Chapter 2

"Quivering Web of Living Thought": Conceptual Networks in Swinburne's *Songs of the Springtides*

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Digital Swinburne, Networks, and Nodes

The essay below is informed by many years' labor on an electronic, Web-based collection of Swinburne's works, *The Swinburne Project* (<http://www. swinburneproject.org/>). This digital collection both provides access to high-quality digital representations of Swinburne's texts, along with additional scholarly material, and serves as a test bed for experimentation with various information and Web technologies in an effort to enable new reading and writing strategies; to identify and visualize poetic and informational systems, structures, and designs; and to open previously untrodden paths of discovery through Swinburne's work. Digital media offer possibilities and functionalities—keyword searching, hyperlinking, integration of text, image, audio, and other media—that may benefit the representation and study of any poet, but for Swinburne, a deceptively and disarmingly difficult and dense poet, digital media offer even more particular advantages.

Swinburne is an ideal poet for such digital presentation and treatment. He is a poet of complex thought, extended conceits, diverse forms, and extensive and rich allusions. This expansive though elusive or obscured range is represented in Swinburne's work in a carefully organized and architected manner. In one of his famously equivocal essays on Swinburne, T.S. Eliot claims that Swinburne's prose style represents "the index to the impatience and perhaps laziness of a disorderly mind" (17). Eliot is correct that Swinburne's writing provides us with an index, yet he is very wrong regarding the nature of the mind that is indexed. In much of Swinburne's best writing—for instance in the strongly thematic volumes *Poems and Ballads, First Series* and *Songs before Sunrise*, and in *Songs of the Springtides*—Swinburne presents us with artfully structured indices to a meticulously ordered and precise mind. Digital representations of Swinburne's work, I argue, facilitate the explicit identification, representation, and analysis of the architectonic structures in Swinburne's compositions. Having identified the rudiments of these structures, one may employ a host of digital tools and strategies, such as those provided by the

NINES project,[1] to suggest other structures in the text and to generate the indices implicit in the deliberate designs of Swinburne's poems.

On what are these indices and structures based? Swinburne's work is full of familiar signposts and nodes, such as his trademark binary oppositions and pairings: pain/pleasure, life/death, love/hate, hope/fear, sleep/death. An incredibly learned poet with an extensive range of form and allusion, Swinburne packed his poems with often obscure references to the Bible, classical mythology, Arthurian legend, and contemporary politics. Like other poets—especially Milton, Blake, Shelley, and Hugo, who worked in a vatic tradition—Swinburne relies on a dependable and personal clutch of symbolically charged figures, images, and concepts. For Swinburne, these include natural forces, the femme fatale, the artist/poet, the passage of time in the months and the seasons, and the preeminence of song and music, to name but a few. These elements of Swinburne's verse all serve as familiar, easily identifiable nodes of information, laden with meaning acquired through strategic repetition and structural integration into the intellectual networks of Swinburne's work. I will examine these nodes, structures, and architectonic forms in one of Swinburne's most intricately designed collections, *Songs of the Springtides*.

The notion of the text as a self-constituted network or as a part of a larger intertextual network is found in influential writings by major poststructuralist theorists. In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes perceives the text as

> an entrance into a network with a thousand entrances; to take this entrance is to aim, ultimately, not at a legal structure of norms and departures, a narrative or poetic Law, but at a perspective (of fragments, of voices from other texts, other codes), whose vanishing point is nonetheless ceaselessly pushed back, mysteriously opened; each (single) text is the very theory (and not the mere example) of this vanishing, of this difference which indefinitely returns, insubmissive. (12)

Similarly, as Michel Foucault writes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*,

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network. And this network of references is not the same in the case of a mathematical treatise, a textual commentary, a historical account, and an episode in a novel cycle; the unity of the book, even in the sense of a group of relations, cannot be regarded as identical in each case. The book is not simply

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[1]   *NINES*, or *Networked Infrastructure for Nineteenth-Century Electronic Scholarship* <http://www.nines.org/>, is "a scholarly organization in British and American nineteenth-century studies supported by a software development group assembling a suite of critical and editorial tools for digital scholarship." *NINES*, under the leadership of Jerome J. McGann, Director Andrew Stauffer, and Associate Director Laura Mandell, and supported by a steering committee and editorial boards, provides a framework for peer-reviewed digital scholarship in the "long nineteenth century" along with digital tools for collecting, annotating, and otherwise manipulating the digital objects collected by *NINES*.

the object that one holds in one's hands; and it cannot remain within the little parallelepiped that contains it: its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse. (23)

More recently, Friedrich Kittler, in *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, building on and synthesizing the work of Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, and others, writes about literature as an information system supported and shaped by the available technologies of discourse: "[a]n elementary datum is the fact that literature (whatever else it may mean to readers) processes, stores, and transmits data, and that such operations in the age-old medium of the alphabet have the same technical positivity as they do in computers" (370). These theories of the text as constituting and constituted by information networks and as carriers of data have obvious relevance and resonance for digital humanities scholarship, much of which is engaged in explicitly identifying, encoding, and otherwise representing the information structures in texts of all kinds. Of course, Barthes, Foucault, Kittler, and other poststructuralists argue that all texts are participatory nodes in a vast intertextual network, and so we should not be surprised to find such networks, such participation in a larger network, in Swinburne. At the same time, however, the aggressive self-consciousness with which Swinburne creates and participates in these networks is noteworthy. For Swinburne participates in intertextual networks that are reinforced by vast and pervasive internal, intratextual networks of repeated and linked nodes derived from a number of key Swinburnian concepts, symbols, and tropes.

While he uses a different vocabulary than that of the poststructuralists, Swinburne shares a view of the text as an information network, a "quivering web of living thought" (*George Chapman* 17), and his own work provides us with one of the richest and most complex examples of intricately designed discourse networks in English poetry. There is in all of Swinburne, and especially in *Songs of the Springtides*, an omnipresence of other texts: in the "high song" that teaches Thalassius (*Poems* 3: 297), in the echoes of Aeschylus and Sappho in "On the Cliffs," in the "living song of birds" *(Poems* 3: 330), and the presence of Hugo and his "godlike banished gaze" (*Poems* 3: 332) in "The Garden of Cymodoce," as well as in the deeply personal bibliographic study of Hugo in the "Birthday Ode."

The Unifying Features of *Songs of the Springtides*

Songs of the Springtides is a watershed volume in Swinburne's literary career, written and published during a crucial transitional period in his troubled personal life. The composition of the few, but lengthy, poems that constitute the collection occurred during a time of great turmoil for Swinburne, when the poet was suffering severe ill health from an enthusiastically indulged alcoholism, along with an increasing deafness that likely left him feeling lonely and isolated in the social

gatherings and poetry readings of which he was so fond.[2] Through the intervention of his mother and close friend Theodore Watts (later Watts-Dunton), Swinburne was removed from his London rooms to live at The Pines in Putney with Watts. There Swinburne lived out his days, writing prolifically and reading voraciously, under the watchful eye of his dear friend. *Songs of the Springtides* was the first work published after this upheaval in Swinburne's life, and much of the volume was composed during the turbulent period preceding his residence at The Pines. My aim in examining *Songs of the Springtides* is not to provide close readings of individual works;[3] rather, I will explore the volume as a deliberately fashioned and architected whole, and investigate the conceptual networks at play throughout the volume.

A glance at the table of contents reveals that the book has a small number of basic pieces. For *Songs of the Springtides*, Swinburne originally planned "a little volume containing three poems upwards of 500 lines each in length, all of them in a sense sea-studies" (*Uncollected Letters* 2: 181). The three poems were: "Thalassius," "On the Cliffs," and "The Garden of Cymodoce." In a letter to his friend William Michael Rossetti, Swinburne proposed for "this triad of sea-studies" the title "Epithalassion," Greek for "upon the sea": "I want a generic title: I had thought of 'Epithalassion,' forming the word after the types of the Latin Epithalamium & the Shelleyan Epipsychidion; I still think it rather pretty & apt; do you think it would do? or would it be held affected & pedantic?" (*Uncollected Letters* 2: 182). Twelve days later, on November 27, 1877, Swinburne writes, again to Rossetti, "I have quite given up the over fantastic title of Epithalassion" (*Uncollected Letters* 2: 185). In the end he settled on the title *Songs of the Springtides*, and to the "triad of sea-studies" Swinburne added a fourth long poem, the "Birthday Ode" to Victor Hugo. Unannounced but also present in the volume are three short poems: the 15-line Dedication "To Edward John Trelawny," Swinburne's "old sea king" and a friend of Shelley's (*Uncollected Letters* 2: 181); an untitled sonnet, with the first line "Between two seas the sea-bird's wing makes halt"; and another sonnet, buried in the notes to the ode for Hugo, "On the proposed desecration of Westminster Abbey by the creation of a monument to the son of Napoleon III."

These constituent poems of *Songs of the Springtides* are arranged in the volume plainly and deliberately. Even with the addition of the ode to Hugo, Swinburne maintains the integrity and focus of the originally planned triptych of sea poems. In both the original volume of 1880 and the 1904 collected *Poems*, Swinburne imposes typographic and structural demarcations between the sea-studies and the ode for Hugo. The table of contents displays a spatial division between the sea-studies

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[2]   Rikky Rooksby's *A.C. Swinburne: A Poet's Life* is the most recent biography of Swinburne and provides a detailed account of Swinburne's alcoholism and his life in Putney with Watts-Dunton.

[3]   Meredith B. Raymond provides extended readings and critical histories of "Thalassius" and "On the Cliffs" in chapter 2 of *Swinburne's Poetics*. Margot K. Louis provides a detailed reading of "Thalassius," "On the Cliffs," and "The Garden of Cymodoce," in Chapter 5 of *Swinburne and His Gods*.

CONTENTS.

Fig. 2.1   The table of contents from *Songs of the Springtides* reveals a division between the triptych of sea-studies—"Thalassius," "On the Cliffs," and "The Garden of Cymodoce"—and the "Birthday Ode" to Victor Hugo.

and the ode, and the triptych is presented within the larger volume as a discreet subcollection with a separate title page.

The "Birthday Ode" is set off further by the insertion of the untitled sonnet "Between two seas the sea-bird's wing makes halt":

> Between two seas the sea-bird's wing makes halt,
> Wind-weary; while with lifting head he waits
> For breath to reinspire him from the gates
> That open still toward sunrise on the vault
> High-domed of morning, and in flight's default
> With spreading sense of spirit anticipates
> What new sea now may lure beyond the straits
> His wings exulting that her winds exalt
> And fill them full as sails to seaward spread,
> Fulfilled with fair speed's promise. Pass, my song,
> Forth to the haven of thy desire and dread,
> The presence of our lord, long loved and long
> Far off above beholden, who to thee
> Was as light kindling all a windy sea. (*Poems* 3: 339)

This sonnet appears after the three sea poems and before the "Birthday Ode." The short poem is deliberately *not* indexed in the table of contents, but this omission only heightens the poem's significance. Like a "hidden" track on a twenty-first

century audio disc, the sonnet is omitted from the listing of poems and is left to be discovered unexpectedly by the reader working his or her way through the volume. In a typically Swinburnian turn of ambiguity, the sonnet is both a demarcation and a bridge connecting the two seemingly disparate sections of this volume. The sea-bird, a stand-in for the poet, pauses, "wind-weary," between two seas. These two seas represent the twin founts of Swinburne's inspiration. On the one side is the triptych of sea-studies, the sea of salt waters, and primal natural forces. On the other side is the sea of literature, represented here by Hugo, who ranks alongside Sappho, Aeschylus, Landor, and Shelley, to whom Swinburne alludes throughout the volume, and who function as central figures in Swinburne's personal cosmology of literary gods and heroes. Among these leading figures, Hugo is perhaps the most representative for Swinburne of the overall landscape, or seascape, of literature. Hugo is for Swinburne a poet *par excellence*, prophet of republicanism and revolution, a dramatist, and a novelist. And Hugo is—as the exile of Guernsey, among Swinburne's beloved Channel Islands, and the author of *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*—a figure, like Trelawny, of the natural sea as well.

The sonnet is strategically placed physically and logically between the two major divisions of the text, and the opening word, "Between," is central to the concerns and themes of the entire book.[4] The sonnet lies between the figurative seas of nature and literature. But the waters of these seas, and the key words and concepts from the poems, mix and mingle and connect in the straights above which the sea-bird/poet hovers. Poets, and their texts—invoked in the figures of the foster-father in "Thalassius," Sappho and Aeschylus in "On the Cliffs," and Hugo in "The Garden of Cymodoce"—are present in the sea-studies, while nature, especially again the sea, figures large in the "Birthday Ode." Part of the genius of the volume is the way in which informational and figurative nodes and networks serve to link these related concerns of nature and literature across the individual poems and across the bridge of the linking central sonnet. Like his poem and his representative, the sea-bird, the poet Swinburne is in a state of between-ness. Swinburne is in a personal transitional period, alluded to in "Thalassius": between a turbulent time of ill health and alcoholism, and a calmer span of recovery, renewed health, and rest:

> Thence in his heart the great same joy began,
> Of child that made him man:
> And turned again from all hearts else on quest,
> He communed with his own heart, and had rest. (*Poems* 3: 308)

Concurrent with this personal transition, Swinburne's work is undergoing a stylistic change. The dramatic nature of *Poems and Ballads, First Series* and the Greek plays, and the grand and declamatory tone of much of *Songs before Sunrise*, are replaced in *Songs of the Springtides* with a quieter and more reflective tenor. The stricter,

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    4   See Sarah Eron's "Circles and the In-Between: Shaping Time, Space, and Paradox in Swinburnian Verse" for an extended discussion of a "physical and temporal state of in-between" in Swinburne's later landscape poems (293).

more defined, regular verse forms of the earlier works—the iambic pentameter couplets of "Anactoria," the quatrains of "Laus Veneris," or the five-line stanzas of "Hertha"—are replaced here with the freer verse paragraphs of "Thalassius" and "On the Cliffs" with their irregular rhyme schemes and line length.

The central sonnet both separates and yokes together the nature studies and the ode. Like so many of Swinburne's volumes, *Songs of the Springtides* has a strong thematic unity and internal coherence. The volume is not an arbitrary collection of unrelated or previously published poems, but a carefully conceived thematic whole. Examples of other strongly thematic volumes in Swinburne's canon include his first two collections, *Poems and Ballads, First Series*, and *Songs before Sunrise*. The former is held together by a number of unifying features, such as the motif of lost or unrequited love and the recurrent figure of the femme fatale.[5] *Songs before Sunrise* is unified by themes of revolution, republicanism, Italy, and classical and biblical parallels to contemporary struggles.[6] For both of these earlier collections, Swinburne composed special-purpose poems to make explicit the thematic unity of these works—"Dedication, 1865" in *Poems and Ballads*, and "Dedication to Joseph Mazzini" and "Epilogue" in *Songs before Sunrise*.

What, then, are the unifying themes, concepts, and tropes of *Songs of the Springtides*? The volume is a series of poetic autobiographies focusing on distinct views of and contexts for the poet: personal ("Thalassius"), spiritual ("On the Cliffs"), external and natural ("The Garden of Cymodoce"), and bibliographical ("Birthday Ode"). In a letter to Edmund Gosse, Swinburne describes "Thalassius" as "a symbolical quasi-autobiographical poem after the fashion of Shelley or of Hugo, concerning the generation, birth and rearing of a by-blow of Amphitrite's" (*Letters* 4: 106). "On the Cliffs" describes a personal spiritual journey and posits a poetic trinity in Apollo, Sappho, and the Nightingale, in whose song Swinburne hears the voice of the poetess.[7] "The Garden of Cymodoce" is a hymn to Swinburne's beloved Sark, one of the Channel Islands, but this topographical nature poem is imbued with the poet's reflections on song and the sea and additional praise of his literary

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[5]   The theme of lost or unrequited love figures most famously in "The Triumph of Time" but also in poems such as "Anactoria," "A Leave-Taking," "Rococo," and the first "Rondel." The femme fatale figure may be found in "Dolores," "Fragoletta," "Laus Veneris," "Satia te Sanguine," and "Anactoria."

[6]   Nearly the whole of the *Songs before Sunrise* revolves around political themes of liberty, revolution, and republicanism. Poems that specifically reference the nineteenth-century Italian struggle for independence and unification include "The Eve of Revolution," "The Halt before Rome," "Mentana: First Anniversary," "Siena," "The Song of the Standard," and "Ode on the Insurrection in Candia." Poems that reference classical or biblical events and figures as parallels to contemporary events include "Super Flumina Babylonis," "Blessed among Women," "Genesis," "Tiresias," and "Non Dolet."

[7]   In the "Dedicatory Epistle" to his collected poems, Swinburne writes, "[n]ot to … the very humblest and simplest lover of poetry, will it seem incongruous or strange, suggestive of imperfect sympathy with life or deficient inspiration from nature, that the very words of Sappho should be heard and recognized in the notes of the nightingales" (xx).

heroes, continuing the autobiographical poetic quest begun in "Thalassius" and "On the Cliffs." The "Birthday Ode" is a tribute to Victor Hugo in the form of a verse catalog of Hugo's works, including the poems, dramas, and novels, all of which are identified clearly by title and date in Swinburne's notes to the poem. However, the overarching themes of song and the sea and the poet's journey persist there as well.

The summarizing poems that appear in some of Swinburne's other collections are not present or needed in *Songs of the Springtides* because of the relative brevity and strong internal cohesion of the volume. Swinburne is a careful and thoughtful architect, always aware of the relationships, forms, and structures, not just of individual poems, but also of the larger collection. In *Songs of the Springtides*, Swinburne establishes complex networks of information nodes, recurring themes, figures, and symbols that repeat and echo and connect throughout the works. These networks may be grouped into major categories such as literary, temporal, natural, and so on. One network, for instance, contains as its nodes the full pantheon of Swinburne's literary heroes. The volume's opening dedication is as much for Shelley and Shelley's "heavenlier song" as for Shelley's friend Trelawney (*Poems* 3: 293). Hugo, Landor, and perhaps others, appear in the foster-father figure of "Thalassius."[8] Sappho and Aeschylus are present in "On the Cliffs."[9] And Hugo is a subject of "The Garden of Cymodoce" and, obviously, of the "Birthday Ode."

Time is another of the networks active throughout the volume. "Thalassius" opens "Upon the flowery forefront of the year" and proceeds through many months and seasons:

"the grey-green April sea"
"when July strewed fire on earth and sea" (*Poems* 3: 295)
"And with that second moondawn of the spring's" (*Poems* 3: 296)
"That marries morn and even and winter and spring" (*Poems* 3: 301)
"And one dim dawn between the winter and spring"
"To put back April that had borne his birth" (*Poems* 3: 302)
"Till April dying made free the world for May" (*Poems* 3: 303)
"And one bright eve ere summer in autumn sank" (*Poems* 3: 304)
"Till on some winter's dawn of some dim year" (*Poems* 3: 308)

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[8]   There is some debate about the identity of this foster-father. Nicolson finds "a composite idealization of Landor, Hugo, and Mazzini" (168). Rosenberg writes that this figure is "[p]robably Walter Savage Landor" (*Selected Poetry and Prose* 236). William Wilson, on the other hand, believes this "wise guardian … is made … in Milton's image" (384). While it is difficult to identify a single antecedent for Swinburne's foster-father, it is clear, with his teachings of liberty and freedom, that he is modeled, in some fashion or other, on the republican prophetic voices—which might include Milton, Landor, and Hugo. Shelley might be another antecedent, though Swinburne refers to the foster-father as a "warrior grey with glories more than years" (*Poems* 3: 296), which would seem to exclude the youthful Shelley.

[9]   For more detailed discussions of "On the Cliffs" and Swinburne's conception of Sappho, see Catherine Maxwell's *The Female Sublime from Milton to Swinburne: Bearing Blindness* and Yopie Prins' *Victorian Sappho*.

The sun, moon, and stars—celestial bodies associated with time—provide another network of prominent recurring figures. "Thalassius" describes a "noise of tempest and a light" "far / From past the moonrise and its guiding star" (*Poems* 3: 305), and "The Garden of Cymodoce" depicts a time "Between the full moon and the sunset star" with "The war-song of the sounding skies aglow" (*Poems* 3: 338). The relentless repetition of these tropes, delivered on the strong rhythms of Swinburne's verse, come at the reader like wave after wave of Swinburne's ever-present sea, reminding the reader of the connections and linkages among the poems and serving a role similar to the summarizing poems of *Poems and Ballads* and *Songs before Sunrise*.

A curious fact from Swinburne's publishing history reinforces the sense of cohesion and thematic unity that one finds in *Songs of the Springtides*. *Songs of the Springtides* and *The Heptalogia*, a small volume of seven-verse parodies published in the same year as *Songs of the Springtides*, are Swinburne's only collections in which all the constituent poems appeared for the first time in the collection itself. All of Swinburne's many other collections included poems he had previously published elsewhere, sometimes in private publications, but often in journals such as *The Spectator* or *The Fortnightly Review*. The poems of *Songs of the Springtides*, on the other hand, were never intended to stand alone but, as Swinburne's letters and the publishing circumstances indicate, were composed as parts of an integrated whole. As a reader, critic, and poet, Swinburne was particularly sensitive to the relationship of parts to the whole and to the structural integrity of poetic compositions. In his essay on Byron, Swinburne cites *Don Juan* as a poem that must be appreciated as a whole: "[h]is magnificent masterpiece, which must endure for ever among the precious relics of the world, will not bear dissection or extraction. The merit of 'Don Juan' does not lie in any part, but in the whole" ("Byron" 243). In a similar manner, *Songs of the Springtides* also suffers greatly from dissection and extraction, which sever the links and disrupt the networks that are so carefully established throughout.

The motivation behind the late addition of the "Birthday Ode" to the volume remains a mystery, but it is clear that Swinburne reworked the structure of the collection and extended the networks present in the sea-studies to integrate this ode into the rest of the volume. Hugo ranked directly alongside Sappho, Aeschylus, Landor, and Shelley among Swinburne's most precious literary touchstones. One possible motivation of the inclusion of the "Birthday Ode" is Swinburne's acknowledgement of Hugo as the poet who shared Swinburne's affinity, reverence, and respect for the sea, and who developed, in his novel *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*, a theory and symbolism of the sea perhaps as comprehensive as Swinburne's own. In addition to his primary role in the "Birthday Ode," Hugo has a strong parallel presence in the triad of sea-studies. He is, as we have seen, one of the possible models for the foster-father figure in "Thalassius." Also, Hugo and his exile on the Channel Islands ("his godlike banished gaze") are the subject of an extended passage of nearly 100 lines in "The Garden of Cymodoce" (*Poems* 3: 330–31)

As previously discussed, all three "sea-studies" are clearly autobiographical. And the "Birthday Ode" to Victor Hugo fits neatly into this autobiographical scheme.

One might suspect that a bibliographic tribute to another writer would be something other than autobiographical, but such is not the case with Swinburne and his literary heroes. In particular, Swinburne's engagement with Hugo was deeply personal, devotional, and profound. Like the faithful who experience religious ecstasies through both scripture and the natural world, Swinburne experienced Hugo through both the elder writer's texts, catalogued throughout the "Birthday Ode," and the natural world and topography that inform the ode and the triptych of sea-studies. Witness the following passage from Swinburne's essay "Victor Hugo: *L'Homme Qui Rit*":

> Once only in my life I have seen the likeness of Victor Hugo's genius. Crossing over when a boy from Ostend, I had the fortune to be caught in midchannel by a thunderstorm. … About midnight the thundercloud was right overhead, full of incessant sound and fire, lightening and darkening so rapidly that it seemed to have life, and a delight in its life. At the same hour the sky was clear to the west, and all along the sea-line there sprang and sank as to music a restless dance or chase of summer lightnings across the lower sky: a race and riot of lights, beautiful and rapid as a course of shining Oceanides along the tremulous floor of the sea. Eastward at the same moment the space of clear sky was higher and wider, a splendid semicircle of too intense purity to be called blue; it was of no colour nameable by man; and midway in it between the storm and the sea hung the motionless full moon; Artemis watching with a serene splendor of scorn the battle of Titans and the revel of nymphs, from her stainless Olympian summit of divine indifferent light. Underneath and about us the sea was paved with flame; the whole water trembled and hissed with phosphoric fire; even through the wind and thunder I could hear the crackling and sputtering of the water-sparks. In the same heaven and in the same hour there shone at once the three contrasted glories, golden and fiery and white, of moonlight and of the double lightnings, forked and sheet; and under all this miraculous heaven lay a flaming floor of water.
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> That, in a most close and exact symbol, is the best possible definition I can give of Victor Hugo's genius. And the impression of that hour was upon me the impression of his mind; physical, as it touched the nerves with a more vivid passion of pleasure than music or wine; spiritual, as it exalted the spirit with the senses and above them to the very summit of vision and delight. (1–2)

The extended passage above brilliantly illustrates closely and exactly Swinburne's unified vision of personal experience, nature (especially the sea), and literature. This vision is present throughout *Songs of the Springtides*, not only in the autobiographical triptych of sea-studies, but also across the bridging sonnet "Between two seas …" and throughout the "Birthday Ode."

Like the autobiographical "Thalassius," which opens "Upon the flowery forefront of the year, / […] by the grey-green April sea" (*Poems* 3: 295), the ode for Hugo opens in the spring, with a birth: "Spring, born in heaven ere many a springtime flown, / Dead spring that sawest on earth / A babe of deathless birth" (*Poems* 3: 341). And indeed, like "Thalassius," the ode is replete with references to the key concepts that participate in the networks established in the sea-studies:

the natural world, including the sea, the sun, and the winds; the elements of earth, air, fire, and water; the passage of time; and the figure of the artist/poet.

Reference Works and Webs

Different critics have commented on the highly structured formality of some of the poetry in *Songs of the Springtides*. Kerry McSweeney believes that "Thalassius" is "far too schematic and abstract" (54). Margot Louis, not necessarily critical of this tendency, writes of the "schematized account of his [Thalassius'] guardian's teachings" (120). Harold Nicolson calls the "Birthday Ode" "a complete rhymed bibliography of the works of Victor Hugo" (168). While some might criticize the deliberateness and self-consciousness of Swinburne's design in *Songs of the Springtides*, it is clear that he was making an informed aesthetic decision. Swinburne is presenting us with a wealth of information about which he feels passionately, and he has chosen to organize and represent that information in carefully architected schematic forms.

In an important essay on Chapman, published in 1875, not too long before *Songs of the Springtides*, Swinburne defends Robert Browning against charges of obscurity, and provides a template for the architectonic structures and networks of multivalent signifiers that support a work like *Songs of the Springtides*. Significantly, Swinburne uses the metaphor of the spider's web in his description of this template, a metaphor, of course, that has been adopted by the designers of the World Wide Web as the controlling conceptual framework for our current twenty-first-century networked information environment:

> Now if there is any great quality more perceptible than another in Mr. Browning's intellect it is his decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and intensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim. … He is something too much the reverse of obscure; he is too brilliant and subtle for the ready reader of a ready writer to follow with any certainty the track of an intelligence which moves with such incessant rapidity, or even to realize with what spider-like swiftness and sagacity his building spirit leaps and lightens to and fro and backward and forward as it lives along the animated line of its labor, springs from thread to thread and darts from centre to circumference of the glittering and quivering web of living thought woven from the inexhaustible stores of his perception and kindled from the inexhaustible fire of his imagination. (*George Chapman* 16–17)

For *Songs of the Springtides*, Swinburne adopts this template, a web of animated lines connecting center to circumference, woven from the perception and imagination of the poet.

Swinburne's spinning and weaving is illustrated in the opening stanzas of the volume's first major poem, "Thalassius." "Thalassius" follows the short Dedication, which opens the volume and, as the first long poem, provides Swinburne with the expanse he needs to introduce the major motifs and themes of *Songs of the Springtides* and, perhaps more importantly, to highlight the aesthetic and poetic

construction of interlocking networks. In the imagery of the opening stanzas, "Thalassius" establishes the poetic framework of expansive conceptual fields dotted by specific information nodes. At least three such fields—time, the sea, and the firmament of the heavens—are introduced in the opening stanzas:

> Upon the flowery forefront of the year,
> One wandering by the grey-green April sea
> Found on a reach of shingle and shallower sand
> Inlaid with starrier glimmering jewellery
> Left for the sun's love and the light wind's cheer
> Along the foam-flowered strand
> Breeze-brightened, something nearer sea than land
> Though the last shoreward blossom-fringe was near,
> A babe asleep with flower-soft face that gleamed
> To sun and seaward as it laughed and dreamed,
> Too sure of either love for either's fear,
> Albeit so birdlike slight and light, it seemed
> Nor man nor mortal child of man, but fair
> As even its twin-born tenderer spray-flowers were,
> That the wind scatters like an Oread's hair.
> For when July strewed fire on earth and sea
> The last time ere that year,
> Out of the flame of morn Cymothoe
> Beheld one brighter than the sunbright sphere
> Move toward her from its fieriest heart, whence trod
> The live sun's very God,
> Across the foam-bright water-ways that are
> As heavenlier heavens with star for answering star,
> And on her eyes and hair and maiden mouth
> Felt a kiss falling fierier than the South
> And heard above afar
> A noise of songs and wind-enamoured wings
> And lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings,
> And round the resonant radiance of his car
> Where depth is one with height,
> Light heard as music, music seen as light.
> And with that second moondawn of the spring's
> That fosters the first rose,
> A sun-child whiter than the sunlit snows
> Was born out of the world of sunless things
> That round the round earth flows and ebbs and flows. (*Poems* 3: 295–6)

The first two lines introduce the twin fields of time ("the flowery forefront of the year") and the sea ("grey-green April sea"). Both time and the sea are expansive fields populated by more specific points and nodes. The field of time is dotted by years and months, seasons and days. The field of the sea is patterned with islands, rocks, sea-birds, foam, sea-flowers, and relentless rhythmic waves. The heavens are introduced early ("the sun's love") and become more prominent

as the passage progresses: "heavenlier heavens with star for answering star." Again, in the imagery Swinburne presents a background field, the firmament of the heavens, punctuated by a foreground of individual points: the sun, the moon, the stars. These background fields, networks, and other major components of these opening stanzas are linked by shared floral imagery. Time is associated with flowers in the phrases "the flowery forefront of the year" and "when July strewed fire on earth and sea." Although the month strews fire, the verb *to strew* is most commonly associated with the strewing of flowers, an association supported by the usage examples listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*). The sea and shore participate in the floral web as well with images of the "foam-flowered strand" and the "shoreward blossom-fringe." The central figure of the poem, Thalassius, with his "flower-soft face" likewise becomes a flower-shaped hub in the network of networks established in the opening lines of the volume. Thus we have three of the predominant concepts, images, and themes—time, the heavens, and the sea—all representing networks and, along with the poem's protagonist Thalassius, tied together in a conceptual network through the use of floral imagery. The choice of flowers as the image that ties all elements together becomes all the more significant when we remember Swinburne's frequent association of flowers with song and poetry.[10]

Further connections and conflations are easily found in these opening verse paragraphs. A simile connects the sea and the heavens: "the foam-bright water-ways that are / As heavenlier heavens with star for answering star." The heavens, through the figure of the sun-god Apollo—"the live sun's very God"—become associated with poetry and song. As Apollo appears, we hear above the water-ways "A noise of songs and wind-enamored wings / And lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings." Swinburne's connections and transformations begin to expand and multiple at a dizzying rate: "depth is one with height, / Light heard as music, music seen as light." And the passage then closes with the image of a circuit—"round the round earth"—through which all the network traffic "flows and ebbs and flows."

This intricate weaving and the systematic, schematic, and organizational approach to the poems is a natural impulse for Swinburne, a scholarly poet who embraced annotation, categorization, and clarity. He adopted a practice that would become more common in modernist works such as Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Swinburne frequently published explanatory and bibliographic notes to his own work; such notes may be found in *Poems and Ballads*, *First Series*, *Songs before*

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[10]   One easily finds in Swinburne many examples of his association of flowers with song and poetry. In the "Dedication, 1865" of *Poems and Ballads*, we find the phrase "musical flowers" (*Poems* 1: 295). The Prelude of *Tristram of Lyonesse* is rich with such imagery and metaphor: "My singing sign that makes the song-tree flower" (*Poems* 4: 8). The elegy "In Memory of Barry Cornwall" includes the phrase "the fruit and flower of his song" (*Poems* 3: 70). And in the sonnet "The Resurrection of Alcilia" Swinburne writes, "Sweet song-flower of the Mayspring of our song / Be welcome to us, with loving thanks and praise …" (*Poems* 5: 70).

Sunrise, *Erechtheus*, and *Songs of the Springtides*. Swinburne's appreciation for the aesthetic and critical value of organization and categorization may be found in the "Dedicatory Epistle" to his collected *Poems*. Here he speaks fondly of the "method" of dividing a poet's work into

> sections and classes … to see, for instance, their lyrical and elegiac works ranged and registered apart, each kind in a class of its own … The apparent formality of such an arrangement … might possibly be more than compensated to the more capable among students by the gain in ethical or spiritual symmetry and; aesthetic or intellectual harmony. (xiv)

So while the task of categorizing, sectioning, and classifying may appear pedantic and overly formal, the rewards are great: "ethical or spiritual symmetry and; aesthetic or intellectual harmony."

Swinburne's impulse to categorize and classify leads him to adapt some seemingly unpoetic forms to his poetry. Three of the four poems of *Songs of the Springtides* are, in some respects, poetic reference works or outlines. "Thalassius" is a syllabus outlining the curriculum for the education of a particular, Swinburnian kind of poet; "The Garden of Cymodoce" is a travel guide;[11] and the "Birthday Ode" a bibliography. These characterizations are not meant to be reductive. All the poems are deeply personal and deeply felt. That they share commonalities, structures, and techniques with reference works is a sign of generic experimentation and architectural ingenuity. Reference works adopt the kinds of links and cross-references that are also present in the networks of *Songs of the Springtides*. For instance, in reading the passage on Hugo from "The Garden of Cymodoce," one can imagine an implicit "see also" reference pointing to the "Birthday Ode." When Swinburne is accused of writing schematic poetry in a work like "Thalassius," there is no reason to protest. What should be challenged is the notion that a schematic design or presentation is necessarily aesthetically or intellectually suspect. Information science has taught us that organization, arrangement, and categorization are not mere conveniences, but involve the development of sophisticated conceptual models and the imposition of those models on complex bodies of knowledge and information. Digital humanities approaches employ similar strategies of categorization and classification, implementation of complex metadata standards and application of digital tools to reveal features commonly sought in humanities scholarship, that is, ethical or spiritual symmetries and aesthetic or intellectual harmonies that might otherwise go unnoticed.

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[11]   In a letter to Arnold, Swinburne writes, "[d]o you know my favorite corner of all on earth known to me, the island of Sark? If so, you cannot (I trust) fail to recognize in the third poem of my new book an attempt to supersede Murray by a simple and complete 'Handbook' in rhyme" (*Letters* 4: 142). Murray was a publisher of popular nineteenth-century travel handbooks.

Digital Strategies

Digital representations of the poems in *Songs of the Springtides* were indispensible to my own efforts to analyze Swinburne's poetic systems, networks, and models of categorization and classification. A de facto standard employed for such digital representations is the *Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) Guidelines*, a mature conceptual model for digital representation of a vast array of documents: inscriptions and papyri, manuscripts from all periods, correspondence, printed books, born-digital documents, and more. As stated in section "*About these Guidelines*," the *TEI Guidelines*

> make recommendations about suitable ways of representing those features of textual resources which need to be identified explicitly in order to facilitate processing by computer programs. In particular, they specify a set of markers (or *tags*) which may be inserted in the electronic representation of the text, in order to mark the text structure and other features of interest. (TEI Consortium)

The *TEI Guidelines* are implemented as an application of XML, the eXtensible Markup Language. A markup language is a system for "marking up" or encoding texts and data for explicit identification of structure and semantics. Thus the <div> element or "tag" can encode the beginning (<div>) and end (</div>) of a structural division such as a chapter, section, or subsection of a document. The <lg> tag, for "line group," indicates stanzas of verse, and the <l> tag, for "line," identifies lines of verse. HTML, the HyperText Markup Language, provides a set of tags for Web documents, and so includes tags for headings, divisions or sections, paragraphs, links, embedded images, and so on. TEI provides tags for all of these features but also more specialized tags for scholarly use, including tags to identify deletions, additions, and damage found in manuscripts; the various components of a critical apparatus; and names of various types (that is, people, places, organizations, and others). In case the hundreds of tags provided by TEI do not support a specific need of a particular scholarly project, the *TEI Guidelines* provide a convenient extension mechanism for the creation of new tags and modification of existing tags. All documents in *The Swinburne Project* have been encoded according to these *TEI Guidelines*.

These TEI-encoded texts, with basic structural and semantic encoding, serve as a foundation for the project. To these foundational texts, one may add richer encoding to support very specific explorations and literary expeditions. Below is an example of a lightly encoded stanza from "On the Cliffs":

```
<lg>
   < n="64">Dumb is the mouth of darkness as of death:</l>
   < n="65">Light, sound and life are one</l>
   < n="66"> In the eyes and lips of dawn that draw the sun</l>
   < n="67"> To hear what first child's word with glimmering breath</
      l>
   < n="68">Their weak wan weanling child the twilight saith;</l>
</lg>n="69">But night makes answer none.</l>
```

And here is line 65 from the passage above, with every word tagged and the lemma, or dictionary form, for each word included as an attribute of the tag:

```
< n="65">
  <w lemma="light">Light</w>,
  <w lemma="sound">sound</w>
  <w lemma="and">and</w>
  <w lemma="life">life</w>
  <w lemma="be">are</w>
  <w lemma="one">one</w>
</l>
```

Lemmatization can be particularly helpful for gathering together all forms of a word, especially in languages with many inflected forms, such as Greek or Latin. For Swinburne, gathering together *sing*, *sings*, *singing*, *sang*, *sung*, etc., under their lemma *sing* may, for instance, be very useful for searching and analysis.

Additional TEI mechanisms were employed to explore the conceptual networks in Swinburne's *Songs of the Springtides*. The first few passes of "encoding" simply involved strategies familiar to students of literature: an iterative process of reading, highlighting, and annotating of the primary texts, secondary critical works, and more general reference works. This process revealed, among other things, the set of conceptual and thematic categories, discussed above, that control the structure and flow of the volume. Having "marked" these structures with notes, marginalia, and other scribbles and scrawlings, I modeled TEI structures to encode these features in a machine-readable form that can be processed by computer programs. One such structure is a formalized list of conceptual or thematic keywords; this list is embedded within the metadata for each poem. The basic structure of a TEI-encoded text includes two major sections, the TEI Header, which includes metadata about the text, and the text itself, typically a transcription of a print or manuscript source document. The transcription may include much besides the basic transcription, including editorial and explanatory notes. The metadata in the TEI Header includes bibliographic information about the digital file and the analog source, technical details about the encoding, descriptive metadata regarding subject, language, and so on, along with many other metadata options, such as the structured list of conceptual keywords:

```
        <taxonomy xml:id="keywords">
    <bibl><title>Thematic Keywords</title></bibl>
    <category xml:id="kw-sea" corresp="swinburne.xtm#sea">
          <catDesc>sea</catDesc>
      </category>
    <category xml:id="kw-time" corresp="swinburne.xtm#time">
          <catDesc>time</catDesc>
      </category>
    <category xml:id="kw-poet" corresp="swinburne.xtm#poet">
      <catDesc>poet</catDesc>
```

```
        </category>
    <category xml:id="kw-song" corresp="swinburne.xtm#song">
      <catDesc>song</catDesc>
      </category>
    <category xml:id="kw-fire" corresp="swinburne.xtm#fire">
      <catDesc>fire</catDesc>
      </category>
    <category xml:id="kw-earth" corresp="swinburne.xtm#earth">
      <catDesc>earth</catDesc>
      </category>
    <category xml:id="kw-air" corresp="swinburne.xtm#air">
      <catDesc>air (wind)</catDesc>
      </category>
    <category xml:id="kw-water" corresp="swinburne.xtm#water">
      <catDesc>water</catDesc>
      </category>
    <category xml:id="kw-heavens" corresp="swinburne.xtm#heavens">
      <catDesc>celestial bodies</catDesc>
      </category>
    <category xml:id="kw-compass" corresp="swinburne.xtm#compass">
      <catDesc>compass</catDesc>
      </category>
    </category>
  </taxonomy>¹²
```

Then within the text, words and passages associated with one or more of these keywords are encoded with tags linking the word or passage in the text to the relevant keyword(s) in the list above. Here is the second stanza of "Thalassius" encoded in such a manner:

```
<lg>
  < n="16">For when<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke12" corresp="#kw-
time">July</seg>strewed<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke13" corresp="#kw-
fire">fire</seg>on earth and<seg
    type="keyword" xml:id="ke14" corresp="#kw-sea">sea</seg>
  </l>
  < n="17"><seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke15" corresp="#kw-time">The
last time ere that
    year</seg>,</l>
  < n="18">Out of the<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke16" corresp="#kw-
fire">flame</seg>of<seg
          type="keyword" xml:id="ke17" corresp="#kw-time">morn</seg>
    <seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke18" corresp="#kw-sea">Cymothoe</seg>
  </l>
  < n="19">Beheld one brighter than the<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke19"
```

---

¹² Those unfamiliar with XML, TEI, and the technical syntax in this illustration may nonetheless observe that the example includes a list of conceptual keywords, each of which has an unique identifier (xml:id) that is used for linking purposes.

corresp="#kw-heavens"
       >sunbright sphere</seg>
     </l>
     <l n="20">Move toward her from its fieriest heart, whence trod</l>
     <l n="21"><seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke20" corresp="#kw-heavens">
The live sun's very
       God</seg>,</l>
     <l n="22">Across<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke21" corresp="#kw-
sea">the foam-bright
       water-ways</seg>that are</l>
     <l n="23">As<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke22" corresp="#kw-heavens">
heavenlier heavens with
       star for answering star</seg>,</l>
     <l n="24">And on her eyes and hair and maiden mouth</l>
     <l n="25">Felt a kiss falling fierier than the South</l>
     <pb n="296"/>
     <l n="26">And heard above afar</l>
     <l n="27">A noise of<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke23" corresp="#kw-
song">songs</seg>and<seg
       type="keyword" xml:id="ke24" corresp="#kw-air"> wind-enamoured
wings</seg></l>
     <l n="28">And<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke25" corresp="#kw-song">
lutes and lyres of milder
       and mightier strings</seg>,</l>
     <l n="29"> And round <seg xml:id="kf25" corresp="#heavens">the resonant
radiance of his car</seg></l>
     <l n="30">Where depth is one with height,</l>
     <l n="31"><seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke26" corresp="#kw-song">Light
heard as music, music seen
       as light</seg>.</l>
     <l n="32">And with<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke27" corresp="#kw-time">that
<seg
       type="keyword" xml:id="ke36" corresp="#kw-heavens">second
moondawn</seg>of the
       spring's</seg>
     </l>
     <l n="33">That fosters the first rose,</l>
     <l n="34"><seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke28" corresp="#kw-heavens">A sun-
child</seg>whiter than
       the sunlit snows</l>
     <l n="35">Was born out of the world of sunless things</l>
     <l n="36">That round the round earth flows and ebbs and flows.</l>
     </lg>

The tag <seg type="keyword"> indicates a segment of text containing a word or passage of interest. The attribute *corresp* (short for *corresponds*) provides the link to the keyword or keywords that correspond to this particular passage. Let's examine more closely a few lines:

<l n="26">And heard above afar</l>
<l n="27">A noise of<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke23" corresp="#kw-song">songs</seg>and<seg
type="keyword" xml:id="ke24" corresp="#kw-air">wind-enamoured wings</seg></l>
<l n="28">And<seg type="keyword" xml:id="ke25" corresp="#kw-song">
lutes and lyres of milder
and mightier strings</seg>,</l>

The first <seg> element (short for *segment*), in line 27 (<l n="27">) marks the word *songs*, and links it, obviously enough, to the keyword *song* (corresp="#kw-song"). Then in the same line, the phrase *wind-enamoured wings* is marked with a <seg> element and linked to the keyword *air*, or wind, (corresp="#kw-air"). In the next line, the phrase *lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings*, is marked with yet another <seg> element, and linked to the keyword *song* (corresp="#kw-song"). This latter example illustrates some of the power and functionality that the markup provides over basic string searching and pattern matching. One can, of course, search a digital text for strings such as *song* and *sing* and find occurrences of words such as *song*, *songs*, *sing*, *sings*, *singer*, and so on. Such a query will not, however, locate *lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings*. But with a text encoded as described above, a bit of technical know-how, and the appropriate tools, one can use an expression such as //seg[@corresp="#kw-song"] to generate a list of all the words and phrases that have been associated with the concept *song* by the encoder of the text. Of course, for this to work, one needs to do a significant amount of reading and encoding of the text. Some of the more obvious associations may be automatically tagged by simple computer programs. Less obvious associations require human intervention or much more sophisticated computational algorithms. But that is the nature of at least one sort of digital humanities research: an interative process of reading, editing, encoding and tagging, processing, rereading, re-editing, re-encoding and retagging, reprocessing, and so on.

One useful way to process digitally encoded texts, is to use them as data sources for graphical information visualizations. I worked with a number of colleagues to develop a visualization that would illustrate and allow interactive exploration of the conceptual networks in Swinburne's *Songs of the Springtides*, or ultimately in any collection of texts.[13] Preliminary results are illustrated in Fig. 2.2 on the following page.
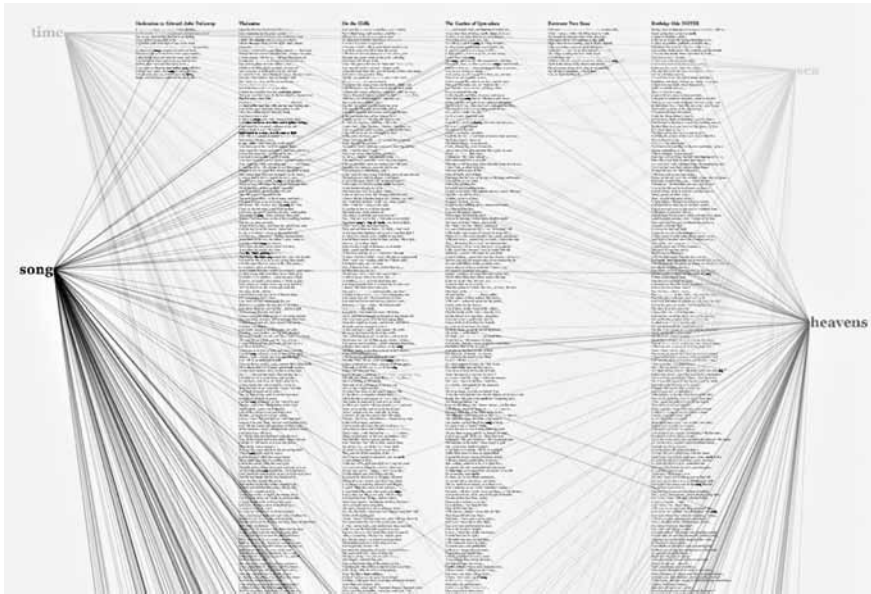

Fig. 2.2   The text of *Songs of the Springtides* appears above, surrounded
               by conceptual keywords. Lines are drawn from the keywords to
               the related words and passages within the text. The occurrences
               within the text are highlighted in the same shade of gray as the
               related keyword. The large keywords can be dragged around the
               screen to explore, for instance, different patterns of intersection and
               convergence.

Song and the Sea

Figure 2.3 focuses on the two familiar Swinburnian tropes of song and the sea that
seem to dominate among the many networked nodes, indices, and other structures
in *Songs of the Springtides*. The title of the volume itself invokes both song and
the sea and is evocative of the moment of crisis and transition in Swinburne's life
and work that occurred during the composition of the poems. The word *springtide*
has many potentially relevant meanings; multiple definitions are listed in the *OED*.
It can mean simply the "season of spring; spring-time." Another definition relates to
the sea and the tides. A springtide is "a tide occurring on the days shortly after the
new and full moon, in which the high-water level reaches its maximum." During
the springtide the low-water level is also at its lowest. The season of spring and the
new moon both convey a sense of newness, rebirth, and reinvigoration, perhaps
reflecting the sense of renewal and rest Swinburne experienced after emerging from
the difficult period of ill health and alcoholic excess. In the image of the springtide
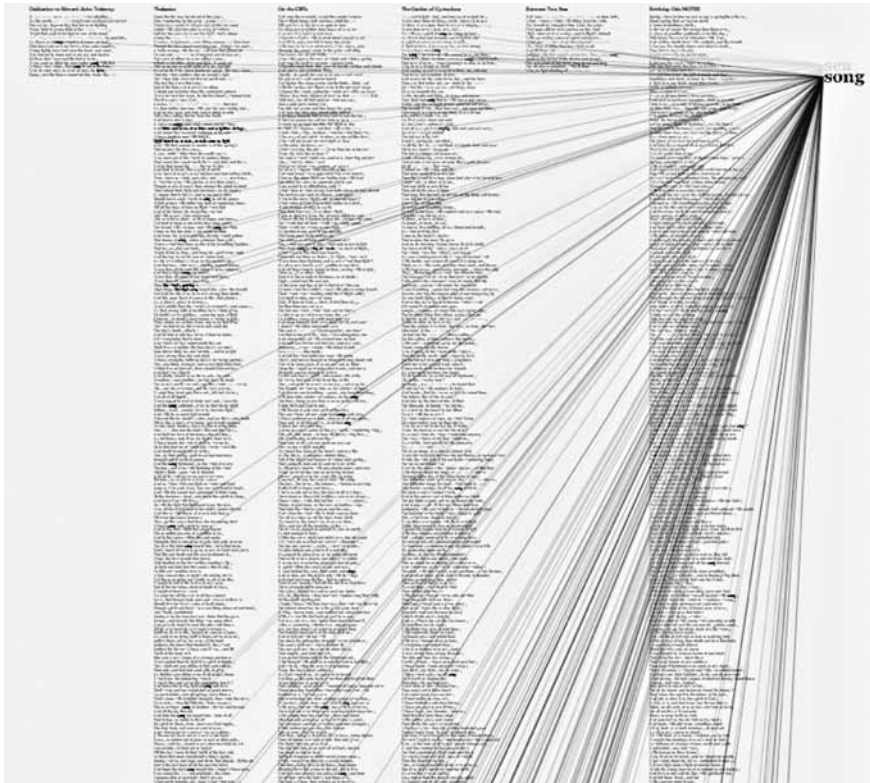
Fig. 2.3   In this visualization, all keywords but *sea* and *song* have been
             turned "off." The origin points of *sea* and *song* have been aligned,
             with their labels overlapping, in the upper right hand corner, to
             illustrate similarities and differences in occurrence and distribution.
             One notices a large clustering of darker (*sea*) and lighter (*song*) gray
             lines leading down toward the conclusion of each longer poem.
             The interactive, color visualization is available on the Web as
             a resource of *The Swinburne Project* at <http://purl.oclc.org/
             swinburnearchive/vis/acsvis0001/>.

as the time of highest and lowest tides, Swinburne perhaps found a symbol to
encompass his familiar pairings of extremes and opposites. Springtide may also
mean "a copious flow or large quantity of something." While Matthew Arnold
privately derided "Swinburne's fatal habit of using one hundred words where
one would suffice" (*The Letters of Matthew Arnold* 5: 219), Swinburne himself
boasted of the length of his poems, and was particularly proud of his copious flow
of inspiration, celebrating the fact that his "little volume" included "three poems
upwards of 500 lines each in length" (*Letters* 4: 112).

In naming *Songs of the Springtides*, Swinburne followed his usual practice of referencing music or song in the titles of his collections of poetry. The "ballads" of his three series of *Poems and Ballads* are suggestive of course of sung verse. To these three volumes we may add *Songs before Sunrise*, *Songs of Two Nations*, and *Studies in Song*. In fact, from 1866, when his first collection was published, until 1880 with *Studies in Song*, all the titles of Swinburne's collections of poems contained the words *song*, *songs*, or *ballads*. Swinburne conceived of his poems as songs, not because of the oft-repeated and false charge that he cared more for sound than sense in his verse, but because of his profound understanding of and respect for the history and legacy of poetry, for its origins in song and performance, and in the sung lyrics and choruses of his beloved Greeks, Sappho and Aeschylus. A computer-generated concordance of all the poems in the *Songs of the Springtides* reveals that the word *song*, in its various forms and derivations (that is, *song*, *songs*, *sing*, *singer*, *singing*, and *sang*), is the most frequent significant word (excluding articles, prepositions, and the like) in the collection, appearing over 100 times. To these occurrences, one must also add other references to music and song, such as "lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings" (*Poems* 3: 296) or "the wind's quiring to the choral sea" (*Poems* 3: 297). The references are more or less evenly distributed throughout the collection. In "Thalassius," nearly half the poem, lines 63–243, are devoted to the lessons taught by the "high song" of Thalassius's foster-father. As the high song supersedes the foster-father as the mentor and tutor of Thalassius, so at the poem's conclusion Thalassius himself undergoes a transfiguration: "Being now no more a singer, but a song" (*Poems* 3: 309). Following this transfiguration from singer to song, from poet to poem, from human to musical and textual form in the final stanza of the poem, Apollo addresses his son Thalassius, and rewards him for sacrificing a conventional life for a life of song, a life as song:

> "Child of my sunlight and the sea, from birth
> A fosterling and fugitive on earth;
> Sleepless of soul as wind or wave or fire,
> A manchild with an ungrown God's desire;
> Because thou hast loved nought mortal more than me,
> Thy father, and thy mother-hearted sea;
> Because thou hast set thine heart to sing, and sold
> Life and life's love for song, God's living gold;
> Because thou hast given thy flower and fire of youth
> To feed men's hearts with visions, truer than truth;
> Because thou hast kept in those world-wandering eyes
> The light that makes me music of the skies;
> Because thou hast heard with world-unwearied ears
> The music that puts light into the spheres;
> Have therefore in thine heart and in thy mouth
> The sound of song that mingles north and south,
> The song of all the winds that sing of me,
> And in thy soul the sense of all the sea." (*Poems* 3: 310)

This passage clearly illustrates the connection in Swinburne's work between song, or poetry, and the complementary trope of the sea. And as in the opening stanzas of "Thalassius," the more prominent tropes of song and sea are punctuated again with floral imagery ("thy flower and fire of youth") and repeated references to the heavens ("music of the skies," "music that puts light into the spheres").

The word *sea* appears nearly as many times as *song* throughout the volume and in every poem. The words *sea* and *seas* appear some 74 times in the volume. But then *sea* also appears another 39 or so times as part of compounds, such as "sea-flower" or "sea-wind." And to these specific occurrences of the *sea*, one must add more elusive references: "foam-flowered strand" and "the foam-bright water-ways" (*Poems* 3: 295). All these references, explicit and elusive, may be captured, annotated, processed, and otherwise manipulated using the digital-encoding strategies discussed above. *Songs of the Springtides* represents Swinburne's most concentrated and sustained treatment of the sea, which serves, like the spider's web, as a metaphor, in Swinburne's poetic enterprise, for distributed networks of key words and concepts. The sea is everything and nothing for Swinburne. It is the source of "a life and a pulse, a sting and a swell, which touch and excite the nerves like fire or like music" ("Byron" 243), and it is a desolate wasteland as in "the waste of waves" ("By the North Sea" *Poems* 5: 107), "the waves of the waste wide sea" (*Erechtheus Poems* 4: 370), "The dim twin wastes of sea and land" ("Birthday Ode" *Poems* 3: 344). The sea is a fluid and formless mass given structure by the rhythms of the waves and the tides and the coast's outlines. It is the dark and mysterious depths and the bright sparkling, sun-lit surface surrounded by cliffs and inhabited by sea-birds. The networks of *Songs of the Springtides* provide the reader with a similar diversity of meaning. One need not arrive at specific linear patterns of meaning in these poems—to attempt to do so would be to struggle against the web-like, networked architecture of the work. The volume is about the particular artist Swinburne, and the general figure of the poet; it is about Shelley, Landor, Hugo, Aeschylus, and Sappho, and all poets and singers; it is about the months and seasons and the passage of time; it is about works and texts and books. And it is, above all, about the fluid relationships shared among all these elements and the multiplicity of meaning that may be found by traversing various paths along Swinburne's poetic network.

Coinciding with Swinburne's physical move from London to The Pines, *Songs of the Springtides* represents not a retreat from the life of experience but an embrace of a life of words, a transfiguration from singer to song, and a quest for a "heaven of wondrous words" ("Thalassius" *Poems* 3: 298). Fittingly, the volume closes with a verse bibliography. Swinburne shared with many of the readers of this present volume of essays an enduring and unrelenting passion for words, texts, and books. For a poet possessed by such a passion, why should a descriptive bibliography of his favorite contemporary author not be a fitting subject for an ode in the grand style? The enduring love of Swinburne's life was his love of books. Near the end of his life, in the "Dedicatory Epistle" that prefaces his collected *Poems*, Swinburne pays homage to his beloved "heaven of wondrous words":

> 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)

While one hopes never to dispense with the books on the dusty shelves of our
libraries, perhaps we can exploit the digital technologies now available to shake
off some of that dust from the text themselves, and reinvigorate them with the
energy of living things.

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