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Terry L. Meyers
William & Mary, tlmeye@wm.edu

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Let me thank John for his kind words and say how pleased I am to be here at this wonderful exhibition of materials from Edith and John Mayfield's magnificent gift to Georgetown University and indeed to the world. It seems to me an incredibly brief time since I was here for the first time to speak to the Friends of the Library, also on the occasion of an exhibition featuring some of the wonderful materials John and Edith collected. But when I look at the calendar I see it has been 29 years. And it's even been almost two decades since I came and worked after John's death in 1983 to gather the manuscript and scholarly materials that so enriched my recent publication of Swinburne's correspondence. I mention that because John was a meticulous scholar as well as a tireless collector, and for the letters that he and Edith collected his researches and his notes were invaluable to me as an editor. I've tried in my three volumes to acknowledge clearly in my footnotes the debts that I owed to John—and the reader of those notes will not but be impressed at John's wide-ranging and deep scholarship. As his amassing 101 copies of Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon suggests, John was an indefatigable scholar, obsessed, relentless, unceasing. He would go to any lengths to track down Swinburneiana. He commissioned me once to go to Swinburne's pub in Wimbledon, The Rose and Crown, and, in an effort to discover a date, to ask the barman to remove from its frame a Johnnie Walker advertisement that featured the ghost of Swinburne. The barman refused and John went to his grave disappointed with me I am sure. He told me once that in trying to find out more about a pornographic novel ascribed to Swinburne, Flossie, A Venus of Fifteen, he'd met with a publisher of a modern edition, only to retreat in haste as he began to suspect his lunch companion was an active member of a criminal gang active in Baltimore. Such are the dangers of scholarship.

But the debt I owe to John and also Edith is a debt too of a larger sort, an inspiration that came from seeing in them both a shared delight, a shared exuberance, in

not just the process of finding and acquiring the treasures they did but also inthe pleasure they took in sharing their collection, in making it available to scholars who could benefit from it and who could help broadcast the significance of what they'd discovered. They were both utterly selfless in their generosity as they shared their collection even with someone as young as I was when I first met them. And their generosity now continues with the support of Georgetown University as their collection has been fully catalogued and is now open to those who, though they will not have known the Mayfields, will nevertheless have occasion to thank them for the illuminations they have made possible in so many areas of their collecting.

But I owe other debts to Georgetown too and I want to single out especially my deep gratitude to Nicholas Scheetz for his support and encouragement over the years. I was deeply distressed to learn that Nick would not be able to be here this evening, an evening that he was responsible in the first instance for setting up. Nick was a favorite of John and Edith Mayfield and no wonder, for he shares with them the same mania for collection development, the same deep and wide curiosity, and the same generosity of spirit that drives his determination to enlarge the collections of the library here and to make those collections available in the widest possible way. Nick is the very epitome of so many of the professional librarians I've met over the years whose dedication, determination, and knowledge are the bedrock of scholarship—without Nick and his fellows, little could be done, and I mean that seriously.

This year, 2009, is of course the centenary of the death of Algernon Charles Swinburne, that bad boy of Victorian poetry, that extraordinary writer who outraged so many of his contemporary readers—and later readers too, I might add—with his strongly anti-theistic poetry, with his radical republicanism in a monarchical culture, and with his melodic and entrancing siren song of sexually outrageous poetry. This evening I'd like to talk about Swinburne's funeral in April 1909 on the Isle of Wight, an event that closed his life with the kind of public controversy that I think he might have been delighted by.

But I want to approach that funeral through a consideration of Swinburne's relations with his elder contemporary, the Victorian poet laureate, Alfred, Lord Tennyon on the grounds that this year is also the bicentenary of Tennyson's birth in 1809 and on the grounds that the relationship between the two men can be linked through one of the

Swinburne letters John Mayfield collected and annotated, a letter by Swinburne in 1892 declining to attend Tennyson's funeral even after he'd sent Tennyson's widow a gracious letter of condolences. Within this story of two funerals there lies a story of profound religious disagreement.

The relations between these two poets were not always easy ones, though usually cordial in tone, at least in public, as befits two gentlemen. I want to talk for a bit about what Swinburne and Tennyson said about each other in private. As it turns out what divided them in powerful ways was a funereal subject, how to regard death and how to regard love in a world so apparently dominated by death.

When Tennyson died in October 1892, Swinburne wrote Tennyson's widow a letter of condolences to which Lady Tennyson replied with graciousness. She wrote to Swinburne that Tennyson had "highly esteemed your great gifts" and she wrote further in carefully nuanced words her hope that Swinburne's gifts "may for many years to come be a blessing to the world and to yourself in that they are so." She added too a personal note, that Tennyson "always had a very pleasant recollection of his brief acquaintance with your Father and Mother."

This note recalls several things worth mentioning. The first is a recollection of the two poets' personal relations that dated back to Swinburne's youth, when he was growing up on the Isle of Wight and Tennyson lived not far away. It is an anecdote that is well known, but one that is not generally understood properly.

Swinburne rode from Bonchurch to Farringford one day, January 12, 1858, and called on Tennyson. Tennyson recorded that "young Swinburne called here the other day with a college friend of his and we asked him to dinner and I thought him a very modest and intelligent young fellow." Tennyson mentions reading from "Maud" for Swinburne, and then makes a comment often quoted with glee: "but what I particularly admired in him was that he did not press upon me any verses of his own."

This is a wonderful story, and I hate to deflate it, but although it seems to be a slightly acerbic judgment by Tennyson on Swinburne's early poetry, it is not. It is rather a comment by Tennyson at his relief that a visitor, any visitor would have the graciousness not to push on him verses that in most instances would better never have

been written. Admirers of Tennyson sought him out at his home and at times seemed to lay siege to him. And Tennyson did all he could to avoid the versifiers who would press on him their latest effusions. In other words, in this instance Tennyson was not so much making a critical judgment about Swinburne's poetry (it's unlikely he would have known any of it in any case)—he was simply expressing his relief that the call was a social one, not a professional one.

But that is not to say that Tennyson didn't harbor the most serious reservations about Swinburne's poetry. Lady Tennyson's careful wording of her hope that Swinburne's gifts would be "for many years to come … a blessing to the world and to yourself in that they are so" hints, I think, at Tennyson's deep sense of poetic vocation and bardic responsibility, his belief that poetry should make for the Good and encourage the people of an age towards the Better and the Higher. He had a strong sense that the poet himself is blessed in that he brings to the world that sense of moral purpose, but it was beyond a blessing, it was a heavy responsibility that a poet needed to live up to. Even in Tennyson's delicately worded letter of thanks for a copy in 1865 of Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon one can see his thinking that Swinburne was going astray. Swinburne's play is strongly anti-theistic, and one of the choruses thunders to a close with a denunciation of "the Supreme Evil, God." This was a line that Christina Rossetti could not bear to read—she pasted over it a small strip of paper. And it's among the lines that Tennyson gently condemned in writing Swinburne that he "had some strong objections to parts of … [Atalanta in Calydon], but these I think have been modified by a re-perusal, and at any rate I daresay you would not care to hear them; here however is one. Is it fair for a Greek chorus to abuse the Deity something in the style of the Hebrew prophets."

One of the powerful images in "In Memoriam" which brings to light Tennyson's idea that the poet should bring to his work a moral direction is in a section where Tennyson is contemplating the whole of God's wonderful creation and draws an analogy between, on the one hand, God as creator, in effect, as artist to the great poem that constitutes the created universe and, on the other hand, the Victorian poet, himself, who is charged with the creation of a beautiful work, but also, and this is important, a beautiful work that carries and reveals a moral meaning. Tennyson elaborates this in

Section 34 where he suggests that the creation does have and indeed must have a moral plan if God is a responsible artist, that that plan must include immortal life for each of us, and that without immortality one might as not continue to live at all. He mentions the "fantastic beauty" of the earth and the sun, but in the sense of their being phantasms, not real, if there is no God/artist behind their creation.

Tennyson writes:

> **[A.]** My own dim life should teach me this,
> That life shall live for evermore,
> Else earth is darkness at the core,
> And dust and ashes all that is;
>
> This round of green, this orb of flame,
> Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
> In some wild Poet, when he works
> Without a conscience or an aim.
>
> What then were God to such as I?
> 'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
> Of things all mortal, or to use
> A little patience ere I die;
>
> 'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
> Like birds the charming serpent draws,
> To drop head-foremost in the jaws
> Of vacant darkness and to cease.

Now Swinburne's attitude was different. He was schooled among the Pre-Raphaelites who took as their mission resistance to convention and a speaking of truth, the depiction of what they saw with their own eyes, undistorted by popular fancy or delusion. And Swinburne was in many ways the chief proponent in England of Art for Art's sake, a theme he echoed and elaborated from a number of authors, not least Edgar Allen Poe in America, and Charles Baudelaire in France. He resisted the notion that poetry should be a handmaiden to religion or morality. Tennyson had been receptive, of course, to this amoral approach to art, and even tempted sorely by it. As you read such of his early poems as "The Palace of Art," "The Lotus Eaters," or "The Lady of Shallot," you can see vividly his temptation, but also his resistance to temptation and his resolute move away from a poetic art that avoids or resists a moral drift or direction in favor of pure beauty.

One measure of his attraction is that even in 1886 when an American reporter visited him at Farringford and asked him about possibly visiting America, he admitted that he had once thought of doing so, but was put off by "Dickens' first visit—the receptions, dinners, handshakings." But he admitted that there was one place in America that even in 1886 he was interested in visiting, what he called "hallowed ground, a pilgrim shrine, a Mecca of the mind." That place was the grave in Baltimore of Edgar Allen Poe. Poe, he said, was "the literary glory of America," a poet he admired as being unusually "susceptible to the impression of beauty," as having "all the Greeks' appreciation of beauty and much of their power in expressing it." I mention this because it documents a powerful appeal that I think existed in Tennyson well beyond his earliest poems, the appeal of mere beauty, though clearly Tennyson struggled to discipline that appeal.

I won't develop this disagreement about art for art's sake as far as I could, but many of you probably know Tennyson's squib denouncing Swinburne and others who held to the doctrine of Art for Art's sake, a squib Tennyson didn't publish, but which appeared not long after his death in the Memoir published by his son, Hallam Tennyson:

> **[B]** 'Art for art's sake!' Hail, truest Lord of hell!
> Hail, genius! Master of the moral will!
> 'The filthiest of all paintings painted well,
> Is mightier than the purest painted ill!'
> Yes. Mightier than the purest painted well,
> So prone are we towards the broad road to hell.

Swinburne never published his reply to this, but he denounced it about 1904 or 1905 in an essay called "Changes of Aspect"; he was not kind to Tennyson, saying in effect that actually Tennyson himself was at his best when he put his art first and his morality second. Swinburne put it rather rudely:

> **[C.]** …whenever Tennyson himself was not serving this lord of hell, the law which compels every artist to do his very best in his own line and not allow the very noblest intention or instinct or emotion to deflect or distort or pervert his hand, he driveled: he driveled as pitifully as in this idiotic eructation of doggerel. (New Writings, p. 68)

Several other private comments, unpublished during either poet's lifetime help set the continuing tension between the two. For example, Swinburne at Oxford about 1871 spoke informally to W. H. Mallock and a group of undergraduates. He said something admiring of Tennyson first, according to Mallock: **[D.]** "The most beautiful lines that Tennyson ever wrote." he exclaimed. "were these from Maud, 'And like silent lightning under the stars / She seemed to divide in a dream from a band of the blest.'" That's sincere praise from Swinburne, and the lines are lovely, with assonance and alliteration that are powerful and of the sort that Swinburne, of course, would admire. Yet after those admiring words comes a sting: "Yes," he went on, "and what did the dream Maud tell her lover when she had got him--That the salvation of the world depended on the Crimean War and the prosecution of Lord Palmerston's policy."

Or consider Swinburne's marginal comment in Hallam Tennyson's 2 volume 1897 memoir of his father *[on offer from Ximenes, Cat. 82]*. According to a bookseller's description of these volumes, Swinburne marked passages a number of times with usually "a single word or phrase, usually sardonic if not sarcastic." One comment is especially interesting for it is a comment on a slightly sardonic comment by Tennyson on…. Swinburne. Hallam printed his father's letter of Nov. 13 1872 to W. C. Bennet in which Tennyson thanks Bennet for a flattering poem about him and says he wishes he [E.] "had something of what Master Swinburne calls 'the Divine arrogance of genius,' that I might take it into my system and rejoice abundantly," but, he says modestly, instead he feels, quoting Marvell, that he will like "most of us[,] be left and swallowed up" in the "Deserts of vast eternity.

Tennyson's comment is a modest and self-deprecating one, but Swinburne apparently thought little of the laureate's modesty. He has put a question mark beside the comment and turns it in a rather nasty way, saying that instead of this "arrogance of genius," this self-confidence that Swinburne admired in poets, "No. He [Tennyson] had the cowardly self-conceit which shudders and quivers and cringes and pretends not to believe in itself. Pah!"

These are not pleasant comments, but they suggest the depth of disagreement between Swinburne's understanding not just of poetry, but of the world, for the two poets held starkly different views. On this evening of funereal themes, let me take a more

sustained look at one area of disagreement—love and the survival of love beyond the grave. Tennyson's greatest poem, I think, is "In Memoriam," one of the most powerful and moving love poems in the language and a poem that affirms both individual immortality and enduring, eternal, and reciprocated love. It is a poem of extraordinary emotional power. In teaching it to my students, I frequently find myself with a tingling spine and can feel emotion welling up within my breast. It even happened once that I was so moved that I broke down and simply began to sob. It is a poem that Queen Victoria, that super-heroine of mourning, was especially fond of, but "In Memoriam" drew from Tennyson's peers, from other Victorian poets, a number of skeptical responses. I have in mind Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sonnet sequence "The House of Life" as well as his short but damning lyric "The Woodspurge"; I would include Thomas Hardy here too as a late Pre-Raphaelite and cite his also short but equally damning lyric, "Hap." Swinburne struggled against "In Memoriam" as well—his elegy on the death of Baudelaire, "Ave atque Vale," is infused with images and phrases from "In Memoriam" and is constructed to eviscerate Tennyson's optimism about the immortal survival of the individual soul. Let me quote several sections of "In Memoriam" and then two verses from Swinburne that demonstrate Swinburne's Pre-Raphaelite firmness in speaking truth even to cultural, literary, and religious power.

"In Memoriam" is so rich in affirmations of love and the survival of the immortal soul that I choose with difficulty, but let me cite two Sections. Section 126 affirms the centrality of love:

> **[F.]** Love is and was my Lord and King,
> And in his presence I attend
> To hear the tidings of my friend,
> Which every hour his couriers bring.
>
> Love is and was my King and Lord,
> And will be, tho' as yet I keep
> Within his court on earth, and sleep
> Encompass'd by his faithful guard,
>
> And hear at times a sentinel
> Who moves about from place to place,
> And whispers to the worlds of space,
> In the deep night, that 'all is well.'

And lines from Section 47 affirm Arthur Henry Hallam's personal survival in an identifiable and bounded form in the afterlife:

> That each, who seems a separate whole,
> Should move his rounds, and fusing all
> The skirts of self again, should fall
> Remerging in the general Soul,
>
> Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
> Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside;
> And I shall know him when we meet:
>
> And we shall sit at endless feast,
> Enjoying each the other's good:
> What vaster dream can hit the mood
> Of Love on earth?

These affirmations are central to Tennyson--they form the absolute core of his beliefs. But they are ones that Swinburne utterly disdains as illusion and delusion. On love, for example, consider Swinburne's "A Forsaken Garden," a description of a garden that he locates on the Isle of Wight, whether for his own personal associations or for its provocative affront to Tennyson, who, as I mentioned, lived there too, I cannot decide. Anyway, here is Swinburne on two lovers and their asseverations of eternal and undying love and on what Swinburne thinks the results would be in two diametrically opposed lives. He describes these lovers as having existed a hundred years before and as having visited what is now an abandoned garden at a time when it was lovely and alive:

> **[G.]** Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
> Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
> Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
> Years ago.

The first possibility is that their declared love was just a temporary infatuation:

> Heart handfast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"
> (Did he whisper?) "look forth from the flowers to the sea,
> For the foam-flowers endure while the rose-blossoms wither,
> And men that love lightly may die--but we?"
> And the same wind sang and the same wave whitened
> And forever the garden's last petals were shed;
> In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
> Love was dead.

The second possibility is that their love in fact endured through life, but the result ultimately was still a love that ended with life.

> Or they loved their life through--and then went whither?
> And were one to the end--but what end who knows?
> Love as deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
> As the rose-red seaweed mocks the rose.
> Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
> What love was ever as deep as the grave?
> They are loveless now as the grass above them
> Or the wave.

In both cases, the results are the same utter annihilation of the lovers and, we can anticipate, of we who also experience life and love.

> All are at one now, roses and lovers,
> Not known of the cliffs or the fields or the sea;
> Not a breath of the time that has been hovers
> In the air now soft with a summer to be.
> Not a breath shall sweeten the seasons hereafter
> Of flowers or of lovers that laugh now or weep,
> When as they who are free now of weeping and laughter
> We shall sleep.

Needless to say, there is little consolation here; love does not endure. And, of course, human souls do not endure either. For Tennyson that each of us being a bounded and defined entity eternally recognizable is central. It is no accident that in the closing lines of "In Memoriam" he conceptualizes the coming into being of a human soul in terms of a defined form. At the moment of conception, he stresses, a human child takes on defined form: **[H.]** "A soul shall draw from out the vast / And strike his being into bounds." It is that boundedness that lets Tennyson affirm his reunion with Arthur Henry Hallam in the afterlife. But when Swinburne contemplates the afterlife, he stresses not survival, not persistence of being and persistence of form, but actual and literal dissolution, that vague and unsweet state that Tennyson could not abide. For Swinburne, when we die, we find, gratefully, utter oblivion, utter nothingness—we are wholly dissolved, and lose all being., as his image of a river arriving at the sea describes:

> From too much love of living,
>
> From hope and fear set free,

We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

85

I want now to bring this discussion of differences in vision between Swinburne and Tennyson to a close as I move on from the metaphorically funereal to the literal funeral. So let me cite one more private comment, an exceptionally telling one by Tennyson about Swinburne, a comment recorded by Emily Tennyson in her Journal for 1871, only five years after Swinburne's notorious volume Poems and Ballads had appeared to widespread moral condemnation. (The volume was obnoxious enough that at Cambridge students debated whether it should be added to the Union library or not). Anyway, listen to Alfred's judgment as mediated by Emily:

> **[I.]** 26 February 1871. I go with A[lfred]. into Maiden's Croft *[Tennyson's little summer office]*. He talks despondingly of Swinburne's book and of the tone of literature in his set as he does now from time to time foreseeing the fiercest battle the world has yet known between good and evil, faith and unfaith.

These are strong words, "the fiercest battle the world has yet known between good and evil, faith and unfaith"—they are words that point towards the culture wars that America, at least, is still in many ways embroiled in. And they are words that I use to move forward in my talk this afternoon for this theme of "unfaith" grows deeply out of the very being of Swinburne. It marks a deep-seated anti-theism and a ravening skepticism of any life beyond the one we know now and here. And it is this unfaith that is manifest in Swinburne's funeral and in the controversy that it led to.

Swinburne's funeral is an occasion that has been discussed before, in an article in 1974 by a Canadian scholar, Roger Peattie, and in modern biographies, especially in the

best and most recent of Swinburne's biographies, by Rikky Rooksby. What I offer this evening is an account of the fractious occasion that draws more extensively than has ever been done from a number of documents and photographs that as far as I know have never been brought together. I should express my gratitude to Rikky Rooksby for his generosity—we both discovered several years ago that we were each about to write about Swinburne's funeral, each with a collection of photographs and newspaper clippings we had individually formed, and Rikky very kindly withdrew and left the field to me, even going so far as to send me copies of the material in his collection, some of which I did not have.

Let me first of all draw your attention to the Handout and to the pictures there. These will gain in context as I talk, but having them in mind as I do may help us see the drama of the situation.

[The photograph of Swinburne's coffin being carried from The Pines would have been taken shortly after 7 a.m. on the day of the funeral, 15 April 1909; the gentleman leading the way was presumably the undertaker, Mr. Haslett of Wandsworth]

The standard account of Swinburne's funeral is easily accessible in Cecil Y. Lang's edition of Swinbune's letters, at the very end of volume 6. I won't rehearse that account—it comes from several articles drawn from The Times—since what I'm interested in is what has not generally been known even to Swinburne scholars.

Let me just start by noting the situation poor Theodore Watts-Dunton found himself in when Swinburne died. Watts-Dunton, of course, was the solicitor and friend who saved Swinburne's life in 1879, by almost literally kidnapping him and moving him forcibly to the suburban scene of Putney. Swinburne had lived a life of dissipation in drink and otherwise throughout the 1860's and 1870's and there's little doubt he would have died if Watt-Dunton hadn't dried him out and overseen him domestically for the rest of his life. Swinburne's life settled down considerably at The Pines, Putney, and though I think he had a more vigorous social and intellectual life than many biographers allow and though some of his later poetry is beginning to attract critical interest, it is true that his later life was a more mundane one. Each day, for example, he walked regularly across

Wimbledon Common to a pub, The Rose and Crown, where he enjoyed one drink, one bottle of Bass Ale. That pub, by the way, still preserves Swinburne's chair and will display it if you ask.

When Swinburne died, April 10, 1909, Watts-Dunton was himself ill with influenza (so ill he could not even attend the funeral itself on April 15). But he rose to his duty on April 14 and wrote a distressed and distressing letter to Swinburne's surviving sister, Isabel. He informed her that "the Church of England Burial Service cannot be read over Algernon's grave" and went on, "there is no hope for it" as he sketched out his intentions for the funeral, with Swinburne's coffin to be transported directly from Ventnor Station "strait to the grave." Though he allowed Isabel to contemplate "some other plan" if she or a "good Clergyman" could come up with one, he emphasized to her that "the burial service cannot be read over him." Watt-Dunton's plan was simply for "assembled Friends … [to] gather round the grave and the Flowers will be dropped in the grave in the usual way and then the Ceremony will end."

We don't have Isabel's reply, but as Roger Peattie thinks, later the same day, April 14, Watts-Dunton was again adamant, and wrote Isabel a second time that although Algernon had attended the burial of their mother in Bonchurch in 1896 and was content to hear the burial service read over her grave, he'd behaved himself "in order not to wound the family." But Algernon had, Watts-Dunton assured Isabel, "up to his last moment cherished the deepest animosity against the Creed which he felt had severed him from his most beloved ties….. If he had made a slight matter of his antagonism against Christianity… it would have been different but with him it increased with his years and at the last… it was bitterer than ever."

Roger Peattie's 1974 article on Swinburne's funeral makes it clear that behind Watts-Dunton's letters to Isabel was an exchange of letters between Watts-Dunton and William Michael Rossetti in the days just after Swinburne's death. William Michael Rossetti was a close friend of Swnburne and a fierce free-thinker, quite different in that respect from his sister Christina Rossetti. Peattie provides the documentation suggesting that Watts-Dunton had first acquiesced in Isabel's plan for a conventional service and then had been reminded by Rossetti of a promise he'd made to Swinburne to not allow that. At first even Rossetti seemed not interested in pushing the matter, though he

quickly reversed himself and on April 11, he says, wrote of the matter to Watts-Dunton in "decisive terms." Watts-Dunton, in some clear agony, waffled in reply on April 13, saying of Swinburne that the matter of an Anglican service over his mother's coffin in 1896 "had been threshed out by Swinburne years ago when his mother died. He decided to accept the affair as part and parcel of the huge grotesque mummery against which the single-handed struggle seemed useless." Watts-Dunton here clearly seems to be giving in to Isabel and to convention, and went on to invite Rossetti to attend the funeral. But Rossetti refused, telegraphing the same day, April 13, "No: I would have gone but for the service, which I think absolutely wrong."

Rossetti's telegram gave Watts-Dunton a troubled night and he changed his mind and determined to forbid the Anglican service. He wrote Rossetti on April 14 that during

> the silent watches of the night there flashed upon my memory certain words of … [Swinburne's] in which he said, 'But with regard to myself, I should seem to be contradicting all my work if I consented to … [the burial service] being used over me.

With this, Watts-Dunton reported, he "started from my bed and immediately remembered that I promised him it should not be done. And today I took measures to prevent the service being read"—these measures being his letters to Isabel Swinburne and, more dramatically in his capacity as "Sole executor under the will" of Swinburne, a telegram to the Rector of Bonchurch, the Rev. John Floyd Andrewes, forbidding the service that had already been authorized. In a flurry of telegrams exchanged between the Rector and Watts-Dunton, a compromise was reached whereby there was to be no religious service but the Rector might be allowed, according to Watts-Dunton, to say over the grave "many kind words of him, who was simply the best and most adorable of men."

That wording appears to be what led to trouble and to controversy, for the Rector apparently found a license in this agreement that Rossetti at least had not anticipated. In a letter after the funeral. Watts-Dunton professed himself satisfied. Writing on April 28, he assured Rossetti that he "found the whole affair satisfactory," that "all I wanted was that the ridiculous formula read over the grave of every rapscallion, about the sure hope of a resurrection under the Lord Jesus etc. should be omitted, and omitted … [those words] were." Rossetti was not entirely content with the behavior of the Rector. He in

the end had been unable to attend anyway, but he reported that his daughter, Helen Rossetti, who had attended, "thought the clergyman needlessly officious, and she withdrew at one moment of the performances."

Rikky Rooksby includes in his fine biography of Swinburne Helen Rossetti's detailed account of the funeral, from the arrival of the coffin at Waterloo Station to the end. She is forthright in her disgust. As she reached the burial ground, she reports, she

> suddenly became aware of a lugubrious chanting noise, and on looking around perceived that several carrion crows [her description of the funeral procession] had descended: a clergyman, in surplus get-up, was preceding the coffin chanting psalms or whatever they are. On reaching the grave, and the coffin being deposited, he (the rector of Bonchurch) made a little speech. He began by saying that he deeply regretted to announce that at a late hour yesterday he read a telegram from Swinburne's executor saying that it was Swinburne's wish not to have the burial service, that he however intended to show the utmost respect to the memory of the dead poet, who whatever his after opinions may have been, was nevertheless a baptised member of our Church [St. Boniface, where ACS had been baptized]. He went on talking, but I felt perfectly ill with disgust. Emery Walker, who was standing near me, murmured 'scandalous.' I answered, 'It's disgraceful. I can't stand it.' When I heard the wretch begin in his droning voice 'Man that is born of woman' I quietly retired from the scene and going right away from the vicinity of the grave plucked a branch of bay and some primroses and violets which were growing about wild. When I saw that the clergyman had finished I returned, and was one of the first to throw flowers into the open grave. Again to my horror[,] I saw the coffin was covered with a purple pall on which was designed a huge white cross, and I thought of … [Swinburne's] verses: 'Thou hast conquered, oh pale Galilean, and the world has grown grey from thy breath.'

The collection of newspaper clippings that Rikky Rooksby and I formed allows us to supplement the standard accounts of Swinburne's funeral in a number of ways. One letter in The Times itself, for example, has been left out of the discussion. It is of

some interest because it does mark Watts-Dunton's public statement of his satisfaction with the way Swinburne's funeral was conducted and does exonerate the Rev. Andrewes from some of the questions of whether the rector disregarded Swinburne's and Watts-Dunton's wishes in reading parts of the Burial Service at the grave. Watts-Dunton wrote to the *Times* on May 13, 1909 with his final public statement:

> Please convey to rector of Bonchurch my deep gratitude and admiration for the admirable way in which he handled a complexity such as no clergyman ever had to confront before. He turned what might have been a ghastly failure into a beautiful ceremony by his amazing tact, delicacy, and generosity.

And Watts-Dunton included in this letter to The Times the text of a telegram, April 21, 1909, from the Rector of Bonchurch: "Mrs. Leith forwarded to me yesterday your most gratifying telegram exonerating me from having broken faith with you or acting contrary to your instructions …. Thank you very much… for the kindness which has prompted so warm an acknowledgment of my simple desire to follow out your wishes in the matter."

A number of further clippings flesh out some details of Swinburne's funeral and I'd just like to run through a selection of those details.

The *Telegraph* noted that although the hearse in Putney was "timed to leave The Pines … at a quarter to seven o'clock, it did not actually start until a quarter past, when nearly 200 people had gathered in the bright sun-lit morning." In the single mourning coach accompanying the hearse were "Miss Watts, sister of Mr. Watts Dunton, and Mr. Mason, a nephew [sic], who from childhood had known the poet, and was the hero of his famous child epic, 'A Dark Month.' Traveling by Upper Richmond-road, St. John's-hill, and Chelsea Bridge, the hearse and coach reached Waterloo at 8:40; there the coffin was transferred "to a railway-van which had been previously converted by the undertakers, Messrs. Haslett and Co., into a chapelle ardente." Mrs. Watts-Dunton traveled to Waterloo by train."

The *Daily Graphic* (16 April 1909) reported that the coffin was carried from the Pines "about seven o'clock" and at Waterloo Station was placed "in a draped saloon, attached to the 8:55 train for Portsmouth": "the large crowd which had assembled at

Waterloo stood with bared heads at the train steamed out of the station." At Ventnor, reached at about 2 p.m., "the mourners emerged from the train into the genial warmth and unclouded light of a perfect spring day. There was here also a respectful crowd in waiting." The coffin was then transported in an open hearse for the journey to the churchyard, about a mile away: "at the church gates the cortege was met by the rector of Bonchurch, who read the opening sentences of the burial service as he led the way to the moss and primrose lined grave." After his remarks, "the rector … asked for silent prayer and concluded by pronouncing the Benediction."

An unlabeled clipping (probably dating from April 17 and probably from the *Isle of Wight County Press*) notes that the steamer had reached Ryde Pier at about 1 p.m.; "a large number witnessed the transfer of the coffin, which was covered with beautiful floral tributes, to the train for Ventnor." The article quotes "a correspondent" who gives further details of the feeling among the family and others at the churchyard:

> It is stated on good authority that Miss Isabel Swinburne, the late poet's only surviving sister, who was too ill to attend the funeral, delegated to her cousin, Mrs. Disney Leith, full authority to arrange the funeral, and that just before the burial relatives expressed a wish for prayers to be read, as they very much questioned whether the poet ever left instructions that his remains should not have a Christian burial. Col. Leith [Mary Gordon Leith's son] quietly restrained one or two of the principal mourners, holding opposite views with regard to the ceremony, from interfering with the Rector, when he commenced to read the opening sentences of the Burial Service at the entrance to the Churchyard, and also prevented what looked likely to develop into intervention on the part of one or two mourners at the graveside."

The *Isle of Wight Mercury* noted that from Ryde to Ventnor, "the coffin occupied a special van, hung with black draping, and with the floor carpeted." At Ventnor, "hundreds of persons had assembled" and along the road to Bonchurch "the route here and there was lined with spectators."

The Telegraph's account of the cortège from Ventnor differs slightly:

> At Ventnor station, where the body arrived shortly after two, not many people saw the coffin carried to the hearse, and along the mile of

> hilly road to the churchyard there were very few people to watch the cortège pass. In Bonchurch village all blinds were drawn. This seemed to be the only sign of mourning. There was no tolling of bells, and of the several hundred spectators inside the cemetery fully half wore bright summer dresses. The visitors to the locality were easily recognisable, and unfortunately, in their desire to secure the best places to witness the interment, they did not hesitate to scramble over graves which were clearly cared for by tender hands. The news that no service was to be read over the poet's remains quickly spread, and some old parishioners who had been present at the funerals of most of the Swinburnes recalled the fact that the poet knelt by the graveside with his sisters when their mother was buried. It was nearly three o'clock when the body reached the churchyard.

The *Mercury* too takes note of the family's hopes for a religious service:

> We are informed that the truth in reference to the religious ceremony at the funeral is that Miss Isabel Swinburne, unable to attend the funeral herself, delegated to her cousin, Mrs. Disney Leith, full family authority as to the conduct of the funeral. Colonel Leith, acting for his mother, came over and interviewed the Rector, and supported by Sir John Swinburne, brought the strongest possible pressure to bear to have a religious ceremony. At the graveside he interposed and prevented several who endeavoured to stop the Rector from going on with the service. There is a disposition on the part of the members of the family to deny that Swinburne ever left instructions that there should be no religious ceremony.

The *Daily Telegraph* account (April15) adds a few details. It mentions that the Swinburne family graves are covered with "Sicilian marble, cut and carved under the admiral's [Swinburne's father's] watchful eye. " *[note John's query about this!]* It notes too that the grave had been lined with moss the day before the burial and that the moss was to be picked out with primroses from The Orchard [the home of Mary Gordon] before the coffin was lowered.

The *Daily Chronicle* (16 April) explains the gaily dressed mourners apparent in several of the photographs and mentions the protests by Emery Walker and Helen

Rossetti):

> This afternoon all the trippers who are spending an Easter holiday in Ventnor made their way to Bonchurch and the new churchyard. Life at Ventnor does not offer many chances of excitement, and to see a famous poet buried was an opportunity too good to be lost. So they came, and the most enterprising gained standing room near the grave, and were only kept aloof from its intimate neighborhood by the constabulary. Exhausted tourists sat on tombstones, those with more energy trampled the primroses and violets in search of a convenient point of view. Professional photographers climbed trees and trained their cameras on the grave. Amateurs were not less enterprising, and an American boy, who brought his parents with him, had obtained a good place not three yards away from the spot where the chief mourners were expected to assemble. All were in holiday attire. There is nothing definitely irreverent in a scarlet striped parasol, but it seemed out of place when it was unfurled to cover a lady in the front row of the spectators wearing a cream coloured costume. Still, the sun was hot, and the funeral was exceedingly late; it had been expected quite half an hour before, and people who had afternoon tea engagements began to think that their homage to a dead poet was ill requited by this delay.
>
> The procession came at last, and one heard in the distance a firm, assertive voice repeating the familiar words: 'We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'
>
> Some of those who were already at the grave wondered. There was to be no service; that was the compact signed and sealed. Amazement and anger was on the faces of the mourners who followed the coffin; one, at least, was dissuaded only by the appeal of a companion from making a protest there and then at the breaking of the bond. The rector, the Rev. Floyd Andrewes, an elderly man, in full canonical [attire,] strode calmly in front of the procession….

> The coffin was deposited on the planks covering the moss covered grave and made ready to be lowered, and then the Rev. Floyd Andrewes spoke….
>
> … the rector, after all, had accepted the situation ['that no formal service is desired over his (Swinburne's) grave']. Those of the mourners who had felt wrath when it seemed possible that the order for the burial of the dead was to be insisted upon were appeased. But it was re-awakened when the voice of the rector repeated: 'Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery.'
>
> Never before, probably, has that sentiment been received with muttered exclamations of 'Shame!' and 'Scandalous!' as it was yesterday by those who attended as chief mourners. But the Rev. Floyd Andrewes went relentlessly on. He passed from that portion of the service to the committal sentence. 'For in as much as it hath pleased Almighty God, of His great mercy, to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' He stopped there, without reference to 'sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.'
>
> 'I will now ask those present,' said the rector, 'to join with me for a moment or two in silent prayer. The church is open for prayer and meditation for any of those who would like to retire to it after the service.' And for a few moments this curious congregation bowed their heads; even the shutters of the camera were silent; only the birds sang to the sun striking hot out of the heavenly blue.
>
> The rector returned to the church, where a few of the parishioners followed him but there was no spoken word. Many passed in front of the open grave and dropped flowers upon the coffin, among them Lord Tennyson who was an unostentatious mourner at the funeral.

The Daily Chronicle reporter spoke to several of Swinburne's relations and to the Rector about the poet's wishes:

> *The mourners who followed the coffin from Putney had accepted the*

rector's assurances that there would be no service. They were greatly indignant that the poet's wishes had been disregarded. Dr. Lowry, a cousin of Swinburne, stated to me after the interment that Swinburne left instructions in his will that there should be no religious service whatever. Mr. Watts Dunton thought that he had made it certain by the steps he took to prevent any such thing. That he has failed was not his fault, but because the rector had, in spite of his promise, insisted on reading fragments of the burial service.

The rector when I saw him this afternoon [April 15] said he was not convinced that the relatives were opposed to the service, and some of them had expressed a contrary opinion. In the circumstances he thought a compromise was best, and he remarked that he had not, in the portions of the service which he read, done anything to offend anyone's susceptibilities.

In its account, the Daily Telegraph describes the incipient protest at the gate to the churchyard:

The cortège was met at the entrance to the churchyard by the Rev. J. Floyd Andrewes, the Rector of Bonchurch, in his surplice and stole, and so soon as the coffin had been lifted out of the hearse the reverend gentleman recited the opening sentences of the service, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord.' There was no scene, though when Mrs. Watts-Dunton, the wife of the poet's executor, attempted to make a mild protest she was quietly restrained by Colonel Leith, one of the mourners. The coffin was carried straight to the graveside, and when it had been placed on the planks covering the opening of the grave, the rector gave a short address, explaining to a crowd of several hundreds the reason for the absence of the ordinary service. Then, while the coffin was lowered to the bottom of the vault, the reverend gentleman said the first portion of the committal sentences, beginning with 'Man that is born of a woman,' and finishing with 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust.' There followed a profound silence, broken only by the piping of song-birds, and the throbbing engines of an ocean tramp a few hundred yards out in the Channel, and then Mrs. Leith, one of the mourners, and Colonel Leith, entered the church. The other members of the funeral party

remained discussing the rector's action, while the public filed past the moss and primrose-lined grave, and cast handfuls of flowers on their departed friend.

The Telegraph reporter also wrote that

in conversation with me after the funeral, Mr. Andrewes stated that some of Mr. Swinburne's relatives saw him this morning, and 'they did not like the idea' of a silent burial. Mrs. Watts-Dunton, who was accompanied by Dr. Lowry, Mr. Swinburne's cousin, was very much distressed that the wishes of the poet had not been complied with. 'Mr. Swinburne,' she said, 'left instructions in his will that there should be no religious ceremony whatever at his funeral, and I should like it to be known that the clergyman of the parish, and not the executor, is responsible for the reading of a portion of the burial service at the graveside.' Dr. Lowry subsequently added that the mourners and friends of Mr. Swinburne who had travelled from London were much concerned that the poet's wishes had not been respected.

One last note about Swinburne's funeral: there had been some discussion of whether his remains might be interred in Poets Corner in Westminster Abbey.. The Daily Chronicle explored the matter in a story on 12 April: "already a number of communications have reached us suggesting that the honour of burial in Westminster Abbey is due to this last great poet of the Victorian era" (p. 1d). The next day, the Daily Chronicle reported "a general desire" (p. 4f) to see Swinburne honored by burial at the Abbey. The Daily News noted on 12 April that "a suggestion has been made that his [Swinburne's] remains should find a resting place in Westminster Abbey, but the Dean of Westminster, when seen by a 'Daily News' representative last night, had no statement to make on the subject" (p. 5d). The paper tried the Dean once more and reported on 13 April that up until the night before "Dr. Robinson had received no official communications regarding the possibility of the burial of Mr. Swinburne" (p. 5f).

The Times too reported that "the Dean of Westminster has not been approached by anyone authorized"; it printed a statement by "a correspondent who

knew Mr. Swinburne well" deprecating the idea (14 April 1909, p. 8d). The same day the Daily Telegraph specified that "we are asked to say that it is a misapprehension to suppose that the Dean of Westminster has been approached by anyone authorised to do so with respect to the poet's burial in Westminster Abbey" (14 April 1909, p. 11b).

America took note as well, as revealed in a passing remark by a correspondent in the New York Times (14 June 1909, p. 6) alluding to a "controversy" over the matter. The New York Times earlier had reported that the Dean of the Abbey "refused to make any statement on the subject" (11April 1909, p. 1]). And in an editorial a few days later, the New York Times, wagged its finger at the "blind misjudgment" that denied Westminster Abbey Swinburne's remains: "that the murmurs of reproach should be loud and deep is but natural" (13 April p. 8).

I have yet to discover these murmurs of reproach—or the others the New York Times claimed when it revisited the controversy, 20 June (p.8), and discussed Swinburne's religion. In an extraordinary claim, it said that unnamed "Catholic periodicals" said that Swinburne was "a communicant of the Roman Church," and should not have been buried with with a Protestant ceremony.

Thomas Hardy took note of this part of the controversy in his 1924 poem "A Refusal," where the Dean of Westminster sputters his indignation at a proposal to honor another controversial poet, Byron, with simply a tablet in Poets' Corner: The Dean declares in irritation that if he were to honor Byron, there would be no limits:

'Twill next be expected
That I get erected
To Shelley a tablet
In some niche or gablet.
Then--what makes my skin burn,
Yea, forehead to chin burn--
That I ensconce Swinburne!

I started with a brief review of some of the relations both gentle and prickly between Swinburne and Tennyson and perhaps as a coda I should circle back to Tennyson in all of this. My topic has been a rather funereal one, and so it will remain as I close, but let me turn to Tennyson's own death and funeral. Relations between the poets did not end as graciously as

one might like. Swinburne was moved by Tennyson's death no doubt, and some notes in his hand record the date and the atmosphere in terms and images that Swinburne used in his "Threnody" on Tennyson's death, a manuscript of which he sent Lady Tennyson. His notes read simply, 'Oct. 6. Tennyson died in the night. Dark and dismal dawn. In the evening moonlight-like daylight, with clouds that passed[,] shone and vanished into the light.'

But although Hallam Tennyson attended Swinburne's funeral, Swinburne had not been able to bring himself to attend Tennyson's. His friends attended—both Theodore Watts Dunton and William Michael Rossetti were there—and his mother and sisters sent a wreath to Westminster Abbey. But Swinburne wrote a coolish note to Tennyson's publishers, who were in charge of arrangements, saying simply that he was "unable to avail myself of the invitation you have done me the honour to send me"; the note seems to have hidden some stronger feeling, for Edmund Gosse recorded that Theodore Watts-Dunton had told him that "Swinburne… [who had been] invited to take a prominent place [at Westminster Abbey], positively and obstinately refused to come, and will probably be so stiff-necked as to refuse the laureateship, which …. on good authority, will certainly be offered to him."

Queen Victoria, it is reported, is thought to have believed that with the death of Tennyson Swinburne was the best poet in her dominions and a candidate to be the new poet laureate. But that was not to be—Swinburne's youthful eroticism, his political radicalism, and, of course, his antipathy to Christianity made it unlikely in any case and perhaps the final nail in that coffin was his having called not tpp many years before for the assassination of the Russian Czar, a cousin to the Queen. Not a good career move.

So between the funeral of Tennyson in 1892 and his own death in 1909, Swinburne lived with his brows unencumbered by laurel leaves. He died on April 10, 1909, chanting Aeschylus as he died. And as we have seen this evening, he was a source of contention at his own funeral just as he had been in life.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)
The Woodspurge

The wind flapp'd loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walk'd on at the wind's will,--
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,--
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flower'd, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,--
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

Hap
By Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
--Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

1866.