

THE PORTAL

News from the Armstrong Browning Library

*"A wondrous
portal opened
wide..."*

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Browning Day 2012: Celebrating a Bicentennial

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*I believe, with
Goethe, that life is
rich and beautiful
in proportion to
the way we fill it
with things rich
and beautiful to
remember.*

—A.J. Armstrong

Browning Day 2012 was a wonderful success. May 7 was significant as it marked the bi-centennial anniversary of Robert Browning's birthday. This year also celebrates the centennial of Dr. A.J. Armstrong's arrival at Baylor University. Several events throughout the rest of the year will mark these special occasions, most notably, the international conference, on November 1-3, 2012.

An entertaining musical program was led by Carlos Colón, Resident Fellow at Baylor University's Institute for the Studies of Religion and Artist-in-Residence at the Armstrong Browning Library. Glenn Beals, Baylor alumnus and Waco resident, sang an early 20th-century song medley. These songs were inspired by the love letters between Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett.

The program also included a lively instrumental performance conducted by Blake Clark, the winner of the 2012 Browning Composition Competition. The inspiration for the piece was Robert Browning's "The Pied Piper of Hamelin." It was scored for the piano, flute, cello, and clarinet and performed by a student ensemble from the Baylor School of Music. Clark is a sophomore music composition major at the Baylor School of Music and a member of the A Cappella Choir.

Dr. Sandra Donaldson, a distinguished scholar and general editor of *The Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, delivered the Browning Day lecture, entitled "The Personal, the Political, and the Poetical: Four Poems by Elizabeth Barrett Browning."

Although Elizabeth Barrett Browning is generally most famous for her cycle of love sonnets, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, Donaldson chose to present Elizabeth's expertise from a different perspective. The four poems introduced in her address concern social issues. Donaldson presented a glimpse into the "two very powerful forces, the intellect and the affections" that shaped all of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poetry and particularly these four poems. Her address focused on personal anecdotes, political motivations, and poetical allusions relating to each of the poems.

In discussing the first poem, "The Cry of the Children," Donaldson related Barrett Browning's personal connection to R.H. Horne, whose interviews brought to light the condition of children working in mines and factories. She also explained the influence the poem may have had in bringing about changes in the laws relating to child labor. In addition to the personal and political aspects of the poem, Donaldson pointed out its poetical accomplishments, including

the resonance with William Blake's poems on the same subject.

The second poem, "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," is also a poem of protest, this time against slavery in the United States. Donaldson made the poem memorable through her explanation of the Barrett family's land holdings in Jamaica. Also of interest was Donaldson's comparison of this later poem with Barrett Browning's earlier poems of similar subject matter. Donaldson carefully attended to the poetical structure of the poem, which was again reminiscent of Blake.

Donaldson made the third poem, "Fragment of 'An Essay on Woman,'" modeled on Pope's "Essay On" poems, come alive through her relation of anecdotes of Barrett Browning's childhood and youth, revealed through letters from her mother.

The final poem, "The Forced Recruit," addresses the social injustice of military impressment in Italy. Donaldson's explanation of the Brownings' participation in Italian literary and political communities, newspaper and journal articles describing the event of the poem, and the stories connecting the event with the establishment of the Red Cross added to an informed understanding of the poem.

Donaldson's detailed familiarity with the poetry, political situations, and personal stories of Elizabeth and Robert Browning are evident in her intimate glimpses into these four lesser known poems that combine intellect and affections and reveal Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "enthusiasm of the understanding." The lecture was followed by a reception in the Martin Entrance Foyer.



Dr. Sandra Donaldson delivering the 2012 Browning Day lecture, "The Personal, the Political, and the Poetical: Four Poems by Elizabeth Barrett Browning."



A Word from the Director

Thank you to our faithful Guardian Angels for supporting the Armstrong Browning Library, and thank you for your generous help in making 2012 a special time of celebration. What better year to complete Dr. Armstrong's dream of a "Garden of Contentment" than this centennial year of his arrival at Baylor University. And, for his centennial celebration to fall on the same year as the bi-centennial of Robert Browning's birth is a very happy coincidence.

Several people have stepped up to fulfill Dr. Armstrong's dream of "an outstandingly lovely portion for the grounds." The garden will enhance the Waco Hall side of the Library and provide a plaza for outdoor entertainment and fellowship. A generous supporter has made the major gift for the project, two other families have provided funds to help finish the project and enhance the garden with a water feature, others have committed to underwrite twelve benches for the area, and other Guardian Angel donors have made gifts that will help protect the beautiful oak trees and add other furnishings to the area.

The garden will include brick sidewalks, crushed granite paths, lush greenery, comfortable seating areas soothed by the sound of a bubbling fountain, and beautifully lit trees in the evening. Construction will start this summer and plans are under way for a fall dedication. Having this large well-planned "Garden of Contentment" on the grounds of the Armstrong Browning

Library will provide a gathering space like none other on the Baylor campus. Dr. & Mrs. Armstrong envisioned and achieved a beautiful building for Baylor University that serves as a world renowned nineteenth-century research center; now the grounds will share in their vision of splendor and grace.

Rita S. Patteson
Director

Dr. Kirstie Blair joins Baylor University's Armstrong Browning Library as the Margaret Root Brown Chair in Robert Browning and Victorian Studies

It is a pleasure to announce the appointment of Dr. Kirstie Blair as the holder of the Margaret Root Brown Chair in Robert Browning and Victorian Studies during the year of 2012. For the first half of the year, Dr. Blair remained in residence at the University of Glasgow while she planned and coordinated an international conference to be held at the Armstrong Browning Library on 1-3 November 2012. She and her family (Matthew, Fergus, and Elsa) arrived in Waco on July 2 to complete her six-month appointment and to work with ABL faculty and staff, Dean Pattie Orr, and members of several Baylor departments. During her stay, she will concentrate on scholarly research and publishing related to ABL's Browning focus, teach the undergraduate Robert Browning course at Baylor in the fall, promote interest in research related to the Library's holdings, and participate in a variety of ABL activities. Her first association with the Library was in August 2009 when she was awarded a Visiting Fellowship.

Having previously taught at Keble College and St. Peter's College, Oxford, Dr. Blair joined the University of Glasgow as a Lecturer in English Literature in January 2005, where she was recently promoted to Senior Lecturer. Her primary research interests lie in Victorian literature, particularly poetry and poetic form, working-class poetry and poetics, literature and

medicine, and literature and religion. Dr. Blair speaks regularly at faculty seminars and conferences and has a real interest in supervising postgraduate students, especially those in the fields of poetry and/or religion. Her first monograph, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart*, appeared in 2006 from Oxford University Press. She has a new book, *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion* (Oxford University Press, May 2012); is an Associate Editor of *The Year's Work in English Studies*; and is also a Section Editor (Victorian literature) for *Literature Compass*.

We extend a true Texas and Baylor welcome to Dr. Blair and her family.



ACQUISITIONS SPOTLIGHT

The Adams Family: An Acquisition Coincidence

"I love it when a plan comes together!" Perhaps you will remember this phrase, as it was often quoted by John "Hannibal" Smith (George Peppard) in the 1980's television series "The A-Team." That same feeling takes place at the Armstrong Browning Library when acquisition items happen to complement each other in the most remarkable way.

After being on the trail of a particular two-volume set of Robert Browning's works since July 2010, Curator of Books and Printed Materials Cynthia Burgess was successful in adding the 1887 Riverside edition of Robert Browning's poetry in April 2012. The attraction of these volumes lay in the bookplates attached to the inside front covers and the original letter contained in the first volume. In the letter, dated 10 April 1911 on Washington, British Embassy letterhead, Viscount James Bryce (1838 – 1922), a British historian, statesman, and diplomat, thanks Charles Francis Adams Jr. (1835 – 1915), grandson of John Quincy Adams (6th president of the United States) and great-grandson of John Adams (2nd president), for introducing him to the poetry of Browning. This reference to Robert Browning qualifies the letter for inclusion in the Supporting Documents section of *The Brownings: A Research Guide*, and the bookplates qualify the volumes for listing in the Association Volumes section of the *Guide*. Adams is known for his service as a colonel in the Union Army during the American Civil War, as a railroad regulator and executive of the Union Pacific Railroad, an author of historical works, and as a member of the Massachusetts Park Commission. Bryce and Adams corresponded from 1888 to 1915. Much of their correspondence is at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Coincidentally, in March 2012, three carte-de-visite photographs, all annotated by Robert Browning, were purchased by Curator of Manuscripts Rita Patteson. The coincidence? Along with a signed likeness of Robert Browning, and one of Robert Lowe (1811 – 1892, British and Australian statesman under Gladstone), there was one of Charles Francis Adams, Sr. (1807 – 1886), father of Charles, Jr. and son of John Quincy Adams. On the verso of



the photograph, Browning identified him simply as Mr. Adams. Charles, Sr. served as Ambassador to Great Britain from 1861 to 1868, and it was during those years that Browning became acquainted with the prominent Adams family. Correspondence between Browning and Henry Adams (brother of Charles, Jr.) and Abigail Brooks Adams (mother of Charles, Jr. and wife of Charles, Sr.) was especially prevalent during this period, as noted in the *Guide*.

The bookplates in the volumes are described as being "From the Library of the John Quincy Adams Family" and were devised and first used by John Quincy Adams, using symbols representing his family's history and a motto from Tacitus, *Fidem libertatem amicitiam retinebis* (Keep faith, liberty, friendship).

Naturally, there are many items in the Armstrong Browning Library collections that complement each other, but it is a bit unusual to acquire items so relevant to each other in such a short span of time. To repeat: "I love it when a plan comes together!"

Save the Dates

September 20: The Institute for Studies of Religion presents: "The Cross and the Book: Sacred and Secular in the Age of Browning." This symposium on Victorian faith and doubt will be located at the ABL. It will feature lectures by Timothy Larsen (Wheaton College) and Philip Jenkins. For more information, please visit www.baylorisr.org.

October 12-13: Parent & Family Weekend. A tradition at Baylor since 1960, Parent & Family Weekend strives to help families of Baylor students become better acquainted with the University and spend time with their children. For more information, please contact the Baylor Chamber of Commerce at (254)710-3322.

November 1-3: Robert Browning and Victorian Poetry at 200. An international conference to celebrate Robert Browning's bicentenary in 2012. The conference will focus on Browning's importance within the broader field of Victorian poetry and poetics, and within Victorian studies more generally. For more information, please visit our website.

November 3: Baylor Homecoming at the ABL. Open house with refreshments, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Tours of the newly installed Garden of Contentment provided.

For more information and updates, please visit www.baylor.edu/lib/abl or contact Christi Klempnauer at (254) 710-4968.



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ARMSTRONG BROWNING LIBRARY
One Bear Place #97152 Waco, TX 76798-7152

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Phone: (254) 710-3566 Fax: (254) 710-3552
Web site: www.baylor.edu/lib/abl

Number 60 Summer 2012

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Please Recycle

Help Finish A Dream!

Soon after the construction of the Armstrong Browning Library, Dr. A. J. Armstrong lamented in a letter written in July 1952: “[A]fter dedicating the Library in a blaze of glory we [realized] we had practically not a penny left for landscaping....” Dr. Armstrong envisioned an area he described as “an outstandingly lovely portion planned for the grounds... to include beautifully designed benches where people can sit and meditate and absorb the beauty of the garden.”

Several individuals have come forward to help make this dream a reality, but opportunities are still available to provide teak table and chair sets, illuminate the majestic oak trees, endow the continued beauty and maintenance of the garden, and assist with other enhancements for the grounds. We invite you to participate in the completion of the “Garden of Contentment” by making a tax-deductible donation to Baylor University in honor or in memory of a loved one and becoming a Guardian Angel of the Armstrong Browning Library.

For further information, please contact Rita S. Patteson, Director (rita_patteson@baylor.edu; 254 710-4967).

Gifts may be made online at www.baylor.edu/give, designated to the Armstrong Browning Library Guardian Angel Fund. Make checks payable to Baylor University, indicating “Guardian Angel Fund” and the specific purpose on the note line, and mail to Christi Klempnauer, Armstrong Browning Library, One Bear Place #97152, Waco, TX 76798-7152.



Original Inspiration: Architectural design, ca. 1951, submitted by Lambert's Landscape Company, Dallas.