Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909)

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Swinburne was a poet

Swinburne published about:

- 500 poems
- 10 plays (“Tragedies”)
- and many books and essays about literature and art.
Portraits of Swinburne

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Swinburne was English

Growing up, Swinburne lived both in Northumberland in the very north of England, near Scotland, and in the very south of England, on a smaller island, the Isle of Wight.

The culture and history and landscape of the English-Scottish border and the sea became enduring topics in Swinburne's poetry.
Swinburne was a Londoner.

As an adult, Swinburne lived in and near London, the largest city and capital of England and Great Britain.
What did Swinburne write about?

Greek mythology
What did Swinburne write about?

*Arthurian Legend*
What did Swinburne write about?

Books
The half-brained creature 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 know that books are to poets as much part of that life as pictures are to painters or as music is to musicians, dead matter though they may be to the spiritually still-born children of dirt and dullness who find it possible and natural to live while dead in heart and brain. Marlowe and Shakespeare, Aeschylus and Sappho, do not for us live only on the dusty shelves of libraries. (xxi)
What did Swinburne write about?

*Paintings & Statues*
Face fallen and white throat lifted,
   With sleepless eye
She sees old loves that drifted,
   She knew not why,
Old loves and faded fears
Float down a stream that hears
   The flowing of all men's tears beneath the sky.
What did Swinburne write about?
people (friends, authors, artists, heroes)

But we, our master, we
Whose hearts, uplift to thee,
Ache with the pulse of thy remembered song

Victor Hugo

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What did Swinburne write about?

*Places*
Sark, fairer than aught in the world that the lit skies cover,
Laughs inly behind her cliffs, and the seafarers mark
As a shrine where the sunlight serves, though the blown clouds hover,
Sark.

We mourn, for love of a song that outsang the lark,
That nought so lovely beholden of Sirmio's lover
Made glad in Propontis the flight of his Pontic bark.

Here earth lies lordly, triumphal as heaven is above her,
And splendid and strange as the sea that upbears as an ark,
As a sign for the rapture of storm-spent eyes to discover,
Sark.
What did Swinburne write about? babies
Baby, baby dear,
Earth and heaven are near
Now, for heaven is here.

Heaven is every place
Where your flower-sweet face
Fills our eyes with grace.

Till your own eyes deign
Earth a glance again,
Earth and heaven are twain.

Now your sleep is done,
Shine, and show the sun
Earth and heaven are one.
Swinburne’s Life

- 1837: Born on April 5.
- 1856-59: Attends Balliol College at the University of Oxford, meets Pre-Raphaelite painters and poets.
- 1866: Publishes Poems and Ballads, his most famous work.
- 1909: On April 10, dies of pneumonia.
Swinburne’s Grave

on the Isle of Wight
The Algernon Charles Swinburne Project

production version:
http://www.swinburneproject.org/

development version:
http://webapp-devel.dlib.indiana.edu/swinburne/

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