and diverted from the subjects that had brought him fame. There were changes – and some striking continuities too – in Swinburne’s poetry over the remaining thirty years of his life, but much of this was already apparent long before the Putney years. The critical reception of the volumes published at the end of the 1870s, *Bothwell*, *Erechtheus*, *Essays and Studies* and *Poems and Ballads, second series* was perhaps the high point of his contemporary reputation. Yet it was still the scandalous volume of 1866 that was his best-selling work.

Chapter 3: The Role of the Periodical Press

The Victorian period saw a huge growth of the periodical press thanks to technical developments in printing and to changes in taxation, both of which made newspapers and journals cheaper to produce and sell; and, later in the century, thanks also to the extension of literacy to most of the population. Periodicals reported news and gossip; they serialised novels; they printed poetry; they discussed, analysed and indeed shaped the issues of the day; many of them reviewed, some extensively. This was not an ephemeral activity. At the end of the century George Saintsbury, journalist, critic, and by then Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh (and, as it happens a contemporary reviewer of, and strong partisan for, Swinburne) remarked: ‘... perhaps there is no single feature [of the Victorian period] ... not even the enormous popularization and multiplication of the novel, which is so distinctive and characteristic as the development in it of periodical literature ... More than half the most valuable books of the age in some departments, and a considerable minority of the most valuable in others, would never have appeared as books at all.’¹

The importance of the periodical press for Swinburne can scarcely be over emphasised. Nearly all his prose works with the exception of the monograph on *William Blake* – and he had begun that as a review² – were published initially as journal articles or as introductions to other editions and were only then collected together into volumes, principally *Essays and Studies* (1875), *Miscellanies* (1886) and *Studies in Prose and Poetry* (1894). What may be more surprising is that a significant part of the content of the volumes of poetry – almost a third of an estimated six hundred poems – first appeared in the extensive Victorian periodical press before being collected in book form sometime later, usually with only the lightest revision. The proportion was at its highest in the later volumes: with about 80% of *Astrophel* (1894) and 75% of *A Channel Passage* (1904) having already appeared elsewhere.

¹ George Saintsbury, *A History of Nineteenth Century Literature* (New York and London : Macmillan and Co., 1896) p.166.

² Lang , *Letters* 51 (15 December [1863]).

As well as publishing him the press made and reflected Swinburne's reputation by reviewing his books.³ It was such attention from journals, magazines and newspapers that created reputations: consequently reviewing was a significant matter. This chapter examines reviewing first, and then moves on to consider Swinburne's own extensive periodical publication.

(a) Reviewing

Early in the century the main reviewing journals had been the quarterlies, the Whig *Edinburgh Review* (1802), its Tory rival, the *Quarterly Review* (1809) and, founded a little later, the radical *Westminster Review* (1824). In addition to their political articles, literature was dealt with in depth and at length, but their influence declined throughout the Victorian period (although they all survived into the twentieth century). When John Churton Collins made an incisive attack on Swinburne's prose writings in the course of an article in the October 1885 *Quarterly Review*, demolishing J.A. Symonds's recent volume on Shakespeare's predecessors, Swinburne missed it. He only caught up a year later when the author unwisely drew it to his attention, and then asked Gosse to track him down a copy. 'Can anything be funnier than the assumption of a writer in the *Quarterly*, the *Westminster*, the *Edinburgh* or any other Review which was of more or less note in the days of our fathers, that the authorship of an article in one of these organs must be known to persons who in fact were unaware of its existence?' he asked.⁴

The reason for the decline of these titles' influence was a very significant increase in reviewing journals over the period: there were far more of them, and they appeared much more frequently. New weekly titles included the *Examiner* (1808), the *Athenaeum* (1828), the *Spectator* (1828) and the *Saturday Review* (1855). Then there were a group of monthlies: the misleadingly named *Fortnightly Review* (1865) which

³ Annex 3 provides an extensive list of the contemporary reviews of Swinburne's books arranged by title of the reviewing journal or newspaper. Where possible it identifies anonymous reviewers; and it documents the source of these attributions.

⁴ Lang, *Letters* 1396 (29 Oct. 1886).

became monthly from 1866 onwards, the *Contemporary Review* (1866), the *Academy* (1869) which was weekly from 1873, and the monthly *Nineteenth Century* (1877). Of these neither the highly serious *Fortnightly*, which in its early years tempered its earnestness with serialised fiction, nor the equally highbrow *Nineteenth Century*, twin summits of the ‘higher journalism’ were comprehensive reviewers. The *Athenaeum* certainly aimed – at least by its later Victorian heyday – to cover all significant literature. There were many other new major nineteenth century journals, particularly publishers’ titles from the sixties and seventies such as *Macmillan’s Magazine* (1859), the *Cornhill Magazine* (1860) and *Tinsley’s Magazine* (1867) which could be described as more middlebrow; they might review, but it was not their real focus which was entertainment. At the end of the century came a proliferation of popular illustrated magazines, of which the *English Illustrated Magazine* (1883) was the first aimed at a wide, general readership; these titles did not review.

The critical journals appealed to a narrower audience than the publishers’ magazines or to the new illustrated magazines of the 1880s and 1890s. But there was one other important source for reviews with a potentially much wider readership, which was the newspaper press. This meant, first of all, London. The *Times* was anything but a systematic reviewer, and much the same could be said of the *Standard*, the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Daily News*. The explanation for this was that literary criticism for them was incidental and not a priority. But they did all print reviews and those in the *Times* enjoyed the authority of the paper’s establishment standing. (It is significant that Moxon’s told Swinburne that they were withdrawing *Poems and Ballads* because of a threatened attack from the *Times*.)⁵ Much more regular and conscientious in its coverage than the dailies was the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a London evening title founded in 1865 which aimed specifically to combine the features of a daily paper with those of a literary journal. But because rapid, national distribution of London daily titles did not become possible until late in the nineteenth century, outside of the capital the provincial press remained important for much of Swinburne’s career. These titles might lift news and gossip from London titles, but did not simply copy or quote reviews; many wrote their own. In some instances criticism could be detailed and authoritative: the *Glasgow*

⁵ Lang, *Letters* 125 (13 Aug. 1866).

Herald's coverage of Swinburne in the 1870s and 1880s is particularly noteworthy. (Much of it may have been supplied by his old friend, John Nichol.) But it needs to be kept in mind that provincial reviewing had little influence outside of its immediate area. The *Glasgow Herald* did not circulate in London.

An initial stage in the reviewing process would be the dispatch of the new volume to the press by its publisher. There are just two lists for Swinburne's works in the Chatto files (although the files contain references to review lists for several of his other books these are missing); both surviving lists are from the later part of his career. *Poems and Ballads, third series* went to the *Spectator*, *St James' Gazette*, *Athenaeum*, *Academy*, *Times*, *Standard*, *Scotsman*, *Morning Post*, *Manchester Examiner*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Saturday Review* and the *Scots Observer*. 'We have omitted several good papers to which we usually send free copies – in accordance with your request' Chatto told Watts in 1889. 'Kindly let us have it back with any alterations or additions.'⁶ Five years later in 1894 *Studies in Prose and Poetry* (a collection of previously published journal articles) was sent to the *Manchester Guardian*, *Bookman*, *Daily News*, *Westminster Gazette*, *Standard*, *Scotsman*, *Speaker*, *Morning Post*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Leeds Mercury*, *Academy*, *Times*, *Spectator*, *Daily Chronicle*, *Saturday Review*, *Illustrated London News*, *Athenaeum*, *Literary World*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Graphic*, *Morning Leader*, *Guardian*, *Tablet*, *St James' Gazette*, and the *Pall Mall Gazette*.⁷

Apart from these lists there is nothing further to show where review copies were sent, since whether or not they were supplied did not determine whether or not that paper ran a review. In 1882 and 1886 Swinburne had specifically instructed Chatto not to send review copies of *Tristram of Lyonesse and other poems* or the *Study of Victor Hugo* to the *Spectator* or to the *Saturday Review* ('whether asked for or not' in the case of the second book),⁸ apparently antagonised by what he viewed as their consistent hostility towards him. Both the *Spectator* and the *Saturday Review* covered *Tristram* – positively as it happens.⁹ At first sight there are some striking omissions from Chatto's

⁶ Chatto Letter Book 22/521 (12 Mar. 1889).

⁷ Chatto Letter Book 30/337 (24 Oct. 1894). These two lists are tabulated at Annex 9 below.

⁸ Chatto Letter Book 16/113 (12 July 1882), Lang, *Letters* 1358 (14 Feb. 1886).

⁹ *Saturday Review*, 29 July 1882, pp.156-157; *Spectator*, 12 Aug. 1882, pp.1055-1057.

two lists: the *Fortnightly Review*, and the *Nineteenth Century* are in neither and the *Pall Mall Gazette* is missing from the first. Yet both the *Saturday Review* and the *Spectator* are there, doubtless restored to favour thanks to those unexpectedly warm reviews; while at the time of the first list the temperamental poet was feuding with the *Pall Mall* but by 1894, W.T. Stead, its editor from 1883 to 1890, had moved on.¹⁰ The two heavyweight monthlies are missing not because Swinburne was on bad terms with either of them (he was himself being published in both) but because literary reviewing was not their main business and only a very few volumes were noticed.

On receipt of a volume the editor might pass it to a staff reviewer; he might review it himself; he might entrust it to a third party. In 1861 the *Athenaeum* gave Swinburne's very first volume, *The Queen Mother and Rosamund*, to Henry Chorley. Chorley had been taken on in 1833 and reviewed prolifically for over thirty years on almost any subject.¹¹ A new volume by an unknown name was, not unnaturally, given to a hack. Watts joined the staff in 1876 and wrote all except one of the reviews of Swinburne's works for the next twenty years. In between Chorley and Watts came a variety of names, with several reviews written by the editor.¹² Joseph Knight became their drama critic from 1868,¹³ and presumably it was in that capacity that he reviewed *Bothwell* and *Erechtheus* before Watts joined the paper, although the *Heptalogia*, Swinburne's volume of parodies published anonymously in 1881 some years after Watts' arrival, also went to him. Again, Knight's career as a reviewer of Swinburne was a long one, probably even longer than that of Watts, from early *Sunday Times* pieces in the 1860s to the turn of the century with those in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Between *Atalanta* in 1865 and *Locrine* in 1888 no less than nine reviews of Swinburne in the *Spectator* were written by its editor, Richard Holt Hutton, and it is by no means impossible that some of the others there were from his pen too.

¹⁰ Joseph O. Baylen, 'Swinburne and the *Pall Mall Gazette*', *Research Studies*, v.36 no.4 (Dec. 1968), pp.325-334. During Stead's tenure Swinburne referred to the *Pall Mall Gazette* as 'the *Dunghill Gazette*.' But he still read it and ensured he saw it while away on holiday: Lang, *Letters* 1382 ([12 July 1886]); 1439(6 Aug. 1887).

¹¹ Leslie A Marchand, *The Athenaeum; a mirror of Victorian culture* (University of North Carolina Press, 1941), pp.182-193.

¹² *Athenaeum* reviewers are identified in Annex 3.

¹³ Marchand, p.226 .

A fourth option for an editor was to consider a review offered by someone without formal links to their paper. Following the uproar over *Poems and Ballads* in the late summer of 1866, William Rossetti wrote a lengthy article in its defence destined, he thought, for the *North American Review* from whose editor, Charles Eliot Norton, he believed he had an open invitation for contributions. He then discovered that Norton had published a hostile article by James Lowell covering *Chastelard* and *Atalanta* in his April 1866 issue, and soon heard from Norton himself that he himself was by no means sympathetic to Swinburne:

I fear that your regard for the author and admiration of his powers may lead you, in the warmth of championship, to go farther in his defence of in assertion of his merits than the severe critical judgement of a Transatlantic Editor (the impersonation of posterity!) will allow him to accompany you ... Whatever of power, imagination, melody or beauty there may be in the sensualist school is of the same nature with the charm of the Siren's songs. It is not good art; – I am puritan enough to believe that good art cannot exist without good morals...¹⁴

Norton added, just over a month later:

Anything you write comes commended to me not only by its intrinsic merit but by my cordial regard for yourself – and you may be sure that I shall gladly publish your paper in the *Review*, unless the necessity of preserving a general consistency of tone on its critical judgements should be violated by so doing.¹⁵

Maintaining that consistency would have been impossible, Rossetti did not press his case. Fortunately he had no need to hawk the article around English editors as Hotten had already suggested publishing it as a pamphlet and they quickly reached agreement. The terms were £15 to Rossetti and half of any profits, with Hotten paying the

¹⁴ Peattie, *Letters* 105 (30 Sept. [1866]) footnote 1: quoting letter from Norton dated 12 Sept. 1866.

¹⁵ Peattie, *Letters* 108 (7 Oct. [1866]) footnote 16: quoting letter from Norton dated 18 Oct. 1866.

expenses.¹⁶ (This may be the only case recorded of how much a nineteenth century review of Swinburne commanded.)

Two years earlier William Rossetti's advocacy of Swinburne had proved unacceptable to another editor. He relates that he offered the *Pall Mall Gazette* a critique of *Atalanta* but 'it was considered too exuberant in praise, and not inserted.'¹⁷ His submission had overlapped with an expression of interest from Froude, editor of *Fraser's Magazine*, who wrote that he would 'trust your judgement about *Atalanta*, and leave you free to say what you like about it.' But by the time Rossetti knew the *Pall Mall Gazette* was uninterested in what he had written it was too late and Froude had another reviewer lined up.¹⁸

Froude's comment to Rossetti could be read as 'I'll publish your review of *Atalanta* whatever you say,' with the implication that most other editors would expect a contributor to take a particular line. A more likely reading is that he was saying: 'I think I know that I'll agree with what you are likely to write.' Norton cannot have been the only editor seeking consistency of tone, and just as he was not going to publish something that violated it, neither, surely, was Froude. And in Froude's case we can see the editor not only setting the tone but also shaping the article and even dictating words. His reviewer for *Poems and Ballads* was John Skelton who had begun writing for *Fraser's Magazine* some years before under the pseudonym 'Shirley.' Skelton later printed extracts from two letters Froude had sent him on this controversial volume. 'You are coming round to my opinion of Swinburne,' Froude wrote in August 1866. '... I have looked at his late poems, but have not got a copy of them.' A few days later he had:

Since I wrote you I have seen Swinburne's volume, and also the *Saturday* and the *Athenaeum* reviews of it. There is much, of course, which is highly objectionable in it, but much also of real beauty. He convinces me in fact for the first time that he has real stuff in him, and I think, considering the fatuous stupidity with which

¹⁶ *Rossetti Papers* (Diary entries for 16 Oct. 1866, 17 Oct. 1866), pp.193-194.

¹⁷ *Rossetti Papers*, pp.63-64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.64. (Letter dated 21 Nov. [1864]).

the critics have hitherto flattered him, considering that he is still very young, and that the London intellectual life is perhaps the very worst soil which has ever existed in the world for a young poet to be planted in, — considering all this, I am very unwilling to follow the crew of Philistines, and bite his heels like the rest of them. The *Saturday Review* temperament is ten thousand thousand times more damnable than the worst of Swinburne's skits. **Modern respectability is so utterly without God, faith, heart; it shows so singular ingenuity in assailing and injuring everything that is noble and good, and so systematic a preference for what is mean and paltry, that I am not surprised at a young fellow dashing his heels into the face of it.** If he is to be cut up for what he has done, I would lay the blame far more heavily on others than on him, and I would select and especially praise the many things which highly deserve praise. **When there is any kind of true genius, we have no right to drive it mad. We must deal with it wisely, justly, fairly.**¹⁹

Skelton made this the basis of his extensive review of about 6,500 words, praising Swinburne's strengths while still attacking what he found highly objectionable (he called for a number of poems to be suppressed), and particularly lambasting the general critical response. His review even incorporated some of his editor's sentences (those marked above with a contrasting font) word for word into his text.²⁰

The most famous attack on *Poems and Ballads* was that contributed by John Morley to the *Saturday Review* – one of those reviews to which Froude had particularly objected.²¹ And this too appears to have had a major editorial input. Beresford Hope, the paper's proprietor, wrote to a friend who had taken Froude's line in supporting Swinburne:

¹⁹ [John Skelton] *The Table Talk of Shirley*, (William Blackwood and Sons: London and Edinburgh, 1895), pp.136-137.

²⁰ [John Skelton] 'Mr Swinburne and his critics,' *Fraser's Magazine*, Nov. 1866, pp.635-648. The marked sentences are used on p.635 and p.636.

²¹ [John Morley] *Saturday Review*, 4 Aug. 1866, pp.145-147.

I don't at all agree with you in your condemnation of the review of Swinburne. Such a brute as he is both as author and man had to be squelched and you can't squelch a toad with rose-water. J.D. Cook [the *Saturday Review*'s editor] did the thing deliberately, ordered the review and consulted Scott²² on the article when written; and afterwards, from real anxiety to have done what was right, consulted me as to whether he had gone too far in his quotations. I decided he had not, agreeing with his and Scott's view that it was necessary to prove his case in order to make good the condemnation.²³

It is tempting to suppose that Morley, relatively young (at 28 a year younger than Swinburne) and with his way to make in the world, followed the editorial line and penned the damning review as instructed, but not entirely from conviction. For, less than six months later, as soon as he became an editor himself, he was soliciting a contribution to the *Fortnightly Review*, and from that time on published Swinburne's verse and prose there on a regular basis.²⁴ And six years later he told the poet 'I have regretted both my tone and the jist of the criticism ever since.'²⁵ Yet his review was not simply a cynical, written-to-order demolition. Its striking omission was that it made no reference to the blasphemy which so many of the other critics found in *Poems and Ballads*, suggesting his independence from the High Church Hope and the Rev. William Scott, who would surely have seen this as a justified charge. Morley, later notorious for printing 'god' with a lower-case 'g' in the *Fortnightly*, was a freethinker.²⁶

Because a review was published does not entail that it appeared in the exact form that it left the reviewer. The very first issue of the *Fortnightly Review* contained a

²² The Rev. William Scott was one of the paper's founders, and a frequent contributor.

²³ Henry William Law and Irene Law, *Book of the Beresford Hopes* (London: Heath Cranton Limited, 1925) p.225.

²⁴ Meyers, *Letters* 177A (31 Jan. 1867).

²⁵ Meyers, *Letters* 426A (25 Aug. 1872).

²⁶ J. Mordaunt Crook, 'Hope, Alexander James Beresford Beresford (1820–1887).' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13713>>; David Hamer, 'Morley, John, Viscount Morley of Blackburn (1838–1923).' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35110>>. Accessed 23 Jan. 2010.

review of *Atalanta* by J. Leicester Warren, Lord de Tabley, himself a published poet, a piece remarkable chiefly for overlooking the remarkable choruses and for its condescension to the author.²⁷ Gosse claims that the editor, G.H. Lewes, had toned down Warren's enthusiasm and introduced 'one or two slighting phrases.'²⁸ This is possible, though in this particular instance it sounds like one of Gosse's embroideries because the *Fortnightly*'s advertising was making such a big thing of this new journal being one whose independent writers signed their articles.²⁹ But the point here is that Gosse, with much experience as a journalist from the 1870s onwards, supposed it entirely possible.

In the course of his editorship of the *Fortnightly Review* from 1867 to 1882 Morley published just over thirty poems, reviews and articles by Swinburne. Surviving correspondence shows him cutting away at Swinburne's review 'Matthew Arnold's *New Poems*':

I am much obliged to you for your ready compliance with the excision of the French extract³⁰ – and the fragment about English anonymous critics. You will receive the entire MS along with the proof – so that you will see precisely what has been done. I hope that you will, if you can, cut out a page or two more in the proof – in the shape of extracts from Arnold, or otherwise. It will be a great favour to me if you can.³¹

Swinburne agreed with very little fuss, remarking to William Rossetti that it had been 'squeezed into shape for a periodical which it would otherwise have overweighted.'³² Morley had quickly won his confidence.

²⁷ J. Leicester Warren, *Fortnightly Review*, 13 May 1865, pp.75-80.

²⁸ Edmund Gosse, *Critical Kit-Kats* (William Heinemann, London: 1896), pp.196-197.

²⁹ *Athenaeum*, 25 Mar. 1865, p.436.

³⁰ A long quotation in French from a 'French critic' (doubtless written by Swinburne himself), that confirms Swinburne's judgement that Arnold is no judge of French poetry, survives on pp 438-439

³¹ Meyers, *Letters* 218A (15 Sept. 1867).

³² Lang, *Letters* 220 (17 Sept. 1867).

Signed articles were such a noteworthy feature of the new *Fortnightly* because this was by no means the general rule in the Victorian press. Until the 1860s when *Macmillan's*, the *Cornhill*, the *Fortnightly* and the *Contemporary Review* abandoned it, anonymity was the norm. Other significant titles – the *Spectator*, *Athenaeum* and *Saturday Review* maintained anonymity to the end of the century, as did the newspaper press.³³ Swinburne's earliest journalism, his contributions to the *Spectator* in 1862, were published unsigned and these were not identified until the turn of the century by Gosse (who also misattributed an additional review),³⁴ though his seven poems in the same paper that year appeared with his name.

The case against anonymity was made by Morley in an article in September 1867.³⁵ His argument there was that a signature entails responsibility, and prevents the journalist from making *ex cathedra* judgements while sheltering behind the journal's name and reputation. Swinburne wrote to Morley (perhaps having read this – his letter has not been found) and Morley replied:

About anonymous criticism, by the way, pray do not suppose that I differ from you by a hairsbreadth as to its evil and substantial unworthiness. The system is full of mischief – and one great reason why I labour for the success of the *Fortnightly* is the hope that we may make some way against the prevalent superstition. But if you will permit me to speak frankly, I think you are wrong in pouring invective upon 'critics.' Many of them, I agree, deserve any contempt which they are fortunate enough to attract. But the rest of us are anonymous because we cannot help ourselves. I write in only one paper (besides the *Fortnightly*) [i.e. the *Saturday Review*] and there I may not sign my name: but never disown an article...³⁶

³³ Oscar Maurer, Jr., 'Anonymity vs. Signature in Victorian Reviewing', *University of Texas Studies in English* 26 (June 1948), pp.1-27.

³⁴ W.D. Paden, 'Swinburne, the *Spectator* in 1862 and Walter Bagehot,' in *Six Studies in Nineteenth Century English Literature and Thought* ed. by H.Orel and G.J. Worth (Lawrence: University of Kansas Publications, 1962), pp.91-115.

³⁵ John Morley, 'Anonymous Journalism', *Fortnightly Review*, Sept. 1867, pp.287-292.

³⁶ Meyers, *Letters* 218A (15 Sept 1867).

Doubtless the explanation in Morley's case was financial necessity: he needed money and only anonymous publication was available. In his article he went on to claim that in the *Saturday Review*, the *Spectator* and *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Economist* there was in practice no anonymity. 'The general public may not know who are their instructors, but each of these writers has a circle of friends who know perfectly well what he writes, and to whose opinion therefore he is virtually responsible. It is, for one thing, because they are in fact not anonymous that their general tone is so respectable.'³⁷

It is interesting to speculate whether Morley thought as he wrote this that Swinburne knew he had written that damning article on *Poems and Ballads* just over a year earlier in the *Saturday Review*. Certainly his name was in circulation within two months of its publication. William Rossetti told Swinburne in the first week of October 1866 that according to Hotten 'the article in the *Athenaeum* was written by one Lush, son of a Q.C. – in the *Saturday* by John Morley, and in the *Examiner* by Henry Morley'.³⁸ As it happens, while Hotten's second and third identifications were correct he was wrong about the first, which the *Athenaeum*'s file shows to have been contributed by Robert Buchanan.

In the early Victorian period there is evidence that anonymity allowed reviewers to recycle the same material in different journals.³⁹ There are a couple of cases where a critic reviewed one of Swinburne's volumes in different publications. Richard Holt Hutton, editor of the *Spectator* for over forty years from 1861, not only supplied articles, editorials and reviews to his own paper but also published elsewhere too. In April 1865 he had reviews of *Atalanta* both in the *Spectator* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*.⁴⁰ This was not a case of making a little go a long way: although the substance of these reviews is the same he has not simply recycled his words (or Swinburne's – both reviews quote from a chorus, but each from a different one.) And at the other end of Swinburne's career James Douglas reviewed each of the first two volumes of the

³⁷ *Ibid.* p.290.

³⁸ Peattie, *Letters* 108 (7 Oct. [1866]).

³⁹ Joanne Shattock, 'Spreading it thinly,' *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 9 (1976) pp.84-87.

⁴⁰ *Spectator*, 15 Apr. 1865, p.413; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 Apr. 1865, p.11.

Collected Edition: anonymously in the *Athenaeum* and signed with his name in the *Bookman*.⁴¹ Douglas, like Hutton, was scrupulous here in presenting reviews that although consistent in tone and judgement did not self-plagiarise.

Anonymity was open to abuse. Hepworth Dixon was a striking example, who not only reviewed most of his own books – some half a dozen – while editor of the *Athenaeum* 1853-69, but at his retirement had to be stopped by Dilke, the proprietor, from printing his self-written eulogy to himself.⁴² The run of reviews by Watts of Swinburne in the same paper over the course of twenty years attracted no comment on their authorship though if, as was claimed by Norman MacColl on his retirement in 1900 (having been editor since 1871) ‘Mr Watts-Dunton had been regarded as the author of all the reviews of poetry which appeared in the paper, and had incurred much undeserved obloquy in consequence,’⁴³ it was no secret in literary London. Watts could hardly claim to be an independent critic where Swinburne was concerned. Yet these articles are far from worthless: they constitute an extensive coverage of Swinburne’s later writing (which has been out of fashion and all but forgotten for the past century) and have particular interest because Swinburne undoubtedly discussed his poetry with Watts, and this must have shaped what Watts wrote. Watts had a broad and deep knowledge of English literature (Swinburne’s admiration was not simply the result of friendship and self-interest) and he did not abandon his critical faculties because he was reviewing his closest friend, though he was tactful in his dealing with what he could not praise.

Before he retired to live with Watts in Putney, Swinburne had guided other friendly critics. Gosse reports how Lord Houghton, when preparing his review of *Atalanta* was directed by Swinburne to refer the Greek elegiacs that precede the tragedy to Connop Thirlwall, Bishop of St David’s, (one of the noted Greek scholars of the day)

⁴¹ ‘The Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne, Vol. 1,’ *Athenaeum*, 123 (18 June 1904), pp.775-776; ‘Swinburne,’ [*Poems*, vol. 1] *Bookman*, July 1904, pp. 130-132; ‘Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne vol. 2’ *Athenaeum*, 124 (27 Aug. 1904) pp.264-265, ‘Songs before Sunrise.’ [*Poems*, vol. 2] *Bookman*, Sept. 1904, p.213.

⁴² Marchand, *Athenaeum*, pp.80, 88.

⁴³ *Bookman*, Mar. 1901, p.172 .

to ensure they were not overlooked.⁴⁴ Swinburne regularly read his latest poetry to friends before publication, and these might include critics. Joseph Knight was invited to a reading of *Bothwell*, and his review appeared in the *Athenaeum* a month later.⁴⁵ He was next invited to a reading of *Erechtheus* and the review again appeared a month later.⁴⁶ The impression given by the many reports of Swinburne's poetry readings were that they were just that – he did not talk about or introduce the poetry. But on this occasion Knight would have benefited from some hints. Swinburne read his review and wrote the following day to Gosse:

I am glad you find *Erechtheus* holds his own on further acquaintance. Is he, and am I, to have the pleasure of any public recognition at your hands? ... you are one of the very few critics whose reviews I care to read for any other reason than the amusement to be derived from such well-meant articles as that in yesterday's *Athenaeum*. "A translation from Euripides" !!!!!!! when a fourth form boy could see that as far as it can be said to be modelled after anybody it is modelled throughout after the earliest style of Aeschylus...⁴⁷

And to John Addington Symonds the same day he wrote:

I must send a line of acknowledgement to say how much more pleasure such a letter as yours gives me than any number of anonymous published reviews written by men who may be utterly incompetent to judge, and without right to hold, much less to express an opinion on the matter.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Gosse, *Life*, p.114. Letters to Milnes from the Bishop giving his opinion of them are in R. Wemyss Reid, *The Life, Letters and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton*, v.2.(London: Cassell, 1890), pp.138-140.

⁴⁵ Lang, *Letters* 515 (3 Apr [1874]); 'Mr Swinburne's *Bothwell*, ' *Athenaeum* 23 May 1874, pp.689-690

⁴⁶ Meyers, *Letters* M673B (11 Dec. [1875]); *Athenaeum*, 1 Jan. 1876, pp.13-14.

⁴⁷ Lang, *Letters* 682 (2 Jan. 1876).

⁴⁸ Meyers, *Letters* 683 (2 Jan. 1876).

He continued with some discussion of aspects of the poem in both letters. It was not just editors who directed their reviewers: signed reviews by Gosse and Symonds were shortly afterwards published in the *Examiner* and *Academy* respectively.⁴⁹

A danger of anonymous reviewing was that it facilitated both ‘puffing’ or ‘log-rolling’ and their opposite, ‘slating.’ This had been particularly prevalent in the Romantic period. In the early 1870s the charge of puffing was made against Swinburne and Gabriel Rossetti – though now anonymity (or rather pseudonymity) was a feature of the attack rather than part of the charge. Rossetti’s *Poems*, his first volume of original poetry (as opposed to poetry in translation) was published in April 1870; he had been very anxious about its reception and asked his friends for their active support in advance. John Skelton was requested to review the book in *Fraser’s Magazine*: ‘I am anxious that some influential article or articles by the well-affected should appear at once when the book comes out’, and offered advance proofs to facilitate this.⁵⁰ He asked his brother, William Rossetti to arrange a review by Morris. ‘Do you think the *Academy* would be available? And if so could you propose the thing to the editor.’⁵¹ He reminded Swinburne of a long-standing intention to write in the *Fortnightly*.⁵² Joseph Knight was pleased to help: ‘I rejoice to hear I am to have your support in the *Globe*’, wrote Rossetti, ‘and from knowledge of your well-enduring zeal, may I dare say, reckon on it too in the *Sunday Times*.’⁵³ He could – and not just there. A few weeks later Knight was suggesting to Ellis (Rossetti’s publisher) some more publications to which *Poems* might be sent, and reflected: ‘I have another review to write for the *Graphic*. Not easy to write three is it?’⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Examiner*, 8 Jan. 1876, pp.41-43; *Academy*, 8 Jan. 1876, pp.23-24.

⁵⁰ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.13 (3 Feb. 1870).

⁵¹ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.14 ([3 Feb. 1870]).

⁵² Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.22 (14 Feb. [1870]).

⁵³ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.60 ([19 Mar. 1870]).

⁵⁴ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.104A (16 Apr. 1870).

All this careful planning came to fruition and Rossetti's new volume was widely noticed.⁵⁵ That in itself was not particularly noteworthy; what was unusual was its effective orchestration. Even Swinburne could, in this case, see the likely objections to a review written by himself. 'As for your being a friend of his,' Morley reassured him, 'that is no reason why you should not both like his poetry and tell us why and how you like it and why the rest of discriminating people should do the same.'⁵⁶ So his rapturous article duly appeared in the May 1870 *Fortnightly Review* shortly after the appearance of Rossetti's *Poems*.⁵⁷

The attack did not come until October 1871 when the *Contemporary Review* published 'The Fleshly School of Poetry' which was written by Robert Buchanan but printed under the name 'Thomas Maitland.' It had two prongs: the 'fleshly' content of the poetry, and what Buchanan saw as the concerted hype of Rossetti's friends. He thought their influence spread widely:

When the *Athenaeum* ... advertised nearly every week some interesting particular about Mr Swinburne's health, Mr Morris's holiday-making or Mr Rossetti's genealogy, varied with such startling statements as 'We are informed that Mr Swinburne dashed off his noble ode *at a sitting*' or 'Mr Swinburne's songs have already reached a second edition ...' When the *Academy* informed us that 'During the past year or two Mr Swinburne has written several novels' (!) and that some review or other is to be praised for giving Mr Rossetti's poems 'the attentive study which they demand' ... the whole thing really looked like a leading business.⁵⁸

Rossetti wrote a detailed defence, first attacking Buchanan's weakest position, his attempted anonymity, then rebutting Buchanan's charge of 'fleshliness' with a line by

⁵⁵ These reviews are listed in: Fredeman, *Correspondence*, v.5 Appendix 5 pp.396-397. The three (unsigned) reviews that Knight published were: *Globe*, 20 Apr 1870, pp.1-2; *Sunday Times*, 1 May 1870, p.7; *Graphic*, 14 May 1870, p. 567.

⁵⁶ Meyers, *Letters* 343A (21 Feb. 1870) .

⁵⁷ 'The Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti,' *Fortnightly Review*, May 1870, pp.551-579.

⁵⁸ [Buchanan,] 'The Fleshly School of Poetry.

line examination of some of the poems. But he did not – and could not – say anything about the charge of puffing which was clearly justified at least as far as the organised support was concerned, whatever the merits of his writing.⁵⁹ The *Saturday Review* took up this point a few months later in an article entitled ‘Coterie Glory’, claiming in effect that what Buchanan labelled a ‘Mutual Admiration School’ could be justified in its self-regard. ‘The artist, whether in poetry or in painting, labours for the initiated; and the initiated in their turn, write their best about the poems and the pictures. In such a process there is nothing abnormal, nothing intentionally unfair, and we can hardly understand the wrath it has excited in some quarters ... But it is a truism to add that when coterie glory has been the cradle of true glory, the circle of friends must have consisted of exceptionally gifted and impartial judges.’⁶⁰ And this was what Buchanan denied: he viewed the glory as a sham and the judges as partial.

Swinburne went into attack with *Under the Microscope*, an entomological classification of critics which finished up with a sustained onslaught on Buchanan, where with much sarcasm, he praised the service done to letters by Buchanan’s exposure of the shameless reciprocal praise of the ‘mutual admiration society,’ praise which that group only bestowed outside their circle when motivated by sycophancy or self-interest.⁶¹ He then indicted Buchanan on a charge of covert self-praise. The pamphlet itself attracted very little interest, just one review on its publication, which felt its case was marred by coarse abuse.⁶² Swinburne was disappointed at this lack of response and complained to Joseph Knight who, once again, had been expected to give it a welcome in the press.

How is it (if I may ask without impropriety) that you have never given the least notice of my ‘microscopic’ pamphlet? I was particularly anxious that someone should point out that it was not, as the scum of comic and other journals asserted, a reply to or an attack on that son of a Scottish bitch who was merely noticed at the end, but an essay on criticism embodying some of my most carefully thought

⁵⁹ Rossetti, ‘The Stealthy School of Criticism’.

⁶⁰ ‘Coterie Glory,’ *Saturday Review*, 24 Feb. 1872, pp.239-240.

⁶¹ ‘Under the Microscope’ in *Swinburne Replies*, p.81.

⁶² ‘Mr Swinburne Among the Fleas,’ *Examiner*, 6 July 1872, pp.673-674.

and expressed opinions on some of the most important and most hotly debated poetical questions of the age. I confess its reception or rather non-reception has disappointed me.⁶³

When the essay on Rossetti's *Poems* was reprinted in *Essays and Studies* three years later in 1875 Swinburne returned to the charge of 'mutual admiration' in a calmer state. He made the point in his Preface that he had only reviewed Morris and Rossetti on two occasions and that neither of them had ever reviewed his work, and that far from being someone whose interests were confined to a narrow coterie his interests were in fact quite wide.⁶⁴ This was a fair response, though since his literary enthusiasms were set early, new authors and poets from the 1870s onwards seldom provoked his curiosity. His reviewing began in 1862 with Hugo's *Les Misérables* and Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* and he continued reviewing Hugo to Hugo's death in 1885 and beyond, since a number of volumes were published posthumously. A glance at the list of Swinburne's reviews⁶⁵ – barely thirty in a writing career of almost fifty years – shows that over half of them were of Victor Hugo's works. Despite Swinburne's tireless advocacy neither the English reading public nor the English literary world responded. Nor was it an enthusiasm that Watts could share with his friend. His review of Swinburne's *Study of Victor Hugo* which collects many of these articles is a judicious piece which manages to be appreciative of the volume while yet entirely disagreeing with Swinburne's estimate of Hugo's importance.⁶⁶ Baudelaire died in 1867, and *Les Fleurs du Mal* first issued in 1857 was in its second edition (1861) by the time Swinburne wrote about it. But aside from two articles on Vacquerie (who was a member of the Hugo circle) Swinburne did not return to review French literature. By the late 1860s, by which time he was a celebrity, he would have found little difficulty in placing reviews, so it is perhaps surprising to find just the four pieces on English writers, Morris, Arnold, Rossetti and John Nichol. Since he was short of money repeatedly until his retirement to Putney in 1878 reviewing does not appear to have been motivated by his financial needs. Of these four only Arnold was not a personal

⁶³ Meyers, *Letters* M430B (7 Oct. [1872]).

⁶⁴ *Essays and Studies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1875), pp.x-xii.

⁶⁵ Reviews written by Swinburne are included in Annex 2.

⁶⁶ *Athenaeum*, 13 Mar. 1886, pp.351-353.

friend. Later, in 1886, he told E.T. Cook (Stead's deputy at the *Pall Mall Gazette*) who had requested a review of a new translation of George Sand's letters: 'I never – or scarcely ever – write reviews and am not inclined to make an exception on this one ...'⁶⁷ The indication is that he always chose what he wanted to write about, and did not wait on receiving a volume from an editor.

These relatively few reviews by Swinburne stand in marked contrast to the huge number of reviews his own publications received during his career. This list has a number of striking features.⁶⁸ First and most obviously, is its size: there was a lot of reviewing going on and Swinburne received a considerable amount of attention. Second, the range of publications where reviews appeared is broad, from the *Athenaeum* to *Fun* and to provincial papers, far wider than we would expect today for any volume of contemporary poetry. Third, although some periodicals titles flourished throughout Swinburne's life many were much more short-lived: the periodical publishing scene was competitive and volatile, and doubtless one way to draw readers was by considering the significant literature of the day. The list also invites a reflection that, since Swinburne's sales (as discussed elsewhere) were not vast, the reviews perhaps had very little commercial impact.

Reviews of Swinburne both created and mirrored his reputation: influential journals set the tone, and others followed their lead. A broad-brush outline of Swinburne's position would see him hailed as a new voice with *Atalanta* (1865); attacked for indecency and blasphemy from the appearance of *Poems and Ballads* in 1866 and identified as a fleshly poet for most of the next ten years; *Bothwell* (1874) was received with respect and *Erechtheus* (1876) to almost unanimous applause, while the collection of his writings in *Essays and Studies* (1875) brought acknowledgement of his critical skills. After the retirement to Putney critics could be tired with individual volumes (*Songs of the Springtides* (1880) outstayed many reviewers' patience) or increasingly exasperated by Swinburne's prose style, but they continued to hail the hand of a master; and by the last decade of his life, when the Collected Edition

⁶⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 1356A (28 Jan. 1886)

⁶⁸ Annex 3. Extensive as this list is, it is by no means comprehensive either for the London dailies or for the provincial press, and as they are digitised it is very likely more will come to light.

appeared he was seen as the last surviving great Victorian poet, though one who, perhaps, had not quite fulfilled the immense promise of his youth.

Many of his reviewers must have grown up with him, not just Wise, Knight and Hutton. Both George Saintsbury and Edward Dowden who reviewed Swinburne's final volume, *The Age of Shakespeare* (1908) had reviewed him thirty years earlier – Dowden with the *Note on Charlotte Bronte* in 1877, and Saintsbury with *Bothwell* in 1874. Edmund Gosse, whose first reviews of Swinburne were from the mid 1870s, published his *Life* in 1917. When this generation died it was an opportunity for the reputation to be reassessed.

(b) Swinburne's poetry and articles in the periodical press

Just how much poetry was published in the Victorian periodical press has seldom been remarked upon and has only become more visible since the digitisation of substantial runs of a broad range of titles. The ProQuest *British Periodicals* database Collections I and II include complete runs of journals and magazines (but not newspapers) which for the period between 1860 when Swinburne began publishing and 1909 (when he died) cover 134 titles ranging from the *Quarterly Review* to popular light reading such as *Fun*. It shows that most years between one and two thousand poems appeared in these titles. Much is light-weight verse – *Fun* and *Judy* appear to have been especially full of it; and much is anonymous, or signed only with initials or by names that are now entirely unfamiliar. But even so a search shows that practically every Victorian poet still remembered was published in this way. Annex 10 below uses this database to (a) list the number of poems for each of every fifth year, 1860-1900; (b) give a breakdown by journal title for two sample years; and (c) show the number of contributions made by four sample poets, and the titles where these were published.

A first observation from this data is not just that so much poetry and verse was published, but also that it was found across a very wide range of titles. This is in marked contrast with today, when poetry is rarely met except in specialist poetry magazines. Then the potential audience was not only far larger, it was also far broader.

Annex 2 summarises the titles where Swinburne published: it shows that although he clearly preferred a particular niche, over his career he appeared across a full range of publications from a 1d weekly to what, at a guinea for an issue, must have been the most expensive journal published in his lifetime. The data also reflects the massive growth and development of the Victorian press.

So throughout Swinburne's career there was a huge range of possibilities for publishing in journals. New titles were being launched; old titles were being rejuvenated and some were folding. Editors needed copy, though they might have difficulty paying for it. In the early 1860s Swinburne was all but unknown; after the publication of *Poems and Ballads* in 1866 he was a famous or notorious name, one that some 'advanced' editors might like among their contributors; but by the 1880s and 1890s his was a name that brought a respectable, establishment tone to new titles keen to get off to a good start. In all he was published in just over forty different titles, and of these three were far and away the most important. They were the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Athenaeum* and the *Nineteenth Century*. But he began elsewhere.

Swinburne's introduction to journalism was through his friends. George Meredith had been contributing to *Once a Week* from its second issue in mid 1859; by the end of 1861 it had taken about a dozen of his poems and serialised his novel *Evan Harrington*. For their third issue (16 July 1859) the magazine secured 'The Grandmother's Apology' from Tennyson with a fine illustration by Millais.⁶⁹ Most issues were to include one or two poems (but very few of them by names remembered today) and in the magazine's life, 1859-1880, over a thousand were printed. Other serialisations included Charles Reade's *A Good Fight* (reworked in 1861 as *The Cloister and the Hearth*) and *Verner's Pride* from the sensation novelist Mrs Henry Wood. Its illustrations were among the finest of the 1860s.

'I want to bring little Swinburne to introduce him to you this week or next,' Meredith told the editor Samuel Lucas in October 1861; 'I think you will find him valuable.' Swinburne reported to Monckton Milnes that he was sending one or two

⁶⁹ This is discussed in Kathryn Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp.53-55.

things.⁷⁰ The first, a 14 stanza ballad, ‘The Fratricide’ (which was reprinted four years later in *Poems and Ballads* as ‘The Bloody Son’) was published in the 15 February 1862 issue a week before what was Meredith’s final appearance was with his poem ‘The Old Chartist.’ On 11 October 1862, Swinburne had a short story printed, ‘Dead Love’ with an illustration on wood by M.J. Lawless. It is not clear why Meredith and Swinburne then severed their connection with the magazine.

This was not quite Swinburne’s final contact with *Once a Week*: almost ten years later when he had become famous a subsequent editor, James Rice, approached him for a contribution and Swinburne turned to his friend Frederick Locker: ‘... give me a word of counsel on the matter, if you know anything of the writer or his magazine, which I have not seen for years on years.’⁷¹ A family weekly was not the sort of publication that Swinburne took himself, and by and large (as his subsequent periodical publishing history shows) he preferred to appear in journals that he read. Mr. Rice received and printed the ‘Sestina’ (6 January 1871). An accomplished piece of writing, it must certainly have been among the most distinguished pieces published in its pages. But it was not really ideally suited for popular consumption unlike the earlier poem, although there was no hint of anything readers might have found indecent or blasphemous: ‘The Fratricide’ was a ballad and told a story; the ‘Sestina’ evoked a mood. Years later Swinburne was complaining to Gosse about wasting it there – ‘sacrificed on the Grub Street altar of *Once a Week*.’⁷² Reaching a large audience – a circulation of 60,000 in the 1860s and 40,000 in the 1870s is one estimate – was clearly not a priority for him.⁷³

Perhaps in 1862 he had felt he could afford not to pursue *Once a Week* as another, far more congenial, outlet had now become available thanks to Gabriel Rossetti. Rossetti had first and unsuccessfully tried to secure him an introduction to Froude, the editor of *Fraser’s Magazine* via his friend Theodore Martin. Martin thought

⁷⁰ Cline, *Meredith Letters* 102 ([Oct. 1861]); Lang, *Letters* 29 (15 Oct. [1861]).

⁷¹ Lang, *Letters* 411 (15 Nov. 1871).

⁷² Lang, *Letters* 844 (6 Apr. 1877).

⁷³ Alvar Ellegard, ‘The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain: II. Directory’, *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, no.13 (Sept. 1971), p.20.

Swinburne's poems of no common sort, and the prose tales told with directness, simplicity and power. 'But alas! for a magazine they are, I fear quite useless. The general public would stare and exclaim with the eyes and tongue of prurient prudery, if they were to come across them.' Despite this he would send them on to Froude with as strong a recommendation as he could give. 'He, however, is autocrat in *Fraser* – his judgement is pure and severe, but his feeling is catholic; and I hope he may like your friend's poems, and give some of them, at least, a place; or, even if he doesn't, that he may indicate his readiness to accept contributions, which he may think more suited for his public.'⁷⁴ Nothing ever appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*.

Rossetti had himself been invited to contribute to the *Spectator*, following the announcement of his forthcoming volume of poems, but the sudden death of his wife Lizzie Siddal in February 1862 and the burial of the manuscript copy with her in the coffin meant he no longer felt able to go ahead. He sent his apologies to Richard Holt Hutton, the editor, and then added as an afterthought:

P.S. If I might recommend a substitute (and much more than substitute) for myself as a poetical contributor for the *Spectator*, I would be very glad to get Algernon Swinburne to contribute. He is looking for such opportunities, and will do the highest honour to any paper where his poetry may appear, being undoubtedly destined to be one of the very greatest poets of his generation.⁷⁵

Over six months Hutton printed seven poems, sent Swinburne Hugo's 'Les Misérables' for review (and printed three articles on it); accepted a review of 'Les Fleurs du Mal' and printed his letter responding to its hostile review of Meredith's long poem *Modern Love*. He added a note at the bottom of this describing Swinburne as someone 'whose opinion on any poetical question should be worth more than most men's.'⁷⁶ He soon came to revise or at least qualify that opinion as he grew increasingly uneasy about a review submitted by Swinburne of a shocking avant-garde French work, 'Les Abîmes;

⁷⁴ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 62.1 (4 Jan. 1862), note 3.

⁷⁵ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 62.22 ([28 Mar. 1862]).

⁷⁶ *Spectator*, 7 June 1862, pp.632-633: The letter (but not Hutton's comment) is reprinted in Lang, *Letters* 33 ([7 June 1862]).

par Ernest Clouët.’ The name Clouët would have been vaguely familiar to Hutton as Swinburne had referred to him in passing in his other reviews, but was otherwise unknown to him as he was Swinburne’s invention.⁷⁷ The article was set up in proof together with another: ‘M. Prudhomme on Art and Science at the International Exhibition’. On reflection Hutton thought ‘Les Abîmes’ unsuitable for the *Spectator* – ‘there is a tone of raillery about it which I think once should hardly use to pure obscenity’ – and was evidently having some trouble with the Baudelaire piece too: ‘... I confess your tone on Art is still a little unintelligible to me – what is poetry and Art? ... You write as if art and poetry consisted in pictorial qualities or something of that kind. Can you hold to any theory so narrow?’⁷⁸ The review of ‘Les Fleurs du Mal’ went in on 6 September 1862. Although his poetry there was signed, prose was unsigned. Anonymity had positive and negative aspects for the tyro contributor: while it did nothing to build a reputation, it did facilitate an editor printing a talented, unknown newcomer. (Anonymity also led Gosse and others astray when identifying just what in the *Spectator* was actually by Swinburne.)⁷⁹

Even if he had maintained the connection with *Once a Week* that was not the place for discussions of contemporary French literature, either real or imagined. And there was so much more he wanted to write about. ‘... Have you read Salammbô?’ he asked Monckton Milnes a few months later. ‘... I want to review it somewhere; do you know of any place one could get for it? I don’t want to send any more to the *Spectator*; I don’t approve of their behaviour (e.g. never sending one one’s own articles and taking back books sent for review, notammet four volumes of ‘Les Misérables) and their principles offend my moral sense. I wish I could write at my own times and in my own way occasional studies on matters of art and literature of which I could speak confidently. I think I could do at odd times a set of papers on French writers now to the

⁷⁷ Cecil Y. Lang, ed., *New Writings by Swinburne* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), discusses and prints this and another burlesque article, pp.88-102, 218-225.

⁷⁸ Meyers, *Letters* 35B [early? Sept. 1862].

⁷⁹ W.D. Paden, ‘Swinburne, the *Spectator* in 1862 and Walter Bagehot’, in *Six Studies in Nineteenth Century English Literature and Thought*, ed. by H. Orel and G.J. Worth (Lawrence: University of Kansas Publications, 1962), pp.91-115.

fore.’⁸⁰ It seems just as likely that he had offended Hutton as vice versa, but he was out of sympathy with the highly respectable paper. Hutton was known as a Christian apologist and the *Spectator* became a bulwark against scientific materialism. Since he remained editor until his death in 1897 Swinburne was never published there again, except in the letters column.

It was four more years until he found the outlet he wanted. Before that another new monthly magazine, the *Cornhill*, printed ‘Cleopatra’ with a fine woodcut by the artist Frederick Sandys. Launched by Thackeray in 1860 the second issue contained Tennyson’s ‘Tithonus’ – doubtless deliberately held over from the first issue to maintain interest. The *Cornhill* was another mass market title, which at one shilling would have bought four issues of *Once a Week*, though in the mid 1860s had a similar circulation of 30,000.⁸¹ ‘Cleopatra’ appeared in September 1866, by when *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) had brought Swinburne’s name to public attention, and the reception of *Poems and Ballads* in the reviews from 6 August 1866 onwards was making the literary scandal of the day. So it might be supposed that a solicited poem had, by this turn of events, turned into something of a scoop for the *Cornhill* who had perhaps then arranged the rather fine illustration to maximise their good fortune. In fact Sandys was a friend of Swinburne’s and the drawing came first, before the poem. ‘I return the enclosed verses with a few corrections,’ Swinburne wrote to George Murray Smith who published the *Cornhill*. ‘As they now stand they are at your service and Mr. Sandys. They were thrown off by way of setting his design of Cleopatra, and I did not even know he had sent them to you, much less that they were in type.’⁸² The *Cornhill* with its family readership would not have courted controversy (Ruskin had advised Rossetti against sending ‘Jenny’ there in 1860)⁸³ and the verses were published without fanfare, and received with little notice.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Lang, *Letters* 43 (21 Jan. 1863).

⁸¹ Ellegard, *Readership*, p.18.

⁸² Meyers, *Letters* 119A ([early Aug.? 1866]).

⁸³ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 60.35 ([c.16 Sept. 1860]).

⁸⁴ ‘The name of its gifted writer is not at present in very good odour with the public or critics; but there is nothing in the present verses to offend even the scrupulous. They are strongly and richly written, but do not come up to the promise given by Mr. Swinburne’s earlier writings.’ *London Review*, 8 Sept. 1866, p.277.

In late 1865 or early 1866 J.B. Payne, the manager of Moxon's, had plans to start a *Moxon's Magazine*. William Rossetti heard a rumour from his brother (who must have got it from Swinburne) that Swinburne was to be editor.⁸⁵ Swinburne certainly thought Payne had asked him. 'Some time since he made to me in person almost any offers if I would engage myself in any way to support or direct his forthcoming venture, in the not improbable event of his original editor proving inadequate. I at once told him that I could undertake nothing in the way of business or of regular supervision ... But, I added, I was willing to assist thus far. I would contribute, and do what I could to induce others to contribute.' Swinburne's main condition ('putting aside the money question') was that that he should have power to accept or reject any article he chose, and that his name should not appear, except as a contributor. Payne then undertook 'to provide a man of position and intelligence to do the daily work that Thackeray did himself for the *Cornhill* ... These moderate and reasonable terms were gratefully jumped at; and as a first step in business I got Gabriel to promise he would send something of his surviving poetry ... I believe the first instalment will appear in March at earliest. I have promised it some instalment of my notes on Florentine drawings.'⁸⁶

What is striking here is not so much the carte-blanche apparently being offered Swinburne (for it surely stretches credulity to suppose that an experienced publisher could really have offered him such terms) as the irrelevance to Swinburne of the commercial business of the magazine. Nor, for the moment, is he thinking of what he will earn from such an arrangement. But although *Moxon's Magazine* got no further, another new title which was to print more of Swinburne than any other journal had been launched six months earlier.

The *Fortnightly Review* was announced in a full page prospectus in the *Athenaeum* in March 1865.⁸⁷ It spoke of addressing cultivated readers of all classes; securing the best writers on Literature, Art, Science, Philosophy, Finance and Politics

⁸⁵ Peattie, *Letters* 94 (2 Jan. 1866).

⁸⁶ Lang, *Letters* 95 (4 Jan. 1866).

⁸⁷ *Athenaeum*, 25 Mar. 1865, p.436.

generally; 'the *Review* will be liberal.' It was to be published twice monthly, price two shillings. And its distinctive feature was that contributions were to be signed. It got off to a bad start as far as Swinburne was concerned, with – in its very first issue – that risible review of *Atalanta* by J. Leicester Warren.⁸⁸ The following year it missed *Poems and Ballads* entirely. Swinburne had met G.H. Lewes, the editor, at a party apparently organised by Moxon's in December 1865 and discussed Blake with him. (On the same occasion he also appears to have got drunk and snubbed Tennyson.)⁸⁹ They talked about his forthcoming essay on William Blake and Lewes requested it for the *Fortnightly*, but Swinburne felt it was too long for an article.⁹⁰ He was not to contribute for another year until its new editor, John Morley requested and then published the 'Ode on the Insurrection in Candia' in his March 1867 issue, just six months after writing his anonymous and devastating review of *Poems and Ballads* in the *Saturday Review* and just weeks into his new job.⁹¹ Morley made a point that the Ode should not be reprinted until the month after that (he foresaw it being run-off as a separate pamphlet in aid of the Candiotte refugees) indicating clearly that he fully recognised that Swinburne would be a major attraction for buyers of the *Fortnightly*, which could not afford to lose potential purchasers.

Questions of money were indeed significant. In November 1866 the *Fortnightly* had become a monthly. Originally a limited company, Trollope had set it up, chaired, run and financed it, but funds were exhausted within eighteen months and the company had been forced to sell to Chapman and Hall. The problem was that circulation was poor (just 1,400 when Morley took it over)⁹² and consequently it had little income from subscribers and could not attract advertisers. These difficulties were not quickly resolved. In late 1867 Meredith, standing in as editor for Morley while he was away,

⁸⁸ *Fortnightly Review*, 15 May 1865, pp.75-80. This is discussed in Chapter 1.

⁸⁹ Lang, *Letters* 94 ([?15 Dec. 1865]).

⁹⁰ Lang, *Letters* 96 (5 Jan. [1866]).

⁹¹ Meyers, *Letters* 177A (31 Mar. 1867).

⁹² F.W. Hirst, *Early Life & Letters of John Morley* v. 1 (London: Macmillan and Co, Limited, 1927), p.84. Morley told a friend in 1872 that it had increased from 1,400 when he began to 2,500 and was 'quietly rising every month.'

told Frederick Chapman that he needed more money to pay his contributors⁹³ and replying to Swinburne's complaint about a missed payment explained:

The *Fortnightly* is no longer in the hands of a company, but of a publisher, who tries to diminish the expenses as much as he can; the editor being the chief sufferer. I had to pay for the two poems ['A Lost Vigil' and 'Ave atque Vale', published in the December 1867 and January 1868 issues respectively]. 'The Halt before Rome' [published in November 1867] has evidently been omitted from the list of what is due to you. When I see Morley I will state your complaints to him: but for the sum he gets it's scarcely possible to pay more, without doing so out of his own pocket. It will grieve him as it does me to hear that you are dissatisfied – I received for my 'Phaethon' (about 150 lines) £5.⁹⁴

So not only was Swinburne not being paid reliably; he also felt he was being underpaid – and Meredith's sympathy was not enough. William Rossetti recorded in his diary two months later in March 1868:

Swinburne says that his writing in the *Fortnightly Review* has come to a stand for the present. Payment for his 'Halt before Rome', 'Baudelaire' [i.e. 'Ave atque Vale'] and another poem being outstanding the *Fortnightly* people sent him £12 for the latter two, not as yet settling for the first. He considers this £12 below the mark; wrote about the matter more than a month ago and has as yet received no reply.⁹⁵

A month later, Rossetti noted 'His standstill with the *Fortnightly Review* continues: he can't get paid for 'The Halt before Rome' nor can he get back his *Notes on Old Masters' Drawings in Florence*.'⁹⁶

⁹³ Cline, *Letters* 401 (Dec. 1867).

⁹⁴ Lang, *Letters* 249 (27 Jan. 1868).

⁹⁵ *Rossetti Papers* (4 Mar. 1868), p.301.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* (25 Apr. 1868), p.305.

Morley's problem was not just lack of revenue but that he was also under pressure from Chapman and Hall to reduce costs, which meant both a very careful watch on what he paid contributors and reducing the overall length of each issue.⁹⁷ William Rossetti's diary records a conversation he had in December 1871 with Franz Hüffer who was negotiating with Chapman and Hall to become a part proprietor of the paper (although this was never to come about). 'It seems that Morley receives £600 a year as editor. Besides this, Chapman hands him £100 per month out of which Morley satisfies the contributors, at the rate (mainly) of 10/- per page: if this payment does not exhaust the £100 Morley retains the balance, in his own character of contributor.'⁹⁸ Issues were between 104 and 128 pages, so if Morley could keep his average rate to 10/- he had room for manoeuvre. Together 'A Lost Vigil' and 'Ave atque Vale' covered eight sides: at £12 Morley was already paying above that rate (though of course poetry may always have received more per page than prose).

Swinburne had been holding out for more but Morley was able to conciliate him. 'I have today received a very civil and friendly note from J. Morley' Swinburne wrote to Rossetti in May 1868, '... setting things hitherto square "and hoping" that I will yet allow them to print my notes on Florentine drawings, if I will reconsider the demand of a pound per page – I must say that demand seems very reasonable to me as things go – and yet, for reasons which you know and which I know that you sympathise with me in respecting – I should like to do what lies in me to prop the apparently decadent *Fortnightly*.'⁹⁹ Those reasons were that Swinburne was very much in sympathy with the liberal, free-thinking outlook of the *Fortnightly*, written for and by the educated upper and middle classes.

⁹⁷ Helen Small, 'Liberal editing in the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Nineteenth Century*', *Publishing History*, 53 (2003), p.79.

⁹⁸ Bornand, *Rossetti Diary*, p.141 (entry for 30 Dec. 1871). Some comparisons with Morley's salary: Shirley Brookes took over the editorship of *Punch* for £1,000 p.a. in 1870; and a decade earlier Thackeray was hired at the same rate as first editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*. This was obviously the very top end of the market: Edmund Yates received £500 p.a. as editor of *Tinsley's Magazine* in the late 1860s. [These figures come from: Patrick Leary and Andrew Nash, 'Authorship,' in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, v.6. ed. by David McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.183, 192].

⁹⁹ Lang, *Letters* 264 (18 May 1868).

The article on Florentine art appeared two months later, and relations with Morley and the *Fortnightly* remained cordial thereafter although what Swinburne was finally paid for its 25 sides is unknown. Payment even eight years later was still a matter of contention. Swinburne wrote to Watts: 'Morley writes to me in evident sincerity of regret that the proprietor of the *Fortnightly* cannot or will not give more than £10 for a poem; so that is the end of my contribution [on this occasion], and 'The Last Oracle' is again in the market - a most desirable article of literary property to be knocked down to the highest bidder.'¹⁰⁰

Uncertainty about payment was not the only drawback to journalism. Editors had constraints of space, of taste, and of time to think about. Swinburne had agreed to that severe pruning of his article on Mathew Arnold's *New Poems* perhaps unaware – because he had confidence in Morley's editorial judgement – that editorial decisions may have been driven by financial considerations. A later piece reviewing William Rossetti's *Notes on Shelley* brought an apologetic letter from Morley who found he had to exercise his editorial blue pencil, but too late to consult his contributor:

I am in a terrible state of vexation with myself. Reading over your notes on Shelley more carefully this morning I find a couple of lines which would cause a scandal that might go near to sending the *Review* to the bottom – the two in your translation from Cyclops:

'And playing with breasts, and handling in your hands the field etc.'

It was too late to write to you; and I had two courses open – to leave out the whole matter or leave out two lines. I have taken the latter course. I am vexed with myself horribly for not seeing the point until too late to write to you ... Of course when you reprint, you will do as you will.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Lang, *Letters* 714 (8 Mar. 1876).

¹⁰¹ Meyers, *Letters* 292B (23 Apr. 1869).

These were a few lines Swinburne had supplied to complete Shelley's version of a Greek satyr-play. He gave William Rossetti a bawdier version that he had not ventured to offer to Morley¹⁰² but when he came to reprint the essay in 1875 (in *Essays and Studies*) made no change to Morley's cut text. The most likely explanation for this is that Swinburne had long since mislaid his original text, while Chatto could obtain the *Fortnightly* article quite easily.

Swinburne found the *Fortnightly* under Morley's editorship (January 1867 – October 1882) particularly congenial, but he continued to appear there after Morley moved on. However, the *Fortnightly* was not the only journal with radical aspirations. In the early 1870s Swinburne was invited to write for the *Examiner* which had been recently bought by H.R. Fox Bourne, who 'hoped that, with the scanty means at his disposal, he might be able to restore it ... to something like the position and influence it had held earlier in the century.'¹⁰³ A new series commenced in 1871, with enthusiastic support for J. S. Mill, attacks on expansionist foreign policy, and a generally progressive, liberal outlook. It was, Bourne told Swinburne, 'trying to give outspoken and independent expression to political, social and literary thought with which (I believe) you would in the main concur ... If you can spare time for occasional contributions, either in verse or prose, on political, social or literary subjects, it would be of great service to the paper, and I should be very much indebted to you – especially if you would allow us to append your name to what you write – If you have no leisure for separate work, perhaps – as Landor and some other poets did in past times – you would allow the *Examiner* to contain the first utterance of some of the poems that are intended to appear in volume-form.'¹⁰⁴ It looks as though Swinburne, happy with the *Fortnightly* as a home for his critical writing, saw this as a good opportunity to print the rest of his sonnets excoriating Napoleon III. Three had appeared in the *Fortnightly* in 1868; others, as Swinburne told Watts in 1873, were originally to have appeared in *Songs before Sunrise* 'but are better separate. I have just written two fresh ones ['The Descent into Hell'] on the bursting of the poison-bladder at Chislehurst' (where the French emperor had died on 9 January 1873). What he did not tell Watts was that Ellis

¹⁰² Lang, *Letters* 327 (2 Dec. 1869).

¹⁰³ H.R. Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers*, v.2 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1887), p.289.

¹⁰⁴ Meyers, *Letters* 469A (8 Mar. 1873).

had declined to publish the volume until certain sonnets were withdrawn.¹⁰⁵ There must be some suspicion – although there is no evidence – that Morley had turned them down too.

Bourne, all too obviously thrilled at having secured the poet of the day for his paper, had rashly undertaken to make no changes in Swinburne's text. All went well with the first of the 'Dirae' appearing at the end of March 1873 and with more following at weekly intervals. 'The Saviour of Society' which was one that had particularly alarmed Ellis was published on 17 May 1873, in the same issue as (and immediately after) tributes to Mill who had just died.¹⁰⁶ The *Spectator* was outraged:

But surely it was hardly fair to Mr Mill or to his friends to place their eager and sometimes tender tributes to his memory in immediate proximity to Mr Swinburne's revolting lines headed 'Dirae' which, whatever else they mean or do not mean, certainly do mean a deadly and indecent insult to the faith of the vast majority of Christians. The mourners round a great man's grave, even though he were a great sceptic, should hardly be jostled by so profane and vulgar a companion as Mr Swinburne permits himself to be, in this horrible attempt to outrage the most tender and sensitive of religious associations.¹⁰⁷

At that Bourne lost his nerve and, clearly worried, skipped the pair due for the next week ('Mentana: second anniversary') and published 'Mentana: third anniversary' in their place, together with an editorial note reminding readers of the divergence of thought and expression of the paper's contributors, expressing surprise that anyone had misread them as ridiculing Christian traditions and belief, and pointing out that Christians used strong language and misrepresented other religions. To Swinburne he was more conciliatory:

I really thought I had your permission to omit any that I thought proper, provided I left your phraseology intact in whatever I inserted ... Had I time I should have

¹⁰⁵ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.135 (3 May 1870).

¹⁰⁶ Bornand, *Rossetti Diary*, pp.7-8 (entry for 11 May [1870]); *Examiner*, 17 May 1873, p.519.

¹⁰⁷ *Spectator*, 24 May 1873, p.655.

consulted you before doing anything last week – but really I was so badgered on Thursday and Friday by friends who condemned me for publishing the 1st and 2nd [‘The Saviour of Society’] that I did not know what to do – I should certainly not have heeded complaints from outsiders, but when several of our own contributors (some of whom I especially respect) complained, not of the poems themselves but of the interpretation being put upon them by others I did not know what to do, and perhaps wrongly, I decided at the last moment to omit the ‘Mentana: second anniversary.’¹⁰⁸

It appeared the following week in the 31 May 1873 issue, followed by a note from Bourne explaining that it had been ‘withheld in order that before printing we might have an opportunity of communicating with their author’ and then printing some of Swinburne’s comments. Swinburne also fired off a lengthy letter to the *Spectator* (printed 31 May) and another to the *Examiner* attacking the *Spectator*, which Bourne published as an article (printed 7 June), hoping Swinburne would forgive him ‘for taking out the word “lying” from it. I thought that would not really weaken the force of your complaint.’¹⁰⁹

All this controversy and copy from Swinburne does not have appeared to have helped the paper. Ellegard estimates it had a circulation of 2,000 in 1870.¹¹⁰ High ideals never translated into high sales. In the autumn of 1873 Bourne sold the *Examiner*¹¹¹ leaving, Swinburne told Watts, a debt to him of forty-two pounds.¹¹² But this was not quite the end of Swinburne’s involvement with it: after Bourne’s departure the *Examiner* printed several articles, letters and a four line squib (but no other poetry) from Swinburne. One letter brought a libel action from Robert Buchanan against the

¹⁰⁸ Meyers, *Letters* 480B (27 May 1873).

¹⁰⁹ Lang, *Letters* 480 (25 May 1873), originally published *Spectator*, 31 May 1873, p.697; Lang, *Letters* 481 ([2 June 1873]), originally published *Examiner*, 7 June 1873, pp.585-86; Meyers, *Letters* 484A (10 June 1873).

¹¹⁰ Ellegard, *Readership*, p.9.

¹¹¹ Bourne, *English Newspapers* v.2, p.291.

¹¹² Lang, *Letters* 698 (22 Jan. 1876).

paper; Buchanan won £150 damages in June 1876.¹¹³ Swinburne never published there again and the paper eventually ceased publication in 1881.

The *Examiner* was a weekly review, in a small newspaper format. It had at least three significant competitors: the *Spectator* with which Swinburne was out of sympathy; the *Athenaeum* and the *Saturday Review* (popularly known as the ‘Saturday Reviler’). Swinburne himself initially characterised the *Athenaeum* as the ‘Asineum,’ no doubt in reaction to Buchanan’s review there of *Poems and Ballads* and continued to refer to it as such for a few years.¹¹⁴ But this was to change: starting in 1871 it was to publish more poetry by Swinburne than any other journal; and it reviewed him consistently and at greater length than any other title too. In 1876 Watts joined the staff and as its poetry editor was an important if anonymous presence until the end of the century.¹¹⁵ In contrast to the *Spectator* and the *Examiner*, the *Athenaeum* was not a political review. This meant it was unsuitable for Swinburne’s political verse, as he found when Norman MacColl the editor turned down a group of sonnets (‘The White Czar,’ ‘Rizpah’ and ‘Kossuth’) for that very reason.¹¹⁶ But it was probably one of the most commercially successful and most widely read serious journals of the Victorian age. From the mid 1860s onwards it cost 3d and enjoyed a healthy circulation.¹¹⁷ It covered a broader range of subjects than its competitors: not just literature but also science, drama and music, art, proceedings of learned societies; and its advertising was by far the most extensive. Consequently while the sixpenny *Examiner* and even the *Fortnightly Review* (which cost 2 shillings and 6d for its monthly issue) experienced financial difficulties, the *Athenaeum* enjoyed rude good health thanks to buoyant revenue from circulation and from advertising.

¹¹³ Lang, *Letters* 674 (28 Dec. 1875) originally published in the *Examiner*, 11 Dec. 1875, p.1388; ‘Buchanan v. Taylor,’ *Times*, 3 July 1876, p.13.

¹¹⁴ Lang, *Letters* 144 ([28 Sept. 1866]), 342 (14 Feb. 1870).

¹¹⁵ Thomas Hake and Arthur Compton-Rickett, *The life and letters of Theodore Watts-Dunton*, v.1, (London: T.C. and E.C. Jack Limited, 1916), p.235.

¹¹⁶ Lang, *Letters* 20 Jan. [1878].

¹¹⁷ Ellegard, *Readership*, p.9 estimates 15,000 in 1870.

The *Athenaeum* maintained anonymity in its reviews for most of the time: while all its reviews of Swinburne's poetry and prose were unsigned the few reviews he himself contributed (these were on Victor Hugo and Emily Bronte) were attributed. But generally for prose he appeared to prefer the ample space afforded by the *Fortnightly Review* and, from the 1880s, the *Nineteenth Century*. Space and presentation was a drawback for poetry in the *Athenaeum* too. Issues were well packed with material with three columns to a page filled with small – and for quotations very small – print. A poem was surrounded by other material or spread across columns or squashed into a corner of the page, and that page could be deep inside the issue. This was in contrast to the *Fortnightly* or *Nineteenth Century* with their single column of text and with the poem usually being the first item in the issue. So wanting to publish a poem that marked his mother's birthday ('The High Oaks, Barking Hall, July 19 1896') Swinburne, writing from Barking Hall asked Watts to submit it to the *Nineteenth Century*, adding, 'I could not let it appear in the *Athenaeum* or small type.'¹¹⁸

The *Nineteenth Century* had been founded by James Knowles in 1877 and opened with a poem by his friend Tennyson. Knowles had also formed the Metaphysical Society in 1869 which brought together such luminaries as Tennyson, Gladstone, Huxley and Cardinal Manning (but not Swinburne), all key figures of the Victorian establishment who became regular contributors to its pages. Knowles had previously been *persona non grata* with Swinburne, for, as editor of the *Contemporary Review*, he had published Buchanan's 'The Fleshly School of Poetry.' Swinburne never appeared there. Swinburne may also have felt his loyalty lay with the *Fortnightly*, at least until Morley left it in 1882, with which the *Nineteenth Century* was an obvious competitor having similar content (except it never contained fiction) and the same price and frequency. Any scruples had been overcome by April 1884 which saw his first publication in the *Nineteenth Century* with an essay on Wordsworth and Byron. Knowles then approached him via Watts for some poetry. Swinburne offered him 'a lyric poem addressed to Victor Hugo on the completion of his master-work, *La Légende des Siècles* ... My poem is in 25 stanzas of sixteen lines ... This is perhaps a longer spell of metre than would suit the *Nineteenth Century*.'¹¹⁹ It was. The first

¹¹⁸ Lang, *Letters* 1694 (3 Aug. 1896).

¹¹⁹ Lang, *Letters* 1282A (27 May 1884).

sixteen stanzas are devoted to Victor Hugo, with passing references to thirty of his works. The rest of the ode described and reflected upon some spectacular sunsets of November and December 1883, caused by the eruption of Krakatoa.¹²⁰ Swinburne had written this first, as he told his mother, seeing it as an allegory of the increasing glories of Hugo's sunset years.¹²¹ Knowles clearly did not want the whole. Swinburne wrote back: 'You must excuse me if I say your proposal is quite out of the question. A poem is a thing to be taken or left – and there is an end of the matter. I have been considerably surprised at the number of days which has elapsed without my receiving a word in acknowledgement of the arrival of my manuscript but all I have now to request is that it may be returned to me without further delay.'¹²² Possibly no-one else wanted it either: it was kept for *Midsummer Holiday* where for any readers less conversant with Hugo, Swinburne appended a page of notes identifying each reference to the Master's oeuvre. But then in *Selections* the later stanzas appeared as a free-standing poem with the title 'A Sunset.'

After this shaky start Knowles published 'On a Country Road' in July, a much more modest thirty-five line poem, several essays (including two on Hugo) and remained keen for more. 'I pray you to dismiss utterly from your mind all temptations to wander from my fold – and to believe that my appetite – so far from slacking – grows by what it feeds on from your pen.'¹²³ Over the next twenty years Swinburne published nineteen poems there (Tennyson only had eleven, but he had died in 1892). In fact a glance of a complete list of the fifty-four poems published in this period shows how Knowles relied on these two poets.¹²⁴ There were also seventeen of Swinburne's essays.

The *Nineteenth Century* was unmistakably successful with the calibre of its contributors, its content and its reputation. By 1884 when Swinburne began writing for

¹²⁰ Richard D. Altick, 'Four Victorian Poets and an Exploding Island,' *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Mar., 1960), pp. 249-260.

¹²¹ Lang, *Letters* 1260 (25 Jan. 1884).

¹²² Lang, *Letters* 1282B (2 June 1884).

¹²³ Meyers, *Letters* 1407B (20 Dec. 1886).

¹²⁴ A complete listing is given at Annex 11 below.

it, its publishers claimed a circulation of 20,000, the highest of the monthly reviews and Knowles could boast to Gladstone that his profits were comparable to the Prime Minister's salary.¹²⁵

Although it was these three titles – the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Athenaeum* and the *Fortnightly Review* – that were of particular importance to Swinburne, his verse appeared in many other publications too. Clearly poetry had a potentially wider audience than his essays on Victor Hugo or the Jacobean dramatists. Like Tennyson he appears to have been invited to contribute to the first issues of new titles. His lack of interest in the general, family magazines of the *Cornhill*, *Once a Week* type kept him away from them until in 1876 Chatto solicited a contribution for *Belgravia*:

I am very pleased to inform you that we have purchased the *Belgravia Magazine*. I am particularly anxious that from the first you should raise the character of the magazine to the very highest standard, and shall be extremely indebted to you if you will kindly furnish us with your support by letting us have a poem for the opening number which appears on the first of May. You doing so will be of the greatest service to us as marking a new era in the management of the magazine.¹²⁶

Belgravia in its first ten years of life had been run by Mrs Braddon, who was responsible for much of its sensational fiction; it was otherwise filled with light essays, biographies, and verse – very much the fare of such monthly magazines. Its name was a clear attempt to give its middle class, and doubtless lower middle class, readers the impression they were in touch with a more fashionable world. Swinburne turned to Watts for advice, telling him grandly that he had ‘no personal objection to contribute, considering that where I go I make the surroundings fit for me and can afford to keep lower company for the minute than usual – always drawing the line well on this side of contributions to the *World* or the *Englishman*.’¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Priscilla Metcalf, *James Knowles; Victorian editor and architect* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p.285.

¹²⁶ Chatto Letter Book 8/558 (21 Mar. 1876).

¹²⁷ Lang, *Letters* 719 (22 Mar. 1876). ‘... the popularity of *The World* was largely due to its mild scandal and more or less impertinent title-tattle.’ (Bourne, *English Newspapers* v.2, p.307).

Watts gave the go-ahead, though Swinburne was a bit doubtful about what would be his best contribution, but left that and his fee for Watts to sort out.

One thing I must stipulate – I won't be illustrated. Charles Reade I remember made the same condition once as to a novel. Nobody but Sandys or Millais (and the latter does no magazine work now, I think, anymore than Brown or DGR[ossetti]) of all who do illustrate verse or prose, shall touch my work ... I am glad the editorship and the illustration (and I presume the cover) are to be changed; must they keep that d....d shopboy sort of name? *Chatto's Magazine* or even the *Piccadilly Magazine* would be better. *Belgravia* stinks.¹²⁸

The poem that Chatto received was 'The Last Oracle,' a hymn to the last days of the ancient world and paganism. He paid £50 for it, which made quite a contrast to Morley's maximum of £10 for a poem in the *Fortnightly*.¹²⁹ Although this was a striking piece of Swinburne's poetry it was hardly a natural inhabitant of such a magazine. And surely *Belgravia's* printer had not previously required the use of a Greek font. But the poem's appearance perhaps reflects more on Chatto's ambitions for his newly acquired title than a failure by Watts or Swinburne to gauge the readership correctly. Two more poems followed in July and September, 'A Song in Season' and 'A Ballad of Dreamland,' both quiet, elegiac and somewhat wistful. After that Swinburne never reappeared between its covers except for in the advertisement section at the back. Here until 1889, when he sold it, Chatto regularly printed his Swinburne list, and advertised his new volumes as they appeared with carefully selected quotations from the reviews.

Swinburne's attitude to illustration is understandable after looking at the frequently sentimental and generally very poor illustrations in *Belgravia*. With 'Cleopatra' he had been very fortunate, and had written the poem inspired by the drawing. There were later illustrations but none were of equal distinction, and there is no record of discussions between poet and illustrator. And it is significant that when Swinburne collected and reprinted his verse all illustrations were dropped and

¹²⁸ Lang, *Letters* 726 (31 Mar. 1876).

¹²⁹ Chatto Authors' Ledger 1874-1894, 1 Jan. 1876.

forgotten. From its inception in 1883 to 1890 Swinburne contributed one or two poems annually to the new *English Illustrated Magazine*; but the illustration was no more than a decorative border or headpiece. No real illustrations appeared until the late 1880s when he started appearing in the *Magazine of Art*. His 'Jacobite's Farewell' in its January 1889 issue was printed with the four stanzas spread across a page and surrounded with an engraved drawing by W. Hole depicting the imprisoned Jacobite with his heart-broken wife in his arms and a distant view of a loch. Neither this nor any of the following illustrations to his poems here ever approached the excellence of Sandys' drawing more than thirty years earlier. 'Loch Torridon' was published in January 1890 accompanied by engravings of three topographical drawings by J. MacWhirter, while each of Swinburne's eight-line 'Carols of the Year' which appeared monthly between November 1892 and October 1893 had its own page and was surrounded by a vaguely appropriate seasonal drawing by W.E.F. Britten. There is no feeling in these of any close interaction between poet and his illustrator. Swinburne made two appearances in the *Illustrated London News*. The first was in its 1893 Summer Supplement where his narration, 'Grace Darling' was accompanied by illustrations that would not have been out of place in the *Strand Magazine*, or the *Boys Own Paper*. His second poem in the *ILN*, the sonnet 'The Reverse,' a response to a disastrous British surrender in the Boer War, was published in November 1899 with drawings similarly suitable for a boys' annual, depicting Wellington at Waterloo and another of the Battle of Trafalgar. The sonnet makes no mention of either battle (nor explicitly of the Boer War) and read without knowledge of its context there would be no reason to link the poem to them.

So illustration was evidently of little importance to Swinburne: if his publishers wanted it, then it seems he was willing to go along. Of course the *Athenaeum*, the *Fortnightly Review* and *Nineteenth Century* did not require it as they had none. But in the last twenty years or so of his life Swinburne was appearing increasingly in a wider range of titles, though none appeared to win his loyalty. In the absence of any evidence it is tempting to assume that publishers approached him or Watts and that if he had anything suitable to hand he might go ahead. *Home Chimes*, 'a high-class journal for the people' had Swinburne to give cachet to its first issue in 1884. If Swinburne had judged that *Belgravia* made a common title he could hardly have been attracted to

Home Chimes by its name. It is just conceivable that he – or rather Watts – wanted to reach out to new audiences. (The readers who spent 1d on *Home Chimes* would not have been the same people who could afford 6/- for one of Swinburne's volumes, or 2/6d for the *Fortnightly Review*, or even 3d for the *Athenaeum*.) In this case it is highly unlikely that Swinburne was offered or motivated by a generous fee. Nor would he have been flattered by the other contributors, who were mainly of the third rank. In fact the only other name that stands out is Theodore Watts and he, like Swinburne, was also represented by a sonnet. Perhaps the reason for their involvement is indicated in Watts' 1901 obituary of the editor F.W. Robinson who, he discloses, had been a close personal friend for over thirty years.¹³⁰ Another new title that turned to Swinburne was *The People*, a Tory, 1d Sunday newspaper which also included a large proportion of fiction. In its first few years it had included novels by Zola, Wilkie Collins, Grant Allen and others and, presumably with a good circulation could afford to pay its contributors well. For his ballad, 'The Brothers' Swinburne received £50.¹³¹ But, once again he never published there again.

There are scattered references and records of payments to Swinburne for his periodical publishing, and these are noted within Annex 2, 'Swinburne's Publication in the Periodical Press.' They are not individually large sums, but the return was not negligible, and they form part of the overall earnings. For his last volume, *A Channel Passage*, Swinburne's royalties show that sales for the volume were almost all within the first half year of publication: thereafter it attracted little interest. It brought him £186.0.3d in all.¹³² But since most of the contents – some forty poems – had already been published they will have already earned more than this. Those in the *Nineteenth Century*, paying about £10 per published side will have brought at least £300; if the remaining pre-published poems had only earned £10 each that would have been another £230. So publishing in a periodical, then reissuing as a volume a little later was financially a very sensible thing to do. And his poetry was harvested for a third time in

¹³⁰ Theodore Watts-Dunton, 'A Great Builder of the Old Three Decker, F. W. Robinson,' *Athenaeum*, 14 Dec. 1901, pp.812-813.

¹³¹ BL Ashley A1927 (8 Nov. 1889).

¹³² Chatto Authors' Long Accounts Ledger, 1903-1923. Swinburne's entries for 1905-1908.

the Collected Edition of 1905. (What never appeared during his lifetime was a cheap edition.)

Swinburne's poetry changed over his career from what was perceived as blasphemous, indecent and republican to something neither blasphemous nor indecent but increasingly patriotic and even jingoistic. His journalism in his later years became increasingly concentrated on the Jacobean dramatists. Where he published his political poetry was dictated by the allegiances of the journals concerned. From the mid 1880s he parted ways with the *Pall Mall Gazette* which supported Gladstone's Home Rule for Ireland. At the turn of the century he began to appear in the *Saturday Review* which supported his strongly anti-Boer views. On the other hand there is no clear correlation between 'popular' poems – say those concerned with babies, or the patriotic verse – going to the family and illustrated magazines, and more serious poetry being reserved for the intellectual pages of the *Fortnightly* or the *Athenaeum*. (Much of the baby poetry did not appear in periodicals at all.) While the subject matter of the poetry broadened in the later part of his life he does not appear to have deliberately contributed to new periodicals in pursuit of a new audience. The new titles wanted him, not the other way around. On two occasions when editors wished to anthologise some of his most celebrated early verse he pointed them instead towards 'The Armada.' 'It is too long to learn off by heart,' he told one, 'but I think boys who do not simply abhor verse would relish the movement and impulse of it – if not the militant patriotism which ought to be more to their taste than the classic pessimism of *Atalanta*.'¹³³ This is a rare occasion when we hear him thinking of an audience. Yet when 'The Armada' had first appeared in August 1888, it was not in the *English Illustrated Magazine* or some equally popular or mass market title but in the *Fortnightly Review*.

¹³³ Lang, *Letters* 1750 (12 Oct. 1899); and another similar instance: 1775A (10 July 1902).

Chapter 4: Selling Swinburne

The printing ledgers kept by Hotten, with whom Swinburne published from 1866, and by Chatto his successor, to whom Swinburne stayed loyal until his death, survive at Reading University Library. They include the print runs of nearly fifty of Swinburne's books from 1866 until nine years after his death, when in 1918 Heinemann bought the copyrights.¹ They reveal that a handful of titles were much more successful than the rest. While in just over forty years Hotten and Chatto together printed 28,750 copies of his most popular work, *Poems and Ballads* (1866), only three other titles (*Atalanta in Calydon*, *Poems and Ballads*, series 2, and *Selections*) had more than 10,000 copies, while almost half the remainder needed total runs of no more than 2,000 copies each. And as this suggests, the overall figure across his career was by no means high. Swinburne had an entirely different level of sales to that enjoyed by successful novelists or by Tennyson. *Idylls of the King*, for example, was printed in a first edition of 40,000 copies in 1859 yet the second edition was required within six months; sales in its first five years brought Tennyson £2,300 annually. His final volume, *The Death of Oenone*, which appeared a fortnight after his funeral in 1892, sold over 26,000 copies within months.² Selling Tennyson – once he was established – was big business: selling Swinburne was never on this scale. In total (when estimated figures from his earlier publishers are included) about 150,000 volumes of all Swinburne's titles were printed from 1860 to 1918.

This chapter starts by examining the various arrangements Swinburne had with his publishers, at the costs and profits of producing his books. Since his sales were not large neither was his income, and consequently throughout his career he needed to maximise income from his writing. Chapter 3 showed how publication in periodicals, which was initially his best means of getting into print, remained important even once he was established. The present chapter goes on to examine his American editions, a market which appeared potentially lucrative but never was (at least not for the author) due to the lack of copyright protection. The next section turns to Swinburne's pamphlets, essentially a secondary medium for him when book or periodical

¹ See Annex 1.

² June Steffensen Hagen, *Tennyson and his Publishers* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp.109, 184.

publication was not possible or appropriate. The late nineteenth century bibliophile craze for literary pamphlets created an eager market which was met in part by forgery, and Swinburne was a prime target. He never profited from this but T.J. Wise, his principal forger, certainly did so. Finally a note on readership suggests one reason why Swinburne had a higher profile than his sales might indicate.

(a) Publishing the books: payments, costs and editions

During the Victorian age there were more opportunities than ever before to make substantial sums of money – and not just for new industrialists or the old landed families exploiting their estates. Artists could do particularly well because reproduction brought them before a far larger audience and the reproduction rights generated income. Writers profited too: there were many more readers, due to ever increasing literacy and cheaper books, journals and newspapers thanks to technological developments in printing. And canny publishers could prosper too.³ Early in the century Scott and Byron had been the best sellers of their day and by mid century there were a number of writers well supported by their craft.⁴ Yet it is very unlikely that many of these earned their living by poetry; most were novelists or journalists.⁵ According to a well-known story Eliza Acton turned up at Longmans in the mid 1840s to be told no-one wanted poetry. ‘Bring me a cookery book and we might come to

³ It is not a sure comparative measure, but the wealth of various publishers at death is interesting: George Bentley £86,088 (1895); Andrew Chatto £14,054 (1913); Frederick Chapman £3,855 (1895); W.H. Heinemann £33,780 (1920); J.C. Hotten ‘under £20,000’ (1873); Alexander Macmillan £179,644 (1896); George Routledge £80,000 (1888); George Murray Smith £931,968 (1901); Alexander Strahan £49 (1918). Swinburne left £24,282 (1909); Tennyson £57,206 (1892) and Browning £16,744 (1889). These figures are all quoted in the respective entries in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004. Online edn, May 2011).

⁴ A list of contemporary poetry ‘best-sellers’ in the first half of the nineteenth century is given in: Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader*, Second edition (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1998), pp.386-387.

⁵ Donald J. Gray, ‘Macaulay’s *Lays of Ancient Rome* and the Publication of Nineteenth-Century British Poetry’, in *Victorian Literature and Society* ed. James R. Kincaid and Albert J. Kuhn (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984), pp.74-93.

terms.⁶ (She gave the nation a culinary, rather than a literary, classic.) Twenty-five years later Hotten could tell a correspondent that ‘as a rule, poetry does not pay;’⁷ this was probably no great exaggeration. But although poetry did not sell in large quantities a glance at the advertising in the *Athenaeum* suggests there was no shortage of new titles. Catherine Reilly’s two bibliographies, *Mid-Victorian Poetry 1860-1879* and *Late Victorian Poetry 1880-1899* covering the years of the greater part of Swinburne’s career, identify 2,605 and 2,974 authors respectively, many (perhaps most) with more than one volume to their name.⁸ This scale is confirmed by the annual publishing statistics issued in the *Publishers’ Circular*.⁹

It is conceivable that Longman was a hard-nosed exception in an otherwise altruistic industry which generally liked to subsidize poetry by its more profitable ventures – conceivable but surely very unlikely. It is equally possible that time after time unworldly publishers wagered that this time they had found another Tennyson as they put the next hopeful into print. A more reasonable assumption is that most knew their business well enough to ensure they usually made no loss and took any profit before the author. ‘I tell you I have frequently sent back what I felt to be beautiful and touching in verse, simply because I knew it would not sell,’ Alexander Macmillan wrote in a rejection letter to an unknown poet in 1862. ‘That is my business, to calculate what will commercially pay. Unless it will there is no reason why it should be printed.’¹⁰ Poetry may not have been the royal road to riches, but it could still be a satisfactory commercial undertaking for the publisher, if not always for the poet. So if generally poetry did not sell well and yet a good number of titles were published it will follow that most of their print-runs will have been modest. This is the context of Swinburne’s sales.

⁶ F.A. Mumby, *Publishing and Bookselling* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), p.235.

⁷ Chatto Letter Book 5/352 (2 June 1870).

⁸ Catherine W. Reilly, *Mid-Victorian Poetry 1860-1879; an annotated bibliography* (London: Mansell, 2000); *Late Victorian Poetry 1880-1899; an annotated bibliography* (London: Mansell, 1994).

⁹ See Annex 12. In 1870, the year Hotten was being discouraging about poetry publishing the *Publishers’ Circular* recorded 212 new poetry and drama titles.

¹⁰ Charles L. Graves, *Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan* (London: Macmillan and Co, Limited, 1910), pp.193-194.

Swinburne's first two books, *The Queen Mother and Rosamond* and *Atalanta in Calydon* were published at the author's expense, £40 or £50 for the first, 'considerably more than £100' for the second on Swinburne's recollection.¹¹ There was nothing unusual in this: it was the most likely way for publication of an unknown poet to be a commercial proposition for the publisher. Morris first offered *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* (1858) to Macmillan, but it appeared at his own expense with Bell and Daldy.¹² A year later Macmillan also spurned Rossetti's *The Early Italian Poets* (1861), which went to Smith, Elder & Co. but only thanks to John Ruskin undertaking £100 of the cost.¹³ Pickering had no reason to take a risk with Swinburne either, and the failure of *The Queen Mother and Rosamond* can only have increased Moxon's caution with *Atalanta*. But *Atalanta*, appearing in the spring of 1865 at Swinburne's father's expense, made a great critical impact and Swinburne did not pay for the second edition of 1000 copies that followed in the autumn. Swinburne claimed that the only payments he ever received from Moxon were 100 guineas for the 1000 copy edition of *Chastelard* – this also taken on thanks to the success of *Atalanta* – and a one-off payment of £50 for the essay on Byron prefixed to his volume of selections. He implied that the edition of *Chastelard* was paid for in advance and thought he had never been paid for the second edition of *Atalanta* or their first edition of *Poems and Ballads*. (He never, it seems, quite grasped that he eventually received payment for these from Hotten when he bought up Moxon's stock.) The only record of all these arrangements with Pickering and Moxon are the details Swinburne recalled for Watts in 1872.¹⁴ It is puzzling that Swinburne had not received payment from Moxon for the second edition of *Atalanta* almost a year after it appeared, less surprising that they had not paid for the first edition of *Poems and Ballads* before it was withdrawn just weeks after its appearance.

The financial arrangements with Hotten are only a little clearer. Hotten obviously wanted Swinburne. He saw that Swinburne had made a great impact and while other publishers were nervous of upsetting the proprieties of the day he was not:

¹¹ Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 Dec. [1872]).

¹² Kelvin, *Collected Letters of William Morris* 19b (7 Nov. 1857).

¹³ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 61.41 ([18 June 1861]).

¹⁴ Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 December [1872]).

Swinburne presented a unique opportunity, so he was markedly more generous than with many of the hopeful poets who approached him. To one such he wrote: 'In common with most London publishers I only undertake the publication of volumes of verse on commission – that is at the author's expense. I will undertake to produce your volume in a superior style and to give it a good start with the trade and relieve you from all further cost for a payment of £20.'¹⁵ Another author, Alfred Austin, had already published with other firms when he offered Hotten *The Season: a satire*. Hotten proposed that they should share the profit equally after costs of printing, paper, binding and advertising had been met, but he was unprepared to take any risk: if the expense had not been met after six months Austin should pay the deficiency.¹⁶ So Austin not only had to guarantee that Hotten would lose no money, he also had to trust him for a fair and honest account of his sales. Swinburne was not to find him trustworthy. That he was not an isolated rogue is suggested by the proposal made twenty years later by Walter Besant at the first conference of the Society of Authors (which Besant formed only in 1884) for clearly set-out publisher agreements, with the accounts open to the author and 'no secret profits.'¹⁷ Profit sharing even with a scrupulous publisher could mean a long wait. Two years after the publication of *Goblin Market* in 1862 Christina Rossetti wrote to Alexander Macmillan: 'I enclose my receipt for half profits: with my grateful thanks, as I am sure I could have no sort of claim upon them when you alone ran the risk.'¹⁸

What Hotten offered Swinburne was much more attractive. First, as an inducement, he would pay £200 for the initial edition of 1000 copies of *Poems and Ballads*, a royalty of 4/- on the published price of 9/-. This was certainly very generous and Hotten was anxious he would not take it for granted. He spelled out the costing to Howell who was taking part in the negotiations between them:

¹⁵ Chatto Letter Book 5/472 (5 Sept. 1870).

¹⁶ Chatto Letter Book 3/551 (16 Mar. 1869).

¹⁷ *Athenaeum*, 5 March 1887, p.323.

¹⁸ Anthony H. Harrison, *The Letters of Christina Rossetti* vols. 1-4 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997-2000. Letter 215([June 1864]).

The average wholesale price which I should obtain for *Poems* at 9/- would be from 5/6 to 5/10. Allowing Mr. S 4/- per copy there remains 1/6 or 1/10; and as the book cannot be produced – in the cheapest way – under 2/- per copy, it is easily seen that I have nothing for my trouble but a loss of some few pence per copy; and if, as I calculate, some £40 or £50 are expended in advertisements, I am this further sum out of pocket. In this calculation I have not included the percentage which we allow agents for travelling and selling the books in the provinces, and shipping houses for forwarding abroad. The Moxons, I believe, allow what we do, viz; 15%, which on the *Poems* would be 10 ¾d per copy...¹⁹

He would pay slightly lower royalties on the other stock taken over from Moxon, but then for all future editions ‘I pay Mr S. one fourth of the publication price for all copies printed, bear all risks and pay all expenses.’

A royalty of one quarter of the advertised publication price on copies printed was not the sole arrangement applied by Hotten until his sudden death in 1873. The accounts for just two years survive, and in them two exceptions are apparent.²⁰ The monograph on *William Blake* had been partially set up in type by Moxon’s and Hotten had inherited the printer’s expenses when he took it over. These, he claimed, had been so high that sales failed to recoup them.²¹ Two versions of Hotten’s January 1868 Statement of Account to Swinburne reflect this; the first includes a £100 royalty on *William Blake* and is crossed through. (This would be the equivalent of a royalty of four shillings – a quarter of the publication price – on 500 volumes, though the printing ledger shows 1,500 were printed.)²² It was replaced by a second account, identical with the first but without the Blake entry.²³ The second exception was the *Song of Italy* for which the same account records a ‘royalty on copies sold’ of £32.16.3d which, assuming a twenty five per cent royalty, equals 750 copies. So it looks as though

¹⁹ Meyers, *Letters* 134A (28/29 Aug. 1866).

²⁰ See Annex 4.

²¹ Chatto Letter Book 3/292 (24 June 1868).

²² Print Ledger 1/168.

²³ Chatto Letter Book 3/287 (8 January 1869); the rewritten version is 3/291 (8 January 1869) published Meyers, *Letters* 244A (8 January 1869).

Hotten was implementing different arrangements to his own advantage: no royalties before expenses cleared in the case of *William Blake*, (which meant Swinburne received nothing whatever from *William Blake* until Chatto's new edition of 1906, which then brought him just over £60 until his death in 1909);²⁴ and for number of copies sold rather than number printed for the *Song of Italy* (where Hotten had also misjudged the market and printed 3,000 only to find he did not have another *Poems and Ballads* on his hands.)²⁵

One type of arrangement Swinburne avoided. 'Proposals as to sale of copyright had before been suggested to me,' he told Watts, 'but I refused on any terms to part with the copyright of any writing whatever, or to bind myself to any publisher by the sale of more than 1000 copies at a time, so as in all cases to reserve my entire liberty to dispose of my own property.'²⁶ He had been on the verge of selling the copyright of *Chastelard* to Tinsley for £100, before taking it to Moxon. 'I gave up an excellent bargain,' Tinsley later reflected.²⁷ (Although *Chastelard* was by no means a bestseller, with only 4,500 printed over the next forty years, Swinburne will still have earned in excess of four times Tinsley's offer.)

'... Having made a similar agreement with Mr Ellis [as I did with Hotten] I have received from him £100 for the first edition of *Songs before Sunrise*, and (I think) £35 on the issue of a second,' Swinburne told Watts in the 1872 account of his publishing history.²⁸ Since Ellis was paying Gabriel Rossetti a twenty five per cent royalty on his *Poems*,²⁹ and offered Christina Rossetti the same for each edition of her *Nursery Rhymes*³⁰ (though in fact this project never came about) it is not unlikely that Swinburne was offered this royalty too, which would have been 'similar' to the agreement with Hotten. But if Ellis printed a total of 1,000 copies of *Songs before*

²⁴ Chatto Authors' Long Accounts, Jan. 1907, June 1907, June 1908, Dec. 1908.

²⁵ Print Ledger 1/198.

²⁶ Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 December [1872]).

²⁷ Tinsley, *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher*, vol. 1, pp.232-233.

²⁸ Lang, *Letters* 453 (20 December [1872]).

²⁹ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.133 (3 May 1870).

³⁰ Harrison, *Letters* 407 (25 Feb. 1870).

Sunrise a quarter royalty on 10/6 comes to £131.5.0 which does not quite square with Swinburne's recollection of payments of £100 and £35.

A year after Hotten's death business relations between Swinburne and his new publisher, Andrew Chatto, were formalised in the careful agreement dated April 1874 which met many of the desiderata that Walter Besant was to set out in 1887. It stated the print run of *Bothwell* – 1,500 copies – for which Swinburne was to receive £250 when he delivered the manuscript, and confirmed Chatto would 'continue to pay the Author a Royalty of one fourth of the publishing prices upon *Atalanta*, *Chastelard*, *Queen Mother*, *Song of Italy*, *Poems and Ballads*. A similar Royalty upon the *Essay upon Blake* shall be paid as soon as the sale of that work shall have defrayed the cost of publication.' There were also clauses about reprinting, presenting accounts, and terminating the agreement.³¹

Hotten's surviving records give frustratingly little detail for the costs of his titles. When Andrew Chatto took over he inherited Hotten's ledgers, and in his early years his entries do give a careful breakdown. The costs of his first edition (1,500 copies) of *Bothwell* – at 12/6d one of Swinburne's most expensive volumes – are itemised as follows:³²

Royalty to author	£225
Composition	£44.10.6
Paper	£57.4.0
Working	£27.11.3
Binding	£34.2.6
Advertising	£40.0.0
Stereo	£23.19.6
Handling of letter	£3.8.0
[illegible] for 50 [illegible] copies	£1.17.6
Corrections	£9.8.0
List of Books at end	£1.10.0

³¹ Swinburne Contracts: Folder 1 (23 Apr. 1874): this is transcribed in Annex 7.

³² Print Ledger 2/215.

[illegible] cancel [illegible]	£1.0.0
[illegible] on 900 [illegible]	£2.0.0

While not all of this is quite decipherable the amounts are clear. The total production cost (without counting the royalty) is £246.11.3 which means that each volume with a cover price of 12/6 cost just over 3/- to produce. Even adding the royalty only brings the cost to just over 6/- which still looks like a generous profit margin: but Chatto's profit will not have been of the proportion this initially suggests.

First, Chatto would not have sold the volumes at the published price of 12/6 each to the bookseller since the bookseller had to make a profit too. Hotten told Howell that the wholesale price of *Poems and Ballads* was slightly less than two thirds of the cover price.³³ Five years later Hotten wrote to Ellis, hoping to order *Songs before Sunrise*, '... if you would allow me the usual wholesale commission off the trade price. I would take 50 copies if you would let me have them at the same price as I charge Mr. Warne for the *Poems [and Ballads]*: viz. 15% off.'³⁴ And sending samples of his new titles a few months earlier to the wholesale bookseller Simpkin and Marshall (who supplied the country trade and the smaller London bookshops)³⁵ he offered '... the same terms as last year viz. 12½% off the actual sale prices,' though implied this was open to negotiation.³⁶ After Chatto had taken over the discount rose. He told Simpkin and Marshall in 1875: 'The sale terms will be the same as usual to you viz.: a third off the catalogue prices, 13 as 12, and 7½% discount on monthly settlements ...'³⁷ Discounts were flexible, and a third was clearly nothing exceptional.

Not only did the bookseller need a discount from the publisher on the published price in order to make a profit but also, before the Net Book Agreement (not formally

³³ Meyers, *Letters* 134A (28/29 Aug. 1866).

³⁴ Chatto Letter Book 6/100 (14 Jan. 1871).

³⁵ Their trade is described in: Henry Curwen, *A History of Booksellers* (London; Chatto and Windus, [1873]), pp.412-420 and W.J. Gordon, 'Simpkins', *Leisure Hour*, Sept. 1894, pp.704-708.

³⁶ Chatto Letter Books 6/47 (16 Nov. 1870).

³⁷ Chatto Letter Book 8/356 (7 Oct. 1875).

inaugurated until 1 January 1900 but anticipated by Macmillan in 1890 with many publishers following his lead by the mid-1890s), a discount was expected by the retail customer as well. Booksellers gave a discount of up to a quarter to the cash buyer.³⁸ As late as 1911 Percy Spalding at Chatto's told Watts-Dunton who was querying the cost of *Songs before Sunrise* to 'bear in mind that, although the volume is issued at 10/6, the public buy it at 7/11 i.e. at 3d off in the 1/-.'³⁹ Consequently the discount from publisher to bookseller would have to be greater than the discount from bookseller to customer.

So Chatto's incomings were less than the *Bothwell* breakdown in his ledger suggests. Assuming a third discount, 1500 copies of *Bothwell* would have brought in £625 (rather than £937.10.0 at the full price.) Subtracting from that the publishing cost recorded in the ledger brings Chatto's profit on the first edition down to just under £154, which is much less than the £225 royalty he paid to his author. Then there would have been his overheads: corresponding with author and printers; sending out review copies; storing and distributing the stock; and often in Swinburne's case as an early part of the process Chatto had to send someone off to the British Museum to find the text of a poem or article because its author could no longer find a copy (and sometimes the poet only had a vague recollection where it had appeared); and to do all of this required staff and running the office and shop at 74-75 Piccadilly. Chatto had been working for Hotten when Hotten acquired Swinburne and must surely have had a clear idea of his sales since then: whereas Hotten may well have pursued and clung to Swinburne in the hope he would be a best-selling poet like Tennyson, Swinburne's attraction for Chatto is more likely to have been as a 'name' giving weight and prestige to his list.⁴⁰

The main expense for *Bothwell* was the author's royalty of £225. For this and his first few publications with Swinburne Chatto paid in advance for an edition of a certain number of copies. And in his eagerness to retain Swinburne following the death

³⁸ Simon Eliot, "'Never Mind the Value, What about the Price?'" Or, How Much Did *Marmion* Cost St John Rivers?' *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, v.56, no 2 (Sept. 2001), p.165.

³⁹ Chatto Letter Book 75/639 (28 Apr. 1911).

⁴⁰ 'By the common consent of all mankind who have read, poetry takes the highest place in literature.' Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), p.197.

of Hotten when it seemed possible Swinburne would go elsewhere Chatto had emphasized that this would be in cash, and was even ‘willing to anticipate to a certain extent the payment of prospective royalty on the unsold copies of *Poems and Ballads*, *Atalanta*, and *Chastelard* now on hand.’⁴¹ (This reveals that latterly Hotten had switched to paying royalties on sales, not on the editions he printed.) It is not clear if Swinburne did benefit from any advance payments, and Chatto’s ledgers show that from 1877 Swinburne was paid on sales, and not on print-runs.⁴²

In the list of costs the proportions between the main elements would obviously change according to the length and cost of the volume (*Bothwell* was over 500 pages) and the size of the print-run. Advertising was entirely variable, though Chatto made a particular effort with *Bothwell* because it was his first new work from Swinburne. Stereotypes were made when a new edition was set up – Chatto showed enough confidence in Swinburne to do it at once and not wait for sales⁴³: they made it economic to print in short runs, as keeping a book in type meant that type could not be otherwise used. (When Moxon had *William Blake* kept in type before transferring it to Hotten the bill was a protracted matter of disagreement between them and was Hotten’s and Chatto’s justification in never paying any royalties.) Even *Poems and Ballads* which sold steadily throughout Swinburne’s life was usually only reprinted in runs of 500 copies at a time.

Stereotyping contributed to the surprisingly unchanging character of Swinburne’s publishing career. Although Chatto frequently used the terms First edition, Second edition and so on, in fact these are simply new impressions from the same stereotypes, occasionally with minor corrections. Swinburne was not a reviser: generally his text stayed the same, though he would note misprints or other infelicities in the printing.⁴⁴ Annex 1 lists all of Swinburne’s titles and shows that although there were in some cases many impressions of a particular title there were very few new

⁴¹ Chatto Letter Book 7/597 (18 Sept. 1873).

⁴² Chatto Author’s Retail and Statement Ledger 1874-1892: f.315-317 (Apr. 1875-Nov. 1877).

⁴³ An exception was *The Heptologia* published anonymously in a run of just 500 copies and not stereotyped.

⁴⁴ Two exceptions are revisions to *A Word for the Navy* and to *The Heptologia*.

editions. *Songs before Sunrise* first appeared from Ellis in 1871; comparing his edition with any of Chatto's shows that Chatto was using his plates for the text, and he continued to do so until his final impression in 1911. The purchaser did not have a choice of editions. In two cases (*Poems and Ballads*, when Chatto first brought out his Crown octavo edition, and *Poems and Ballads, second series* which appeared both in Crown octavo and Demy octavo) there was a choice of format, but the price was the same and the setting was the same: the only difference was the paper size.

Not only were editions unchanging: so were prices. *Poems and Ballads* was issued at nine shillings in 1866; it was still nine shillings on Swinburne's death in 1909. Ellis issued *Songs before Sunrise* at 10/6 in 1871; Chatto was selling the same edition with the same price forty years later. This is the case for all of Swinburne's titles and is in marked contrast to Chatto's marketing of novels. These he would sell first in the three-volume library format, followed by single volume editions: first six shilling, then 3/6, two shilling, and eventually a cheap edition at 6d. A recent study follows him doing this with novels from Wilkie Collins and Ouida.⁴⁵ Neither author was very happy at being sold in very cheap formats, so the initiative was clearly coming from Chatto. His agreements with them were for the purchase of the copyright in England, or in England and the colonies, or for a certain number of years. The print runs for single titles were on an entirely different scale to Swinburne's poetry. In the 1890s Chatto printed 117,500 copies of *The Woman in White*, and this was thirty years after its appearance and its greatest success. By the end of the century he had reprinted some 180,000 copies of three of Ouida's novels.

The business case for a publisher selling his novels in differently priced editions was that each was aimed at different sections of the market; a skilful publisher would time the release of each edition so that expected sales of more expensive editions were not undercut by the cheaper editions that followed. Where a title was out of copyright (which by the 1842 Act became seven years after the death of the author, with a minimum of forty two years from publication) any publisher could put out an edition, and seek to reach a particular segment of the market, so timing was then a matter of

⁴⁵ Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp.145-151.

who published first. Chatto's apparent lack of initiative with Swinburne's works is particularly marked when contrasted with his go-ahead attitude to his own fiction list. Even before Hotten's death Swinburne was negotiating with Chapman and Hall, who held out the prospect of a cheap 2/- edition in two volumes.⁴⁶ Agreement with Chatto was only reached when things finally fell through with Chapman in April 1874, because Chapman had failed to reach agreement with Chatto about buying the old stock, and Swinburne (undoubtedly advised by Watts) wanted to have just one publisher.⁴⁷ Chatto must have known about Chapman's proposal for a cheap edition and it is significant that he did not come up with a similar plan himself. The implication is that, with his knowledge of Swinburne's sales to date and the market, he judged it not to be economically viable.

Just a few years before Swinburne's agreement with Chatto, Gabriel Rossetti had approached Ellis on the same topic of a lower priced edition:

Someone told me yesterday that he was enquiring of one of the large cheap booksellers about the sale of my book, which was asserted to be excellent in this particular quarter, but that 'if published at 7/6 it would have gone off nearly as well as Tennyson.' What do you think of making the next edition a cheap one when needed – say even 6/-? Would it not be likely to get a new class of buyers, whereas the first class is already supplied? ⁴⁸

We do not have Ellis's reply, but he did not take up the suggestion, and Rossetti's *Poems* remained priced at twelve shillings. This was an expensive volume (although 6d cheaper than *Bothwell*) but it was selling well. Just four months after writing Rossetti received a cheque for the fifth and sixth editions, comprising three thousand copies that had been printed in total since its appearance in April.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Lang, *Letters* 455 (22 Dec. 1872).

⁴⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 516B (18 Apr. 1874).

⁴⁸ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.177 (17 June 1870).

⁴⁹ Fredeman, *Correspondence* 70.226 (3 Oct. 1870).

Browning's publisher also rejected a cheap edition. Furnivall recalled in his obituary of the publisher George Smith how, after founding the Browning Society in 1881, he was shocked to discover from Browning how little he was earning from his poetry.

Knowing that Tennyson got £5,000 a year, I thought that Browning might have had £500; but he had not £100. So I pleaded for a change to a publisher ... who was more of a student of poetry. But no: Browning would not leave Smith; though I might see Smith and try to persuade him to take up my notion of a shilling selection, with short introductions by myself ... Accordingly I went to Waterloo Place and Smith's answer was summed up in: 'It's all very well to talk about a cheap edition of Mr. Browning's works and fifty thousand of a shilling selection, but I know the facts. Our books show that we print 750 copies of a new poem; the first year we sell from 380 to 400 copies; the second year thirty to forty; the third year a dozen; and afterwards only odd copies. And as to your shilling selection, we should print 10,000; we should sell 2,000 and be the laughing stock of the trade. Moreover the shilling selection would stop the sale of the two six shilling ones, and render their plates valueless. I will not recommend anything of the kind to Mr. Browning.' So nothing was done, though Smith lived long enough to change his mind, and acknowledge that the stir made by the Browning Society did sell Browning's works.⁵⁰

The publishers of Rossetti, Swinburne and Browning all doubted that reduced prices would create increased sales and increase revenue. Consequently prices stayed high. In 1886 the *Pall Mall Gazette* published an interview with E.J. Stoneham, a bookseller with seven large discount shops in the City of London.⁵¹ Here, reported the paper, the City clerk on £100 to £200 a year bought his reading. 'Poetry is not popular. The four most popular poets are Shakespeare, Byron, Scott and Longfellow. Tennyson would sell enormously if there was a 3s 6d edition, but the present prices are prohibitive to my class of customers. Swinburne is also prohibitive.' Stoneham did not say so, but one feature of his successful poets was that they were available in cheap

⁵⁰ *Athenaeum*, 4 May 1901, pp.567-568.

⁵¹ 'A Great Bookseller and What he Sells', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 May 1886, pp.1-2.

editions because they were out of copyright (and Longfellow, as an American was not protected). The *Young Folks Paper* may have catered to a slightly better off class than Stoneham's city clerks, but even so it was making the same complaint just a few years later: 'It is a pity that so many poets, Mr Swinburne among them, publish their books at what are, to the great majority of people, prohibitive prices. Seven shillings for a volume, even with discount, is what comparatively few can afford to disburse frequently; and before writers blame the public for their indifference they should look to it that they are not themselves greatly to blame.'⁵² And the *Academy* took a similar view: 'I am inclined to believe,' wrote a columnist, 'that Mr. Swinburne is a little-bought poet, and this is so, largely, if not mainly, because his books are issued and maintained at such (comparatively) high prices.'⁵³

In 1902 Grant Richards proposed to Watts-Dunton a two volume cheap edition of Swinburne, to join *Tennyson's Poems, 1830-58* in his new World's Classics series. This had almost 500 pages and sold for one shilling in cloth or two shillings in leather. Chatto was alarmed:

I think that there cannot be the slightest doubt that the time has not yet come for the issue of such an extremely cheap edition. Experience shows that the proper time for these cheap issues is after the demand for the larger, better and higher priced editions has been fully supplied, and with fewer exceptions, such issues are only made when the term of the copyright is about to expire, and when it is impossible for the owners of the copyrights to prevent unauthorised reprints.⁵⁴

But looking at Swinburne's print-runs in Annex 1 it is clear that the titles that were selling most steadily were, with the exception of the *Selections*, those now over thirty years old. There was no case for arguing that demand for many of the other volumes – which was meagre – justified a wait. Chatto's point about expiring copyright was more relevant. Tennyson had started coming out of copyright in 1899, seven years after his death. With his wide appeal his publishers had, even during his life, issued many

⁵² 'Mr Swinburne and his new book (continued),' *Young Folks Paper*, 4 May 1889, p.280.

⁵³ The Bookworm, 'Bibliographical', *Academy*, 25 March 1899, p.350.

⁵⁴ Chatto Letter Book 43/102 (12 May 1902).

editions at a whole range of prices and still made money. What is striking is that once out of copyright the balance of prices changed dramatically. Between 1863 and 1897 over half of his editions were priced above 3s 6d; between 1898 and 1900 this proportion had shrunk to 16%.⁵⁵

If Chatto's cautious strategy to maximise income was at the expense of broadening the market it is interesting to look at Swinburne's earnings from royalties (see Annex 13 below). The sums are not large, around £200 to £400 per year. Although it has been suggested that £400 represents a comfortable middle class income⁵⁶ it is also worth bearing in mind that Gosse believed Swinburne's allowance from his father to support his literary life in London after leaving Oxford had also reached this figure.⁵⁷ (Whether or not he was correct is perhaps immaterial: this was a credible allowance for the Admiral to give his son.) Swinburne, unlike Tennyson, could not afford to build a country house on this income, let alone run two (Farringford and Aldworth). As another comparison, in the last four years of his life Browning was earning £436 (1886), £756 (1887), £1,252 (1888) and £1013 (1889) from his own poetry, plus royalties from his wife's sales (which in 1886 exceeded his own), in addition to investment income.⁵⁸ A second feature is there is no gradual pattern of increase reflecting Swinburne's cumulating sales as the number of volumes in print gradually grew, or of decline with waning interest as the *enfant terrible* of the 1860s fell out of fashion. There are peaks and troughs correlating with the publication of new volumes.

Another approach to issue a cheap edition in the World's Classics series (now in the hands of Henry Frowde for the Oxford University Press) was made to Watt-Dunton in 1910, a year after Swinburne's death. He forwarded it to Chatto who was no keener

⁵⁵ Simon Eliot, 'What Price Poetry', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 100 (2006), 425-445, p.439.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of income (in the context of book buying) see Simon Eliot, "'Never Mind the Value, What about the Price?'" , pp.165.

⁵⁷ Gosse, *Life*, pp.65-66

⁵⁸ Roma A. King, Jr., *Robert Browning's Finances from His Own Account Book* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 1947), pp.16-19.

than before: not only was Swinburne still in copyright, but they had only a few years earlier issued the Collected Edition. 'All this costly plant and stock would, in our opinion, be seriously deteriorated in value if a cheaper edition were now to be put upon the market.'⁵⁹

Over the course of the next few years Watts-Dunton made repeated attempts to increase the income from Swinburne's works. Initially he seems to have been concerned about the expiry of copyright, and Percy Spalding was asked to provide exact dates for the first publication of various volumes.⁶⁰ The most popular volumes, *Poems and Ballads* and *Atalanta in Calydon*, had both been published more than forty two years before, so they were then protected only for a further seven years from Swinburne's death, which meant to April 1916. But as Spalding pointed out, Swinburne's estate was likely to benefit from the extension of protection to fifty years after death which was the term in the Copyright Bill then going before Parliament. Watts-Dunton next suggested a price reduction for *Songs before Sunrise*. The reply was not encouraging: 'it would not to any appreciable extent increase its sales,' and prices of some of the other volumes would have to come down too. But Watts-Dunton had clearly made the point that Chatto & Windus had long since covered their costs in publishing Swinburne's volumes, and instead they offered to increase the royalties, retrospectively from the beginning of 1911, from 25% to 33¹/₃%.⁶¹ They reiterated their reluctance to change the pricing two days later:

With regard to the question of reducing the price of *Songs before Sunrise* on which you ask our opinion; although the price for this volume does seem rather high, we believe that the public to which Mr Swinburne's Work specially appeal is a cultivated one, and so necessarily limited in number; and those anxious to obtain the Poet's works do not mind paying the price which has been established for so many years.⁶²

⁵⁹ Chatto Letter Book 74/634 (20 Dec. 1910).

⁶⁰ Chatto Letter Book 74/729 (1 Jan. 1911), 75/674 (3 May 1911).

⁶¹ Chatto Letter Book 75/620 (26 Apr. 1911).

⁶² Chatto Letter Book 75/639 (28 April 1911).

The question of pricing continued to be considered and in 1914, just as the Great War approached, some progress was made. 'I confess that one great question which has been seriously occupying my mind,' Spalding told Watts-Dunton in March, 'is whether the publication of a cheap edition of Mr Swinburne's Poems will not only keep the income up to the present figure but will augment it.' By April he had concluded that it would and recommended that all the Crown octavo volumes should be reduced to six shillings, maintaining the $33\frac{1}{3}\%$ royalty, and that there should be a new cheap edition at two shillings a volume, with a 25% royalty.⁶³ This proposal went no further as Watts-Dunton died just a few weeks later on the 6 June.

The Trustees of Watts-Dunton's estate immediately approached Spalding for an offer for Swinburne's copyrights. The 1911 Act, which had been giving Watts-Dunton some concern while it was under discussion, had extended copyright to 50 years after the death of the author, so Swinburne's estate could expect to benefit in contrast to those of his peers, Tennyson and Browning (who had died in 1892 and 1889 respectively). Spalding offered £4000 to be paid in instalments over eight years, but then withdrew the offer following the outbreak of the Great War, though he indicated that negotiations could resume once peace had been declared.⁶⁴ The widowed Mrs Watts-Dunton wrote to Spalding (without the knowledge of the other Trustees) in November 1916. In the course of a long and detailed reply Spalding said:

You will no doubt remember that I paid Mr Watts Dunton a visit in April 1914, and previously to this I had sent him a longer letter in which I proposed a cheaper edition of the *Poems* for inclusion in the St Martin's Library ... My idea was then and still is that Swinburne's Poems should be published in a popular form to come within the means of all, and the scheme I brought before him was to issue the six volumes of *Poems* [the Collected Edition] at 2/- net in cloth. No discontinuance of the sale of the 36/- net edition was contemplated, as there would always be a demand for the latter from those who prefer an edition on larger paper. This cheap publishing price was based upon pre-War quotations, which we received from paper-makers and printers, and these unfortunately for

⁶³ Chatto Letter Book 83/835 (24 Mar. 1914); 83/1113 (23 Apr. 1914).

⁶⁴ Chatto Letter Book 84/580 (7 July 1914); 84/944 (17 Aug. 1914); 85/944 (3 Feb. 1915).

the present are at an end. I still think that such an issue if it could be done at the price would greatly enhance the sale of the *Poems* and add to the revenue ... I am convinced that much could be done to widen his public by means of cheaper editions, but you will remember that both the suggestions I have made to this effect have been negative. The immediate moment does not seem to me to be a propitious one either for the launching of a large scale of cheap editions, or for the sale of the copyrights by the Trustees, but of course this is purely a personal opinion in which you may not concur.⁶⁵

This is such a turn-around from the previous reluctance to consider cheap editions that it suggests that Andrew Chatto who only retired in 1912 took one position, and Percy Spalding took another. But if so Spalding was not to have his opportunity: in March 1917 William Heinemann visited him to inform him that he had purchased the Swinburne copyrights. Spalding wrote to Mackenzie Bell, one of the Trustees: 'I am sorry that as other firms were also tending we were not given the opportunity of doing likewise.'⁶⁶ Chatto & Windus had missed the boat.

It was now Heinemann who had the chance to discover if there was a larger market ready to buy new, cheaper editions.

(b) Copyright and Swinburne's American Market

During Swinburne's lifetime copyright in the United Kingdom was regulated by the Copyright Act of 1842. As noted above, it gave protection to works first published in this country for the life of the author plus seven years, or for a minimum of forty two years if that was longer, and it imposed fines for importing foreign reprints for sale or hire. In the United States the Copyright Acts of 1790 and 1831 gave protection only to American citizens: works by foreign writers could be reprinted with impunity. What this meant was that American publishers were legally entitled to plunder popular

⁶⁵ Chatto Letter Book 90/13 (29 Nov. 1916).

⁶⁶ Chatto Letter Book 90/917 (5 Apr. 1917).

English writers such as Dickens and Scott. British publishers – Hotten is a striking example – did the same with American authors such as Mark Twain. When Andrew Chatto took over Hotten's business in 1873 he wanted to conduct a very different business to his predecessor. 'An American author,' he pointed out in an interview published in the *Washington Post* eleven years later, 'can secure a copyright in England by publishing here first.' And he prided himself on arranging it: 'By that means Mark Twain, Bret Harte and others enjoy all the privileges of this market as well as their own. We have paid Mark Twain for royalties on his books £5,000.'⁶⁷ The rewards for British authors publishing in America with no possibility of protection depended on the good will of American publishers and on careful timing. The situation improved in 1891 thanks to the American 'Chace' Act, which extended American copyright to foreigners, though only if their work had been printed in the United States and deposited at the Library of Congress within two days of publication.⁶⁸

Fortunately for British authors not all American publishers exercised their legal right to reprint without charge. The ledgers of Ticknor and Fields of Boston show them paying Tennyson the equivalent of a 10% royalty on his 1842 *Poems*. Coventry Patmore received the same percentage in 1856 for *Angel in the House: The Espousals*. There were practical advantages in this over piracy: early sheets from the English publisher – either proofs or the first printing – enabled the American publisher to have his edition for sale before any competition; he could also market the book as the 'author's edition' or 'authorized edition' which bolstered 'courtesy of the trade' conventions whereby a publisher laid a claim to exclusive printing of a foreign work if he had advertised his intention to do so and established a prior claim. (The object of such understandings between publishers was to avoid ruinous competition.) But it was not simply a matter of this honest publisher reprinting with payment, and that unscrupulous one reprinting without: while Ticknor and Fields spent \$3,825 on buying

⁶⁷ Joseph Hatton, 'Books and Bookmakers; familiar talks with one of the great London publishers', *Washington Post*, 6 July 1884, p.1.

⁶⁸ Catherine Seville, 'Copyright', in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1830-1914*, pp.214-225 .

the early sheets of sixteen foreign titles in 1859, another twelve foreign publications were reprinted without any payment.⁶⁹

‘When *Atalanta* appeared in ’65’, Swinburne recalled in 1875, ‘I received (I think from Messrs. Osgood but am not sure [Osgood was then the junior partner in Ticknor and Fields]) a cheque for £20 with a courteous note proposing arrangements for any future books. This proposal, being ignorant of all business, I, out of deference and a sense of etiquette towards him, referred to my then acting publisher in London’.⁷⁰ Although Swinburne implies he was a fool to do this, his attitude was formed by his subsequent rupture with Moxon’s over the withdrawal of *Poems and Ballads*. As the most unbusinesslike of men he was the last person able to negotiate his own American publishing deals. Moxon’s edition of *Atalanta* was published in London in March 1865.⁷¹ Ticknor and Fields’ edition was announced as ‘just published’ by the *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* of 18 October 1865⁷² and had almost certainly been unauthorised when Swinburne received his £20 cheque. By then Moxon’s may have reached agreement with another firm, Hurd and Houghton of New York, who advertised their forthcoming publication of *Chastelard* ‘from early sheets’ on 7 November 1865.⁷³ When it appeared the verso of the title page was marked ‘Author’s edition.’ Hurd and Houghton had also announced *The Queen Mother and Rosamond* as ‘In the Press’ on 11 November. But it failed to appear, and Ticknor and Fields issued it the following year. It was reviewed in the *New York Times* as ‘recently published’ on 9 June 1866 though had been received at Harvard as a gift from the publisher on 16 April.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Michael Winship, *American Literary Publishing in the Mid-Nineteenth Century; the business of Ticknor and Fields* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.136-138. This study makes no mention of their Swinburne editions.

⁷⁰ Lang, *Letters* 600 (20 Feb. 1875).

⁷¹ *Publishers’ Circular* 1 April 1865, p.171, where it appears in the list of new books published 15-31 March.

⁷² Clyde Kenneth Hyder, *Swinburne’s Literary Career and Fame* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1933), p.22.

⁷³ *New York Times*, 7 Nov. 1865, p.5. It was reviewed in the same paper on 26 Dec. 1865, p.4.

⁷⁴ *New York Times*, 11 Nov. 1865, p.5; 9 June 1866, p.5. Flora M. Livingston, *Swinburne’s Proof Sheets and American First Editions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Privately printed, 1920), p.7.

Without further evidence no firm conclusion can be drawn from this sequence of publishers. Moxon's had probably arranged the American publication of *Chastelard*, possibly of *The Queen Mother and Rosamond*, but not that of *Atalanta. Poems and Ballads* appeared with a third publisher, G.W. Carleton of New York. He gave it a new title, *Laus Veneris and other Poems and Ballads*, and moved what had become the title poem from third to first place in the contents. The imprint reads: 'New York, / Carleton, Publisher, 413 Broadway / London : Moxon & Co,' and again is marked 'Author's edition' on the verso of the title page. But as it was published in November while Moxon's had withdrawn the volume in England on 6 August 1866⁷⁵ and Hotten taken over as Swinburne's publisher, Carleton may have been dealing with Hotten or, if unscrupulous, played off one publisher against the other. Wise records that the edition was 'fully authorised,' that it was agreed the profits were to be divided equally between Swinburne, Carleton and Moxon's, and that a 'substantial sum' was duly sent to London, though none of it ever reached the author.⁷⁶ He does not give his source for this information and it is not entirely credible. If there was such a profit-sharing agreement with Carleton it put great trust in him (several thousand miles from London) to give an honest account of his sales and costs. That the book went into many editions from its appearance on 3 November 1866 (following a pre-publication announcement on 11 October) was trumpeted in its extensive advertising.⁷⁷ 'I have gone through five editions in as many days in America,' Swinburne told his friend Powell towards the end of November; 'a sterile success which brings much clamour and no profit with it.'⁷⁸ This sounds like either a naive assumption that any payment so soon after publication was even a possibility, or perhaps a cynical recognition that there was little hope of reward, whatever the sales, though either way it hardly tallies with the profit-sharing agreement reported by Wise.

Hotten's name appeared with Carleton's on the title-page of the American edition of *Notes on Poems and Reviews* in 1866. But then Ticknor and Fields issued A

⁷⁵ Meyers, *Letters* 122A (6 Aug. 1866).

⁷⁶ Wise, *Bibliography*, v.1, p.134.

⁷⁷ Hyder, *Swinburne's Literary Career and Fame*, pp.74-75.

⁷⁸ Lang, *Letters* 164 (21 Nov. 1866).

Song of Italy in 1867. 'I had quite forgotten how admirably you had managed the *Song of Italy*,' Swinburne commented to his friend Thomas Purnell a few years later, wishing he had thought to ask him to arrange the American sale of *Songs before Sunrise*.⁷⁹ Hotten tried, unsuccessfully, to interest Osgood in *William Blake*, offering him 750 copies complete with title page with their name on it for six shillings a copy, 'which is 6d per copy more than the actual cost of publication.'⁸⁰ Osgood did not respond; Hotten then approached Roberts Brothers, and with a further price reduction:

The selling price here is 16/- and after selling a very large 1st edition in a single block we are now disposing of the second edition. The book cost 5/- to produce – paper, print and pictures. We will sell 500 copies in quires at 5/6 each – in the distinct understanding that no copies are sent back to the country, where of course they would greatly interfere with our full published price. We cannot sell in smaller numbers as Scribner buys 50 copies at a time at 11/6 per copy.⁸¹

When this failed he then turned to Tousey of New York and offered an initial one hundred copies at 5/6d, (so in effect another reduction in his terms) but met with no more success.⁸² This edition of *William Blake* never covered its expenses, never brought Swinburne any royalties and was remaindered as early as 1872.⁸³ And it could not even be off-loaded onto the American market.

Although Swinburne had by now seen a number of his books published in America, apparently with and without his initial authorisation, he does not seem to have been fully aware of the copyright situation between the two countries. Bringing Lord

⁷⁹ Lang, *Letters* 381 (4 March 1871).

⁸⁰ Chatto Letter Book 3/87 (1 Jan. 1868).

⁸¹ Chatto Letter Book 3/177 (8 Apr. 1868).

⁸² Chatto Letter Book 3/243 (23 May 1868).

⁸³ Lang, *Letters* 1792 (3 Aug, 1903); *Athenaeum*, 27 Jan. 1872, p.123: in a 'Select List of New Publications and Remainders from Henry Southeran, Joseph Baer & Co', it is listed at 9s., published price 16s. But Hotten and Chatto retained some in stock – its final appearance in a Chatto advertisement seems to have been the *Belgravia Advertiser*, Jan. 1886, p.25. The copy in Cambridge University Library from the Keynes Collection (Keynes.L.2.6) contains in its front board the sticker of S. & T. Gilbert, who remaindered Moxon's edition of *Poems and Ballads*.

Houghton up to date with his writing in March 1868, he told him that he had a number of poetical irons in the fire, ‘but have finished one which I think as good as anything I have yet done. It is sent off to an American magazine, but I intend it to reappear here before it can be pirated.’ This was ‘Siena’ whose 36 stanzas plus notes appeared in *Lippincott’s Magazine* for June 1868. What Swinburne had overlooked was that for him to have copyright in his own country it had to be published here first and so, failing to find a journal publisher in time, Hotten printed a few copies as a pamphlet – perhaps only six – and the British Museum received its copy on 27 May 1868, just in time to secure copyright ahead of its American appearance.⁸⁴ Later in the autumn an American friend, Bayard Taylor, was proposing calling on Ticknor and Fields in Boston to see if they would take any of Swinburne’s poems for the *Atlantic Monthly*. Taylor was aware of the importance of timing. ‘“Watch of the Night” I should think could easily be disposed of here, that you could give it in the same month in England – that is, if you have not already made an arrangement.’⁸⁵ This time publication on both sides of the Atlantic was co-ordinated: it appeared in the December issues of both the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Atlantic Monthly*.⁸⁶

Simultaneous publication in magazines was required because while first publication in America meant loss of copyright in England, a prior publication in England meant that other American journals could easily reprint from an imported copy, without paying the author. No records have so far come to light of how much Swinburne earned from America in this way (nor of how much he lost: no work has been done on what was published in American journals.) At the end of 1872 he asked Purnell ‘if you can at once take charge for the American market of a forthcoming poem of mine of upwards of 200 lines which will appear in the *Fortnightly*. [‘Memorial Verses on the Death of Theophile Gautier,’ *Fortnightly Review*, Jan 1873.] As your good offices have before procured me the money due from that quarter I come to ask for them again, so as not to lose by unauthorised reprint the pittance I have a right to

⁸⁴ Wise forged extra copies of Hotten’s ‘Siena’ pamphlet. The date of the genuine pamphlet’s receipt at the British Museum is given in Carter and Pollard’s *Enquiry* p.287 in the course of exposing the forged version.

⁸⁵ Meyers, *Letters* 275A (31 Oct. 1868).

⁸⁶ *Fortnightly Review*, Dec. 1868, pp.618-612; *Atlantic Monthly*, Dec. 1868, pp.698-702.

expect.⁸⁷ This sale does not appear to have come off, perhaps hindered by Swinburne having again left it rather late for simultaneous publication to be arranged. But Watts had now met Swinburne and begun to take a vigorous interest in his affairs. He saw great potential in the American market, although his enthusiasm was not grounded in experience and proved unjustified. There were some lyrics in the as-yet unpublished *Bothwell*:

Would it not be well to get them printed, at once, in some American magazine and so get the poem talked about, and at the same time, make a little money by them? I named it to Joaquin Miller [a celebrity American poet then visiting London] the other day and I have no doubt that you could get, say, £10 for any lyric. *Let me know your views on this.* You ought to make a good income out of America where you are so enormously famous. The New York *Independent* would take any lyrics of yours and pay liberally for them.⁸⁸

The *Independent* was offered sonnets from the 'Dirae' sequence that was appearing in the London *Examiner*, and they published the following:

Dirae: xii. The Saviour of Society	<i>Examiner</i>	17 May 1873, p.519
Napoleon, Savior of Society. 1869	<i>Independent</i>	22 May 1873, p.641
Dirae: xiii. Mentana: Third Anniversary	<i>Examiner</i>	24 May 1873, p.543
Mentana: Third Anniversary. 1870	<i>Independent</i>	12 June 1873, p.740
Dirae: xv. The Descent into Hell. January 9, 1873	<i>Examiner</i>	7 June 1873, p.589
The Descent into Hell. (Chislehurst, 9 January 1873)	<i>Independent</i>	26 June 1873, p.804
Dirae: xvi. Apologia	<i>Examiner</i>	14 June 1873, p.615
Apologia	<i>Independent</i>	10 July 1873, p.868

⁸⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 446B (5 Dec. [1872]).

⁸⁸ Meyers, *Letters* 470B (27 Mar. 1873).

Publication was, after all, far from simultaneous. Swinburne eventually acknowledged receipt of payment, but the sum is not recorded.⁸⁹

H.R. Fox Bourne, editor of the *Examiner*, who seems to have been overwhelmed first with the honour of publishing Swinburne and then by the ensuing controversy, saw no objections to the arrangement with the *Independent*.⁹⁰ Chapman, the more enterprising publisher of the *Fortnightly*, told Watts he had offered the proof sheets of Swinburne's latest poem in his journal – 'North and South' appeared in the May 1873 issue – to several American houses but without success.⁹¹

Swinburne's *Songs before Sunrise* had been published in London in 1871 by F.R. Ellis, following Swinburne's falling-out with Hotten. Ellis offered it to Roberts Brothers of Boston.⁹² The Roberts edition which appeared the same year, 1871, has two distinctive misprints also in the London edition: the word 'Or' has vanished from the beginning of a line on page 271, line 10 and the initial letter M of 'Master' from page 282 line 13.⁹³ It follows that Ellis either supplied the stereotypes or the sheets themselves. The book was not a success in America and there seemed less interest in Swinburne's new publications. 'My political poems brought in very little, and *Bothwell* it seems nobody would take at any price', Swinburne confided to an American friend in 1875, still hoping someone could give him useful tips on dealing with American publishers. 'Mr. Longfellow whom I once met in London asked me what I had received from America, and on hearing told me I had been robbed of a sum which sounded to me incredible.'⁹⁴ But Mr. Longfellow of course had copyright in America.

When Andrew Chatto took over as Swinburne's publisher in 1874 he had included a clause in the contract for *Bothwell*: 'With regard to the American market the

⁸⁹ Lang, *Letters* 492 (1 Dec. [1873]); Meyers, *Letters* 492A (3 Dec. 1873) ; Lang, *Letters* 493 (4 Dec. 1873).

⁹⁰ Meyers, *Letters* 476D (17 Apr. 1873).

⁹¹ Meyers, *Letters* 477D (8 May 1873).

⁹² Lang, *Letters* 381 (4 March 1871).

⁹³ Livingston, *Swinburne's Proof Sheets*, p.19.

⁹⁴ Lang, *Letters* 600 (20 Feb. 1875).

Publishers will sell the advance sheets in America for the best price procurable and hand over the entire proceeds to the Author deducting a Commission of twenty five per cent upon the amount received.’⁹⁵ Despite his efforts Chatto was not to find an American publisher for a new work of Swinburne’s for another three years. At the end of 1874 he sent Osgood early sheets of Swinburne’s essay *George Chapman*. ‘We should be content with £20 for the sheets’, he told him.⁹⁶ There was no American edition. A year later Chatto wrote to Roberts Brothers about *Erechtheus*:

We enclose a set of first proofs of Mr Swinburne’s new poem. We will send a corrected copy together with the title and preliminary pages as soon as they are in type. We will supply a complete set of stereos making payment to author for £50; if you would rather set it up yourselves from the advanced sheets they will cost you £30. If you will take the stereos and telegraph your reply we can dispatch them during next week.⁹⁷

They were followed within a couple of weeks by the dispatch of revised sheets, though still before Roberts Brothers had made any commitment to take them: Chatto’s confidence in a sale was misplaced.⁹⁸ But from 1878 Chatto had found a regular customer in R. Worthington of New York. His first purchase was early sheets – in fact uncorrected advance proofs – of *Poems and Ballads, second series*. As a result the New York edition had many minor differences from the London edition, particularly in the Dedication and Contents at the start of the volume, but also with slight variations in the text.⁹⁹ In addition Worthington added an Appendix with the Prelude from ‘Tristram and Iseult’ (which had appeared *A Holiday Book of Prose and Verse* in London in 1871 and had not previously been reprinted) and ‘The Sailing of the Swallow’ (which he lifted from the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of March 1877.) An apologetic note on page 242

⁹⁵ Swinburne Contracts: Folder 1 (23 Apr. 1874).

⁹⁶ Chatto Letter Book 8/9 (18 Nov. 1874).

⁹⁷ Chatto Letter Book 8/454 (11 Dec. 1875).

⁹⁸ Chatto Letter Book 8/465 (23 Dec. 1875).

⁹⁹ These are detailed in Gwen Hampshire, ‘Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads, Second Series 1878*’, *Book Collector* 24 (1975), pp.236-244.

explained that to avoid further delay this had been done without the author's sanction. Swinburne received £15, so presumably Chatto had charged Worthington £20.¹⁰⁰

Until his final business failure in 1891 Worthington continued to buy early sheets from Chatto and issued a total of seventeen Swinburne editions between 1878 and 1889. The process went spectacularly wrong with the publication of *Locrine*. This was a short play in rhyming verse about a legendary king of Britain which Swinburne wrote during the course of 1887. After Swinburne's usual tussle with the proofs Chatto had it ready for publication in mid November,¹⁰¹ and he sent early sheets to his agent, De Witt C. Lent of New York, who passed them on to Worthington for use in America for £25.¹⁰² As Worthington had by now published a good number of Swinburne's preceding titles this must have seemed a routine procedure. Worthington then offered *Locrine* to the *New York Times* for \$100 but, according to his own account published in that paper, when three hours after his deadline he had received no reply he then sold it for the same amount to the *Evening Sun*. The *Sun* set it up in type and intended to publish it that Saturday, 19 November 1887, 'simultaneously with its publication in London.'¹⁰³ The *New York Times* then decided that it would, after all, like the play and instructed its London correspondent, Harold Frederick to obtain it. He did so via a journalist, E. St. John Brenon, who obtained an early copy from Chatto to use for a review to be cabled to the *New York Times* and was given permission to include a 'few quotations.'¹⁰⁴ Instead the entire text, less the Dedication to Alice Swinburne, was sent by Atlantic cable on 16 November and printed across the first two and a half sides of the *New York Times* for Thursday 17 November.

The *New York Times* made the most of its coup. The next day it published two articles (there were more in the following days), printing the reactions of leading

¹⁰⁰ Chatto Author's Retail and Statement Ledger 1874-1892/289-290 (14 Aug. 1878).

¹⁰¹ This is the implication of the advertising: it was to be available 'shortly'. *Athenaeum* 15 Oct. 1887, p.490; and without qualification 12 Nov. 1887, p.628.

¹⁰² Chatto Letter Book, 21/451 (2 Dec. 1887).

¹⁰³ 'Cabling a Whole Poem,' *New York Times*, 18 Nov. 1887, p.1; '*Locrine* by Cable,' *ibid.* p.4 which quotes an editorial from the *Sun*.

¹⁰⁴ Chatto Letter Book, 21/450 (2 Dec. 1887).

publishers and of other newspapers and discussing the technical feat of transmitting 18,000 words in five hours over two cables. Worthington estimated it must have cost the paper nearly \$3,000 (which was then worth about £600). But it was Joseph H. Harper of Harper Brothers who, as a publisher, saw the copyright implications:

It was a remarkable bit of newspaper enterprise [he told the *New York Times* reporter.] ... The first thing that struck me however, was something that you may not wish me to discuss. It is possible that the publication in this country of the tragedy has vitiated English copyright. English law is very strict and absolutely demands priority in publication as a basis of copyright. Publication in the meaning of the law is the issuance of the book for sale. I do not know the conditions in the present case, but if, as your dispatch stated, the book is not to be actually published until Saturday, I think there is no question in the matter ... Mr Swinburne, therefore, may not be altogether pleased as any English publisher, should the American publication have preceded the English, is at liberty to print his book.¹⁰⁵

From a letter Chatto wrote to St John Brenon four years later it appears that Brenon claimed to have been unaware of the copyright implications, and supposed that such a piece of journalist enterprise could only have been useful publicity for sales.¹⁰⁶ Chatto was surprised that Worthington had offered the early sheets for publication before the date arranged for simultaneous publication on both sides of the Atlantic, which, Chatto told the agent De Witt C. Lent, was 'a departure from a carefully pre-arranged plan that might lead to vexatious results.'¹⁰⁷ Worthington explained himself to Chatto, but his explanation does not survive, only Chatto's acknowledgement of it, and Chatto's comment that he had been afraid 'at one time' of copyright complications.¹⁰⁸ Worthington's most likely explanation must have been that he sold the sheets to the *Sun* with an agreement about their publication date.

¹⁰⁵ 'Cabling a Whole Poem,' *New York Times*, 18 Nov. 1887, p.1.

¹⁰⁶ Chatto Letter Book 25/279 (5 May 1891).

¹⁰⁷ Chatto Letter Book 21/451 (2 Dec. 1887).

¹⁰⁸ Chatto Letter Book 21/476 (14 Dec. 1887).

There was no come-back from the *New York Times*' publication. *Locrine*'s appearance there was not noticed by the British press with the exception of the *Publishers' Circular* which reprinted an article from its American counterpart, *Publishers' Weekly*.¹⁰⁹ No British publisher then or later issued its own edition. One reason might be that British publication was, or could be construed as, before 17 November. The book was certainly printed before then, since the earliest review was on the 15 November, and the *Athenaeum* advertised it implicitly as available on 12 November – the earlier advertisements had said 'shortly'.¹¹⁰ Another explanation could be that there was simply little interest. In 1868 when Swinburne was at the zenith of his fame and notoriety, 'Siena' might well have tempted an enterprising British publisher; twenty years later *Locrine*, a drama on an obscure subject from the same poet was now less of a draw. (Chatto's sales of *Locrine* from 1887 until 1918 totalled just under 1,500 copies, much the same as each of his other later plays.)¹¹¹

After Worthington's collapse Chatto found other publishers for some of Swinburne's subsequent volumes: *The Tale of Balen* to Charles Scribner's Sons (1896); *Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards* to Dodd, Mead and Company (1899) and Harper for the Collected Editions of the Poems and Tragedies. Because of the change to the American copyright legislation with the Chace Act of 1891, American publishers who wanted to issue Swinburne's new books now paid more, but not a lot more. Percy Spalding gave the following annotated list to Watts-Dunton when he was asking about American editions in 1911, which reflects this.¹¹²

<i>Mary Stuart</i>	Early sheets sold to Worthington for £15 (Feb. 1886)
<i>Study of Victor Hugo</i>	ditto, by Mr de Witt C. Lent for £10 (Jan 1886)
<i>Miscellanies</i>	£10 received through Lent (Aug 1886)

¹⁰⁹ 'The Swinburne Incident,' *Publishers' Circular*, 15 Dec. 1887, pp.1801-1802.

¹¹⁰ Review in *Daily News*, 15 November 1887, p.5. Advertisements in *Athenaeum*, 15 Oct. 1887, p.490; 12 Nov. 1887, p.628. It was included in 'New works published from Nov. 16 – 30,' *Publishers' Circular*, 6 Dec. 1887, p. 1517D.

¹¹¹ Chatto Print Ledger 4/328.

¹¹² Chatto Letter Book 74/873 (18 Jan. 1911).

<i>Selections</i>	Stereos sold to America for £10 (July 1887)
<i>Study of Ben Jonson</i>	£12/10 received from America (July 1890)
<i>Poems and Ballads, third series</i>	£13 received from America (July 1890)
<i>Sisters</i>	£40 received from Messrs McClure (Aug 1892)
<i>Tale of Balen</i>	Scribners paid £50 for the copyright (July 1896)

The money that Swinburne earned from America for sales of early sheets before the 1891 Act and from rights for volumes published after it remained low: he could sometimes command more for a single poem in the English press. But this did not account for his entire American market. Chatto's ledgers show that he also sold volumes directly to America and paid Swinburne half his English royalty, 12½% of the retail price instead of 25%. These royalties begin to appear in the ledgers from December 1883 and continue thereafter. For example: in December 1883 (the previous summary is dated April 1883) he detailed 1,735 volumes sold at home and 527 sold to America. In June 1887 it recorded 1,990 home and 210 American sales; in July 1893 1,418 home and 224 American sales.¹¹³ These are not just for titles where there was no American edition, but include the whole range of Chatto's Swinburne publications. To return to *Locrine*, the ledgers show 245 copies sold to America bringing Swinburne, with a royalty of 9d a copy, just over £9 in total between publication in 1887 and his death in 1909. The 1058 copies sold in the United Kingdom attracted a royalty of 1/6d a copy, totalling just under £80 in the same period.¹¹⁴

Even after 1891 the American legislation did not give any sort of retrospective protection to foreign authors, so the bulk of Swinburne's work remained at the mercy of American publishers throughout his life. Yet there is no evidence of a rash of publishers reprinting individual volumes, though three very substantial compilations appeared in the 1880s. The first of these, *Selections from the poetical works of A.C. Swinburne*, (subtitled *from the latest English edition of his works*) was edited with a lengthy, somewhat critical introduction by R.H. Stoddard, and published in 1884 by T.Y. Crowell & Co of New York. In 631 double columned sides it included *Atalanta*, *Erechtheus*, *Chastelard*, *Bothwell*, *Mary Stuart* entire and a little over a hundred poems,

¹¹³ Author's Retail and Statement Ledgers 1874-1894.

¹¹⁴ These figures are compiled from Chatto's Author's Retail and Statement Ledgers.

carefully omitting anything – in fact the most celebrated poems – from the first *Poems and Ballads* that might give offence. An undated edition, *Selections from the Poetical Works of Algernon C. Swinburne, from the latest English edition of his works* (New York, A.L. Burt, Publisher) ran to 423 pages and included 166 poems. An even thicker volume of 857 pages appeared in 1887: *The Poetical Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne. Complete Edition. Including also the most celebrated of his dramas, viz.: The Queen-Mother, Rosamond, Chastelard, Atalanta in Calydon, Bothwell, Erechtheus, etc.* (New York: J.D. Williams, 1887). Judging from the number of these for sale today over the internet all of these were published in substantial numbers. Chatto thought similar English editions would undercut the market for individual volumes, and resisted a collected edition for many years.

There was one conspicuous pirate of single volume editions in America, and this was Thomas Bird Mosher, who opened his swashbuckling career with George Meredith's *Modern Love and Other Poems*, and even had the audacity to advertise it in the *Athenaeum*.¹¹⁵ He made a particular point of good quality printing and superior presentation and, thanks to no obligation to pay royalties, prices were modest. Legally he could not sell his reprints in the United Kingdom, but for many years on either side of the turn of the century he advertised his catalogue in the *Athenaeum* and the *Academy* as being available for the price of a stamp 'to any place that can be reached by mail.' Bad feeling was stoked up with British publishers and authors, but as he pointed out, he had a perfect legal right to reprint as he did.¹¹⁶ Meredith had been impressed by the presentation of Mosher's edition and wrote to tell him so. 'A handsome pirate is always half pardoned.'¹¹⁷ Swinburne too appears to have been unconcerned. *Félice: a book of lyrics* (1894) was the first of thirteen of his books Mosher published. This, when brought to his attention, Swinburne 'admired, and the selection from his poems was, he considered, a judicious one.'¹¹⁸ One of Mosher's later Swinburne volumes was his 1901 reprint of *A Year's Letters*, which had previously appeared as an anonymous

¹¹⁵ *Athenaeum*, 19 March 1892, p.386.

¹¹⁶ 'Reply of the American Pirate Mosher to the Editor of the P.C.,' *Publishers' Circular* 13 March 1909, pp.401-402.

¹¹⁷ Cline, *Letters of George Meredith* 1399 (3 Mar. 1892), 1406 (24 Mar. 1892).

¹¹⁸ G.C. Williamson, *Behind my Library Door* (London: Selwyn & Blount, Ltd, 1921), pp.202-203.

serial in the *Tatler* during 1877 and then been forgotten. Swinburne revised a copy to use as the text for the English republication of *A Year's Letters* by Chatto under its new name *Love's Cross Currents*.¹¹⁹ He gave the copyright to Watts-Dunton, despite which relations between Watts-Dunton and Mosher remained cordial.¹²⁰

Although Mosher claimed (in his 1909 reply in the *Publishers' Circular*) to be dealing in 'flotsam and jetsam on the unchartered sea of literary misadventure' this was scarcely so with most of his Swinburne piracies. Undeserved neglect was hardly the case with *Atalanta in Calydon*, all three series of *Poems and Ballads*, *Songs before Sunrise* or *Tristram of Lyonesse* (although Mosher could have claimed that his was the only separate American edition of *Tristram*).¹²¹ But the poet at the end of his career could afford to be more relaxed about this piracy than he would have been almost forty years earlier. Whereas in the early years of his fame both he and Watts had assumed there were large sums to be made from America, experience had shown that, thanks to the copyright situation this was far from the case.

(c) Swinburne the pamphleteer

Swinburne's extensive published output appeared in three formats: as books; in the periodical press; and, as a sort of half-way house (though in considerably less quantity) in pamphlet form. During his lifetime almost thirty pamphlets were printed under his name.¹²² A handful of these were polemical prose; the rest were mainly individual poems which are also found in the press and in his collections of poetry. Swinburne, maintained Gosse writing less than ten years after his death, was a writer

¹¹⁹ T.J. Wise *The Ashley Library* v.6, (London: For private circulation, 1925), p.203.

¹²⁰ Algernon Charles Swinburne, *A Year's Letters* ed. Francis Jacques Sypher (London: Peter Owen, 1976), p.xxx. Sypher refers to two letters in Harvard College Library 13 Nov. 1903 and 24 Oct. 1912 from Watts-Dunton to Sypher.

¹²¹ Mosher's editions are detailed in Philip R. Bishop, *Thomas Bird Mosher, Pirate Prince of Publishers* (New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 1998).

¹²² These are listed in Annex 15.

who ‘avowed himself to be ‘a bit of a bibliomaniac’ and one ‘who on many occasions was eager to embrace the opportunity of circulating particular poems in that limited pamphlet form which appeals to the lover of rare books.’¹²³ The evidence for this enthusiasm – had Gosse thought it necessary to present it – would have been the poet’s library which included a collection of Elizabethan quartos and early editions of Landor,¹²⁴ and the existence of those very pamphlets that were now circulating in the book market and so carefully documented by Gosse’s friend, the collector and bibliographer, Thomas James Wise. But in fact there is no reason to suppose Swinburne had any interest in issuing his poems in limited editions, and less than twenty years after Gosse wrote these words Wise, the preeminent bookman of the day, had been exposed. Many scarce pamphlets supposedly issued by Mrs Browning, by Tennyson, Swinburne and others and authenticated by Wise in his authoritative bibliographies were Wise’s forgeries.¹²⁵

Pamphlet production offered some advantages over book or journal publication for author and publisher. They could be produced quickly and economically and sold cheaply, and so were particularly suitable for topical matters. Their disadvantage – they were by nature ephemeral and not produced for long-term sales – made them ideal material for forgery as the ‘first edition’ craze took hold towards the end of the century.

Notes on Poems and Ballads was written, according to its own text, ‘to accede to the wish of my present publisher, and to the wishes of friends whose advice I value, that on his account, if not on mine, I should make some reply to the charges brought against me.’ The circumstances were Moxon’s withdrawal of *Poems and Ballads* in August 1866 following the furore in the press that greeted its publication, Swinburne’s consequent break with Moxon and agreement with John Camden Hotten to transfer his

¹²³ Gosse, *Life*, pp.331-332.

¹²⁴ ‘... I have his very first published volume of 1795, and all three editions of his Latin poems; also the *Gebir* of 1803 in its quaint original green boards, wherein I take a bibliomaniacal delight.’ Lang, *Letters* 1001 (2 Apr. [1880]).

¹²⁵ John Carter and Graham Pollard, *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets* (London: Constable, 1934).

books to him.¹²⁶ It is not unlikely that the impetus for a response to the critics did indeed come from Hotten since it was going to take some time before he could get *Poems and Ballads* back in the market, as though existing sheets could be reused the Moxon title page had to be cancelled and replaced, and the Moxon binding could not be recycled. A reply by Swinburne would be excellent publicity and help keep the controversy alive, which could only be good for sales. Swinburne was writing it during September and had it in Hotten's hands by the end of the month.¹²⁷ The *Athenaeum* misunderstood what Hotten had told the *Publishers' Circular* and supposed it was going to be in verse.¹²⁸

Hotten dispatched the proof to William Rossetti and discussed its content and presentation with him, then reported to Swinburne.¹²⁹ Swinburne responded more positively to Hotten's (and Rossetti's) strictures on his text than on their suggestions that it should be included at the end of the re-issued *Poems and Ballads*. 'I may just add', he told Rossetti, 'that I don't agree about the suggestion of printing my pamphlet as an appendix to my book. It would in my opinion be making far too much of an ephemeral and contemptible subject. If the poems are fit to live they must outlive the memory of this'.¹³⁰ Hotten accepted this, though still aimed to bring out the pamphlet and reissue *Poems and Ballads* simultaneously. He announced himself to the trade as Swinburne's new publisher in the *Bookseller* on 31 October and the *Publishers' Circular* the next day with full-page advertisements which included not only *Notes on Poems and Reviews* and all Swinburne's works he had taken over, but also William Rossetti's own pamphlet, *Swinburne's 'Poems and Ballads,' a criticism*.¹³¹ Rossetti had been planning to place it in the *North American Review* but the editor proved less enthusiastic than Rossetti had hoped, and Hotten was very ready to take it over.¹³² At 80 pages it was almost four times longer than Swinburne's *Notes* and was advertised at

¹²⁶ Lang, *Letters* 139 (4 Sept. 1866) accepts terms from Hotten for his existing works.

¹²⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 143 (20 Sept. 1866); Lang, *Letters* 144 (28 Sept. 1866).

¹²⁸ *Publishers' Circular*, 15 Sept. 1866, p.541; *Athenaeum*, 22 Sept. 1866, p.371.

¹²⁹ Peattie, *Letters* 108 (7 Oct. 1866); Meyers, *Letters* 148A (8 Oct. [1866]).

¹³⁰ Lang, *Letters* 149 (9 Oct. 1866).

¹³¹ *Bookseller*, 31 Oct. 1866, p.929; *Publishers' Circular*, 1 Nov. 1866, p.694

¹³² Roger W. Peattie, 'William Michael Rossetti and the Defence of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 19 (Oct. 1971), pp.356-365.

3s.6d, cloth in contrast to Swinburne's one shilling paper pamphlet. Rossetti offered his *Criticism* to Hotten for £15 on delivery and then half the profits, which was quickly accepted.¹³³ The print-run was 250.¹³⁴

What Hotten paid Swinburne is unknown: *Notes* does not appear on either of Hotten's surviving accounts to him;¹³⁵ nor is there an entry for it in Hotten's print ledger. Wise wrote in his *Bibliography* that 1,000 copies were printed; that Swinburne was paid his royalty; and that Hotten then published an illicit second edition masquerading as the first in order to avoid paying a further royalty. His evidence for these statements is not presented, except for a description of the two editions.¹³⁶ (He points out that they are barely distinguishable except by comparing the first edition imprint 'Savill and Edwards, Printers, Chandos Street' with the second edition's 'Savill, Edwards and Co., Printers, Chandos Street,' though notes there are many minor mechanical variations throughout.)¹³⁷ Since then a suggestion that the second edition could be one of Wise's productions has been made and discounted because analysis verifies the paper. (It is evidence in the case against many of his forgeries.)¹³⁸ In fact neither Hotten nor Wise were culpable on this occasion: Chatto's Print Ledger shows that he had 1,000 copies printed in October 1875 by 'S & Edw.'¹³⁹

But although the second edition of *Notes and Reviews* was almost certainly legitimate, a question-mark remains. When Swinburne was considering what to put into his proposed collection of prose in 1873 he asked Watts whether he should 'reissue my *Notes* on my own Poems exactly as they stand, or with excisions and alterations, or only an extract or two from them?'¹⁴⁰ If he then thought the original edition had been

¹³³ Peattie, *Letters* 110 (15 Oct. 1866), with acceptance dated 17 Oct. 1866 (footnote 2).

¹³⁴ Chatto Print Ledger 1/170.

¹³⁵ Meyers, *Letters* 244 (Account dated Jan. 1868); Lang, *Letters* 285 (Account dated 22 Jan. 1869).

¹³⁶ Wise, *Bibliography* v.1, pp.144-152.

¹³⁷ *The Business Directory of London* (London: J.S.C. Morris) up to and including the 1869 edition use the first form, from the 1870 edition onwards (including 1875) the printer is cited in the second form.

¹³⁸ Selwyn H. Goodacre, 'Bibliographical notes, 369: Swinburne's *Notes on Poems and Reviews* (1866)', *Book Collector* (1977), pp.586-587.

¹³⁹ Chatto Print Ledger 3/56.

¹⁴⁰ Lang, *Letters* 483 (5 June [1873]).

exhausted he was wrong since, as Chatto was advertising it from December 1873, there must have been some copies left.¹⁴¹ Perhaps that influenced his decision. *Essays and Studies*, Swinburne's first prose collection, was published in May 1875 without containing the *Notes* either in full or in part, which was reprinted a few months later. As the original printer reset the second edition of *Notes* it is not surprising that they are so similar. (A collation of the two editions shows no significant differences.)¹⁴² But reusing Hotten's imprint and publication date is more curious. Why does it not announce itself as a second edition? Another, more easily answered question concerns payment. Although Chatto was advertising *Notes* right into the 1890s¹⁴³ – and presumably selling the occasional copy – there is no record of any payment to Swinburne in his authors' ledgers from 1877 when they begin giving a title by title breakdown of sales. The most likely explanation is that he paid in advance for the 1000 copies printed (it is possible that all Chatto's payments to Swinburne before 1877 were on print runs, not sales), which, if reckoned on Swinburne's usual royalty of 25% of the published price would, in the case of this one shilling pamphlet, have brought him £12.10s.

After *Notes on Poems and Reviews* Hotten published his first new book for Swinburne, *A Song of Italy*, in 1867. Taking a generously spaced 66 sides preceded by eight sides of reviews of Swinburne's other books and followed by another eight, and a further eight sides from Hotten's catalogue, it could quite practically have been issued as a slim pamphlet (perhaps for one shilling) instead of as a 3/6d book. Early in Browning's career Moxon had issued *Bells and Pomegranates* as a series of eight cheap pamphlets, the first, *Pippa Passes*, at 6d. '*Bells and Pomegranates* marks an epoch, as the French say, in the history of literary publication in England,' wrote a reviewer at the time. 'In no previous instance, we believe, has a poet put forth his first edition in that cheap form in which so many interesting reprints have been given to the public.'¹⁴⁴ But he was wrong: this did not inaugurate a new trend in poetry publishing, although had

¹⁴¹ *Athenaeum*, 20 Dec. 1873, p.835; it was still being advertised in the first half of 1874 e.g.: *Academy*, 27 June 1874, p.1.

¹⁴² *Swinburne Replies*, p.vii.

¹⁴³ *Athenaeum*, 5 Nov. 1892, p.641.

¹⁴⁴ *Monthly Review*, May 1841, pp.95-99.

the series been a success perhaps it would have done so. The format was Moxon's suggestion to save money – not his own resources but that of Browning's father who was meeting the bill (in this case about £16) for each title.¹⁴⁵

Hotten followed *A Song of Italy* with another single poem but this time issued as a sixteen page pamphlet. This was *Siena* which had been sent off to *Lippincott's Magazine* in March 1868. At the last moment Swinburne became aware it had to be printed in this country first or he would lose British copyright, so Hotten printed a few copies as a pamphlet – perhaps only six. The British Museum received its copy on 27 May 1868, just in time to secure copyright ahead of its American appearance in Lippincott's June issue.¹⁴⁶ Neither Swinburne nor Hotten can have made any money from the British pamphlet (there is no sign that it was commercially sold or advertised) and had there been time Swinburne would probably have placed it with a periodical – the *Fortnightly Review* had printed 'Ave atque Vale' just that January – but 'Siena' was a long poem and it seems likely that finding the requisite space before June was not going to be easy.¹⁴⁷ Even so the pamphlet in no way prejudiced 'Siena's' subsequent appearance in an English journal. Hotten was anticipating publishing a new collection of Swinburne's political poems – he advertised *Songs of the Republic* as available 'shortly' as early as August 1868¹⁴⁸ – and Swinburne did keep it for that volume, though when it finally appeared in 1871 the collection had a new title, *Songs before Sunrise*, and a new publisher, F.S. Ellis.

Hotten's third – and final – pamphlet for Swinburne was a commercial production. This was the *Notes on the Royal Academy Exhibition* for 1868, which Hotten proposed that Swinburne and William Rossetti should undertake jointly, with

¹⁴⁵ William Clyde DeVane, *A Browning Handbook*, 2nd edn (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc, 1955), p.88.

¹⁴⁶ Wise forged extra copies of Hotten's 'Siena' pamphlet. The date of the genuine pamphlet's receipt at the British Museum is given in Carter and Pollard's *Enquiry* p.287 in the course of exposing the forged version.

¹⁴⁷ It may well be that this is the unnamed Swinburne poem that Edward Dicey at *St Paul's* told Hotten on 18 May 1868 he would not accept unread and that Edmund Yates, editor of *Tinsley's Magazine* declined on 23 May 1868. (BL Ashley 5763, ff. 56,70) .

¹⁴⁸ *Athenaeum*, 8 Aug. 1868, p.164.

the intention that it should be the first of an annual series.¹⁴⁹ The content was divided between the two authors, each selecting which pictures they would discuss; Swinburne characteristically included several works by Gabriel Rossetti who was not exhibiting. Hotten printed three thousand copies and priced it at one shilling, and was advertising it (though not extensively) from May 1868.¹⁵⁰ Come the end of July Rossetti confided to his diary: ‘Hotten, whom I met in the street, says the R.A. Notes have sold 1300 (or 1500, I forget which) copies – not a large number.’¹⁵¹ Nevertheless sales must have picked up as Swinburne received a £20 royalty on sales in Hotten’s account dated January 1869¹⁵² and Rossetti presumably earned the same, while in both the following two years Hotten suggested a follow-up. But by now Swinburne had lost confidence in Hotten and showed no intention of giving him more business.¹⁵³ Yet Hotten knew his market: from 1875 Chatto began his annual series *Academy Notes* which ran until 1907.

By 1870 Swinburne had determined to give his forthcoming collection to Ellis, Hotten was threatening legal action, solicitors were involved and arbitration was in the air. Prussia’s defeat of Napoleon III at Sedan on 1 September 1870 and the proclamation of the Third Republic three days after that threatened the settlement because of Swinburne’s ecstatic reaction: ‘An Ode literally burst out of me,’ he told William Rossetti, ‘which I have sent to Ellis today to print as a loose sheet or pamphlet. I am nine tenths out of my mind with joy and pride in Paris.’¹⁵⁴ Just a week later it was being advertised (‘Now ready, 8vo, price 1s., by post 1s. 1d.’)¹⁵⁵ Only publication in a newspaper could have been quicker, but that would have required finding a politically sympathetic editor and one inclined to print some three hundred lines of rhetorical exhortation. The *Fortnightly Review* would, once again, have been a likely outlet, but as a monthly nothing there could appear in a hurry. Going to Ellis meant upsetting

¹⁴⁹ *Rossetti Papers* (Diary entry for 23 Apr. 1868), p.305.

¹⁵⁰ Chatto Print Ledger 1/284; *Examiner* 2 May 1868, p.288.

¹⁵¹ *Rossetti Papers* (Diary entry for 28 July 1868), p.320.

¹⁵² Lang, *Letters* 285 (22 Jan. 1869).

¹⁵³ Lang, *Letters*, 14 June 1869; Peattie, *Letters*, 12 Apr. [1870].

¹⁵⁴ Lang, *Letters* 366 (7 Sept. [1870]).

¹⁵⁵ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 Sept. 1870, p.16; 15 Sept. 1870, p.16; and 17 Sept. 1870, p.16.

Hotten, but ‘I could not wait and let it miss the nick of time to appear in’ Swinburne told Howell, anticipating trouble; ‘so pray tackle H. at once if you can’.¹⁵⁶

Ellis obviously thought it worthwhile to send out the shilling pamphlet for review. It was noticed, though the critical reaction was mixed. Without knowing the size of the print run it is difficult to judge its sales. Chatto bought 884 remaining copies from Ellis in 1874, and advertised them until he included the *Ode* in *Songs of Two Nations* the following year. In 1893 he sold the entire pamphlet remainder of 799 to Pickering and Chatto.¹⁵⁷ If Ellis’s original print-run had been 1,000 this does not represent a good sale. (However it did make enough of an impact to provoke a parody, *An Imitation of A. C. Swinburne’s Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic*, another one shilling pamphlet, very similar in size and format to its prototype – this was clearly done deliberately – but with a contrasting anti-Republican stance. It appeared the following year.) If he was disappointed by sales of the *Ode*, Ellis had earlier been shaken by the text of *Songs before Sunrise*, and declined to publish until certain of the sonnets – those comparing the birth of Napoleon III and Christ, and another apparently blaspheming the Trinity – were withdrawn.¹⁵⁸ Then its publication was further delayed until January 1871 due to the imbroglio with Hotten. It is not surprising he kept Swinburne’s next publication, the pamphlet *Under the Microscope* at arm’s length.

As discussed above, *Under the Microscope* was Swinburne’s response to Buchanan’s ‘The Fleshly School of Poetry’ (itself a response to Rossetti’s *Poems* published by Ellis in 1870) an article that had been printed in the *Contemporary Review* for October 1871. Buchanan had reissued this as a substantially enlarged pamphlet in May 1872, which undoubtedly encouraged Swinburne to issue his own. Ellis was not keen to take it on,¹⁵⁹ but arranged for it to appear with the imprint of ‘D. White,’ with whom he merged in partnership a few months later. It made a substantial, ninety page pamphlet priced at 2/6d. Wise records that five hundred copies were printed (though does not give the source of this figure), and Chatto’s print ledger shows that 69 were

¹⁵⁶ Lang, *Letters* 367 (9 Sept. 1870).

¹⁵⁷ Chatto Print Ledger 2/220.

¹⁵⁸ Fredeman, *Letters* 70.135 (3 May 1870).

¹⁵⁹ Bornand, *Rossetti Diary* (27 May 1872), p.204.

transferred to him in 1874.¹⁶⁰ Chatto included it in his advertisements for a year, then dropped it, and never reprinted. But curiously there is no sign that White advertised it at all. There may even have been just one review, and that was hostile.¹⁶¹ Swinburne was distinctly put out. He referred ruefully to the ‘concerted silence of literary London’ to Nichol a month later.¹⁶² Although he told Watts when he was considering putting together a collection of his prose writings in 1873 that he wished he had published *Under the Microscope* in the *Fortnightly Review*, Watts was lukewarm about including it in full in the new collection, doubtless on the grounds of its lively assault on Tennyson.¹⁶³ It was omitted entirely.

Swinburne’s next pamphlet was published after he had transferred to Chatto. This was Swinburne in political mode again, but not this time in verse. Swinburne wrote to Watts:

Having long been solicited to say something on the ‘Eastern question’ and being unable to join in the popular view of the case expressed among others by our friend Morris, I feel impelled to publish a few words which I am now setting in order. The appearance of Carlyle’s letter in the *Times* [28 Nov 1876] has at length decided me. Now I want to know in what *daily* paper I can publish my letter. I have no knowledge of, or interest with, anyone connected with the *Times* or *Pall Mall* [*Gazette*] either of which I should prefer to any third journal. The *Daily News* would probably decline to publish a letter on the anti-Russian side. Therefore, if no better way be – as I *must* speak at once if at all – I must publish it as a sheet or tiny pamphlet. But I should prefer a newspaper.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Wise, *Bibliography* v. 1, p. 219; Chatto Print Ledger 2/219.

¹⁶¹ ‘Mr. Swinburne among the Fleas’, *Examiner*, 6 July 1872, pp.673-674.

¹⁶² Lang, *Letters* 443 (29 Nov. [1872]).

¹⁶³ Lang, *Letters* 483 (5 June [1873]); Meyers, *Letters* 485A (23 June 1873).

¹⁶⁴ Lang, *Letters* 771 (29 Nov. [1876]).

Brevity was seldom one of Swinburne's virtues and after a couple of days he found that 'my proposed letter has far outgrown the modest limits of a newspaper contribution.'¹⁶⁵ Hence it became a pamphlet published by Chatto.

The Eastern Question preoccupying the statesmen of Europe was how best to deal with the declining power of Turkey, the impending break-up of its empire and the struggle for power that would result. An uprising in Bulgaria against its Turkish master in April and May 1876 was met by the Bulgarian Atrocities, a massacre that horrified Europe. 'If the question is whether Bulgaria must be left at the mercy of the Turks or conquered by Russia, let Russia conquer it and God be with her,' wrote the *Daily News*, and this was the same opinion expressed by Carlyle in the *Times*.¹⁶⁶ Swinburne had a long-standing hatred for Russia, and though not a supporter of Turkey preferred the 'waning evil' of the second to the 'waxing evil' of the first.

Chatto moved very quickly. Little over a week later he was advertising '*Note of an English Republican on the Muscovite Crusade*. Price: One Shilling.'¹⁶⁷ Swinburne was keen to see his reviews and expected Chatto to send these on. 'I am as curious a boy on his first rush into print to see anything that is said of my first venture in so new a field as that of political pamphleteering on a question of the day.'¹⁶⁸ Not a lot was said: the seven or eight notices reported the content rather than engaged with it. Chatto ran off two thousand copies and was still including it in his advertisements until the late 1880s, when it was allowed to go out of print.¹⁶⁹ At the same time in December 1876 Swinburne dashed off a satirical piece of verse *The Ballad of Bulgary* which lampooned John Bright ('the gentle Knight Sir John de Bright') and Gladstone ('Sir William the Wise') who were campaigning for action against Turkey and sent it, anonymously, to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Disappointed at getting no response he forwarded it to Purnell for publication – still without the author's name – in 'the *Globe* or any other respectable

¹⁶⁵ Lang, *Letters* 772 (1 Dec. [1876]).

¹⁶⁶ Quoted by George Lafourcade, *Swinburne; a literary biography* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1932), p.233; *Times*, 28 Nov. 1876, p.6.

¹⁶⁷ *Examiner*, 9 Dec. 1876, p.1399.

¹⁶⁸ Lang, *Letters* 782 (16 Dec. [1876]).

¹⁶⁹ Chatto Print Ledger 3/119.

anti-Russian paper.’¹⁷⁰ No one took it up, and it did not appear in print until pirated by Wise just under twenty years later, from a manuscript copy lent him by Gosse.

The political commentator had not made much of an impact and although this was the first and last of Swinburne as political pamphleteer it was not quite the end of Swinburne’s production of pamphlets. The next legitimate and commercial publication was the limited edition pamphlet *A Word for the Navy*. This came about because he had lost its copyright, given to the publisher George Redway in 1885 in return for some potentially embarrassing letters. Redway first used it as the selling point for a new anthology of sea poems.¹⁷¹ Then he advertised it as a limited edition pamphlet of 250 numbered copies for five shillings each.¹⁷² (As a comparison: the cloth volumes of *Atalanta* and *Erechtheus* were each priced at six shillings throughout Swinburne’s life.) Nine years later he thought he saw another market and advertised it as a penny pamphlet.¹⁷³ Swinburne was involved in all this. ‘How foul is the get up of it’ he complained to Watts about the 1887 pamphlet, ‘with all the vulgar twiddles to which I objected retained.’¹⁷⁴ These twiddles were the decorated initial letter on each page, the poem being printed with a single verse to each side. They were removed from the 1896 edition, which was printed in blue ink on cheap paper, with a slight revision of the first two lines of the fourth stanza to keep the verse topical. Reputedly in a print run of 10,000, over 4,000 copies were still remaining when Chatto bought back the copyright, stock and stereotypes in 1898 for twenty guineas.¹⁷⁵

The last pamphlet that appeared was *A Channel Passage 1851* issued by William Heinemann in June 1899 in a privately printed edition. It owed its existence – as had the *Siena* pamphlet in 1868 – to copyright and the requirement for first

¹⁷⁰ Lang, *Letters* 777 (11 Dec. 1876); 788 (27 Dec. 1876).

¹⁷¹ Meyers, *Letters* 1347A (10 Dec. 1885); Lang, *Letters* 1375 (1 July 1886); Estelle Davenport-Adams, ed., *Sea Song and River Rhyme* (London: George Redway, 1887).

¹⁷² *Athenaeum*, 23 July 1887, p.130.

¹⁷³ *Saturday Review*, 18 Jan. 1896, p.91.

¹⁷⁴ Meyers, *Letters* 1437A (5 Aug. 1887).

¹⁷⁵ *Athenaeum*, 18 Jan. 1896, p.89; Chatto Letter Book 35/695 (13 May 1898).

publication in Britain.¹⁷⁶ This was because the poem had been sold to the *North American Review*, where it appeared in the July 1899 issue. The covers of the journal show that in Britain it was handled by Heinemann: hence his, rather than Chatto's, involvement.

Most of the remaining pamphlets that appeared though supposedly privately printed, and implicitly by Swinburne's wish or with his authorisation, were piracies (i.e. unauthorised¹⁷⁷) or forgeries (i.e. printed with a false date.) Five were condemned by Carter and Pollard in 1934 while suspicion fell on the rest, and fifty years later Barker and Collins convicted another seventeen.¹⁷⁸ Even though these pamphlets are spurious they are of interest as we see Wise interacting with Swinburne and because their production and sale shows the changing nature of the book market at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

Wise prided himself on his acquaintance with Swinburne and made the most of it in his bibliographies, introducing plausible (but unverifiable) background detail with a casual: 'Swinburne used to say ...' or 'Swinburne told me ...' Wise was neither a scholar nor a professional book-man. As a lad of sixteen in 1875 he had joined Hermann Rubeck and Co. (a firm dealing in essential oils) as office boy; by the time he retired after the Great War he was a partner. He also brought his great energy and enterprise to book collecting and dealing, to compiling and publishing bibliographies. His publishing activities may have got under way with the production of facsimiles for the Shelley and Browning Society. In 1886 the Browning Society issued a facsimile of *Pauline*, edited by Wise. As he said in its preface: 'In all respects save the paper, which it has been found absolutely impossible to match exactly, the present reprint may be considered a very good and precise representation of it.'¹⁷⁹ He joined the Shelley

¹⁷⁶ *English Catalogue*, 1900, p.205: 'Privately printed, Heinemann, June 1899.' The British Library copy of the pamphlet, shelfmark: C.58.f.15, is date stamped 30 June 1899.

¹⁷⁷ And so published illegally, unlike America (as discussed earlier) where he could be pirated entirely legally.

¹⁷⁸ Nicolas Barker and John Collins, *A Sequel to An enquiry into the nature of certain nineteenth century pamphlets* (London: Scolar, 1983). A summary of the Swinburne items is included in Annex 15 below.

¹⁷⁹ Robert Browning ed. Thomas J. Wise, *Pauline; a reprint of the original edition of 1833* (London: Richard Clay and Sons, 1886), p.x.

Society and became its Secretary in 1887 publishing a dozen books for them, including more facsimile reprints. Copies were sent to Swinburne, and Wise requested permission to reprint his 'Notes on the Text of Shelley' from *Essays and Studies* in his reprint of *Epipsychidion* for the Society.¹⁸⁰ Swinburne was very happy to agree.¹⁸¹ Wise recorded that his first visits to The Pines were that year and Swinburne took him up to his library to show him his treasures.¹⁸²

Two years later Wise with breathtaking audacity brought three of his forgeries, *Cleopatra*, *Dead Love* and *Siena* to Swinburne's attention, who took them at face value all the more easily for already believing Hotten to be a rogue:

I did not know that Hotten had republished, or reprinted, my stanzas on Sandys' drawing of Cleopatra which appeared with an engraving of that fine drawing in the *Cornhill* ...¹⁸³

About modern rarities – unless the rare impression contains something otherwise unprocurable – I am so indifferent that it would be a sin and a shame for me to deprive you of your *Cleopatra*. 'Seven guineas' – heaven and earth ... I need hardly say that I know nothing (and never heard till now) of any such volume as you mention published or printed by Hotten under my name. I certainly never wrote a poem (though I did once write a ghost story) called 'Dead Love.'¹⁸⁴

But the final surviving letter from Swinburne in this sequence is quite curt: 'I know nothing whatever about the cut or uncut edges of the *Siena* pamphlet – and care, I may add, considerably less than nothing; except inasmuch as I hope your copy may be 'all right' on your account.'¹⁸⁵ Swinburne suspected nothing and at the request of an

¹⁸⁰ Lang, *Letters* 1361 (24 Mar. 1886); 1374 (23 June 1886); Meyers, *Letters* 1381 (11 July 1886) .

¹⁸¹ Lang, *Letters* 1386 (15 July 1886).

¹⁸² *Swinburne Library*, pp.xi-xiii. Deliberately or not he predated his first visit by two years: Lang, *Letters* 1471 (27 Apr. 1888) is Swinburne's invitation.

¹⁸³ Lang, *Letters* 1470 (25 Apr. 1888).

¹⁸⁴ Lang, *Letters* 1473 (2 May 1888).

¹⁸⁵ Lang, *Letters* 1474 ([c.4 May 1888?]).

acquaintance was quite happy to sign a copy of the *Siena* pamphlet in 1899.¹⁸⁶ Wise writes of the Siena forgery in his *Bibliography* that Hotten ‘finding a demand for first editions of his (Swinburne’s) writings even in those early days at once caused it to be reprinted as precisely as possible, and it is known that he sold the booklets readily at five or ten shillings apiece.’¹⁸⁷ This is nonsense: Hotten had just published *A Song of Italy* at three shillings and sixpence and found it was not selling well; Ellis had little more success with the one shilling *Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic*.

The demand for modern first editions was a more recent phenomenon. One explanation for Wise’s success as a collector was that he was in at the start: earlier in the century collectors were not interested in current Victorian literature, and not especially interested in first editions. For Wise the *editio princeps* was something of a fetish: creating them was the rationale behind many of his forgeries; he then authenticated them by inclusion and documentation in his bibliographies and, in due course, by presenting them to the British Museum Library. One standard procedure was to take a poem whose first appearance had been in a journal or just in a book and to produce an apparently earlier private pamphlet version. The production could be done quite cheaply, and provided it was taken for a scarce rarity could command substantial prices in the sale-room. The seven guineas which he quotes for the *Cleopatra* pamphlet shows the sort of sum he was thinking of. This was for a specialised, bibliophile market, not the general poetry-buying public charged average prices of between six shillings and ten shillings and sixpence for most Swinburne’s volumes. (These prices were, in the late 1880s and 1890s, increasingly seen as expensive – and this was not just the view of indigent city clerks. *The Academy* wrote at the end of the century: ‘I am inclined to believe that Mr. Swinburne is a little-bought poet, and this is so, largely, if not mainly, because his books are issued and maintained at such (comparatively) high prices.’)¹⁸⁸

The rapidly developing bibliophile market was reflected and documented in a new quarterly publication, *Book Prices Current*, which started in 1886 and continued

¹⁸⁶ Lang, *Letters* 1742 (12 Mar. 1899).

¹⁸⁷ Wise, *Bibliography* v.1, p.177.

¹⁸⁸ The Bookworm, ‘Bibliographical’, *Academy*, 25 March 1899, p.350.

until 1956. It recorded the prices reached at book sales, and from the first included Swinburne. He would doubtless have been surprised to learn that a first edition of *The Queen Mother and Rosamond*, which had never been either a critical or commercial success, sold in 1887 or 1888 for £9.¹⁸⁹ Browning reflected wryly on the changed fortunes of *Pauline*, ‘published more than half a century ago at my own expense – and absolute loss of every penny – then selling (were there buyers) at some three shillings and six pence, now is hardly procurable for £25, and has already been reprinted in facsimile [which Wise edited] as a curiosity.’¹⁹⁰

It was this new market that George Redway was aiming at with his limited edition (two hundred and fifty numbered copies) of *A Word for the Navy*, though at five shillings perhaps just within the range of the aspirant, not just the wealthy, bibliophile. He did this with a range of other books aimed at collectors. These included R.H. Shepherd’s *Bibliography of Swinburne*, again in a small edition, and in this case reissued updated several times. Similarly at the Bodley Head, Elkin Mathews and John Lane published much new poetry in the 1890s. Their advertisements stated the number of copies printed, usually in the low hundreds.¹⁹¹ Small print-runs for new poets were nothing new of course: but making the limitation itself a selling-point was. These new trends did not go un-criticised. Lane and Mathews defended themselves in the letters column of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, though saying nothing about why they should state the size of the edition.¹⁹² The *Fortnightly Review* published a substantial piece, ‘The First Edition Mania’, which opened:

The craze for first editions is not by any means a recent one, although it may be said to have now reached its extremest form of childishness. Time was when the craze existed in a perfectly rational form, and when the first editions in

¹⁸⁹ *Book Prices Current*, v.2 (1887/88), entry 1491.

¹⁹⁰ William Clyde DeVane and Kenneth Leslie Knickerbocker, eds., *New Letters of Browning* (London: John Murray, 1951), p.360. (Letter to C. Butler, 25 June 1888).

¹⁹¹ For example, an advertisement in the *Athenaeum*, 30 Sept. 1893, p.436: poems by Arthur Benson, 500 copies, 5/- ; Francis Thompson, 500 copies, 5/- ; Richard Garnett, 350 copies, 5/-; Alice Meynell, ‘second edition – a few of the large paper copies (First edition) remain. 12/6d.’

¹⁹² *Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 July 1893, p.4.

demand were books of importance and books with both histories and reputations, whilst their collectors were scholars and men of judgement. Now, every little volume of drivelling verse becomes an object of more or less hazardous speculation, and the book market itself a Stock Exchange in miniature.¹⁹³

It went on to consider recent sales of first editions of Dickens, Thackeray and Scott, Tennyson and Browning among others (though not Swinburne): the viewpoint was not the new one of the bibliophile collector. A reply appeared very promptly in *The Bookman* from Wise who corrected detail about particular sales, but made no challenge to the underlying philosophy of the article.¹⁹⁴

Wise pursued the limited edition pamphlet market energetically – and openly and legally, though possibly unscrupulously – after Swinburne's death. He bought up Swinburne's unpublished manuscripts from Watts-Dunton, edited them with the help of Gosse, and issued just over seventy five slender pamphlets between 1909 (when one of the first was *Letters to T.J. Wise* 'Edition limited to Twenty Copies,') and 1918. If, as the most detailed account of his purchase of this material suggests, he received as much as ten pounds for single copies of these¹⁹⁵ and he sold them all, they could have brought him £15,000. Even half that amount was a considerable sum a century ago. The sum he paid Watts-Dunton, according to the account Wise himself gives in introducing them in his *Bibliography*, was about £3,000. 'The contents of many of the pamphlets described in the following pages will never be reprinted ... it is well that all of them should be safely and permanently preserved in type.'¹⁹⁶ There is an irony here: what for Swinburne had been a way of getting into circulation quickly and cheaply had become, after his death, something very different.

¹⁹³ W. Roberts, 'The First Edition Mania', *Fortnightly Review*, March 1894, pp.347-354.

¹⁹⁴ Thomas J. Wise, 'The First Edition Mania', *The Bookman*, April 1894, pp.17-18.

¹⁹⁵ Wilfred Partington, *Thomas J. Wise in the Original Cloth* (London: Robert Hale, 1946), pp.164-165.

¹⁹⁶ *Wise Bibliography*, v.2, pp.xii, xiv.

(d) A Note on Swinburne's Readership

That Swinburne's books were expensive is one reason why he did not sell well; but he was not as expensive as the three-volume novel which, for much of his lifetime retailed at half a guinea a volume yet still commanded a large audience. The three-decker existed thanks to a symbiotic relationship with the circulating libraries and did not depend on sales to individual purchasers. Libraries bought in bulk though at a substantial discount, giving publishers a reliable market and the libraries' members borrowed the new titles in a format they could not afford to buy. Hence the line seen in advertisements for new novels week in, week out, in the *Athenaeum*: 'Now ready at all the libraries.' When immediate demand was satisfied publishers released cheaper, single volume editions and the libraries sold off their surplus stock. Fiction was by no means the sole business of the circulating libraries, as surviving catalogues of Mudie's Select Library reveal. A subject breakdown from 1869 shows novels comprising just 10% of the stock, with another 4.5% classified as 'Poetry and Dramatic Literature'. The same source records some of Mudie's large bulk orders. The two final volumes of Macaulay's best-selling *History of England* each required 2,500 copies; *Livingstone's Travels in Africa* reached 3,350. 'Nor do the libraries object to the highest poetry,' it reports. '... 1,000 copies of *Idylls of the King* were found insufficient to supply the demand; and the next new poem of Tennyson, *Enoch Arden* rose to 1,500 copies.'¹⁹⁷ And despite what this might suggest neither was Mudie's stock of poetry limited to the nation's best-selling poet.¹⁹⁸

For the novelist a rejection by Mudie was significant because the circulating library was such an important element in the publishing ecosystem: if Mudie did not buy a title it might not be economically viable to produce. His taste could determine what fiction was publishable; and so when in 1883 he refused George Moore's *A Modern Lover*, Moore issued a protest at this censorship with his *Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals*. Mudie, concerned for the good name of his 'Select Library,'

¹⁹⁷ Hain Friswell, 'Circulating Libraries; their contents and their readers', *London Society*, v.20 (1871), pp.515-524. Friswell's subject breakdown is given in Annex 14b.

¹⁹⁸ Poetry included in Mudie's January 1872 catalogue is listed at Annex 14c.

had refused to take *Poems and Ballads*, as Hotten found in August 1866.¹⁹⁹ This was Swinburne's title that would have justified an immediate large stock to meet public interest, but, as far as may be judged from surviving Mudie catalogues and advertising, its boycott was maintained at least into the 1880s. Nor does *Poems and Ballads; series 2* from 1878 appear in this period, though it was a very different volume from its predecessor. 'The onus of selecting the books rests entirely in Mr Mudie's own hands, and it has often been objected that his decisions are somewhat arbitrary; – for instance Mr Swinburne is tabooed, while M. Paul de Koch is made free of the establishment.'²⁰⁰ Mr. Mudie had perhaps on this occasion been misled by the title, because he was in fact quite happy to stock most of Swinburne's other titles.²⁰¹

As non-fiction was not reliant on the libraries to get into print in the same way as fiction Swinburne had no need to be concerned by the boycott. Both titles were among his best-selling titles. Back in 1862 the young Roden Noel had asked Alexander Macmillan to push his poetry with Mudie and was told:

People who want to read poetry generally buy it. But, of course, there may and will be, some who want to look and read slightly anything that is talked about, but it must be talked about first. ... Circulating Libraries are not to be depended on, they are mere handers-forth of what is demanded ...²⁰²

Those 1,000 copies of *Idylls of the King* and 1,500 of *Enoch Arden* show Macmillan's analysis was not entirely right. But Mudie was not killing Swinburne's market as his boycott would, had these books been novels. There was no sequence of new, cheaper formats once the library market had been satisfied, for Swinburne's editions and prices seldom changed. Nor was Mudie denying him an important shop window: poetry was

¹⁹⁹ Meyers, *Letters* 134A (28 Aug. 1866).

²⁰⁰ Henry Curwen, *A History of Booksellers* (London; Chatto and Windus, [1873]), p.428. Paul de Koch wrote popular and rather racy novels of Parisian life, characterised by a later critic as 'vulgar, but not immoral.'

²⁰¹ A list of Swinburne's titles stocked by Mudie 1865-1884 is given in Annex 14a.

²⁰² Charles L. Graves, *Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1910), p.196. Letter dated 13 Dec. 1862.

never advertised ‘now available at all the libraries.’ And besides, except for *Poems and Ballads*, *Notes on Poems and Reviews*, *Poems and Ballads; series 2* and *Chastelard*, Swinburne’s other titles were held. By the end of Swinburne’s life (and after Mudie himself had died in 1890) the 1907 Mudie Catalogue shows practically all his works in stock, including the Collected editions.²⁰³ We cannot tell the size of Swinburne’s library readership, but we can be certain it existed.

Another uncertain audience is in the periodicals where he published: potentially it was substantial. The estimated circulation figures cited in Chapter 3 for the core of favourite journals to which he contributed range from 1,400 when the *Fortnightly* was at its nadir as Morley took over, to the 15,000 of the *Athenaeum* at much the same time; and to 20,000 for the *Nineteenth Century* a decade later. Chatto’s ledgers give print-runs for his periodicals issue by issue, and those where Swinburne appeared are as follows:²⁰⁴

Belgravia

May 1876, pp.329-332	The Last Oracle
12,000	
July 1876, pp.5-9	A Song in Season
10,500	
Sept. 1876, p.324	A Ballad of Dreamland
10,000	

Gentleman’s Magazine

Mar. 1877, pp.287-308	The Sailing of the Swallow
5,000	
Aug. 1879, pp.170-180	Note on the Historical Play of King Edward III
4,000	
Sept. 1879, pp.330-349	Note on the Historical Play of King Edward III
4,000	

²⁰³ *Catalogue of the Principal English Books in Circulation at Mudies Select Library, Jan. 1907* (London: Mudies Select Library, 1907).

²⁰⁴ Chatto Print Ledger 3/810; 3/735.

- Oct. 1880, pp.416-423 A Relic of Dryden
4,000
- 18 Sept. 1881, pp.284-290 The Statue of Victor Hugo
4,000

It is not surprising that a popular, general title such as *Belgravia* should require more copies than the more serious *Gentleman's Magazine*. Circulation of the *Cornhill Magazine*, spectacularly successful from its first issue in January 1860 with sales of over 100,000 copies, had shrunk to 32,000 by the time of Swinburne's only appearance with 'Cleopatra' in September 1866.²⁰⁵ His later publication in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, *Illustrated London News* and in various newspapers – *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, and the *People* – again exposed him to the mass market, but these were not regular outlets for him. The success of the *Athenaeum* and the *Nineteenth Century* in capturing a large circulation is probably more significant.

But no-one reads a newspaper from cover to cover, and doubtless even some loyal purchasers of the *Fortnightly Review* will have turned the pages with a yawn on finding yet another contribution from Mr. Swinburne. Conversely any copy might have multiple readers, as did those in libraries. In 1872 Mudie's could offer all the quarterlies and the main monthlies.²⁰⁶ And a quarter of a century later Swinburne, on holiday with his mother and wanting to see a recent article asked Watts-Dunton 'to send me (from the circulating library, if you do not have a copy of it) the *Quarterly Review* on Rossetti.'²⁰⁷ London's West End clubs provided the impecunious Victorian bachelor with all the facilities he required. 'There was no longer any occasion for him to buy a book, a magazine, or newspaper,' wrote a near contemporary survey (perhaps with a hint of hyperbole) 'for in his club he would find a library such as few private houses could furnish, and in the morning-room every newspaper and weekly review that had a respectable circulation.'²⁰⁸ Swinburne made much use of his club for meals

²⁰⁵ John Sutherland, 'Cornhill's Sales and Payments: the first decade', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, v.19. no. 3 (1986), pp.106-107.

²⁰⁶ These are listed in Annex 14c .

²⁰⁷ Lang, *Letters* 1693 (27 May 1896) .

²⁰⁸ Ralph Nevill, *London Clubs: their history & treasures* (London : Chatto & Windus, 1911).

and socialising and may have been using its library when encountered by Arthur Munby on 2 May 1870 whose diary records: 'To the Arts Club, and dined there: and after dinner had a long tête à tête with A.C. Swinburne. He was reading his own article in the new *Fortnightly* on Rossetti's poems'.²⁰⁹ (A little later he heard that Swinburne had 'resigned, to save himself from expulsion, on account of his gross drunkenness. A sad case'.²¹⁰ William Rossetti reflected in his diary, 'this cessation of Club membership will be a daily and serious inconvenience to him.')²¹¹ F. J. Furnivall had other arrangements. 'Our newswoman here,' he told the *Spectator* in a letter making one of his vituperative assaults on Swinburne's Shakespearean scholarship, 'lets magazines for a penny a read. Thinking Mr. Swinburne's article might be worth that honest coin, I paid it.'²¹² It is possible he was being facetious, but as he was in financial difficulties for much of his career this may be recording a practice that has since been forgotten.

What is certain is that readers of the periodical press had plenty of opportunity both to read about Swinburne and to read him; and that his many appearances whether in his own writing, in reviews of his writing, or in the continuous stream of gossip kept him before the public. But this never translated into substantial sales for his books.

²⁰⁹ Derek Hudson, *Munby Man of Two Worlds; the life and diaries of Arthur J. Munby, 1828-1910* (London: John Murray, 1972), p.282 (Diary entry for 2 May 1870).

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp.289-290 (Diary entry for 8 Aug. 1870).

²¹¹ Bornand, *Rossetti Diary*, p.17 (Diary entry for 29 June 1870).

²¹² Frederick James Furnivall, 'Mr Swinburne and Shakespeare', *Spectator*, 13 Sept 1879, p.1159; he was reading Swinburne's second article: 'Note on the Historical Play of King Edward III, *Gentleman's Magazine*, Aug. 1879, pp.170-181, and Sept 1879, pp.330-340. Each issue would have cost 1s. to buy.

Chapter 5: Reshaping the poet, 1878-1909

The trajectory of Swinburne's life, from youthful radical to conservative, is not an unusual one. In part this development became inevitable as what had been new and innovative in the style of his poetry – the lyrical rush of words coursing through long lines, the attention to sound and rhythm – became after twenty, thirty and forty years, if not stale then at least very familiar. From the start this technical skill and virtuosity had met with critical approbation, and right to the end of his life reviewers would almost routinely notice the music of his verse, even if finding nothing else to commend. But its content was another matter. *Poems and Ballads* had rocked the establishment by what hostile critics regarded as its indecency and blasphemy. Yet this was Swinburne's best-selling book: it was, it seems, what the public wanted. If this is surprising in the light of its reception, no less so is that, despite his bravado in the face and aftermath of the storm, Swinburne then backed away. No other collection was so provocative, so incendiary, though *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) was still found blasphemous in parts. Despite the titles on their covers, the contents of *Poems and Ballads, series 2* in 1878 and *Poems and Ballads, series 3* in 1889 were in no danger of igniting the scandal of the 1866 volume again. For, as an earlier chapter has shown, Swinburne was moving on in the 1870s, and this continued in the years that followed. He found new themes, two in particular quite foreign to the image of a subversive radical: one was the celebration of babies and small children; another was patriotic enthusiasm for the Empire, a sentiment in marked contrast to the red republicanism of his younger days.

Swinburne appeared to have left one audience, the audience that bought those books which made and sustained his reputation, and then failed to find another, despite critical endorsement. After the death of both men Gosse blamed Watts as an insidious influence who successfully imposed his own provincial tastes and prejudices on the poet. This chapter, with evidence from the volumes published in the 1880s, shows how partial and inaccurate that judgement was. It suggests that Swinburne was going his own way, largely independent of criticism and uninterested in pursuing a new audience, even though his new, popular themes might suggest something different. Hotten knew he had acquired a poet with a dubious reputation, but surely thought there was potential for spectacular sales. Chatto was to find that, as volume followed volume and

Swinburne's critical reputation became increasingly respectable, this never translated into growing sales. And so when the keystone to the arch that celebrated Victorian literary respectability, the Collected Edition, was put into place just a few years before Swinburne's death, both the marketing and reception of this edition showed that all the interest was still on the early years of Swinburne's career.

(a) The guidance of Watts¹

As a solicitor, and one with strong literary interests, Watts was in an excellent position to investigate Swinburne's legal standing *vis à vis* Hotten and to negotiate with Hotten's possible successors; his was the signature on the 1874 agreement with Chatto 'as agent for and on behalf' of Swinburne.² A.P. Watt is usually credited as being the first professional literary agent, a middleman between author and publisher, whose role was to provide the expertise and knowledge of the market that the author lacked. His firm, which still continues, celebrated its centenary in 1975. After less than twenty years A.P. Watt could provide testimonials from clients including Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle, Rider Haggard, Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling. Walter Besant was convinced that, thanks to Watt, his income had tripled.³ Watts provided something initially rather less, but ultimately much more, and all without charge, to Swinburne.⁴ To start with, his practical experience of publishing was actually far less than Swinburne's. Watts was still at the very beginning of his long career as a literary

¹ Watts added his mother's maiden name and a hyphen to become Theodore Walter Watts-Dunton from the summer of 1896. Writing to him Swinburne addressed him as 'Watts' until the late 1880s; after having lived with him for almost a decade this became 'Walter.'

² Annex 7 gives the text of this agreement.

³ James Hepburn, *The Author's Empty Purse and the Rise of the Literary Agent* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp.51-55.

⁴ After Watts-Dunton's death Clement Shorter, editor of the *Sphere* (and a great friend of Wise), made repeated claims that Watts-Dunton had profited very nicely from his friend. *Sphere*, 25 Nov. 1916, p.152; *Sphere*, 13 Apr. 1918, p.36.

journalist⁵ when his reviews started appearing in the *Examiner* in 1874; only in 1876 did his long association with the *Athenaeum* begin. His own first book, *The Coming of Love, and other Poems* was not published until 1897. Ten years of legal experience, however useful, was not the key to the world of publishing and did not avoid his altercation with Chatto in 1874 (detailed in an earlier chapter) which briefly threatened the transfer of Swinburne's business on the death of Hotten. But thereafter his value to Swinburne gradually increased. From 1877 and for the next twenty years Watts reviewed his friend in the *Athenaeum*, and two years later he rescued him from life-threatening alcoholism.

Towards the end of the 1870s Swinburne's life was speeding towards disaster. Gosse who knew him well at this time says cautiously in his biography: 'from February 1877 to June 1879 he was in a constant state of febrility and ill-health in London.'⁶ His confidential essay deposited in the British Museum and unpublished until 1962 enlarges on this:

For a long time his bouts of abandonment to drink were occasional and brief, but they gradually grew more lengthy as well as more frequent. At the time when he was forcibly removed from his lodgings by Theodore Watts, his condition had become deplorable and disgusting beyond words. He had developed the symptoms of delirium tremens, and that he should recover at all, more still that he should recover so completely, astonished the doctors.⁷

He was weaned off alcohol, his health was restored and in his remaining thirty years living with Watts in suburban Putney poetry, plays and criticism poured from his pen. Watts was not only his literary agent, reviewer and friend; he took care of all domestic worries too.

⁵ Watts' first review to capture public attention was his unsigned 'The Lost Hamlet', *New Monthly Magazine*, Apr. 1873, pp.279-285 (Thomas Hake and Arthur Compton-Rickett, *Life and Letters of Theodore Watts Dunton* [London, T.C. and E.C. Jack, Limited: 1916] v.1, p.107).

⁶ Gosse, *Life*, p.244.

⁷ Lang, *Letters* v.6, p.234 .

Gosse saw something ominous here:

The temperament of Watts, which was more practical and vigorous than his own, exercised an unceasing and well-meant pressure upon Swinburne ... As his own power of asserting himself decayed, or retired within concealed channels, it was inevitable that the weight, the opinions and the force of Watts should more and more take its place. Swinburne grew to live in, by and through Watts, till at length his own will existed only in certain streams of literary reflection, while even these were narrowed by the unconscious compulsion asserted by the domination of his companion.⁸

That Swinburne lost the power of asserting himself is utterly contradicted by his correspondence (most of which was not published within Gosse's lifetime) and by his strident voice in the press (which must have been read and heard by Gosse.) Nor was he simply following Watts' lead and trumpeting his opinions. During the 1870s his poetry had already moved away from the areas that had so shocked the critics of *Poems and Ballads*, although as late as the publication of *A Midsummer Holiday* in 1884 and *Selections* in 1887 this was still found worthy of comment.⁹ Swinburne's focus and interests continued to change (though not his style) following the move to Putney in 1879. Watts did seek to shape and direct – quite legitimately, surely, in his role of literary adviser – but with mixed success. This is seen in his response to Swinburne's next few volumes.

Swinburne's first book of poetry after his move to Putney was *Songs of the Springtides*, published in May 1880. At 6/- for a slender volume of just 135 pages it was, page for page, one of Swinburne's most expensive books and not one of the most

⁸ Gosse, *Life*, p.268.

⁹ It was repeatedly remarked upon. 'Mr Swinburne's New Volume', *Times*, 6 June 1883, p.4: 'We can imagine one who had only known the author by his *Poems and Ballads* taking up the present work, and with astonishment exclaiming, "Can these things be?" ... There is not a line here that might not have been written by the most scrupulous of writers. Mr Swinburne's genius is ripening and expanding ...'; 'Mr Swinburne's New Poems,' *Pall Mall Gazette* 22 Nov. 1884 pp.4-5: 'Let criticism say what else it will, it must not say that Mr. Swinburne is any longer who touches what is unhealthy even with the lancet of a surgeon.'

immediately attractive. It comprised just four long odes. ‘Thalassius’, ‘a symbolical quasi-autobiographical poem after the fashion of Shelley or of Hugo, concerned the generation, birth and rearing of a by-blow of Amphitrite.’¹⁰ ‘On the Cliffs’, Swinburne had described to Watts the previous summer:

I have a new poem to read you, longer (I will not say better whether I think so or not) than any (except the ever edifying ‘Dolores’) in either of my collections. ‘Anactoria’ which is next longest is ninety-four lines short of this new-born one ... You will regret to hear that in subject-matter and treatment it is not akin to either of the above-named. I fear there is not overmuch hope of a fresh scandal and consequent ‘*succès de scandale*’ from a mere rhapsody just four lines short of four hundred (oddly enough) on the song of a nightingale by the sea-side.¹¹

‘The Garden of Cymodoce’, was some 350 lines in praise of the island of Sark; and a ‘Birthday Ode for the Anniversary Festival of Victor Hugo’ which was added at a later stage, was the first of a number of similar works where Swinburne paid tribute to one of his heroes and carefully made mention of each of his works, identified in thoughtfully supplied notes. Watts, Swinburne told William Rossetti, objected to some lines in ‘Thalassius’ that described a gladiatorial show. (Gosse thought that page perhaps the finest in the volume, and possibly for the same reason that Watts disliked it: this section recalls an earlier Swinburne, specifically the world of ‘Faustine’ from *Poems and Ballads*.)¹² He also disliked the gratuitous attack on Napoleon III in the Sark ode as the cause of the exile of Victor Hugo, who had visited Sark.¹³ It all remained and was supplemented with an additional sonnet among notes at the back, ‘On the proposed desecration of Westminster Abbey by the erection of a monument to the son of Napoleon III,’ which must have been a further provocation to Watts.

While criticism from Watts was not always heeded, his encouragement was always appreciated. Swinburne confided to Gosse: ‘Watts – as I possibly may have

¹⁰ Lang, *Letters* 973 (10 Oct. [1879]).

¹¹ Lang, *Letters* 948 (30 July 1879).

¹² Gosse, *Life*, p.254.

¹³ Meyers, *Letters* 978F (15 Nov. [1879]).

told you – says (what a man generally likes to hear of his latest work) that it is *the* best poem I ever wrote.’¹⁴ In this case he was speaking of ‘On the Cliffs,’ but as Swinburne’s letters record, Watts said the same of many other poems in these years. This was deliberate. Following the breakdown of his health Swinburne thought he had lost his poetic gifts and Watts (as Watts later told a friend) believed the poet needed and responded to this reassurance.¹⁵ In print Watts was more circumspect: though he was always supportive he was by no means uncritical; where his sympathies were not engaged he often preferred silence.

Watts opened his *Athenaeum* review with a welcome to the title, *Songs of the Springtides*: ‘It suggests Nature in her two most exhilarating aspects – the new life of the summer and the ever new life of the sea ... Mr. Swinburne’s passion for the sea is well known; in writing about it he is always at his best.’ Despite this Watts did not have much to say about ‘Thalassius,’ offering just three lines of description then quoting a hundred from the poem. He responded with much more interest to ‘On the Cliffs’, referring to the quotations from Aeschylus and Sappho and citing Sappho in the original Greek to compare it with Swinburne’s embedded translations. (This suggests direct input from Swinburne as Watts did not have a public school or University education and is unlikely to have had the chance to master Greek.) He then makes a comparison with Keats and Shelley and describes Swinburne’s poetry as not aiming to produce a picture to represent physical beauty, but to evoke a melodious emotion caused by physical beauty. ‘... Except in “The Garden of Cymodoce” there is not in his poems an individual landscape such as we get in Wordsworth and Mr. Tennyson; nor is there in his entire poems a portrait of a beautiful woman’. In ‘The Garden of Cymodoce’ and the ‘Birthday Ode’ to Victor Hugo Watts responds to the metrical virtuosity, and tactfully says nothing about those references to Napoleon III that he so disliked or to the additional sonnet on the desecration of Westminster Abbey tucked away in the notes at the back. ‘The fine enthusiasm and noble temper which are the characteristics of this volume can hardly fail to gain for it a wide audience,’ he concluded with more loyalty than prescience, for many of the other reviews were

¹⁴ Lang, *Letters* 977 (17 Oct. [1879]).

¹⁵ Coulson Kernahan, *Swinburne as I Knew Him* (London: John Lane, 1919), p.77.

unenthusiastic and sales proved to be slow.¹⁶ Chatto printed 2,000 copies in 1880 and did not need to reprint for another ten years.¹⁷

No doubt the notice by Watts will have helped to sell some copies, but even his measured enthusiasm could hardly disguise the volume's recondite nature. It would never have been a popular success: but then none of Swinburne's earlier poetry had been directed at a wide audience either. This was something that Watts addressed directly in his review of Swinburne's next collection, *Studies in Song*.

According to Gosse the thirteen poems in this following collection were all written between February and August in 1880.¹⁸ Fluency had clearly been restored. Swinburne told him that summer: 'I have enough stock ready for another verse-book in the autumn. There is one poem in seven parts ['By the North Sea'], just a little longer than 'Thalassius,' which Watts likes better than anything I ever did (and in metrical and antiphonal effects I prefer it myself to all my others): so I shall inscribe it to him.'¹⁹ Gosse comments: 'Watts was responsible for the effort Swinburne was now making to write descriptive or landscape poetry; he urged the poet to devote himself during their summer holidays more to positive observation and less to abstract passion.'²⁰

The review of *Studies in Song* by Watts in the *Athenaeum* makes the point that Swinburne was indifferent to public taste: 'It is ... the peculiarity of Mr. Swinburne's genius that it never concerns itself about the likes and dislikes of its audience ... Not that he is in any way beyond the reach of public praise or blame; but he has a positive incapacity for considering the taste of others.'²¹ Watts compares this with Tennyson's incessant revisions and second thoughts in the light of criticism. (On this view Swinburne, who was found indecent and blasphemous in the mid 1860s but who, by and large, wrote very little more in the same vein, must have done so not in response to

¹⁶ [T.W. Watts], 'Songs of the Springtides', *Athenaeum*, 22 May 1880, pp.655-657.

¹⁷ Chatto Print Ledger 3/321.

¹⁸ Gosse, *Life*, p.255.

¹⁹ Lang, *Letters* 1022 (5 July 1880).

²⁰ Gosse, *Life*, p.255.

²¹ [T.W. Watts], *Athenaeum*, 15 Jan.1881, pp.90-92.

the public outcry but because his own taste had altered.) Yet having noted this independence Watts clearly sees a need to influence him:

That Mr. Swinburne's poetry gains much from this independent temper is true, but, also, it suffers somewhat ... That Art must elevate the soul and (by suggestion) instruct it is true; but unless she also amuses the soul, the soul will have nothing to do with her ... Mr. Swinburne's poetry which from the very fact of its being (since the publication of *Songs before Sunrise*) the loftiest in aspiration that has appeared in our time, is occasionally less interesting than any poetry or artistic production can afford to be.

That, he finds, is the only fault of the 'Song for the Centenary of Walter Savage Landor' (another lengthy panegyric – some 800 lines – to another of Swinburne's heroes, again supplied with notes to identify all the allusions to his works). 'For fervour and nobility of temper it is beyond the highest water-mark of any other living poet,' and he applauds Swinburne's conspicuous triumph over the appalling metrical difficulties he had set himself.²² But then considering the quality and the neglect of Landor he makes a very telling comment: 'That a writer like Landor should have made so little mark upon English literary history is a notable if not an astonishing fact, and illustrates what we have said about the enormous power of compromise in artistic success.' The message to Swinburne is clear.

Watts then turns to a contrasting poem with just six stanzas, 'Six Years Old', a poem that surely appealed to a very different audience. It opens:

Between the springs of six and seven,
 Two fresh years' fountains, clear
 Of all but golden sand for leaven,
 Child, midway passing here,
 As earth for love's sake dares bless heaven,
 So dare I bless you, dear.

²² On the poem's completion Swinburne had told his mother: '... Watts deliberately pronounces it the finest thing I ever wrote.' Lang, *Letters* 1015 (8 June 1880).

He hurries over this in a sentence – perhaps it was not the compromise he was looking for, though there was to be a considerable amount of such verse to children and babies in the coming years – and turns to the final poem, ‘By the North Sea’ whose ‘rich variety of music’ and ‘rhymic [sic] majesty haunts the ear.’ He quotes at length from it and ‘Off Shore’ to illustrate these qualities and then concludes with a paragraph that responds to what has become one of the main criticisms of Swinburne’s poetry.

It might be said of Mr. Swinburne’s poetry that, if such verses as these had no mental nor emotional value, they must survive for many a generation on account of their rhythm alone. As to the mental value of his work – that must be judged by a standard applicable to no other contemporary poet, inasmuch as this method of work is so radically unlike theirs. There is no greater mistake than that of comparing poetry whose mental value consist in a distinct and logical enunciation of ideas, and poetry whose mental value consists in the suggestive richness of symbol latent in rhythm and even colour. It is idle to discuss the question which kind of poetry is the more precious so long as we recognise the fact that a poem like ‘Thalassius’ for instance, while devoid altogether of any logical statement of thought, may be as fecund of thoughts and emotions too deep for words as a shaken prism is fecund of tinted lights.

This may well be a direct reply to the review by Edward Dowden in the previous week’s *Academy*, which found Swinburne’s thought too often thin and obscure.

Certain rhetorical devices – antithesis, the pairing of kindred words, the balancing of equal-weighted clauses, even alliteration – comes to serve as substitutes for invention and for ideas. And the tyranny of such processes withdraws the idea, when it exists, from simplicity, from reality, from the manifold subtle movements of life, and renders it mechanical, rigid, strained.²³

²³ Edward Dowden, *Academy*, 8 Jan.1881, pp.20-21.

Watts would almost certainly have written his review by the time Dowden's appeared, but he may have been able to add that final paragraph or substitute it for another.

'The most distinguished critic of the day' was how Swinburne described Watts privately (though without naming him) in a letter to Gissing in 1883; a few years later he referred in print to the author of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica's* essay on Poetry (who was Watts) as the 'first critic of our time – perhaps the largest-minded and surest-sighted of any age.'²⁴ This admiration – absurdly and typically extravagant, for his praise or censure was always delivered in the strongest terms – did not mean either that the docile Swinburne meekly followed Watts' lead or that they always shared the same literary tastes. In a review of Austin Dobson's *Proverbs in Porcelain* back in 1877 Watts had remarked that he doubted if Dobson 'or even Mr. Swinburne or Mr. Gosse ... will ever acclimatise here such dainty trifling as the rondeau and the rondel ..., the triolet, the villanelle and the Malayan pantoum.'²⁵ Swinburne produced a volume exclusively of roundels six years later. Perhaps he was responding to a challenge.

When Watts reviewed *A Century of Roundels* his main argument was that to be successful the form must be the necessary shape of the content, just as it is in a sonnet by Milton, Keats or Wordsworth. And the conclusion he reached was that the roundel is better suited to light-weight than serious themes, though Swinburne is addressing both:

Roundels concerning loss, with eloquent and touching tribute to Rossetti and more elaborate homage to Wagner; a number of roundels to babies, to baby's feet, baby's hands, and baby's eyes – the most trivial and least sincere portion of the volume; noble praise of painting by Courbet, Fantin and Millet; and commemoration of scenes in the Channel Islands and of Italian cities succeed each other and are interspersed with reflections and speculations strangely unlike those of Mr. Swinburne's earlier volumes, since most are reverential and some absolutely pious. In the mastery of language they exhibit the poems now given to the world may vie with Mr. Swinburne's past accomplishment ... His great faults,

²⁴ Meyers, *Letters* 1245B (29 Oct. 1883); 'Whitmania,' *Fortnightly Review*, Aug. 1887, pp.171-176.

²⁵ [T.W. Watts] 'Portraits in Porcelain, and other Verses,' *Athenaeum*, 16 June 1877, p.761.

diffuseness of expression and looseness of thought are here held in check ... on the other hand his greatest merits, his rush of emotion and verbal movement, cannot find vent here ... For serious purposes, and for a writer of Mr. Swinburne's powers, the roundel must be pronounced an inadequate form of composition.²⁶

In the 'Dedicatory Epistle' to the Collected Edition, written over a decade later, Swinburne still maintained a quite contrary view: 'There may perhaps be somewhat more depth and variety of feeling or reflection condensed in the narrow frame of the poems which compose *A Century of Roundels* than would be needed to fulfil the epic vacuity of a Choerilus or a Coluthus [two very minor but ambitious writers from the Classical world].'²⁷

The preceding volume of poetry, *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems*, which appeared in 1882 had been Swinburne's thickest book of verse and brought together the eponymous poem (comprising a Prelude and nine Cantos) which he had begun fifteen years before with a substantial collection of later verse, some originally published in the *Athenaeum* and *Fortnightly Review* only a few months before the book came out. According to Gosse, Watts 'feared a repetition of the scandal of 1866, and fancied that the second and fourth cantos might be challenged by the Public Prosecutor. To modify the dreaded effect of these passages, a very thick book was produced, in which *Tristram* was eked out and half concealed by nearly 200 pages of miscellaneous lyrics. Swinburne, who submitted to everything that Watts suggested, acquiesced in this arrangement ... But there proved to be no cause for anxiety. The amatory complexion of *Tristan* was not objected to by anybody. What was objected to in the poem, alas! was its lack of vital interest.'²⁸ In fact most of the reviews were enthusiastic, all found much to admire and all of them concentrated on *Tristram*. There is no reason to suppose the response to *Tristram* would have been different had Swinburne published it as a freestanding volume. The motivation for publishing one substantial volume could be rather more prosaic than Gosse allows. In the first years after his move to Putney

²⁶[T.W. Watts,] 'A Century of Roundels', *Athenaeum*, 16 June 1883, pp.755-756 .

²⁷'Dedicatory Epistle', *The Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, v.1 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1905), p.xxviii.

²⁸ Gosse, *Life*, p.262.

Swinburne was exceptionally prolific: 1880: *Songs of the Springtides* and *A Study of Shakespeare*; 1881: *Mary Stuart* and *Studies in Song*. A third year with two volumes coming out could look very much like over production, all the more so since the previous two collections, *Songs of the Springtides* and *Studies in Song*, had not sold well. This explanation inverts Gosse's argument: not that *Tristram* would be protected by the presence of the other poems, but that these poems would be supported by *Tristram*. The following years he published only single volumes: 1882: *Tristram of Lyonesse*; 1883: *A Century of Roundels*; 1884: *A Midsummer Holiday and other poems*.

The second half of this thick volume included two lengthy poems, 'Athens, an Ode' and 'The Statue of Victor Hugo', a group of nineteen miscellaneous sonnets, another group of twenty one 'Sonnets on English Dramatic Poets (1590-1650)' and almost a hundred pages of poems celebrating babies and young children. What now reads in the main as mawkish sentimentality charmed many of his contemporaries. J.A. Symonds came over misty eyed in the *Academy*;²⁹ the *Graphic* recommended them to 'all who love children, and can appreciate true pure poetry ... Mr Swinburne has done his great gifts such justice in this book, which will live, we prophesy, when many of his former works are forgotten.'³⁰ ('But certainly not before,' we might be tempted to add.) Watts hurried over this substantial portion of the volume in two sentences. 'As to the poems about children, these will carry the present volume into places where Mr. Swinburne has hitherto been a stranger. They are to be ranked with the child poems of Victor Hugo for intensity and for delicate charm with those of Miss Christina Rossetti.'³¹ What Swinburne, Watts or Chatto might have asked was whether this new audience for the baby poems would be equally interested in *Tristram*, the Athens ode or the Sonnets on the Dramatic Poets, and if not whether it would pay 9/- for the volume.³²

²⁹ John Addington Symonds, *Academy*, 5 Aug. 1882, p.94.

³⁰ *Graphic*, 26 Aug. 1882, p.210.

³¹ [T.W. Watts,] 'Tristram of Lyonesse and other Poems', *Athenaeum*, 22 July 1882, p.105.

³² As a comparison: Christina Rossetti *Sing-Song* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1872) was priced at 5/- [Athenaeum, 30 Sept. 1871, p.421] as was: Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Child's Garden of Verses* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1885) [Athenaeum, 11 Apr. 1885, p.461].

A Midsummer Holiday, which followed *A Century of Roundels* in November 1884 commemorated, as Watts said in his review, ‘the poet’s summer holiday with a friend by the seashore.’ He did not disclose that this friend was himself, the reviewer. He found much to say about and commend in the topographical, nature poems; more of the baby poems were dealt with in ten words of faint praise; ‘the powerful poems upon political subjects will recommend themselves to some readers: others they will repel.’ While ‘the poem which the English reader will find more difficult than any other in the volume is, no doubt, that which pleases Mr. Swinburne most, the ode to Victor Hugo.’ Despite these reservations he concluded again with a sentence all too clearly written with Chatto’s advertising copy in mind: ‘Altogether this volume shows a vigour of hand, a brilliant mastery over artistic means towards artistic ends, such as Mr Swinburne has never surpassed and rarely equalled.’³³

The political poems to which he referred were ‘Vos Deos Laudamus: the Tory journalists’ anthem’ and ‘Clear the Way’ (which had both previously appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*); and three sonnets entitled ‘The Twilight of the Lords’ which also sounded a blast against the House of Lords. The *Pall Mall Gazette* had campaigned strongly in favour of extending the franchise and, following the defeat of Gladstone’s Franchise Bill by the Lords, issued a 1d pamphlet *The Peers and the People*.³⁴ Swinburne’s ‘Clear the Way!’ was published in the paper a month later.³⁵ For the moment the paper’s politics and his coincided; they were shortly to diverge over Gladstone’s pursuit of Home Rule for Ireland which the paper supported and to which Swinburne was vehemently opposed. Swinburne also deplored the sensationalist journalism of W.J. Stead (editor 1883-1890), in particular the manner of his exposure of child prostitution in a series of articles, ‘The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,’ in 1885.³⁶

³³ [T.W. Watts], *Athenaeum*, 22 Nov. 1884, pp.651-653. Chatto preferred to use an encomium from the review in *The Times*, and one from the *Pall Mall Gazette* which praised Swinburne for what he was not writing: ‘... does not contain one love poem, one address of passion. It is full of the most noble political aspirations, the tenderest love for children ...’

³⁴ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 July 1884, p.16.

³⁵ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 Aug. 1884, p.4.

³⁶ Joseph O. Baylen, ‘Swinburne and the *Pall Mall Gazette*’, *Research Studies*, 36 (1968), pp.325-334.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* became openly hostile to Swinburne from 1887 to the departure of Stead in 1890. A note at the end of July 1887 headed ‘Facilis decensus Averno’ told its readers:

Having recanted his political opinions and turned from the praise of revolution ... to become the laureate of the layette [i.e. of baby-wear] and the reciter of Jubilee odes, Mr. Swinburne has now naturally advanced to the equally congenial task of recanting his literary opinions. This month ... he begins ... by casting off Whitman ... Seriously, if Mr. Swinburne has any care – or even as much care as we have – for his lasting reputation, he should abjure Mr. Theodore Watts and take to *Laus Veneris* again.³⁷

This paragraph seems to be a unique instance where comment on Watt’s influence over Swinburne was made publically while both men were alive. And that tag from Virgil, with its deployment of Latin for the paper’s educated readership, might be read as a protest at vulgar popularisation of the baby poems and the Jubilee ode. (The Ode was more warmly received in some other quarters. ‘How fine and striking is Algernon Swinburne’s “Ode on the Jubilee” in the June number of the *Nineteenth Century*!’³⁸ enthused the Crown Princess of Prussia to her mother, Queen Victoria. ‘I hope it has been read to you.’)³⁹ As for Swinburne’s attack on ‘Whitmania’ in the *Fortnightly Review* for August 1887, although this seemed a sudden *volte face* to those only aware of his youthful enthusiasm enshrined in the twenty-three verses of ‘To Walt Whitman in America’ from *Songs before Sunrise*, Swinburne had been expressing reservations twenty years earlier to William Rossetti. In 1867 Rossetti published a Whitman selection with Hotten in which he noted that Swinburne was ‘an ardent (not of course a *blind*) admirer of Whitman’ and then a few pages later quoted – though without

³⁷ ‘Occasional Notes’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 July 1887, p.4.

³⁸ ‘The Jubilee’, *Nineteenth Century*, June 1887, pp.781-791.

³⁹ ‘*Beloved and darling child: last letters between Queen Victoria and her eldest daughter, 1886-1901*, ed. by Agatha Ramm (Sutton: Stroud, 1990), pp.52-53.

attributing it – criticism taken directly from a letter he had received from Swinburne.⁴⁰ And there had also been half a dozen or so pages in *Under the Microscope* (1872) devoted to Whitman which though supportive had also been critical.⁴¹

The week after this paragraph appeared the same paper printed a 1,500 word article on ‘Mr. Swinburne’s Politics’ which contrasted Swinburne’s celebrated youthful support for Italian freedom with his utter rejection of Irish home rule, though this time made no mention of Watts.⁴² (It probably was his position too, since he was a keen supporter of the Empire, as he made clear in his response to Swinburne’s *Selections*.) The public view of Swinburne was changing.

(b) *Selections* (1887)

Just how much Swinburne’s own image of himself had altered since the days of *Laus Veneris* over twenty years earlier becomes apparent in his choice of verse for his only volume of anthology, *Selections* published that same year, 1887 – at least provided Swinburne made the choice himself. This has been denied. Wise’s two volume *Bibliography* of Swinburne relegates the book to a two paragraph Note at the end of the second volume, confidently remarking that ‘In 1919 the book was withdrawn, and replaced by a wider, more representative, and in every way far more satisfactory selection made by Mr Gosse and myself, and published by William Heinemann.’⁴³ The explanation appeared in the Publisher’s Note that prefaces his newly chosen 1919 volume. ‘The only selection from the poems of Swinburne hitherto available in England was one made by Watts-Dunton in 1887. It consisted of pieces that appealed especially to his personal taste, and omitted many that have been recognised as among the best the

⁴⁰ *Poems of Walt Whitman*, selected and edited by William Michael Rossetti (London: John Camden Hotten, 1868) p.[vii], p.8; Lang, *Letters* 222 (6 Oct. [1867]); Peattie, *Letters* 128 (10 Oct. 1867). Rossetti issued a new edition with Chatto in 1886, which reproduced the 1868 Prefatory note with Swinburne’s attributed and unattributed comments unchanged.

⁴¹ *Under the Microscope*, pp.61-67.

⁴² ‘Mr Swinburne’s Politics’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 Aug. 1887, pp.2-3.

⁴³ Wise, *Bibliography*, v.2, p.337.

poet ever wrote'.⁴⁴ Watts-Dunton having died in 1914, his indignant widow wrote to the *Athenaeum* pointing out that the earlier *Selections* had a preface by her husband explicitly stating that the choice had been made by the poet himself, and that this note implied he was a liar.⁴⁵ Another correspondent chipped in with a recollection of Swinburne saying 'he had expressly seen to it that it contained the best of the things by which he wished to be remembered.' Heinemann issued an apology.⁴⁶

But the case is not quite clear cut. A memory of a conversation thirty years earlier is not cast iron evidence, while Watts' Preface which records Swinburne's responsibility did not appear until after Swinburne's death in April 1909, being added to *Selections* from the eighteenth impression of 1913 onwards. In fact it is inconceivable that Swinburne would have published anything without Watts' involvement. (There is room for doubt with the illicit, flagellation material though the difficulties in dating this make a suggestion that it was written much earlier and published when long out of Swinburne's hands very plausible.) But it would also be entirely out of character for Swinburne to relinquish the selection to Watts. Fifteen years earlier, when putting together his prose collection *Essays and Studies* he had been quite sharp with Watts: 'I am simply astonished – excuse my saying so – at your suggestion that my volume of Studies should omit all articles on contemporary poets'.⁴⁷ (The articles were included.) His confidence in Watts' judgement had doubtless increased over the years and while it is clear that some of the shifts his contemporaries noted in his politics and poetry were at least supported by Watts, there is no reason to think that Swinburne would simply have surrendered the choice of the book's contents to him.

Surviving letters show that both men were involved in the selection. 'I did want to put in some of my longer lyrical poems,' Swinburne told his mother, 'but Watts said they would overweight the book, and it would be better to put in some dramatic extracts

⁴⁴ *Selections from Swinburne*, ed. by Edmund Gosse, C.B. and Thomas James Wise (London: William Heinemann, 1919), p.[vii].

⁴⁵ *Athenaeum*, 12 Dec. 1919, p.1350.

⁴⁶ *Athenaeum*, 19 Dec. 1919, p. 1380; *Athenaeum*, 2 Jan. 1920, p.25.

⁴⁷ Lang, *Letters* 485 (20 June [1873]).

which at first I had not thought of doing.⁴⁸ Decisions were being made while the book was with the printers. ‘The Triumph of Time’ which certainly qualifies as one of Swinburne’s longer lyrical poems was originally included, and then Chatto was directed to remove it, one of a number of late changes.⁴⁹ The publisher was not entirely happy with this, and suggested the cost of the alterations should be deducted from the royalty.⁵⁰ Once published, complimentary copies went to Mrs Molesworth, the children’s author: ‘I send you a little book of selections from my poems, chosen as much by Mr. Watts – or nearly so – as by myself,’⁵¹ and to Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol and Swinburne’s old friend. The Master sent a polite acknowledgement: ‘I look forward with great interest to seeing what poems your judgement and that of Mr Watts have placed in the Anthology.’⁵²

The choice is indeed the interesting feature of the anthology, and there are two commentaries on it by Watts. The first is his lengthy, anonymous review article in the *Athenaeum* which Swinburne must have read; and the second his Preface added to the *Selections* four years after the poet’s death.

It was reported, Watts tells us in his review, that Browning entrusted the selection of his poems for a comparable volume to a judicious friend, doubtless on account of his own modesty. Such a suggestion by Watts was obviously an invitation to those who knew the identity of this reviewer and his relationship to the poet to reflect on the role of the judicious friend in this instance. (It could even be the source of the story of his sole responsibility.) Another difficulty the poet has to face, continues Watts, is that his opinions on the relative merits of his poems are seldom at one with those of his admirers. So, he implies, whether or not a judicious friend did have a hand in this case the poet’s choice is unlikely to satisfy everyone. And, he goes on, a poet develops, but not his old admirers:

⁴⁸ Lang, *Letters* 1427 (28 June 1887).

⁴⁹ Chatto Letter Book 20/907 (23 Mar. 1887).

⁵⁰ Chatto Letter Book 20/1887 (17 Apr. 1887).

⁵¹ Lang, *Letters* 1430 (4 July 1887).

⁵² Meyers, *Letters* 1425B (12 [June] 1887).

Poets, for the most part, beginning to write copiously when very young ... give voice at first to just such ideas as happen to be in the atmosphere around them – ideas which a little experience would, in some cases, teach them are not quite so fine after all as they seem to be ... [The poet] is more likely to be whisked off his feet by his own imagination, and has generally a considerable load of other people's balderdash to cast from his shoulders before he can really be said to stand on his own feet. The difference between a great poet and a little one is indicated by the celerity or the tardiness with which the poet "unloads" himself. But, unfortunately it is a poet's balderdash that his more special disciples are sure to admire.

On the whole, he says, the selection here is admirable and representative; 'the preponderance in the volume of descriptive poetry over all other varieties is very noticeable, and of course the sea plays a very important part throughout.' But, he continues, he would have liked to have seen one of Swinburne's sea poems 'in which the sea is treated from a patriotic point of view. This is an entirely new departure of his in a line where useful work needs to be done; for in these days, as cannot be too frequently iterated and reiterated that to the sea England and the English-speaking race owes everything.' (Swinburne was to oblige the following year with a patriotic commemoration of the Armada.) The review then turns into a satisfied reflection in this the jubilee year on the Victorian imperial mission. '... England's destiny as the august mother of empires should give rise to no vain glory in any Englishman's breast; but rather it should give rise to a feeling of modesty, almost of humiliation before responsibilities so vast.' For a couple of columns Swinburne seems to have been pushed to the background, though with a role for him as laureate of the empire being implied.

Twenty five years later, long after the heady days of the Jubilee, when Watts came to introduce the eighteenth impression there was no talk of Empire. The poems in *Selections*

... were all chosen by Swinburne himself. Although a few of them were taken from his earlier volumes, the main portion of the book furnishes what has been

called [almost certainly by Watts himself] ‘Swinburne’s later and greater development, especially as a nature-lover and poet of the sea.’ For the last thirty years his thoughts had been largely occupied with two subjects. The first of these was the study and contemplation of nature in various localities ... The second of the subjects which specially interested him was childhood.⁵³

Watts had given the child poems which made up a substantial part of *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* only a cursory mention when reviewing that volume in 1882; made no reference to those included in *Selections* in his review of 1887 and again gave them no attention in his review of *Poems and Ballads, third series* in 1889.⁵⁴ The implication is that he did not much care for them himself, and this gives additional reason to think that the compilation of *Selections* did not, as was later claimed, simply represent his own particular taste.

The Contents of *Selections* are listed and identified in Annex 17 below. The works which had shot Swinburne to fame, *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) and *Poems and Ballads* (1866) are represented but not in any quantity: from *Poems and Ballads* there is only ‘Itylus,’ one of his shortest lyrics. There are three pieces from *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) and only two from *Poems and Ballads, second series* (1878). These were all among Swinburne’s bestselling books, the books which created the image of the poet: pagan, blasphemous, immoral, impassioned, republican and radical. That was the poet of the 1860s and early 1870s. Swinburne of the 1880s was a somewhat quieter voice with a new focus on the descriptive poetry that Watts remarked upon, and it is the poet of these last seven years or so who is found here. Of the thirty nine selections just twelve come from volumes published before 1880. In terms of pages just about three quarters of the whole was written in the previous seven years, though those years represented only a quarter of Swinburne’s writing life up to that point.

Selections opens with some repackaging. The long eponymous poem from *Midsummer Holiday* (1884) has three sections extracted and presented in reverse order;

⁵³ *Selections from the Poetical Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, Eighteenth impression (Chatto & Windus: London, 1913), p.vi.

⁵⁴ *Athenaeum*, 22 July 1882 pp.103-105; 4 June 1887, pp.727-729; 25 May 1889, pp.655-659.

‘By the North Sea,’ another long poem, this one from *Studies in Song* (1880) receives a similar treatment, with titles newly applied to what were previously published as numbered sections. It closes with some extracts from the Tragedies which appear to have replaced ‘The Triumph of Time’ from *Poems and Ballads* (1866) at a very late stage, when the book was already in press. Although the dramatic extracts are identified, the reader wanting to know where the poems were originally published is given no clue. In the advertising bound up with the new book Chatto listed twenty three other works in print by Swinburne. A reader trying to track down a poem from the *Selections* had no easy way to do it, and in some cases would have been thrown further off the scent because in the anthology they had been given new titles.

The *Athenaeum* review by Watts makes it clear that he saw Swinburne’s poetry now moving in a new direction. Another notice, which appeared in the right-wing *St James’s Gazette*, fervently hoped for the same:

Mr. Swinburne is still in the prime of life and in full possession of his powers, and some of his later work shows that he has that continued power of growth which is one of the greatest privileges of genius. If he will only listen to his own critical conscience, he may yet do work better and much more enduring than any he has yet done. He cannot, indeed, hope to excel certain single passages of prose and verse in which he has attained a character of breadth and poetic ardour scarcely to be found in any other writer of the time; but he can (and there have of late been signs that he intends to) modify his manner of thinking and writing so that his best — which is very good indeed — may not be discredited by so much of the jejune in thought and composition as is to be found in a great deal of his work heretofore.⁵⁵

The anonymous reviewer (who was Coventry Patmore)⁵⁶ concluded by remarking on what ‘every friend of the poet must rejoice to see that he has of late abandoned. There is nothing in the *Selections* which a schoolgirl might not be permitted to read and understand, if she could’. Swinburne still had a reputation in some quarters that was not

⁵⁵ ‘Mr Swinburne’s Selections’, *St James’s Gazette*, 23 June 1887, p.7.

⁵⁶ Reprinted in: Coventry Patmore, *Principle in Art* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1889) pp.112-117.

easily shaken off. But, it should be recalled, just a month later the *Pall Mall Gazette* was advising him that, if he cared ‘for his lasting reputation, he should abjure Mr. Theodore Watts and take to *Laus Veneris* again.’⁵⁷ Patmore, aged 64, and W.T. Stead aged 38 (if indeed he was the author), were of different generations and with irreconcilable views.

From the later 1870s onwards Swinburne received regular applications for permission to include his poems in anthologies. He consistently preferred his more recent works and was disappointed that interest was expressed for his earlier writing, for this was what was wanted. In 1883 he had received a request for two or three poems from the editor of an anthology of English Verse, who wanted the first Chorus from *Atalanta* (‘if the public is not tired of it I am’) and ‘The Sundew’ from *Poems and Ballads* (‘a very early piece of rather boyish verse’).⁵⁸ He proposed instead something from *Erechtheus* [1876] and one of the child poems from the *Tristram* volume. As for a dramatic excerpt from *Chastelard* [1865] ‘I should have thought either of the two later parts [of the trilogy, *Bothwell*, (1874) or *Mary Stuart*, (1881)] would have supplied you as well or rather better than the first part.’ (The editors knew better, and ignored his advice.)

Almost twenty years later William Sharp prepared a volume for Tauchnitz, the Leipzig publisher, of *Atalanta in Calydon and Lyrical Poems*.⁵⁹ Tauchnitz had reprinted English works since the early 1840s, but unlike contemporary American ‘pirates’ he secured authorisation from the authors, offered a payment and excluded his editions from sale in England and her colonies. Sharp had selected widely – probably more widely than Swinburne would have done – despite which Swinburne appears to have been not displeased with the result, though he had criticisms:

⁵⁷ ‘Occasional Notes’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 July 1887, p.4.

⁵⁸ W.J. Linton and R.H. Stoddard eds., *English Verse* (London: Kegan Paul, & Trench, 1884); Lang, *Letters* 1249 (12 Nov. 1883).

⁵⁹ Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Atalanta in Calydon and Lyrical Poems*, ed. by William Sharp (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1901).

I wish there were fewer of such very juvenile crudities as you have selected from my first volume of Poems: it is trying to find such boyish attempts as ‘The Sundew’, ‘Aholibah’, ‘Madonna Mia’, etc offered as the work of a man who has written so many volumes since in which there is nothing that is not a least better and riper than they ... On the other hand I am very cordially obliged to you for giving the detached extracts from ‘Anactoria’. I should greatly have preferred that extracts only should have been given from *Atalanta in Calydon*, which sorely needs compression in the earlier parts. *Erechtheus* which would have taken up less space, would also, I venture to think, have been a better and fair example of the author’s works ... I would have liked to have seen one of what I call my topographical poems in full.⁶⁰

The contents of Sharp’s selection are also listed and identified in Annex 17. His first section is drawn particularly from *Poems and Ballads* (1866) and *Poems and Ballads, second series* (1878). The second accepts Watts’ category of ‘poems about the sea,’ while the third and fourth are more mixed, but include much later material. The contrast with *Selections* of 1887 is very apparent.

Chatto issued *Selections* in June 1887 with a print run of a thousand copies.⁶¹ This modest number was very much the average for his Swinburne volumes, but by August he was asking the poet about corrections for a new impression.⁶² A surviving letter from Swinburne, on holiday with his mother in Bradford on Avon, to Watts indicates that an overhaul of the contents was being considered, though the reason for it is lost.

I quite forgot about the extracts, having started with a vague idea that we had settled what to substitute for the seventh and eighth Guernsey roundels. I do not think we could do better than simply replace them by two others – viz. nos 90 and 91 [‘Insularum Ocelle’ and ‘In Sark’ – both about Sark] instead of 98 and 99.

⁶⁰ Lang, *Letters* 1768 (6 Oct. 1901).

⁶¹ ‘List of books published between 1-15 June’, *Publishers’ Circular*, 15 June 1887, p.681; Print Ledger 4/290. The print runs are listed in Annex 18.

⁶² Chatto Letter Book 21/180 (3 Aug. 1887).

‘Hesperia’ seems to me too long, too vague, and too dependent on the two preceding poems to suit this book: the ‘Garden of Proserpine’ would be better, but I do not wish to improve the selection so as to tempt (or seem as if we were trying to tempt) purchasers of the first edition to invest in this also (with curses on the trick, possibly!) And certainly I will have no more *Atalanta* – there is quite enough (though not, I think, too much) already.⁶³

But nothing happened: *Selections* remained unchanged until after Swinburne’s death in 1909. The volume, priced at six shillings, sold very steadily until then at a rate of around 400-500 a year – not a dramatic sale, but regular and consistent, and one which increased slightly in the decade afterwards. Chatto was nervous of proposals for a cheap edition when, from the end of the century onwards, he had the Collected Edition in mind, or of any edition that would cream off the best of Swinburne and so blight other sales. The *Academy* in commenting on the price of the Collected Edition in 1904 remarked that a cheap edition had never been tried, although it referred to the *Selections* volume. ‘But anything more inadequate for its purpose it would be difficult to conceive.’ Whoever, it asked, had made the choice? A new selection should be assigned to an independent critic – perhaps this was a swipe at Watts – who understood what the public wanted.⁶⁴ Two years later Chatto sent Watts a selection of volumes from his ‘St Martin’s Library’ which was the style Chatto had in mind for a new volume of *Selections*. This was his octavo reprint edition, quite cheap at two shillings in cloth, three shillings in leather.⁶⁵ He hoped that Watts-Dunton or his wife – in 1905 the 73 year old Watts-Dunton had married the 27 year old Clara Reich – would make the selection, and offered a complimentary acknowledgement of £25 in addition to the usual royalty to the author.⁶⁶

The following year there was a rethink. Chatto called in at Putney and arranged with Watts-Dunton that ‘we should publish a new Swinburne Anthology to be edited

⁶³ Lang, *Letters* 1441 (14 Aug. 1887).

⁶⁴ *Academy*, 30 Jan. 1904, p.117.

⁶⁵ *Athenaeum*, 28 June 1902, p.832 is a whole page advertisement of Chatto editions, including the ‘St Martin’s Library’.

⁶⁶ Chatto Letter Book 49/437 (10 Jan. 1906).

with critical introductions by Watts-Dunton drawn to a great extent from his contributions to the *Athenaeum*. We are to publish it for Mr Watts-Dunton to whom Mr Swinburne has given the rights.’ This was to be yet another six shilling, crown octavo volume, Chatto’s favoured Swinburne format, though rather thicker than most and with ‘400-450 pages similar [in] style to the *Oxford Book of Verse* by Quiller-Couch.’⁶⁷ The *Athenaeum* articles, the (unsigned) reviews by Watts as each volume was published, comprised the most sustained and detailed contemporary appraisal of Swinburne’s output from the mid 1870s onwards by a single critic. They represented just a fraction of Watts’ output there, yet unlike so many of his contemporaries he had never selected and reprinted his journalism.

The new Swinburne Anthology also got nowhere despite several reminders.⁶⁸ Then Swinburne died in April 1909, demand for *Selections* increased, and Watts-Dunton, being apparently no further advanced with the new volume appears to have conceded to pressure and simply added to the existing one. The crowd-pleasers were three pieces of early Swinburne:

The readers of *Selections* ...had so often expressed a wish for the inclusion of the two most popular choruses from *Atalanta* that the editor was tempted to add them to the fourteenth issue [1909]. To the seventeenth issue [*sic* – it was the fifteenth, also in 1909⁶⁹] he added another favourite, ‘The Triumph of Time’ [from *Poems and Ballads* (1866)]. In the present [eighteenth] impression [1913] there appears still another poem ‘Heartsease Country’ [from *A Midsummer Holiday*, 1884] a special favourite with the poet himself ...⁷⁰

Swinburne had specifically said in August 1887 that he wanted no more *Atalanta* included, but ‘The Triumph of Time’ had originally been planned for inclusion. Watts-Dunton also added to the eighteenth impression an excerpt from the Collected Edition’s

⁶⁷ Chatto Swinburne Contracts: Folder 3. Pencil note dated 1 Feb. 1907.

⁶⁸ Chatto Letter Book 53/798 (26 Sept. 1907), 59/474(1 May 1908), 59/530 (6 May 1908).

⁶⁹ Chatto Letter Book 71/639 (26 Oct. 1909).

⁷⁰ *Selections from the Poetical Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 18th impression (Chatto & Windus: London, 1913) p.[v].

‘Dedicatory Epistle’, some biographical extracts from two of Swinburne’s letters, and a concluding note by himself. ‘Heartsease Country’ may well have gone in as a conveniently short poem, and perhaps a favourite of Swinburne in topographical vein, to fill two empty pages of the additional signature.

As the long list of impressions shows, this was a popular volume.⁷¹ In terms of numbers of copies printed by Hotten and Chatto until Swinburne was taken over by Heinemann in 1918 it was Swinburne’s second bestselling volume. *Poems and Ballads* (1866) had sold at least 28,750 copies (and probably more because of Hotten’s shortcomings in reporting his sales); the 23,550 volumes *Selections* (1887) were printed in a much shorter time; next came *Poems and Ballads, second series* (1878) with 12,000 volumes and then *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) with 11,500 (though Moxon’s sales prior to 1866 are unknown).⁷² Yet the volumes from which the poems in *Selections* were largely drawn did not sell well. There could be a number of explanations for this. First, perhaps *Selections* was selling on Swinburne’s reputation and not on its contents which, it might be surmised, disappointed its purchasers. (Hence the comment: ‘The readers of *Selections* ... had so often expressed a wish for the inclusion’.) It would be true to say that the later volumes seldom roused excitement in the critics, even if they expressed admiration. Second, readers may have enjoyed the anthology but they will have found its contents gave them no pointers to the collections from where they were drawn, so there was no impetus to go out and ask for *Songs of the Springtides*, *A Midsummer Holiday* or the other later books. Third, perhaps the market for an anthology was simply distinct from that for individual volumes of poetry.

(c) Patriotic themes

Watts proposed a new volume of poems to Andrew Chatto towards the end of 1888 and seems to have indicated the contents and suggested the title *Poems and Ballads; third series*. Chatto thought the title inappropriate because it invited comparison with the two volumes of 1866 and 1878 though, he said, it was much

⁷¹ See Annex 18.

⁷² All these figures are drawn from the Chatto printing ledgers.

thinner and its contents were rather different. 'A good and distinctive title, and one likely to attract purchasers, it seems to me would be *Ballads of the Border and Other Poems*,' he told Watts.⁷³ But Watts or Swinburne thought otherwise and the first proofs of *Poems and Ballads, Third Series* were dispatched to the author in February 1889.⁷⁴ A couple of weeks later Chatto, now reckoning that it was going to make a relatively slim volume of 192 pages and wanting to print it in the same style as the first and second series, suggested selling it at seven rather than nine shillings unless Swinburne could supply another 40 pages.⁷⁵ (Both the 1866 and the 1878 *Poems and Ballads* were in print and selling steadily at nine shillings; the first had 338 pages, and the second 240 pages.) Although no extra text was supplied Watts seems to have held out initially for the higher price, to which Chatto acquiesced with good grace.⁷⁶ It was advertised in advance at nine shillings; but then Watts or Swinburne had a change of mind and, still in advance of publication, this was reduced to seven shillings.⁷⁷

If the three volumes of *Poems and Ballads* from 1866, 1878 and 1889 are compared there is the reduction in size that Chatto noted, but clear continuity of style. This is obviously the same poet, though one addressing a different audience. Where once his aim was *épater les bourgeois* he was now conscious that he was treading on the heels of the laureate. The first volume assumed a knowledge of the classical world in its readers, whether in identifying Anactoria, Hermaphroditus or recognizing the poet's metrical skills in those poems entitled 'Sapphics' and 'Hendecasyllabics.' *Poems and Ballads: second series* was even more demanding: three poems were in French, two in Latin. The 1889 volume had just one poem, 'Pan and Thalassius' with a classical background, and though many of the poems were astonishing feats of metre they did not announce this to the uninitiated. The *Glasgow Herald's* critic noted this change:

⁷³ Chatto Letter Book 22/210 (8 Nov. 1888).

⁷⁴ Chatto Letter Book 22/463 (20 Feb. 1889).

⁷⁵ Chatto Letter Book 22/504 (7 Mar. 1889).

⁷⁶ Chatto Letter Book 22/511 (8 Mar. 1889).

⁷⁷ *Athenaeum*, 16 Mar. 1889, p.357; 30 Mar. 1889, p.419. Chatto Letter Book 22/611 (3 Apr. 1889).

He has, indeed, always possessed the power to become more or less familiar with, or rather perhaps to, a selected multitude; but he has never been able to make himself, or get himself made, the companion of Jock the ploughman, Jenny the milkmaid, Sandy the shepherd or the great mob of weavers, spinners, miners and mechanics to whom Robert Burns is absolutely hail-fellow-well-met. A poet's style limits or enlarges his audience. As mere names the most notable of living poets are equally well known, but are not as poets equally read. Tennyson is more read than Browning, Browning more than Swinburne. But gradually as Mr Swinburne condescends to the interests, if not to the thoughts and passions of the common world, he is getting more into the confidence of a larger and better, because less select, mass of his countrymen.⁷⁸

The new volume contained thirty five poems of which twenty five had appeared quite recently in journals including the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Nineteenth Century* (both monthlies that cost half a crown), and the weekly *Athenaeum*, at 3d. The other main title, also a monthly, was the *English Illustrated Magazine*, a very different journal to any of these three. Much more general and priced at 6d it appealed to a far wider readership. Its appearance was rather similar to the *Strand Magazine* (which was founded just a few years later in 1891), and during the course of its history between 1883 and 1913 its contributors included Hardy, Henry James and Kipling, and at a more popular level Chesterton and Stanley Weyman. By publishing here Swinburne was potentially extending his readership beyond the select audience of his Chatto volumes and the highbrow journals.

The reviews for the book were warm. By far the longest and most detailed was that in the *Athenaeum*, as usual by Watts.⁷⁹ His first sentence deftly tackles an issue which, whether or not it concerned Swinburne himself, clearly troubled Watts, though no other critic was to mention it. 'In giving the name of *Poems and Ballads* to a book whose bulk is not much more than two-thirds of the famous volume of twenty-three years ago Mr Swinburne has displayed the courage of his art. It is well for the poet when he knows that in poetry quality is everything, quantity is nothing.' He then

⁷⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, 22 Apr. 1889, p.9.

⁷⁹ *Athenaeum*, 25 May 1889, pp.655-658.

moves on to consider this quality, how the brilliance of earlier volumes has been replaced by a deep humanity and variety of mood. Next he examines ‘The Armada’ and ‘The Commonweal’, the two patriotic poems of the volume. The former he finds a masterpiece; the latter – which under its original title ‘The Jubilee’ had been Swinburne’s loyal offering the previous year in the *Nineteenth Century* that had so struck the Crown Princess of Prussia – he criticises for its metre: ‘Though many of the stanzas are most musical, this is not the case with all of them; in some there is a positive stiffness. Iambic verses of eight syllables never were much in the writer’s line.’ ‘March: an Ode’ is criticised too. It is, he asserts ‘the only instance in the language of a poem written in octometers. As a *tour de force* it is simply astonishing but there is in it that consciousness of metrical mastery which is apt to detract from the apparent sincerity of the work.’ And apart from an accolade for ‘Olive’ as ‘one of Mr Swinburne’s finest lyrics’ the Baby poems get no mention.

The other reviews made the contrast between Swinburne of the present and the notorious figure of the past, generally to the advantage of the present. The *Pall Mall Gazette* had told its readers in March 1889, ‘that Mr Swinburne’s forthcoming volume will be entitled *Songs after Sunset*’ and it made some facetious suggestions for titles of poems, adapted from *Songs before Sunrise* to echo the poet’s current political views.⁸⁰ Three months later, observing his four sonnets in the Unionist *St James’s Gazette* which attacked Gladstone, (and by which time *Poems and Ballads: third series* was into its second edition) it noted sourly that ‘... material for the expected volume of *Songs after Sunset* is rapidly accumulating.’⁸¹ But its anonymous reviewer for the new *Poems and Ballads* – it was Oscar Wilde – showed very little interest in Swinburne’s politics. ‘The Armada’ was commended for its eloquence and rhetoric, and condemned for its monotony. ‘Somehow we seem to have heard all this before ... We must confess that this shrill singing – marvellous as it is – leaves us out of breath.’⁸² A more severe critic in the *Edinburgh Review* thought the volume would be improved were the sponge

⁸⁰ ‘Occasional Notes’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 Mar. 1889, p.2.

⁸¹ ‘Occasional Notes’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26 June 1889, p.2; ‘Apostasy’, *St James’s Gazette*, 25 June 1889, p.5.

⁸² [Oscar Wilde], ‘Mr Swinburne’s Last Volume’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 June 1889, p.3.

passed over the whole of 'The Armada.'⁸³ But this was the exceptional voice. The *Academy* was more typical. 'In this third series of *Poems and Ballads* the poet is not only eloquent and impassioned but he is also wise. The revolutionary ardours of earlier days have given place to a thoughtful and temperate patriotism.'⁸⁴ It particularly liked 'The Commonweal' which it thought showed how Swinburne now really understood 'our national history.'

Swinburne was proud of 'The Commonweal' too; though Watts thought it too long (he told his sister Isabel),⁸⁵ these were 'fifty perfect stanzas' in the *Academy's* judgement. Swinburne supplied the poem with a brief introduction – a short paragraph – that appeared neither in the *Nineteenth Century* nor in the new *Poems and Ballads*: 'This poem on the Jubilee does not in any way presume to touch upon the official province of the Poet Laureate. The matters of which it attempts to treat are the national character and the national progress of the commonwealth of England during the last fifty years ...'⁸⁶ The *Saturday Review* lauded the 'fervid and not in the least affected patriotism which has set Mr Swinburne far ahead of all his contemporaries but one, and all his predecessors for many years as a poet of the noblest sentiment of political man.'⁸⁷

The poems about babies were generally appreciated, just as a stereotypical view of Victorian taste would suggest. There were some faintly dissenting voices, though regrettably Oscar Wilde had nothing to say. It is tempting, (but may be unfair because the rest of the review is very positive) to read the *Glasgow Herald's* comment as two edged: 'A good poet can do almost anything; but there was a time when almost nobody would have believed that Mr Swinburne would ever write such poems as 'In a Garden,' 'A Rhyme' and 'Baby-Bird' which are crooned in the glorification of infancy.'⁸⁸ The

⁸³ [Henry Heathcote Statham], 'Mr Swinburne's Lyrics', *Edinburgh Review*, 171 (Apr. 1890), pp.429-452.

⁸⁴ George Cotterell, *Academy*, 35 (27 Apr. 1889), pp.279-280.

⁸⁵ Lang, *Letters* 1423 (1 June 1887).

⁸⁶ It survives in manuscript: BL Ashley A4393.

⁸⁷ 'Poems and Ballads', *Saturday Review*, 20 Apr. 1889, pp.482-483.

⁸⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, 22 Apr. 1889, p.9.

Scots Observer wished that he would desist from writing verse on the Baby. ‘There are several of these psalmings in the volume, and one does not exactly regard them with enthusiasm ... The cult of the Baby is becoming a literary nuisance.’ It preferred R.L. Stevenson on the nursery.⁸⁹

Patriotism pleased the critics and the public. The following year another patriotic outpouring, ‘England: an Ode’ appeared which hymned the blessings of Empire in twenty one rolling verses:

Mercy, where the tiger wallowed mad and blind with blood and lust,
Justice, where the jackal yelped and fed, and slaves allowed it just,
Rose as England’s light on Asia rose, and smote them down to dust.

[...]

All our past acclaims our future: Shakespeare’s voice and Nelson’s hand,
Milton’s faith and Wordsworth’s trust in this our chosen and chainless land,
Bear us witness: come the world against her: England yet shall stand.

But this was not written in a desire to reach out to a more popular audience. It was published in the *United Service Magazine* for May 1890,⁹⁰ which had been re-launched by Sir John Frederick Maurice. Wanting to give the title new impetus, he looked around for distinguished contributors for its new series.⁹¹ He had evidently requested something patriotic from Swinburne and the poet was more than happy to oblige.⁹² (Another literary name in the same issue was Rudyard Kipling, who supplied a short story.) Had Swinburne not reprinted the poem in *Astrophel* in 1894 relatively few people would have come across it. (To assemble that collection Chatto as usual had to

⁸⁹ ‘The New Swinburne’, *Scots Observer*, 27 Apr. 1889, pp.639-640.

⁹⁰ *United Service Magazine*, May 1890, pp.97-101.

⁹¹ Frederick Barton Maurice, *Sir Frederick Maurice: a record of his work and opinions* (London: Edwin Arnold, 1913), p.75.

⁹² Meyers, *Letters* 1540A (26 May 1890), 1540B (2 June 1890).

hunt down the texts of the pre-published poems Swinburne was planning to include, but even with his long experience of doing this ‘England: an Ode’ eluded him.)⁹³

Yet the Ode had not gone entirely un-noticed. ‘A candidate in training for a poet laureateship could hardly have chosen an apter theme’ commented a review.⁹⁴ Perhaps so, but such a candidate would surely have published it in a journal with a higher profile. And nor would he have appeared so unconcerned to demonstrate himself wholly inappropriate for the role as Swinburne did just a few weeks later with another ode. Reading in the July 1890 issue of the *Fortnightly Review* a harrowing account of Russian prisons, he reached for his pen and sent off ‘Russia, an Ode,’ which was published in the *Fortnightly*’s next issue. The venom which twenty years earlier he had poured upon Napoleon III was now directed at Czar Alexander III. An MP drew attention to it in the House of Commons and asked about the penalty for soliciting the murder of a foreigner. In the course of his reply W.H. Smith, the leader of the House, claimed that none of his colleagues had read Swinburne’s poem. (*Punch* illustrated the incident with a cartoon of the distraught poet reading of this in the *Times* and tearing his hair: ‘And this, *this* is fame.’)⁹⁵ The poem’s publication also undermines the claim that Swinburne was now little more than a tool in the hands of Watts.

When it came to finding a successor for Tennyson as laureate on his death in 1892, Gladstone, whom Swinburne had publically attacked, was Prime Minister again for his fourth and final term (1892-1894). Gladstone’s letters show it was not Swinburne’s politics that concerned him. The eighty-three year old premier had a clearer recollection of the 1866 scandal than knowledge of Swinburne’s more recent output. ‘Tennyson’s death moves many and much, and that justly. He has done a very great work’, Gladstone told Lord Acton. ‘The question of the succession comes before me with very ugly features. I have, as it happens, the old *Poems and Ballads* 1866. They are both bad and terrible. Have they been dropped? If they have is it reparation? Wordsworth and Tennyson have made the place great. They have also made it extremely clean.’ Acton checked: Swinburne ‘neither withdrew that volume ... nor

⁹³ Chatto Letter Book 29/288 (9 Feb 1894).

⁹⁴ *Review of Reviews*, May 1890, p.417.

⁹⁵ ‘Essence of Parliament’, *Punch*, 16 Aug. 1890, p.83.

dropped it, nor purified it by omissions or alterations.’⁹⁶ A year later Gladstone’s secretary told William Blunt: ‘it has been ascertained that Swinburne would like to be appointed, but the Queen is opposed on account of the immorality of his early songs, and also on account of his having written against the Russian Emperor ... and the Queen, who regarded the Laureateship as an office in her personal household, considered that this made him absolutely impossible as a candidate.’⁹⁷ Gladstone made no appointment and it was left for the next conservative Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, to grasp the nettle. He appointed Alfred Austin in 1896.⁹⁸ Swinburne failed to mark the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897, though Watts-Dunton published a slim one shilling pamphlet, *Jubilee Greeting at Spithead to the Men of Greater Britain*.⁹⁹ And in the *Times* on 17 July 1897 appeared Kipling’s ‘Recessional.’

Swinburne the patriot was very much in evidence when the Boer War broke out in October 1899. For him the Boers were not a plucky little nation striving for self-determination from a mighty Empire, as it seemed to some of his contemporaries, but one oppressing both the incoming British settlers – who were refused the franchise – and the native population.¹⁰⁰ Kipling addressed the public first (and from the same point of view as Swinburne) a few days before the war started with ‘The Old Issue’ in the *Times*, a somewhat opaque ballad on despotism which, although written in his popular style, still needed an editorial to clarify its content. A couple of days later the paper noted ‘Mr Rudyard Kipling requests us to state that he claims no copyright on this side of the Atlantic in his poem entitled ‘The Old Issue.’¹⁰¹ (In his autobiography

⁹⁶ H.C.G. Matthew, *The Gladstone Diaries with Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence* v.13 (1892-1896) (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994). Entries for 7 and 18 Oct. 1892.

⁹⁷ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries; being a personal narrative of events 1888-1914*, v.1 (London: Martin Secker, 1919), p.140. Diary entry dated 10 Oct. 1893.

⁹⁸ Alan Bell, ‘Gladstone Looks for a Poet Laureate’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 July 1972, p.847. This also explores the other candidates.

⁹⁹ Theodore Watts-Dunton, *Jubilee Greeting at Spithead to the Men of Greater Britain* (London & New York: John Lane, 1897). It bore the dedication: ‘To Our Great Contemporary Writer of Patriotic Poetry, Algernon Charles Swinburne.’

¹⁰⁰ Lang, *Letters* 1769 (12 Nov. 1901).

¹⁰¹ *Times*, 29 Sept. 1899, p.7; 2 Oct. 1899, p.7.

Kipling also makes a point too that he took no payment for any of his South African verse in the *Times*.)¹⁰²

Unlike Kipling Swinburne had never found a popular voice, and he proved unable to pitch it for a wider audience. On 11 October the *Times* published Swinburne's, 'The Transvaal. October 9, 1899' and it too carried a post-script: 'This poem is not copyright.'¹⁰³ Waiving copyright was surely aping Kipling, a claim (at least implicitly) to be a patriotic poet and was perhaps an attempt to reach a broader public. (Whether payment was offered or accepted is unknown.) Yet 'The Transvaal,' as the *Academy* noted, was 'a rather difficult sonnet with no break between octave and sestet ... [and] a sonnet is not, of course, the way to reach the people. The people are reached by ballad or song.'¹⁰⁴ Nor was publishing in the *Times* a direct channel to the people either, though as the *Academy* noted some other editors had seen and then reprinted 'The Transvaal.' And other press reports show that on this occasion at least Swinburne did find an audience far beyond the literary elite.

Recognizing the militant spirit of the hour, Mr Dundas Slater has engaged that accomplished reciter, Mr James Fernandez, to deliver Mr Swinburne's latest war poem at the Alhambra. The directors have offered their theatre to the Lord Mayor to give a benefit matinee towards the Mansion House fund for the relief of Transvaal refugees.¹⁰⁵

And the London correspondent of the *Belfast News-Letter* (whose readers – fervent Ulstermen – must have been as keen to maintain the unity of the Empire as Swinburne) seems to have been present:

Patriotic demonstrations continue to occur nightly at the principal theatres and music halls, and now that hostilities have actually commenced the enthusiasm is even greater, if possible, than it was a week or two ago. At the Alhambra in

¹⁰² Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.87.

¹⁰³ *Times*, 11 Oct. 1899, p.7.

¹⁰⁴ *Academy*, 14 Oct. 1899, p.417.

¹⁰⁵ *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper*, 15 Oct. 1899, p.7.

Leicester Square last night Mr James Fernandez as usual, recited Mr Swinburne's latest war sonnet (which has already appeared in this journal) and the enthusiasm reached the climax when a gentleman from the upper circle sang 'The Soldiers of the Queen' the chorus being taken up by the whole audience. At the close of this inspiring scene, the house, as if moved by one impulse rose and sang the National Anthem with remarkable fervour.¹⁰⁶

It may have been a passing success in the music hall, but critical reaction to the sentiments of the sonnet was hostile. Swinburne had compared the Boers to 'men like wolves set free' (clearly, to his mind, very different people from Italians seeking self-determination) and ended with a couplet surely written to be declaimed – and one doubtless relished by Mr James Fernandez:

... scourge these dogs, agape with jaws afoam
Down out of life. Strike England, and strike home.

'Mr Swinburne's sonnet, published by some inadvertence in *The Times*, would have been better in the waste-paper basket,' thought the *Observer*. 'Mr Rudyard Kipling's Muse is at least dignified; but Mr Swinburne's is the kind of lady who always wants to claw some other lady's hair. That is not the attitude of a great nation which is driven by an evil necessity to chastise a small nation. If the foreigner were to judge us by Mr Swinburne's hysterics, there would be some justification for certain Continental ravings ... We have some compensation, it is true, for these untimely excesses, in the silence of the Poet-Laureate, who may be letting South Africa alone on the principle that the burnt child dreads the fire.'¹⁰⁷ (This was a reference to the widespread ridicule that had greeted 'Jameson's Ride,' Alfred Austin's first official excursion as the newly appointed Laureate, when it appeared in the *Times* back in January 1896.)

Kipling achieved a real popular success with another ballad printed in the *Daily Mail* on 31 October. The *Daily Mail*, founded only in 1896, catered to an entirely different readership than the *Times*. ('Written by office boys for office boys,'

¹⁰⁶ *Belfast News-Letter*, 16 Oct. 1899, p.7.

¹⁰⁷ *Observer*, 15 Oct. 1899, p.7.

according to Lord Salisbury's apocryphal put-down.) It started 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' Fund to support the families of troops sent out to South Africa. Kipling supplied his ballad, Sullivan set it to music, and performed, printed, and embossed on merchandise it raised some quarter of a million pounds.¹⁰⁸ The age of mass circulation publicity had arrived: but Swinburne belonged to an earlier generation. A military disaster on 30 October, when a force of British troops had been surrounded, suffered heavy casualties and forced to surrender, occasioned his next patriotic response, 'The Reverse' (again annotated 'Not copyright'). It was another sonnet, but this time appearing in the *Illustrated London News*. That paper gave it a full page, headed by a drawing of Wellington at Waterloo and footed by another of the Battle of Trafalgar.¹⁰⁹ Although Kipling had again got there first – it had reprinted 'The Absent-Minded Beggar' on a whole page the previous week¹¹⁰ – Swinburne's sonnet had the more popular presentation: it would not have looked out of place in the *Boy's Own Paper*. 'It is time for silence or for profoundly sympathetic thought,' said the *Academy*, far from impressed with what it read. 'The sonnet is a thinker's medium, and Mr Swinburne has never been a thinker.'¹¹¹ 'He begins well ... but the sestet, besides being bad in form is, if anything a trifle cryptic ... What do the last three lines mean?' asked the *Outlook*.¹¹² The Poet Laureate had by now broken his silence and responded to the same British setback with 'Inflexible as Fate' which invited the readers of the *Daily Telegraph* to think of Rome's defeat at Cannae – Austin on this occasion had a limited, educated readership in mind.¹¹³

There were four more Boer War poems from Swinburne. 'The Turning of the Tide' was his response to the surrender of a Boer army to General Roberts: it was another sonnet in the *Times*.¹¹⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* in an editorial contrasted it adversely with Lord Robert's chivalrous response to the defeated enemy: 'There is no

¹⁰⁸ Kipling, *op.cit.*, p.88.

¹⁰⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 11 Nov. 1899, p.678.

¹¹⁰ *Illustrated London News*, 4 Nov. 1899, p.642.

¹¹¹ *Academy*, 11 Nov. 1899, p.529.

¹¹² *Outlook*, 11 Nov. 1899, p.484.

¹¹³ *Daily Telegraph*, 2 Nov. 1899, p.9.

¹¹⁴ *Times*, 1 Mar. 1900, p.8.

touch of that knightly sentiment in Mr Swinburne's sonnet.'¹¹⁵ Three months later the *Saturday Review* published his twelve-stanza Ode, 'Astraea Victrix' following further British military successes.¹¹⁶ (Astraea, as its classically schooled readership would have recognised, was the Roman goddess of Justice.) While the right-wing *Standard* heard in it 'the genuine ring of exultant patriotism,' the *Daily News* found him fastening 'not on any heroic and ideal aspect of the struggle, but on the baseness and wickedness, as he conceives it, both of the Boers and of their Continental sympathisers ... There is no material for good poetry in exaggerated and ungenerous thoughts such as these.'¹¹⁷

That autumn the *Saturday Review* also printed 'On the Death of Colonel Benson' another sonnet which excited more controversy.¹¹⁸ Its reference to 'whelps and dams of murderous foes whom none / Save we had spared or feared to starve and slay' provoked a storm of protest. The Chaplain to the Forces in South Africa wrote privately to Swinburne hoping he was mistaken in reading it as a rebuke for not shooting and starving the Boer women and children. Swinburne replied that he had indeed been misunderstood: 'I should have thought it impossible for any man to put so monstrous a misconstruction as yours on the verses in which I have expressed my thankfulness for the difference between English and German treatment of women and children in time of war.' But he was concerned enough to have both the Chaplain's letter and his reply published in the following week's issue.¹¹⁹ The *Manchester Guardian* devoted a horrified editorial to the sonnet on its publication, followed it up with readers' correspondence and eventually received a protesting letter from James Douglas, friend (and in due course biographer) of Watts-Dunton, trying to put the record straight.¹²⁰

Swinburne's last Boer War piece was yet another sonnet, 'The First of June' which marked the peace treaty signed at Vereeniging. 'Peace with honour, peace in

¹¹⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Mar. 1900, p.5.

¹¹⁶ *Saturday Review*, 9 June 1900, pp.704-705.

¹¹⁷ *Standard*, 9 June 1900, p.5; *Daily News*, 9 June 1900, p.4.

¹¹⁸ *Saturday Review*, 9 Nov. 1901, p.584.

¹¹⁹ Lang, *Letters 1769* (12 Nov. 1901), published *Saturday Review*, 16 Nov. 1901, pp.621-622.

¹²⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 12 Nov. 1901, p.4; 19 Nov. 1901, p.11; 20 Nov. 1901, p.6; 16 Dec. 1901, p.9.

righteous work well done' had, to the poet's mind, been achieved. He was also very satisfied with his own contribution to the war effort: all six of these war poems were reprinted unchanged in *A Channel Passage*, his final collection of verse, when it appeared in 1904, soon enough after the Boer War for them still to be topical. Other less immediate political pieces went in too: the anti Home Rule, anti-Gladstone sonnets and the Ode exhorting the tyrannicide of the Czar. There were a few more reprinted political or patriotic poems too: 'The Centenary of the Battle of the Nile, August 1898' which had appeared in the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, 'Trafalgar Day,' and 'Cromwell's Statue' from the *Nineteenth Century*. His twenty year old 'A Word for the Navy' also made its first collected appearance.

Watts had pointed out 'the power of compromise in artistic success.' Yet Swinburne was the last person to compromise: his subject matter changed not because he was trying to reposition himself with a new readership (Chatto's conservative marketing would have frustrated him anyway) but because his own sympathies and interests began to flow with the current of the age; despite that he proved unable to reach out and meet a new audience.

(d) Swinburne's Collected Edition, 1904-1905

One of the most striking features of the contemporary publication of Swinburne's poetry is its stability. Not for Swinburne were major textual revisions, or moves from publisher to publisher, re-arrangement of volumes, or even reissue of existing works in newly set editions. After Chatto took over from Hotten (following Hotten's death in 1873) every new collection of poetry or prose, and every play Swinburne published thereafter remained in print and substantially unaltered until 1917 when Heinemann secured the copyrights. As stock ran low of the more popular titles Chatto would send a standard letter of a few lines to Swinburne informing him of the intention to reprint and asking if there were any changes he would like to make. Typically a further 500 copies would then be printed from the stereotype plates. This static pattern seems like some microcosm of the fixed routines of Swinburne's life in

his years at Putney between 1879 and 1909, which makes it easy to suppose that the conservatism of the publisher was a reflection of the conservatism of the author, not necessarily of Chatto himself.

Interrupting this stasis were the two sets of collected works, which came out volume by volume in 1904 and 1905, just a few years before Swinburne's death in 1909. *The Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne* in six volumes appeared first, followed by *The Tragedies of Algernon Charles Swinburne* in five. By the end of the nineteenth century such collected editions had become an established feature in the publishing landscape.¹²¹ Scott's *Waverley edition* (1829-33) was followed by many of the great Victorians, from Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Thackeray and George Eliot to Hardy, Stevenson and Henry James. Here were further markets – libraries, collectors, bibliophiles (some collections appeared as *éditions de luxe*) – which could be financially very rewarding. More than that, the collected edition gave the author the chance to revise his text and to define his oeuvre for posterity. Consequently its appearance was an implicit acknowledgement of an established literary position.

There were plenty of Victorian poets with single volumes of collected poetry, but just two with whom Swinburne would have compared himself whose works ran into many volumes: Tennyson and Browning. Tennyson was, as always in publishing terms, exceptional. Wise's *Bibliography* lists no less than fifteen different collected editions issued during Tennyson's life, and a further seven up to and including the annotated *Eversley edition* in nine volumes (1907-1908).¹²² These were in a whole range of formats and prices. Browning had issued the six volumes of his *Poetical Works* in 1868 and his complete edition appeared in seventeen volumes between 1888 and 1894. His initial suggestion had been to reuse the plates from 1868 for this, but it was entirely reset; he gave very careful attention to correcting detail, though made a very substantial revision – a new version – of *Pauline* (1833).¹²³

¹²¹ Andrew Nash, ed., *The Culture of Collected Editions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp.4-9.

¹²² [T.J. Wise] *A Bibliography of the Writings of Alfred, Lord Tennyson 2 vols* (London: Printed for Private Circulation, 1908).

¹²³ Michael Millgate, *Testamentary Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.12.

The first reference to a collected edition of Swinburne comes in a letter written in the summer of 1896 from Chatto to Watts. It does not make it clear where the initiative came from, though it is worth recalling that Chatto was involved with the posthumous *Edinburgh edition* of Robert Louis Stevenson at this time.

In accordance with the conversation which we had with you regarding the issue of a new uniform edition of Mr Swinburne's Collected Poetical Works, we are sending you herewith the 12 separate volumes comprising them. We think that the time has now come for the publication of such an edition, which you will probably consider might be condensed with advantage into six volumes of somewhat uniform size the contents of which might be arranged if you think well so as to bring poems of similar nature together. Our idea is that a ready market would be found for this edition if published at the uniform price of 6/- per volume, upon which we would pay a royalty of 1/- per volume of all copies sold. We would continue to publish the original editions and pay the same royalty on copies sold of them as hitherto.¹²⁴

Initially Swinburne appears to have taken up the idea with alacrity, and while staying with his mother and sisters a little later in the summer he was working on a preface to the proposed collection and asking Watts, back in Putney, which specific poems might best be mentioned in it. But then there were second thoughts. 'I propose to finish my introductory essay before turning my attention to anything else,' he told Watts. 'I do not in the least care when the collected edition is to appear – though I should have thought it was for us to determine the date of its appearance – but I must get the business off my hands once for all as soon as may be. I could not think of having to take up the task again.'¹²⁵ Perhaps it had only struck him as he wrestled with the essay just how much work a new edition of all his poetry must entail. The momentum was lost. Two years later Chatto tried again: 'We think the present time is very favourable

¹²⁴ Chatto Letter Book 32/850 (22 June 1896).

¹²⁵ Lang, *Letters* 1693 (27 July 1896), 1698 (25 Aug. 1896), 1702 (7 Sept. [1896]).

in which to commence the collected uniform edition ...' he told Watts, and requested a meeting to discuss the edition.¹²⁶

A year after that with still no progress Chatto now had another card to play. He sent Watts-Dunton a suggested plan for the six volumes, aiming to keep each of them roughly the same size and emphasising – perhaps aware of the author's reluctance to engage in editorial work – that 'it would not require any of the editing or revision which would be desirable in the case of the entire rearrangement of contents of the volumes as originally published.'¹²⁷ His additional card was that he was able to say that he had bought back the copyright, stereotype plates and unsold stock of 'A Word for the Navy' which now he proposed to include in the collected edition, and to reassign the copyright to the author. (This had been extorted from Swinburne by another publisher, George Redway, some ten years earlier as payment for the return of some injudicious letters.)¹²⁸ Swinburne could hardly ignore this; answering by return he expressed himself as gratified by this 'very liberal conduct,' this 'very handsome proposal,' and naturally went on to discuss the collected edition. Chatto did not disclose that the entire purchase of stock, plates and rights had only cost him twenty guineas.¹²⁹ It certainly simplified things that Swinburne had never switched from publisher to publisher, and that, with this single exception, Chatto was already publishing all the contents of the proposed new edition. (Stevenson's *Edinburgh edition* was, in contrast, a more complicated joint production as the title pages suggest: 'printed by T. & A. Constable for Longmans Green & Co. ... and sold by Chatto & Windus.')

The plan that Chatto had sent Watts-Dunton with his letter envisaged simply reprinting the thirteen volumes of poems that Swinburne had published under his own name, with the addition of the *Heptalogia* (which had been published anonymously in

¹²⁶ Chatto Letter Book 36/521 (8 Dec. 1898).

¹²⁷ Meyers, *Letters* 1751C (30 Nov. 1899).

¹²⁸ The complex publication history of 'A Word for the Navy' is also touched on in Chapter 4.

¹²⁹ Chatto Swinburne Contracts. Folder 5 (Letter of George Redway to Chatto, 12 May 1898); Folder 2 (Cashed cheque from Chatto to Redway, 20 May 1898).

1881)¹³⁰ and the reacquired ‘Word for the Navy.’¹³¹ Swinburne had a few ideas about their sequence: ‘*Songs of the Springtides* preceded *Studies in Song*, and should still precede them, though we do not observe strict chronology in the arrangement of this edition. I should prefer that the Second and Third Series of *Poems and Ballads* should appear after *Songs before Sunrise*, which ought to follow immediately after the First. There is no consecutive or necessary connection between the three series of volumes, which bear the same serial name because I could not think of a better.’ He also thought that ‘*Tristram of Lyonesse*’ (which had formed but half of its eponymous volume on publication in 1882) would be better sundered from its accompanying verse, which verse could then be divided between the last two volumes. And the *Heptalogia* – for which he offered Chatto extra lines – should move from the third to the fifth volume.¹³² These changes by and large realise the chronology of the poems more accurately (‘*Tristram*’ had been mostly written well before much else in its original 1882 volume), though strictly *Poems and Ballads, third series* should also be in volume six.

Chatto wasted no time in jotting down a revised arrangement and asking for the revisions to the *Heptalogia*.¹³³ Summer came and he was still waiting for instructions to proceed.¹³⁴ In January 1901 there were developments. He wrote to Watts: ‘I am indeed pleased to receive Mr Swinburne’s Introduction dedicating the new collected edition of his Poetical Works to yourself. I have read it with great delight as it implies the printing of the poems in their integrity without alterations and omissions. I have sent the copy to the printers and hope to let you see proof in a day or two in the style which I recommend for the edition.’¹³⁵ A few days later he followed this up with another suggested arrangement which reunited ‘*Tristram of Lyonesse*’ with its miscellaneous poems and ignored Swinburne’s earlier expressed preference for placing *Songs before Sunrise* in the second volume. And again he stressed that such an

¹³⁰ Its author had been quickly identified: *Glasgow Herald*, 24 Mar. 1881, p.3; *Graphic*, 9 Apr. 1881, p.358; *Cambridge Review*, 4 May 1881, pp. 303-304.

¹³¹ The various proposed arrangements of the collected editions are detailed in Annex 20.

¹³² Meyers, *Letters* 1751D (1 Dec. 1899).

¹³³ Meyers, *Letters* 1752A (5 Dec. 1899).

¹³⁴ Chatto Letter Book 38/543 (5 July 1900).

¹³⁵ Chatto Letter Book 40/444 (4 Jan. 1901).

arrangement 'would not require any of the editing or revision which would be desirable in the case of the entire re-arrangement of the contents of the volumes as originally published.'¹³⁶

The stop – go – stop pattern continued. The following year, 1902, Grant Richards wrote to Watts-Dunton (as Watts-Dunton then reported to Chatto) suggesting a cheap edition of Swinburne to join his volume of Tennyson in his new World's Classics series. Chatto gave no encouragement.

When it is considered that the sale of only 700 copies of the projected new collected edition of Mr Swinburne's Poetical Works will be more productive to the author than the whole 20,000 of the cheap edition, the monetary loss to Mr Swinburne becomes very apparent ...

I may also say that for thirty years I have taken honour and pride in being Mr Swinburne's publisher and hope that at the proper time the issue of a People's edition may be entrusted to myself ...¹³⁷

Nothing further was heard of Richards' proposal. Six months later Chatto again suggested that 'the present time would be a very opportune one to commence the issue of the new Collected Edition of your poems',¹³⁸ but it was a further year before an agreement was reached. What may have finally brought this about was the pneumonia that Swinburne contracted in November 1903, about serious enough to be reported in the press, to keep him housebound for at least three months and to encourage him to draw up his will (which is dated 4 February 1904).¹³⁹

In January Chatto met with Watts-Dunton who accepted a draft agreement Chatto had prepared: the price of each volume would be 6/- with a royalty of 1/6d on

¹³⁶ Chatto Letter Book 40/462-463 (7 Jan. 1901) .

¹³⁷ Chatto Letter Book 43/102 (12 May 1902).

¹³⁸ Chatto Letter Book 45/297 (1 Jan. [1903]).

¹³⁹ 'Literary Gossip', *Athenaeum*, 5 Dec. 1903, p.755; Lang, *Letters* 1802 (12 Feb. 1904); *Times*, 18 May 1909, p.13.

every copy sold (i.e. 25% as with the rest of Swinburne's works) not the 1/- royalty proposed in 1896. It was understood the contents would be arranged in accordance with Swinburne's letter of 1 December 1899 (Chatto's revision of 1901 was put aside) and they discussed and drew up a plan for a subsequent five volumes of Dramatic Works. Watts-Dunton handed over an annotated copy of the *Heptalogia* and agreed to insert an announcement about the poems in the *Athenaeum*, which duly appeared a couple of days later.¹⁴⁰

Chatto inserted a half page advertisement in the *Athenaeum* on 4 June 1904. It began:

Messrs Chatto & Windus have pleasure in announcing that they have arranged for a Collected Library Edition of Mr. Swinburne's Poetical Works in a form worthy to take its place in the library, for which edition subscriptions are now invited. The want of such an edition has long been felt, and the Publishers are glad to be able to advertise the fact that they will commence its publication on June 9 by the issue of Vol. 1 containing the First Series of *Poems and Ballads*, preceded by a long and deeply interesting Dedicatory Introduction. The whole of the Poetical Works will be included in Six Volumes of crown 8vo size, which will be handsomely printed by Messrs Spottiswoode & Co, on deckle-edge paper manufactured by Messrs Spalding & Hodge from pure rag expressly for the work and bound by Messrs Burn & Co in buckram with top edges gilt. The Volumes will be published at short intervals, price 6s net each Volume, or 36s net for the Six Volumes. Subscriptions can be accepted only for complete sets.¹⁴¹

This carefully emphasised the selling points: it was to be the first uniform edition, produced to look good on the shelf. It implied that this was a complete edition, but there would also be new material: a substantial introduction by the poet; '*The Heptalogia* (with Additions)' concluding volume 5; while concluding volume 6 was *A Channel Passage, and other poems*, Swinburne latest (and as yet unpublished)

¹⁴⁰ Chatto Letter Book 46/92 (14 Jan. 1904); Chatto Swinburne Contracts, Folder 5 (21 Jan. 1904);

'Literary Gossip', *Athenaeum*, 23 Jan. 1904, p.116.

¹⁴¹ *Athenaeum*, 4 June 1904, p.709.

collection of poetry. It did not mention the large-paper edition of 110 numbered sets priced at 6 guineas possibly because this was already fully subscribed.¹⁴² (A prospectus had been prepared earlier in the year.)¹⁴³

Poems and Ballads had always been (and remained) Swinburne's best-selling work. Because the collected edition was only being sold in sets and on subscription Watts-Dunton was concerned that sales were not being maximised. Chatto agreed that might be the case for this volume but, he said, were volumes sold separately some of the others would be in danger of being overlooked.¹⁴⁴ (He might also have pointed out that it would have undercut the existing editions.) Watts-Dunton seems to have been satisfied with this. It was a polite way of saying that the public's interest was in the earlier Swinburne.

Volume 1 was published, as the advertisement announced, on 9 June 1904; Swinburne had finished the proofs of volume 2 by 7 July and it was issued on 10 August.¹⁴⁵ Chatto was still awaiting the corrected proofs of volume 3 at the beginning of August, and Swinburne had not reached what Chatto then supposed was his final decision about its contents until the end of the month.¹⁴⁶ For the arrangement agreed in January was not final. First *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Erechtheus* (which had been intended for the Dramatic Works) had been added to volume 4 of the *Poems*, the slimmest of the proposed volumes. This was shown in the half page advertisement in the *Athenaeum* on 4 June 1904.¹⁴⁷ 'The trouble of a collected edition,' Swinburne told his sister Isabel, 'is in the arrangement or rearrangement of the contents or components parts if – as we decided – we don't go merely by chronology; only keeping as near as possible, without making an inharmonious mess of the series, to the successive dates of original publication.'¹⁴⁸ A fortnight after writing to his sister, Swinburne apologised to

¹⁴² Chatto Authors' Long Accounts Ledger shows a royalty for 100 copies of the large paper edition in Jan. 1905.

¹⁴³ Myers, *Letters* 1801A (1 Feb. 1904).

¹⁴⁴ Chatto Letter Book 46/951 (28 June 1904).

¹⁴⁵ Lang, *Letters* 1807 (7 July 1904); Chatto Letter Book 47/95 (10 Aug. 1904).

¹⁴⁶ Chatto Letter Book 47/200 (30 Aug. 1904).

¹⁴⁷ *Athenaeum*, 4 June 1904, p.709.

¹⁴⁸ Meyers, *Letters* 1807F (2 Sept. 1904).

William Rossetti for his tardiness in sending his new *A Channel Passage and Other Poems*, the excuse was the Collected Edition: ‘I have been rather bothered and badgered about the arrangement of the four volumes yet to come, which Watts-Dunton and I have just settled (ten minutes since).’¹⁴⁹ Chatto announced volume 3 for 10 October, volume 4 for 8 November, volume 5 for 21 November and the last volume, volume 6 for December.¹⁵⁰ When volume 3 appeared *Songs of the Springtides* had swapped places with some of the poems originally from *Tristram of Lyonesse*.

No collation of the *Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne* has ever been made with its original constituent volumes. Wise’s *Bibliography* says confidently but imprecisely ‘In the main the text of this edition reproduced that of the separate individual volumes, but in a few instances certain changes making for improvement were introduced.’¹⁵¹ In September Chatto wanted to reprint his original free-standing edition of *Poems and Ballads* and asked for the proofs of volume 1 of the collected edition to be returned so he could use them for changes to the stereotype plates of the original edition: so the implication is that there were corrections even to Swinburne’s most popular volume (Chatto had reprinted this crown octavo edition at least twenty times) although they cannot have been major amendments.

The ‘Dedicatory Epistle’ was written as an introduction to both the poems and the plays – it says nothing about the prose works – and plans for six volumes of dramatic works existed from an early stage. Right up until early 1904 it was envisaged that *Atalanta* and *Erechtheus* would appear in the dramatic works,¹⁵² but by June that year they were being advertised in volume 4 of the *Poems*, where they duly appeared.¹⁵³ The first outline for the collected Dramatic Works is with an undated outline for the collected Poems; that follows the pattern proposed by Chatto of late 1899 in response to Swinburne’s comments, so presumably it dates from early 1900.

¹⁴⁹ Lang, *Letters* 1808 (14 Sept. 1904).

¹⁵⁰ *Publishers’ Circular*, 24 Sept. 1904, front cover; *Athenaeum*, 29 Oct. 1904, p.568 and 19 Nov., p.705.

¹⁵¹ Wise, *Bibliography*, v.1, p.336.

¹⁵² Chatto Swinburne Contracts, Folder 5. Arrangement drawn up by Watts-Dunton and taken down by Chatto (21 Jan. 1904).

¹⁵³ *Athenaeum*, 4 June 1904, p.709.

This envisages both series in six volumes, and presents the *Tragedies* in an un-chronological order.¹⁵⁴

Once Chatto had received the last of the proofs for the collected *Poems* in November 1904 he was anxious to reconsider the arrangement of the *Tragedies*. The surviving documentation for this and for its publication is much thinner than that for the *Poems*. There were a number of rethinks about the arrangement;¹⁵⁵ Chatto became more and more concerned about Swinburne's delay in returning proofs: by October he was writing that 'I hope it may be possible to keep faith with the subscribers (who are now very clamorous).'¹⁵⁶ The original schedule is no longer clear, nor the precise dates when the volumes did finally appear, but the printing dates are recorded in the Printing Ledgers (see Annex 21) and the final volumes were being reviewed in February 1906.

During Swinburne's lifetime Chatto printed 3,000 sets of the six volume *Poems*, (with a further 110 sets in the large paper edition), and another 3,000 between his death and the Great War. The *Tragedies* had sold most of its 1500 set run by 1917 (and again with another 110 sets in the large paper edition.) As Chatto had implied to Watts-Dunton when Grant Richards was agitating for a cheap edition, Swinburne's equivalent financial return on a cheap edition would indeed have required much larger sales. His royalty of 25% will have earned £1,350 in total on 3,000 sets (18,000 volumes) of the *Poems*. But a similar return on a cheap 1/- edition with the same royalty would have required sales of 108,000 volumes. Just after the edition had been announced the *Academy* wrote:

The Collected Edition will probably be, in price, beyond the reach of the average book-buyer, and it is not absolutely certain that it will find its way into many of the Free Public Libraries. Apart from what those libraries contain – what chance has the ordinary young man of literary tastes of making acquaintance with Mr

¹⁵⁴ Chatto Swinburne Contracts, Folder 1. [Two undated pencil outlines, probably about 1900].

¹⁵⁵ Chatto Swinburne Contracts, Folder 5 (21 Jan. 1904); Chatto Letter Book 48/136 (16 Mar. 1905) refers to an arrangement 'supplied yesterday'; *Athenaeum*, 24 June 1905, p.800.

¹⁵⁶ Chatto Letter Book, 48/928 (29 Aug. 1905); 49/48 (27 Sept. 1905); 49/97 (10 Oct. 1905).

Swinburne's poetical works? The volumes containing those works are all issued at a price absolutely prohibitory in the case of slender purses.¹⁵⁷

In fact each volume of both the *Poems* and of the *Tragedies* was priced at six shillings. None of the original volumes had ever been or had become cheaper than that, for Chatto kept those prices the same for forty years (although the purchasing power of the pound was rising – i.e. most other prices were falling – particularly from the early 1870s to the mid 1890s). But each volume of the collected edition was only sold as a unit in the set: they could not be bought separately: so the *Poems* cost 36/- (or 6 guineas for the large paper edition) and the *Tragedies* 30/- (or 5 guineas for the large paper edition).

Both the *Poems* and the *Tragedies* received much attention in the press: Swinburne was regarded by many as the greatest living poet and this edition presented his life's work. Obviously Swinburne too saw it as important. The first volume opens with the introduction to the whole edition. The 'Dedicatory Epistle' addressed to 'my best and dearest friend' – Watts-Dunton of course – discusses some of the poetry and all the six plays written to that time. (Swinburne's last play, *The Duke of Gandia*, was published in 1908, too late to be included in the Collected Edition.) It says nothing about the body of critical writings, though clearly Swinburne thought it more than journalistic ephemera. He had assembled much of his earlier criticism in four volumes: *Essays and Studies* (1875), *Miscellanies* (1886), *A Study of Victor Hugo* (1886) and *Studies in Prose and Poetry* (1894) and he had long had in mind the collection that finally appeared as *The Age of Shakespeare* in 1908.¹⁵⁸ It seems unlikely that neither Swinburne, nor Chatto nor Watts-Dunton had ever considered a set of *The Critical Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* to complement the *Poems* and the *Tragedies* but there is no evidence that they did. A number of explanations are likely. First, if the volumes of 1875, 1886, and 1894 had already collected what Swinburne believed to be of value there would be little point in repackaging them (they were all still in print) unless there was some clear commercial advantage. It is significant that *William Blake*

¹⁵⁷ *Academy*, 30 Jan. 1904, p.117.

¹⁵⁸ Lang, *Letters* 1611 (5 Dec. 1892): Swinburne told Gosse 'As to the book comprising all my studies of the Shakespearean age, I hope to have it ready for the press when I find myself nearer 80 than 70.'

which first appeared in 1868 but had been unavailable for thirty years was republished in 1906. And while a *Critical Works* would have brought some sales it would certainly have swung an unwelcome spotlight on Swinburne's prose which had become ever more shrill and intemperate over the years. Watts-Dunton must have been aware of this.

The 'Dedicatory Epistle' is one of Swinburne's calmest and most lucid pieces of writing, features all the more exceptional for its date. It begins with him recognising the dangers either of vanity or of humility in commenting on his own work, two pitfalls he successfully avoids. He remarks only briefly on *Poems and Ballads* saying that he has nothing to add or retract from the *Notes* that he published at the time. He then passes to *Songs before Sunrise* and here answers a by now frequently heard criticism of his politics. The once radical, republican poet with his hatred for the French empire and support for the emerging Italian republic had, since the Putney years, increasingly appeared as a jingo, condemning Home Rule for Ireland and supporting the British Empire against the Boers. 'Monarchists and anarchists may be advocates of national dissolution and reactionary division: republicans cannot be.'¹⁵⁹

He then moves on to review briefly his first two plays, *The Queen Mother and Rosamund* and the Mary Queen of Scots trilogy. These generally disappointed the greater expectations aroused by his poetry, but '... Private and personal appreciation I have always thought and often found more valuable and delightful than all possible or imaginable clamour of public praise.'¹⁶⁰ And it was surely this support from Watts, whose judgement Swinburne respected, that made him so important to Swinburne quite as much as for his practical and business skills. He then returns to consider the poetry: *Atalanta*, *Erechtheus*, various Odes, *Tristram of Lyonesse* and poems inspired by places. And he again replies directly to another long-standing criticism, that his poetry was all about books.

Not to you or any other poet, nor indeed to the very humblest and simplest lover of poetry, will it seem incongruous or strange, suggestive of imperfect sympathy

¹⁵⁹ *Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, v.1, (London, Chatto & Windus, 1905), p.ix.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p.xii.

with life or deficient inspiration from nature, that the very words of Sappho should be heard and recognised in the notes of the nightingales, the glory of the presence of dead poets imagined in the presence of the glory of the sky ... The half-brained creatures to whom books are other than living things may see with the eyes of a bat and draw with the fingers of a mole his dullard's distinction between books and life: those who live the fuller life of a higher animal than he knows that books are to poets as much part of life as pictures are to painters or as music is to musicians ... Marlowe and Shakespeare, Aeschylus and Sappho, do not live only on the dusty shelves of libraries.¹⁶¹

Then, after a brief look at his eulogistic and elegiac poems he turns to the plays once again and surprises us with the statement that that 'when I write plays it is with a view to their being acted at the Globe, the Red Bull or the Black Friars.' (The surprise is because they seem so unsuitable for the stage: *Bothwell*, which he regarded as his masterwork in this genre, is over 500 pages long.) Finally he responds to another much repeated criticism. A writer conscious of a natural command over the musical resources of the language cannot fail to take pleasure in it, and 'if he be a poet of the order of Hugo, or Coleridge or Shelley, the result will be something very much more than a musical exercise ... there is no music in verse which has not in it sufficient fullness and ripeness of meaning, sufficient adequacy of emotion or of thought, to abide the analysis of any other than the purblind scrutiny of prepossession'.¹⁶²

But perhaps one of the most interesting points relates directly to his publishing history and he makes it on the first page of his introduction. After saying that there is no reason why he should not undertake his own commentary if he can avoid the risks of vanity and humility, he goes on:

And when he has nothing to regret and nothing to recant, when he finds nothing that he could wish to cancel, to alter or unsay, in any page he has ever laid before his reader, he need not be seriously troubled by the inevitable consciousness that the work of his early youth is not and cannot be unnaturally like the work of a

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* pp.xx-xxi.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* pp.xxvii-xxviii.

very young man. This would be no excuse for it, it if were in any sense bad work: if it be so, no apology would avail; and I certainly have none to offer.¹⁶³

So, once he had published something Swinburne presents himself as never having second thoughts. By and large this is true for his poetry, which did not undergo revision or retouching. Even when his estimate of Whitman had sunk dramatically,¹⁶⁴ the paean 'To Walt Whitman in America' was left inviolate. On reading William Bell Scott's posthumous *Autobiographical Notes* (1892) Swinburne was outraged by what he read of himself there and attacked Scott privately and publically.¹⁶⁵ But the 'Dedication' to him in *Poems and Ballads: third series* (1889) remained, and the warm 'Memorial Verses' which had followed his death early in 1891 in the *Athenaeum* were reprinted in *Astrophel and Other Poems* (1894). What qualifies Swinburne's assertion is that the Collected Edition did not collect all the poems that he had published, quite apart from making no attempt at the criticism. In February 1904 Chatto had sent Watts-Dunton a list of Swinburne's 'Uncollected Verses' which he drew from Wise's *Bibliographical List*, suggesting he could include it in his forthcoming volume.¹⁶⁶ Most of these subsequently appeared in *A Channel Passage*, but not all. At least ten poems and fifteen articles were never reprinted or gathered up into book form,¹⁶⁷ and it is not entirely impossible that more could yet come to light, hidden deep in that dark interior of the Victorian periodical press, a huge continent that is still only partially explored. Nor is his assertion quite true for the criticism, which when collected needed some topping and tailing – and sometimes more: *Notes on the Royal Academy* of 1868 included a few hostile lines about Millais, omitted when reprinted in *Essays and Studies* (1875).

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* p.vi.

¹⁶⁴ 'Whitmania,' *Fortnightly Review*, Aug. 1887, pp.171-176.

¹⁶⁵ Lang, *Letters* 1611 (5 Dec. 1892); 'The New Terror', *Fortnightly Review*, Dec. 1892, pp.830-833.

¹⁶⁶ Meyers, *Letters* 1801A (4 Feb. 1904). Thomas J. Wise, *A Bibliographical List of the Scarcer Works and Uncollected Writings of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (London: Published for Private Subscribers, 1897).

¹⁶⁷ See Annex 2.

Although when looking for a laureate in 1892 Gladstone had not relaxed his opinions formed a quarter of a century earlier when *Poems and Ballads* first appeared,¹⁶⁸ by 1904 a different generation was reviewing it: many of the notices of the first volume of the Collected Edition look back at the scandal of 1866 with amusement and with the sense of being above all that. The *Spectator* still found something objectionable, but it was very much in the minority:

It will be remembered that when this volume was first published exception was taken to certain pieces in it as being disagreeable and morbid ... On a review of the volume after so long a period we are emphatically of the opinion that the critics were in the right. Such a poem as 'Anactoria' is not one that a healthy imagination should have conceived ... But there are, even in this first volume, not only fantasias of tumultuous and bewildering music ... but also poems in which idea and expression were so well mated that the resulting work of art has taken a permanent place in the nation's anthology.¹⁶⁹

The *Athenaeum*, which since Watts-Dunton's day as poetry editor could be relied upon to cover all Swinburne's publications, had a substantial unsigned article by James Douglas,¹⁷⁰ a close associate. (His five hundred page appreciation, *Theodore Watts-Dunton, poet, novelist, critic* was published the same year.) Douglas also had another article reviewing volume 1 (this one signed) in the *Bookman*. He repeated this double with reviews of the second volume in the same two journals. Generally in writing about the Collected Edition the critics looked in some detail at the first two volumes, but thereafter interest dissipated and none of the remaining *Poems* volumes receive equally detailed individual attention.¹⁷¹ So the impression is given of a formidable position and reputation, and yet with interest focused very much on the early part of his career, which confirms Chatto's decision to sell the edition only in sets. 'Mr Swinburne's later poems are not much read,' wrote Clutton-Brock in the *Academy*,

¹⁶⁸ 'The licentiousness of Swinburne differs from all other known to me in the quality of intensity.' *Gladstone Diaries*, 10 Oct. 1892.

¹⁶⁹ 'Mr Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*,' *Spectator*, 93 (16 July 1904) pp.88-89.

¹⁷⁰ He is named in the annotated file copy of the *Athenaeum*, held at City University.

¹⁷¹ The reviews are detailed in Annex 22 below.

going on to comment that he had not fulfilled the greatest expectations of his early years.¹⁷² But reviewing volume 1 anonymously in the *Times Literary Supplement* he had also pointed out: ‘There is a common belief that Mr Swinburne never developed past his brilliant youth, that he was born an incomparable master of the sensuous elements of poetry, and learned nothing from experience to extend that mastery. Many masterpieces of his later years refute that belief’.¹⁷³ Despite all qualifications and lack of enthusiasm for later works, when all six volumes were published two very lengthy reviews in the *Quarterly Review* and the *Edinburgh Review* bestowed the accolades that such an edition and such a position naturally invited.

The *Tragedies* won a grudging respect, though there was widespread recognition that Swinburne’s genius was not dramatic at all. Except for *Atalanta* and *Erechtheus* none had been especially successful on publication (and these two now found themselves published with the *Poems* anyway.) There was less than half the number of reviews that the Collected *Poems* had attracted, and these were shorter. The large-paper edition appears to have been undersubscribed, unlike the *Poems*, and was advertised together with the crown octavo edition.¹⁷⁴

Subsequent to the Collected Edition Swinburne published just three further poems: ‘Czar Louis XVI’ in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, ‘A Carol for Charity’ in the *Times*, and ‘Memorial Verses on the Death of Karl Blind’ in the *Fortnightly Review*. His play on Cesare Borgia, *The Duke of Gandia* was issued in 1908, ‘uniform in size, type and general get-up with Messrs Chatto recently published edition of Mr. Swinburne’s collected poems and dramas’, as the advance notice in the *Athenaeum* carefully pointed out.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² A. Clutton-Brock, ‘The Later Poetry of Mr Swinburne’, *Academy*, 20 Oct. 1906, pp.397-398

¹⁷³ [Arthur Clutton-Brock,] ‘Mr Swinburne’s Poems and Ballads’, [*Poems*, vol. 1] *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 July 1904, pp.209-210.

¹⁷⁴ Chatto Authors’ Long Accounts Ledger shows royalties for 81 copies up to Swinburne’s death. Consequently unlike the *Poems* it appeared in Chatto’s advertisements: *Saturday Review*, 6 May 1905, p.614.

¹⁷⁵ *Athenaeum*, 22 Feb. 1908, p.229.

Ten years after Swinburne's death Gosse and Wise edited a new volume of *Selections* for Heinemann. Unlike the 1887 volume of *Selections* this drew on the earlier volumes and although it ranges more widely than that it is by no means as catholic as Sharp's anthology of 1901.¹⁷⁶ The few reviews concurred that it made a good choice, though they also showed clearly that Swinburne's reputation was falling. 'He is no longer in fashion, and little read as a whole,' said the *Nation*. '... After his first three or four volumes anything of real value needs digging out from a large amount of inferior pages.'¹⁷⁷ It was from the volumes after these that most of the contents of the original *Selections* had been drawn: the later Swinburne had failed to establish himself.

'We may agree that Swinburne did make a contribution,' said T.S. Eliot in the *Athenaeum*, 'that he did something that had not been done before, and that what he did will not turn out to be a fraud.'¹⁷⁸ This sounds somewhat grudging and it is surely significant that he felt he needed to say it at all. Just over three years earlier, Percy Spalding who had taken over from Andrew Chatto on his retirement had told the widowed Mrs Watts-Dunton:

My opinion is that the sale of the Swinburne books is likely to go on at about its present level for many years to come. The copyright in them exists for 50 years after the author's death i.e. the copyright in them will not expire until 1959, and there can be no doubt that during this period his reputation as a Classic will be consolidated.¹⁷⁹

Heinemann was to find some more life in the market with cheap editions of the early works when he bought the copyrights, but on the longer term Swinburne was not a good investment. The Collected Edition far from consolidating the reputation of his

¹⁷⁶ The contents of *Selections* 1887, Sharp's anthology and the Gosse and Wise *Selections from A.C. Swinburne* are identified in Annex 17.

¹⁷⁷ 'Selections from Swinburne', *Nation*, 7 Feb. 1920, p.652.

¹⁷⁸ T.S. Eliot, 'Swinburne', *Athenaeum*, 16 Jan 1920, p.72.

¹⁷⁹ Chatto Letter Book 90/13 (29 Nov. 1916).

complete oeuvre underlined that interest was focused on the volumes from the 1860s and 1870s.

Conclusion

A feature of Victorian publishing was the sheer amount of poetry that appeared in books, magazines and journals. Tennyson's unprecedented sales showed that a huge public could be won. Poetry, it seems, was not just a niche market. It was in this environment, following the publication of *Atalanta in Calydon* in 1865 and with the outraged reception of *Poems and Ballads* the year after, that Swinburne became a literary celebrity and for some the great hope of English poetry. Although that hope slowly faded as the years passed, his fame (or notoriety) gradually became something more solid as he was accorded critical recognition and an acknowledged place in the English literary scene. Eventually, by the end of his life, he was seen as the last of the great Victorian poets.

All this would surely suggest substantial sales, so Swinburne's comparatively modest print-runs during his lifetime are surprising: they totalled perhaps no more than 150,000 volumes across fifty titles (of which about forty were poetry or verse drama). One explanation would be to blame his publisher for poor marketing. But Andrew Chatto was not ineffective. His strategy with popular fiction – a succession of cheaper editions for different segments of the market as those with deeper pockets were satisfied – was based on large, wide readerships. His conservative approach to Swinburne, retaining original editions, formats and prices, was in marked contrast. Yet in the mid-1890s when Burne-Jones thought Morris's publisher was letting him down this was his point of comparison: 'I wish he would have Swinburne's publisher – who is Swinburne's publisher now? I should like to see them standing side by side – Swinburne has an enormous reputation beyond the immediate circle of his readers ... You don't see his [Morris's] books on bookstalls and I think it is for want of a business-like publisher.'¹ Chatto may well have been right to judge that, despite his reputation, there was no unexploited mass market for Swinburne. For, despite embracing some popular themes in his poetry (the celebration of childhood and patriotic flag-waving in particular) Swinburne never thought to please the crowd, and

¹ Mary Lago, ed., *Burne-Jones Talking; his conversations preserved by his studio assistant Thomas Rooke* (London: John Murray, 1982), p.56. Conversation dated 25 Nov. 1895.

never had the popular touch. Most of his output only appealed to a small audience; and, unlike Browning in his later years, he never benefitted from an eponymous Society that would promote him within that small group.

As an unknown poet Swinburne had found it very difficult to secure a commercial publisher, although without a reputation it was quite possible for anyone to publish a book of poetry provided they met the costs. No doubt very many went ahead on this basis, for poetry was prestigious and, as everyone knew from the example of Tennyson, could even be lucrative. The reception of *Atalanta* and then *Poems and Ballads* was to change everything. His reputation now also reflected on his publisher. Despite Hotten's disappointment with Swinburne's sales (which, after his rescue of the poet in the late summer of 1866, may have seemed to him justification for his dishonest accounting) Swinburne's name was still important to give lustre to his list: Hotten remained very reluctant to lose him. And despite the slender demand for so many of his later volumes, Chatto never appeared to hesitate over issuing any of them – though the print-runs may have been low.

Another explanation for sales that do not seem to reflect his fame and reputation is that as he became older Swinburne left his public (already a relatively small one) by abandoning the themes of his earlier poetry that brought him his audience. More significantly he simply wrote less inspired – if still highly crafted poetry – after his move to Putney.² So his earlier books, on the whole, remained the strongest sellers.

But while his reputation was built upon early triumphs it was not sustained purely by them. He was kept before the public by the periodical press, and in two important ways. First, his current poetry could be read there. Initially a means to get into print without paying for the privilege, the press continued to be an important source of income right into the final decade of his life. And in the second half of his

² Scott (and he was the first of many) supposed it a direct result of the new regime at Putney. '... the sober life Swinburne is leading is his ruin. Keep away the drink, you keep down every power in his body or mind. It is merely metre-rhythm.' (Letter dated 22 May 1881.) William E Fredeman, 'The Letters of Pictor Ignatus: William Bell Scott's Correspondence with Alice Boyd, 1859-1884', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 58 (1975), p.332.

career he appeared in a wider range of titles, bringing him to a public that might not otherwise directly encounter him. It is possible that it was many of these people who from 1887 onwards went out and bought *Selections*, which was among his top selling titles, despite containing almost none of the poetry which had brought him his fame; and possible that, disappointed with it, they looked no further. Second, all his books were widely reviewed. (This was not the case with the publication of poems in journals which might at best receive a few words acknowledging their presence from rival publications, whose business did not include promoting their competitors.) Criticism almost torpedoed Swinburne's career in 1866 just as it had been launched, by threatening to deny him a publisher. Criticism in all the major reviewing journals, led by unfailing and detailed notice of each book in the *Athenaeum* from the late 1870s onwards when Watts became its chief poetry critic, quite probably sustained it after the public had lost interest. Hence Burne-Jones's comment: 'an enormous reputation beyond the immediate circle of his readers.'

Within a decade of his death Swinburne's reputation was already in steep decline, as the reviews of *Selections from Swinburne* (1919) reveal. Heinemann had still been eager to buy the copyrights from his estate in 1917 and immediately put out a series of cheap editions of the more popular works in the 'Golden Pines' edition for 3/6d a volume.³ In 1924 he reused Chatto's plates from the 1904 Collected Edition and, in what looks like a fire-sale, reissued the lot in two thick volumes for 15/- as the *Collected Poetical Works*. Finally the *Complete Works* newly edited by Gosse and Wise appeared in twenty volumes between 1925 and 1927 in limited runs of 750 copies for £26.5s. per set. What was conceived of as a monument served as a tombstone. None of the volumes of poetry, with the exception of *Atalanta* and *Poems and Ballads*, have been reprinted since then. But there have been regular appearances of a handful of

³ *Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus* (1917); *Poems and Ballads 1st series* (1917); *Poems and Ballads 2nd and 3rd series* (1917); *Songs before Sunrise* (1917); *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1917); *A Study of Shakespeare* (1918); *William Blake* (1925).

early poems in most anthologies of Victorian poetry, and a surprising number of selections.⁴

During his lifetime, before this posthumous eclipse, Swinburne's publishing career was remarkably successful. Once he had made his name he was able to publish what he wanted, and the press was eager to print him. He was one of a handful of poets who did not rely on a day job for his bread and butter. Judged by this and the aftermath, Chatto's efforts might be reckoned not a squandered opportunity but a shrewd husbanding of resources.

⁴ Joanne Shattock, ed., *Cambridge Bibliography of English literature, vol.4, 1800-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999) lists 14 different volumes of selections published in England between 1927 and 1997.

Note on Sources

My main unpublished source has been the Chatto & Windus Archive held in the Archive of British Publishing and Printing, University of Reading which also includes the archive of John Camden Hotten, whose business Andrew Chatto took over on Hotten's death in 1873. There are three components for the period covered by Swinburne's publications:

(i) Letter Books. These contain copies of outgoing correspondence. (There is no incoming correspondence.) I have cited references in the form: Chatto Letter Book 8/558 (21 Mar. 1876) where 8 is the number of the letter book, 558 the page number and 21 Mar. 1876 the date of the letter.

(ii) Print Ledgers ("Stock books"). These contain (in varying detail) information on every print run of each title published, in some cases giving careful breakdown of costs, but always the numbers printed, sent to bind and in stock. I have cited references in the form: Print Ledger 1/172 where 1 is the number of the ledger and 172 the page number.

(iii) Royalty ledgers. The relevant ones are:

Authors' retail and statement ledger. The relevant ones cover 1874-1903, though a detailed breakdown of royalties only begins in 1877. It is followed by Authors' long accounts, 1903-1923

There is also a small collection of Swinburne contracts and miscellaneous notes by Andrew Chatto held by the Random House Group Archive & Library at Rushden, Northants. I have referred to these in the form: Chatto Swinburne Contracts: Folder 1 (23 Apr. 1874).

Bibliography

This bibliography omits the original publication of all Swinburne's own works which are listed in Annex 1: Swinburne's Print Runs and Publication Prices, and in Annex 2: Swinburne's Publications in the Periodical Press. It also omits all the contemporary review articles which are summarised in Annex 3: Reviews of Swinburne's Books.

Bibliographies, letters and non-contemporary editions of Swinburne's works

Beetz, Kirk. H., Algernon *Charles Swinburne a bibliography of secondary works, 1861-1980* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press Inc., 1982)

Gosse, Sir Edmund and Thomas James Wise, eds., *Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, vols. 1-20 (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1925-27)

Gosse, Edmund and Thomas James Wise eds., *Selections from Swinburne* (London: William Heinemann, 1919)

Hyder, Clyde Kenneth, ed., *Swinburne Replies* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966)

Lang, Cecil Y., ed., *The Swinburne Letters*, vols. 1-6 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959-62)

Lang, Cecil Y., ed., *New Writings by Swinburne* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966)

Meyers, Terry L., ed., *Uncollected Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, vols. 1-3 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005)

Swinburne, Algernon Charles, *Lesbia Brandon*, ed. by Randolph Hughes (London: Falcon Press, 1952)

Swinburne, Algernon Charles, *Poems & Ballads & Atalanta in Calydon*, ed. by Kenneth Haynes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2000)

Swinburne, Algernon Charles, *A Year's Letters*, ed. by Francis Jacques Sypher (London: Peter Owen, 1976)

Swinburne, Algernon Charles, *Undergraduate Papers*, ed. by Francis Jacques Sypher (Delmar, N.Y: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1974)

Wise, Thomas J., *A Bibliography of the Writings in Prose and Verse of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, vols. 1-2 (London: Richard Claus & Sons Ltd, 1919-1920. Reprinted London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1966)

Wise, T.J., *The Ashley Library* vol. 6 (London: For private circulation, 1925)

Wise, Thomas James, *A Swinburne Library* (London: For private circulation, 1925)

Other Contemporary Letters, Diaries, etc.

Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen, *My Diaries; being a personal narrative of events 1888-1914*, vols. 1-2 (London: Martin Secker, 1919)

Cline, C.L. ed., *The Letters of George Meredith*, vols. 1-3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970)

de Vane, William Clyde and Kenneth Leslie Knickerbocker, eds., *New Letters of Browning* (London: John Murray, 1951)

Fredeman, William E, ed. *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, vols. 1-8 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002-2009)

Fredeman, William E 'The Letters of Pictor Ignatus: William Bell Scott's Correspondence with Alice Boyd, 1859-1884', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 58 (1975), 66-111 and 306-352

Harrison, Anthony H. *The Letters of Christina Rossetti*, vols. 1-4 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997-2000)

Kelvin, Norman ed., *Collected Letters of William Morris*, vols. 1-4 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984-96)

Lago, Mary, ed., *Burne-Jones Talking; his conversations preserved by his studio assistant Thomas Rooke* (London: John Murray, 1982)

Matthew, H.C.G., ed., *The Gladstone Diaries with Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence* vol.13 (1892-1896) (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994)

Packer, Lona Mosk ed., *The Rossetti-Macmillan Letters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963)

Peattie, Roger W., *Selected Letters of William Michael Rossetti* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990)

Rossetti, W.M, *Rossetti Papers, 1862-1870* (London: Sands, 1903)

Rossetti, William Michael, ed. by Odette Bornand, *The Diary of W.M. Rossetti 1870-1873* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977)

Schueller, Herbert M., & Robert L. Peters., eds, *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, vols. 1-3 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967-69)

Other writings by contemporaries

Abbott, Evelyn, and Lewis Campbell, *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1897)

Adams, Henry, *The Education of Henry Adams* (London: Constable & Co., 1919)

Austin, Alfred, *The Poetry of the Period* (London: Bentley, 1870)

Buchanan, Robert, *The Fleshly School of Poetry* (London: Strahan and Co., 1872)

Burne-Jones, Georgiana, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vols. 1-2 (New York, London: The Macmillan Company, 1904)

Curwen, Henry, *A History of Booksellers* (London; Chatto and Windus, [1873])

Ellis, S.M. ed. *The Hardman papers; a further selection, 1865-1868* (London: Constable, 1930)

Forbes-Robertson, Johnston, *A Player under Three Reigns* (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1925)

Fox Bourne, H.R., *English Newspapers*, vols. 1-2 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1887)

Friswell, Hain, 'Circulating Libraries; their contents and their readers', *London Society*, 20 (1871), 515-524

Gosse, Edmund, *Critical Kit-Kats* (London: William Heinemann, 1896)

Gosse, Edmund, *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1917)

Graves, Charles L., *Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan* (London: Macmillan and Co, Limited, 1910)

Hake, Thomas and Arthur Compton-Rickett, *The Life and Letters of Theodore Watts-Dunton*, vols. 1-2 (London: T.C. and E.C. Jack Limited, 1916)

Hatton, Joseph, 'Books and Bookmakers; familiar talks with one of the great London publishers', *Washington Post*, 6 July 1884, p.1

Kernahan, Coulson, *Swinburne as I Knew Him* (London: John Lane, 1919)

Kipling, Rudyard, *Something of Myself* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

Maitland, Thomas [Robert Buchanan,] 'The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr D.G. Rossetti', *Contemporary Review*, Oct. 1871, 334-350

Minto, W., ed., *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott*, vol. 2 (London: Osgood, McIlvane & Co., 1892),

Nevill, Ralph, *London Clubs: their history & treasures* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1911)

Roberts, W., 'The First Edition Mania', *Fortnightly Review*, March 1894, 347-354

Rossetti, D.G., 'The Stealthy School of Criticism', *Athenaeum*, 16 Dec. 1871, 792-294

Saintsbury, George, *A History of Nineteenth Century Literature* (Macmillan and Co., New York and London: 1896)

[Skelton, John] *The Table Talk of Shirley* (William Blackwood and Sons: London and Edinburgh, 1895)

Tinsley, William, *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher*, vol.1 (London, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co: 1900)

Wemyss Reid, R., *The Life, Letters and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton*, vols. 1-2 (London: Cassell, 1890)

Wise, Thomas J., 'The First Edition Mania', *The Bookman*, April 1894, 17-18

Other Secondary Texts

Altick, Richard D., 'Four Victorian Poets and an Exploding Island', *Victorian Studies*, 3 (1960), 249-260

Altick, Richard, *The English Common Reader*, 2nd edn, (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1998)

Angeli, Helen Rossetti, *Pre-Raphaelite Twilight; the story of Charles Augustus Howell* (London: Richards Press, 1954)

Barker, Nicolas and John Collins, *A Sequel to An enquiry into the nature of certain nineteenth century pamphlets* (London: Scolar, 1983)

Baylen, Joseph O., 'Swinburne and the *Pall Mall Gazette*', *Research Studies*, 36 (1968), 325-334

Bell, Alan, 'Gladstone Looks for a Poet Laureate', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 July 1972, p.847

Bishop, Philip R., *Thomas Bird Mosher, Pirate Prince of Publishers* (New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 1998)

Carter, John and Graham Pollard, *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets* (London: Constable, 1934)

Clements, Patricia, *Baudelaire and the English Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)

Crook, J. Mordaunt, 'Hope, Alexander James Beresford Beresford (1820–1887).' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online edn. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 23 Jan. 2010

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13713>>

DeVane, William Clyde, *A Browning Handbook*, 2nd edn. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc, 1955)

Eliot, Simon 'Hotten: rotten: forgotten? An apologia for a general publisher', *Book History*, 3 (2000), 61-93

Eliot, Simon, "'Never Mind the Value, What about the Price?' Or, How Much Did Marmion Cost St John Rivers?", *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 56 (2001), 160-197

Eliot, Simon, 'What Price Poetry', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 100 (2006), 425-445

Eliot, Simon, 'Hotten, John Camden (1832–1873).' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online edn. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. 8 June 2010
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13859>>

Ellegard, Alvar, 'The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain: II. Directory', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 13 (1971), 20

Goodacre, Selwyn H., 'Bibliographical notes, 369: Swinburne's *Notes on Poems and Reviews* (1866)', *Book Collector* (1977), 586-587

Gray, Donald J., 'Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* and the Publication of Nineteenth-Century British Poetry,' in *Victorian Literature and Society* ed. James R. Kincaid and Albert J. Kuhn (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984), pp.74-93

Grieve, Alastair, 'Rossetti's Applied Art Designs. 2: Book Bindings', *Burlington Magazine*, 115 (1973), 79-84

Gross, John, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (London: Penguin Books, 1991)

Hagen, June, Steffensen, *Tennyson and his Publishers* (London: Macmillan, 1979)

Hamer, David, 'Morley, John, Viscount Morley of Blackburn (1838–1923).' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Online edn. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Jan. 2008. 23 Jan. 2010
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35110>>

Hampshire, Gwen, 'Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads, Second Series 1878*', *Book Collector*, 24 (1975), 236-244

Hepburn, James, *The Author's Empty Purse and the Rise of the Literary Agent* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968)

Hirst, F.W., *Early Life & Letters of John Morley*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan and Co, Limited, 1927)

Hyder, Clyde K., *Swinburne; the critical heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970)

Hyder, C.K., *Swinburne's Literary Career and Fame* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1933)

Kennedy, Edward G., *The Etched Work of Whistler* (New York: Grolier Club, 1910)

King, Jr., Roma A., *Robert Browning's Finances from His Own Account Book* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 1947), pp.16-19

Lafourcade, Georges, *La Jeunesse de Swinburne*, vols. 1-2 (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1928)

Lafourcade, Georges, *Swinburne; a literary biography* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1932)

Law, Henry William, and Irene Law, *Book of the Beresford Hopes* (London: Heath Cranton Limited, 1925)

Leary, Patrick and Andrew Nash, 'Authorship,' in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol.6. ed. by David McKitterick, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.172-213

Ledbetter, Kathryn, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007)

Livingston, Flora M., *Swinburne's Proof Sheets and American First Editions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Privately printed, 1920)

McKitterick, David ed., *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1830-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Marchand, Leslie A., *The Athenaeum; a mirror of Victorian culture* (University of North Carolina Press, 1941)

Marcus, Steven, *The Other Victorians: a study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Basic, 1966)

Maurer, Jr., Oscar. 'Anonymity vs. Signature in Victorian Reviewing', *University of Texas Studies in English*, 26 (1948), 1-27

Maurer, Oscar, 'Swinburne vs. Furnivall: a case study in Aesthetic vs. Scientific criticism', *Studies in English*, 31 (1952), pp.86-96

Mayfield, John S., 'A Swinburne Collector in Calydon', *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, 37 (1980), 25-34

Merriam, Harold G., *Edward Moxon, Publisher of Poets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939)

Metcalf, Priscilla, *James Knowles; Victorian editor and architect* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980)

Millgate, Michael, *Testamentary Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)

Monsman, Gerald C., 'Old Mortality at Oxford,' *Studies in Philology*, 67 (1970), 359-389

Mumby, F.A., *Publishing and Bookselling* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954)

Munby, A.N.L., *The Formation of the Phillips Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956)

Munby, A.N.L., ed., *Sale Catalogue of Eminent Persons, vol. 6: Poets and Men of Letters* (London: Mansell, 1972)

Murray, Christopher D., 'D.G. Rossetti, A.C. Swinburne and R.W. Buchanan: the Fleshly School revisited', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 65 (1982-1983), 206-234

Nash, Andrew (ed.), *The Culture of Collected Editions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003)

Nowell-Smith, Simon, 'Swinburne's The Queen-Mother [and] Rosamond, 1860', *Book Collector*, 13 (1964), 356-359

Paden, W.D., 'Swinburne, the Spectator in 1862 and Walter Bagehot', in *Six Studies in Nineteenth-Century English Literature and Thought*, ed. by H. Orel and G.J. Worth (Lawrence: University of Kansas Publications, 1962), pp.91-115

Paley, Morton D., 'John Camden Hotten, A.C. Swinburne and the Blake Facsimiles of 1868', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 79 (1975/1976), 273-274

Partington, Wilfred, *Thomas J. Wise in the Original Cloth* (London: Robert Hale, 1946)

Peattie, R.W., 'William Michael Rossetti and the Defence of Swinburne's Poems and Ballads', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 19 (1971), 45-54

Peattie, Roger. W., 'Swinburne and his Publishers', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 36 (1972), 45-54

Pennell, E.R. and J., *The Whistler Journal* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1921)

Plant, Marjorie, *The English Book Trade* (London; George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965)

Pope-Hennessy, James, *Monckton Milnes: the flight of youth* (London: Constable, 1951)

Preston, Claire, 'Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads, Third Series*', *Book Collector*, 31 (1982), 101-103

Prettejohn, Elizabeth, *Art for Art's Sake* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007)

Ramm, Agatha, ed., '*Beloved and darling child*': *last letters between Queen Victoria and her eldest daughter, 1886-1901* (Sutton: Stroud, 1990)

Reilly, Catherine. W, *Late Victorian Poetry 1880-1899; an annotated bibliography* (London: Mansell, 1994)

Reilly, Catherine. W, *Mid-Victorian Poetry 1860-1879; an annotated bibliography* (London: Mansell, 2000)

Rooksby, Rikky, A.C. *Swinburne: A Poet's Life* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997)

Rooksby, Rikky, 'Anthologising Algernon: the problem of Swinburne's later poetry', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 40 (1997), 299-309

Roberts, M.J.D. 'Making Victorian morals? The Society for the Suppression of Vice and its Critics, 1802-1886', *Australian Historical Studies*, 21 (1984), 153-173

Roberts, M.J.D., 'Morals, Art and the Law: the passing of the Obscene Publications Act, 1857', *Victorian Studies*, 28 (1984-1985), 609-629

Robinson, James K., 'Austin Dobson and the Rondeliers', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 14 (1953), 31-42

Robinson, James K., 'A Neglected Phase of the Aesthetic Movement: English Parnassianism', *PMLA*, 68 (1953), 733-754

Seville, Catherine, 'Copyright', in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1830-1914*, ed. David McKitterick, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.214-225

Shattock, Joanne, 'Spreading it thinly', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 9 (1976) 84-87

Small, Helen, 'Liberal editing in the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Nineteenth Century*', *Publishing History*, 53 (2003), 75-96

Sutherland, John, '*Cornhill's* Sales and Payments: the first decade', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 19 (1986), 106-107

Tener, Robert H., 'R.H. Hutton: some attributions', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 20 (1973), 1-65

Thomas, D.A, *A Long Time Burning: the history of literary censorship in England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969)

Walder, Anne, *Swinburne's Flowers of Evil: Baudelaire's Influence on Poems and Ballads First Series* (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 1976)

Warrington, Bernard, 'William Pickering', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* vol.106 (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1991)

Weedon, Alexis, *Victorian Publishing* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003)

Williamson, G.C., *Behind my Library Door* (London: Selwyn & Blount, Ltd, 1921)

Winship, Michael, *American Literary Publishing in the Mid-Nineteenth Century; the business of Ticknor and Fields* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
