

Is Victorian Poetry Modern?

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Abstract

Until recently, the Victorian era has been understood as largely anti-modern. Much Victorian poetry was simply ignored by critics, who often saw it as regressive. The poets from the period who did garner attention often did so because they seemed to be “ahead of their time.” Starting in the 1990s and continuing into the present, literary critics have begun to revisit the question of Victorian poets’ relationship to modernity. This scholarship, which often focuses on how poetry from the period was shaped by industrialization and technological innovation, contends that the work of many Victorian poets can be understood as fundamentally modern. This article briefly reviews older scholarship on Victorian poetry’s relationship to modernity, surveys more recent critical interventions, and suggests the development of a critical approach to the poetry of the period that would neither collapse the terms “Victorian” and “modern” nor simply set them at odds with one another.

If either “Victorian” or “modern” were simply what they appear to be – designators of time periods – then this article’s titular question could easily be resolved. That the question remains one of serious scholarly debate is a testament to the slippery qualities of both terms, which are understood to embody temperaments as much as times or, more accurately, temperaments *toward* time. While my title poses the question of whether Victorian poetry is modern, I do not intend to directly answer it here. Rather, in tracing the critical history of this question, I will demonstrate how the terms “modern” and “Victorian” designate experiences of temporality that are tied up with one another in complex ways. The first part of this article will briefly summarize the traditional understanding of the term “Victorian,” which defines it in opposition to the “modern” and, implicitly, defines the “modern” against the specter of a backwards Victorianism. Then, I will survey more recent scholarship that has challenged this oppositional framework. Finally, I will suggest – through a short reading of Gerard Manley Hopkins’s “The Wreck of the Deutschland” – a way of recognizing the coexistence of the “modern” and the “Victorian” within nineteenth-century British poetry that does not collapse these terms or simply set them at odds with each other.

The term “Victorian” has been overdetermined almost since the moment it was coined. While, at its most basic level, it describes the years of Queen Victoria’s reign (1837–1901), even in Victoria’s lifetime there were attempts to associate it with a particular social, aesthetic, and political attitude. In “Whether ‘Victorian’ Poetry: A Genre and Its Period,” Joseph Bristow notes that within only two years of Victoria’s ascension to the throne, “*The Athenaeum* ventured that ‘Victorian’ would succeed ‘Georgian’ as the definition of the age” (88) and traces the first attempt to provide a literary definition of the “Victorian” to Edmund Clarence Stedman’s 1875 book *Victorian Poets*. It focused on how the era’s poets were shaped by large-scale social transitions within their time, particularly those within the realms of science, technology, and philosophy. As Bristow demonstrates, this understanding of Victorian poetry and its corresponding vision of Victorian society would continue to define literary-critical understandings of the era for the majority of the twentieth century. Nineteenth-century scholarship on

Victorian poetry would also largely shape the literary canon of the period, particularly the identification of Robert Browning and Lord Alfred Tennyson as paradigmatic figures of the age (92–97).

In the twentieth century, literary critics increasingly focused on one particular site of tension and transition; the clash between faith and doubt was understood to characterize both the age itself and the internal lives of its major poets. While the era of Victoria's reign saw substantial "modernization" in terms of technology, scientific discovery, and political organization, religion was privileged as the site where Victorian poetry most directly confronted modernity. Some Victorian poets, including Christina Rossetti and Gerard Manley Hopkins, were associated with the traditionalist Oxford Movement within the Church of England. Indeed, one of the most commercially successful poetic publications of the time period was John Keble's *The Christian Year*, a collection of devotional poetry tied to the liturgical calendar and composed by one of the leaders of the movement. John Henry Newman, the most public face of the movement until his conversion to Catholicism in 1845, while best known for his prose, was also a relatively prolific poet. His assertion that "the present is a text and the past its interpretation" (Newman 250) might also stand as one of the era's most striking rejoinders to the future directness of political, scientific, and technological progressivism. The fact that, for most of the twentieth century, literary criticism of Victorian poetry highly favored conflicted figures like Tennyson and Matthew Arnold over the supposedly traditional religiosity of more devotional poets is further testament to the ascendancy of a critical narrative focused on the tension between faith and doubt and to the acceptance of popular accounts of Victorian social mores as repressive and backwards. Critics liked their Victorian poets best when they were not quite "Victorian."

This is perhaps most obvious in the literary criticism produced by the modernists, whose very name suggests the degree to which they defined themselves against their supposedly backwards predecessors. For instance, T.S. Eliot largely defends the power of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* both by declaring it un-Victorian and insisting that it was popular in its own time because it was only partially understood:

It happens now and then that a poet by some strange accident expresses the mood of his generation while at the same time [...] expressing a mood of his own which is quite remote from that of his generation. [...] *In Memoriam* can, I think, justly be called a religious poem, but for another reason than that which made it seem religious to his contemporaries. It is not religious because of the quality of its faith, but because of the quality of its doubt. Its faith is a poor thing, but its doubt is a very intense experience. (Eliot 136–8)

The "quality" of Victorian doubt would continue to interest the next generation of literary critics. J. Hillis Miller's 1963 *Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* devotes chapters to Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, and Gerard Manley Hopkins. While Miller opts for the less-overdetermined term "nineteenth-century" over "Victorian" to describe the objects of his book, he nonetheless provides an account of several major Victorian authors rooted in the faith-and-doubt tension model. Miller notes that the subjects of his book "rejected or were excluded from certain ways of dealing with the loss of God. For some Victorians God was still present. Some lamented the fading of God. Some noted the fading, but did not at all lament" (12) while "the writers discussed here all attempt [...] to bring God back to earth as a benign power inherent in the self, in nature, and in human community" (15). In short, then, the book cares most for authors who comfortably belong neither to the piety of the era nor to its skepticism. Miller quotes the famous lines from Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse" to describe this middle position: "Wandering between two worlds, one dead/The other powerless to be born" (ll. 85–86).

More recent scholarship has begun to challenge the understandings of secularization and Victorian culture that animated previous critical approaches to Victorian poetry. In his 2011 book *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible*, Charles LaPorte notes that scholars of the era's poetry have often emphasized the role of doubt because "the Victorians found [poetry] so well suited to explaining their religious anxieties" (2). This point echoes that of historian Timothy Larsen, who has argued that the prominence of literary criticism within the larger field of Victorian studies has given an outsized importance to the loss of faith. He insists that a "distinction needs to be clearly made between a theme in literature or English studies and a judgement regarding what a historical period itself was actually like" (Larsen 6). However, LaPorte's work suggests that religion and faith's ongoing role in social life can be found as much within the era's literature as beyond it, if literary scholars are willing to look for it. He does recognize, however, that "[a]s a body, literary scholars have been slow to grapple with the recent scholarly reevaluation of Victorian religious culture in part because the old narratives of disappearance and loss have always served us so well" (3).

In his account of Victorian literature and secularization that appeared in these pages in 2013, LaPorte notes that these older narratives are partially due to Matthew Arnold's influence on the development of literary studies as a discipline. The profession of English, in its infancy, reflected Arnold's belief that the study of literature and the cultivation of culture must serve as the necessary replacement for religion, which was no longer tenable as a dogmatic system but nonetheless played a key role in ensuring social stability. The Victorian era's concern with secularization becomes literary studies own origin story, which explains why "[i]n scholarship that leans upon the usual narrative of secularization, the doubt-filled oeuvre of a (most often) male poet like Arnold or A.H. Clough emerges as a key cultural bellwether, while the religious one of a (very often) female one like Barrett Browning seems like a vestigial remainder" ("Victorian Literature, Religion, and Secularization" 280). LaPorte argues that we should reject a triumphalist narrative of secularization, in which faith is slowly but surely undone by doubt, and embrace a more nuanced account, such as Charles Taylor's claim that the nineteenth century is "secular" not because of a large-scale loss of belief (in fact religious faith remained quite strong) but rather due to a change in the fundamental conditions of belief. Adopting Taylor's narrative, according to LaPorte, will allow scholars to forge a more capacious understanding of the period that can re-integrate that "vestigial remainder." Indeed, more recent scholarship has increasingly understood Victorian poets, including those who were previously seen as merely mired in a disappearing world, as largely modern. While the question of how to define modernity remains an open one, literary scholars seeking to locate the "modern" within the "Victorian" have particularly privileged a definition of modernity that focuses on its relationship to time and the moment. Since this understanding is so central to this scholarship, a brief rehearsal of its development is warranted here. Importantly, it is a concept that first appears through a nineteenth-century poet, Charles Baudelaire, who – in distinction to his "backwards" Victorian counterparts – has traditionally been framed by both literary critics and philosophers as one of the first truly modern authors.¹ Baudelaire first provided his definition of *modernité* in "The Painter of Modern Life," where he defines it as "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable" (13). His idea of modernity would be explored extensively in the twentieth century by Walter Benjamin and Jürgen Habermas.

¹As Anne Jamison notes in *Poetics en passant: Redefining the Relationship Between Victorian and Modern Poetry*, the association of nineteenth-century France with the modern and of Victorian England with a backwards fixation on tradition is in fact counter to Baudelaire's own perception and that of many of his contemporaries. In Jamison's account, "anglomania" informed "Baudelaire's association of the new, the foreign, and modern with what we have come to understand as the Victorian" (97).

This stream of thought regarding the modern focuses on two principle shifts in the experience of time. First, a movement away from a conception of time as inherently meaningful, such as the sacred, circular representation of time in religious liturgy, and towards what Benjamin terms the “homogenous, empty time” of modernity, time that has been emptied out of inherent significance and is measured out in the arbitrary, uniform divisions of clock time (Benjamin 261) and second, an increased attention to the importance of the moment. This privileging of the present moment is intimately tied up with what Habermas terms the “epochal concept” of modernity (*Philosophical Discourse* 5). In Habermas’s account, our contemporary understanding of the “modern” is only possible because it “lost its merely chronological meaning and took on the oppositional significance of an emphatically ‘new’ or ‘modern’ age” (5). By defining itself through rupture, modernity could not root its meaning in the past but instead had to “re-capitulate the break brought about with the past as a *continuous renewal*” (7). In Habermas’s account of Baudelaire, his focus on the aesthetic quality of the moment, of the transitory, is a response to “the problem of self-grounding” (8) ushered in by modernity. For Baudelaire, “[a]ctuality can be constituted only as the point where time and eternity intersect” (9).

In her mammoth 1993 book *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics*, Isobel Armstrong suggests that the Victorians – and not just their French counterparts like Baudelaire – played an important role in the development of this sense of being modern. She coins the term “Victorian modernism,” though she separates it from the more epochal thinking of later modernisms:

“Modern,” in spite of its long history, has a resurgence as a Victorian term – the “modern” element in literature (Arnold), “modern” love (Meredith), a “modern” landlord (William Allingham). [...] Victorian modernism sees itself as new but it does not, like twentieth century modernism, conceive itself in terms of a radical break with the past. [...] [It] describes itself as belonging to a condition of crisis which has emerged directly from economic and cultural change. (3)²

More recent critical accounts of Victorian poetry have sought to look not only at this “economic and cultural change” but also at technological ones; oftentimes, these studies more strongly associate Victorian poetry with disconnection and disruption.

Of particular note in this regard is Ivan Kreilkamp’s seminal article “Victorian Poetry’s Modernity,” published in *Victorian Poetry* in 2003. Drawing directly on Habermas’s definition of modernity as “discontinuity in everyday life” (“Modernity—An Incomplete Project” 5), Kreilkamp argues that such discontinuities may well be found in Victorian poetry as an “implicit or covert tendency” despite the fact that the poetry is “to some degree anti-modernist in its explicit presentation” (605). Kreilkamp takes Robert Browning as a sort of test case for this theory, given his status as a thoroughly Victorian poet. By reading references to calotyping in Browning’s “Mesmerism,” Kreilkamp ties the poet’s obsession with “image-making” to the burgeoning technology of photography, suggesting that to find the “modern” in Browning, we must “pay attention to details that would otherwise seem marginal or extraneous” and concludes that even though “Browning may not have seen his own work as grappling with a Baudelairean modern of rupture, transience, and discontinuity,” this “does not mean that we need limit ourselves within the boundaries of his own self-understanding” (607–8). Part of what we must look beyond is “Victorian poetry’s own production of an often romanticized or nostalgic vision of the past” that makes it appear “much less available to materialist approaches” (608).

²Jessica R. Feldman as also uses the term “Victorian Modernism” in her monograph of the same title. Feldman, however, sees the “modernity” of Victorian literature primarily in its pragmatism, which she identifies as “anti-dogmatic, anti-metaphysical, anti-foundational, anti-positivist, anti-systematic” (Feldman 2), an orientation that she believes unites both Victorian and Modernist projects and allows the eras to be understood as “one continuous period” (Feldman 3).

In *Victorian Photography and Literary Nostalgia*, published the same year as Kreilkamp's article, Helen Groth argues that this nostalgic vision is itself a product of modernity. She traces both the way in which Victorian poetry was tied to the commodification of nostalgia and its close relationship to the mass market photography of the time period. Indeed, in travel guides, gift books, and mementos, photography and verse were often combined to increase the effect of nostalgia. While this nostalgia was fixated on the past, it was defined by the conditions of the present: "it was in the process of 'consigning themselves to sepia' that Victorian poets, photographers, and publishers alike came to terms with their own modernity" (7). As Groth suggests, photography deeply affected individuals' sense of the relationship between time and place. However, it was not the only technology that shaped the modern sensibilities of the Victorians.

In her 2005 book *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism*, Ana Parejo Vadillo explores how the centrality of public transit affected female Victorian poets' experience of the city. The *flâneur*, a regular figure in Baudelaire's poetry, has always been central to the theorization of modernity, but the figure has almost always been presented as male.³ Vadillo's book is part of a recent trend in cultural history that has begun to focus on the ways in which women increasingly took to the streets of modern London in the nineteenth century. Vadillo's book addresses how the imagination of Victorian women poets was shaped by the mediation of new technologies of movement, arguing that "[m]ass-transport facilities were not just vehicles for moving across the different cartographies of London. They were vehicles, tools of modernity, which the passenger used to inquire about modern life" (27). Far more so than the *flâneur*, the passenger's spatial vision of the city was tied to the temporal shift in speed enabled by public transit: "the appearance of speed produced two parallel effects, the adaptation of the human eye to the transient, and the transformation of the observer into a transient figure" (35).

By focusing on *transit* as itself a fundamental transition in social experience and as the literal and metaphorical vehicle for moving into modernity, Vadillo recalls the earliest critical understanding of the Victorian era as transitional. However, rather than locating her subjects in a state of tension between the traditional and the modern, Vadillo presents them as progressing distinctly forward toward the modern, with the times if not ahead of them. Far from representing a clinging to tradition, a charge long made against many female Victorian poets, Vadillo's subjects (Amy Levy, Alice Meynell, Graham R. Tomson, and Michael Field) are characterized as effectively modern, an understanding that extends to the book's title, which avoids labeling them as Victorian.

Other recent critical interventions into female Victorian poets have framed elements in their work that seem traditional – such as their religious devotional content – as essentially modern. Krista Lysack's "The Productions of Time: Keble, Rossetti, and Victorian Devotional Reading" (2013) takes one of the most canonical female poets of the era and locates within her devotional poetry the influence of shifting experiences of time ushered in by social and technological changes. Lysack contrasts Rossetti's *Time Flies: A Reading Diary* (1885), in which she structures her meditations around her daily devotional reading, with Keble's *The Christian Year* (1827), which was organized according to the Church of England's liturgical calendar. Unlike Keble's collection, Rossetti's is arranged not by the traditional, communal structure of the liturgical year but by the modern, individual structure of a daily life broken into increasingly small moments of regimented clock time. Focusing on Rossetti's claim, in her entry for September 18 that "Heaven and earth alike are chronometers" (220), Lysack contends that Rossetti is attempting to render modern, "empty" time sacred:

Filling and animating empty time is the daily devotional project of *Time Flies*. Rossetti's book thematizes and instrumentalizes the formation of a lively and self-regarding devotional reading subject

³See Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (2005) for an extensive consideration of this topic.

through a discourse she calls “self-sifting.” In her playful and curious chronometrics, furthermore, Rossetti reveals the ways that heavenly time is produced through a material relation with the book as object. (455)

In contrast to a traditional critical understanding of the opposition of faith and doubt as the corollary to the opposition of the premodern and the modern, Lysack understands Rossetti’s devotional work not as a clinging to the past but as a thoroughly modern way of engaging in faith. If we adopt Taylor’s previously discussed conception of secularization over older, triumphalist understandings, then we might indeed see Rossetti as a secular figure.

Lysack’s article reflects a larger renewed critical interest in the role of traditional faith within Victorian life, one that sees the social experience of faith as being at least as complex and multifaceted in the period as that of doubt. Kristie Blair’s 2012 book *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion* emphasizes that the late nineteenth century marked a high point of public interest in debates about theology, largely due to the rise of the Oxford Movement. Such debates, she argues, had aesthetic and theological consequences, and critics must understand these theological issues to fully appreciate the aesthetic ones. “Victorian poets and their readers,” she writes, “shared a vocabulary relating to contemporary religious debates that we have largely lost. And one of the key words in this vocabulary was ‘form’” (5). The overlap between poetic and religious forms meant “not simply that Victorian poetry was held to have a religious function, but that Victorian religion was held to have a poetic function” (8). Blair’s central thesis is that the formal structure of the poetry of the period reflects, ultimately, on the presence of both faith and doubt: “when Victorian poetry speaks of faith, it tends to do so in steady and regular rhythms; when it speaks of doubt, it is correspondingly more likely to deploy irregular, unsteady, unbalanced rhythms” (1).

For instance, Keble’s *The Christian Year* has a generally regular rhythm whose function corresponds with the Oxford Movement’s insistence that religious liturgical forms could provide an appropriate and moderating channel for religious enthusiasm. In contrast, the poetry of Thomas Hardy was more “irregular,” reflecting his own complex attitude toward the Church of England. Hardy often apes common hymn measure but disrupts it metrically and visually in select lines, in other situations he deploys the form “ironically” (120). “Hardy’s poems,” Blair writes, “appeal to the familiarity of hymns and psalm-tunes, but they also represent them as artifacts of the past” (118). Blair closes her paper by briefly considering the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins, the metrically inventive Jesuit poet. She notes that the tradition of “Roman Catholic poetics” in which Hopkins locates himself does not embrace as full a separation between regular and irregular forms as the Anglican-influenced poetics she devotes most of the book to. This Catholic poetics is “capable of combining a more extreme emphasis on discipline with a more permissive attitude towards both the expression of personal feeling and the presentation of this discipline in poetic practice” (232).

In these closing pages, I will suggest that the capaciousness of Hopkins’s poetry may also allow us to reimagine the relationship between traditional and modern “times” within Victorian poetry. The studies briefly summarized here suggest that if early accounts of Victorian poetry found it to be largely retrograde and valorized most strongly those poets who seemed, in some way, ahead of their time, many recent critical accounts have seen Victorian poets as themselves already modern.⁴ Yet there is a third way of considering the relationship between Victorian

⁴Blair’s book departs somewhat from this trend and, in fact, resembles earlier critical accounts that draw a divide between traditionalist and progressive instincts in the period. Unlike earlier studies, however, Blair’s takes “traditional” religious belief—and the poetic forms that she associates with it—as worthy of sustained critical inquiry.

poetry and modernity. Instead of understanding the “backwards” time of the Victorians as fundamentally opposed to the future-directed time of modernity or, alternately, understanding Victorianism as covertly modern, we might understand the two temporalities as coextensive, at least within some poetry of the period, and themselves productive of spaces that resist definition as either modern or regressive.⁵

In many ways, Hopkins seems a more modern figure than his fellow Victorian poets due to the metrical experimentation in his “sprung rhythm.” However, as a figure who first found himself a devotee of the Oxford movement and then subsequently converted to Roman Catholicism, being received into the Catholic church by John Henry Newman himself, Hopkins was also deeply influenced by traditionalist currents within the era. His “The Wreck of the Deutschland” is particularly notable for the two temporal registers that it deals in: a traditional, liturgical time and the “empty, homogenous” time of modernity. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson explains the difference between these temporalities by contrasting the role of simultaneity in each. He contends that the term “meanwhile” is central to a modern conception of simultaneity. Not only is it the fundamental narrative device of the novel, it is also the governing model of the newspaper, which unites events solely by “calendrical coincidence” for the “date at the top of the newspaper, the single most important emblem on it, provides the essential connection – the steady onward clocking of homogenous, empty time” (33). This exists in stark contrast to the type of simultaneity that Anderson locates in premodern, religious art, one which is “marked [...] by prefiguring and fulfillment,” uniting past, present, and future within a divine and transcendent framework. The circular, sacred time of liturgy is based upon such a concept of simultaneity. While liturgical time is tied to the gathering of religious community within a single space, the time of modern simultaneity is experienced by a vast and scattered community sharing “the almost precisely simultaneous consumption” of the newspaper.

“The Wreck of the Deutschland” clearly invokes both a traditional, sacred conception of simultaneity and its modern counterpart. The poem itself is divided into two sections, one of which describes Hopkins’s own religious experiences and lays out a sacred account of history in which God’s mystery “rides time like riding a river” (l. 47). While this mystery culminates in the crucifixion, it was “felt before” and is in “high flood yet” (l. 55). In short, the divine history recounted in the first section corresponds to the simultaneity of past, present, and future that Anderson identifies with traditional, religiously inflected modes of conceptualizing time. The second section recounts the 1875 wreck of the *Deutschland*, a ship bound from Germany to England and bearing among its roughly 200 passengers five Franciscan nuns fleeing religious persecution. It wrecked twenty-five miles off the shore of Harwich, and all of the nuns died. Hopkins drew his material for this section from newspaper accounts of the wreck, framing his relationship to the drowned nuns not through a traditional appeal to the communion of saints but instead through the type of modern simultaneity that Anderson associates with both the newspaper and the novel:

Away in the loveable west,
On a pastoral forehead of Wales,
I was under a roof here, I was at rest,

⁵While I am specifically concerned here with the overlapping of the temporalities that I have decided to indicate by the shorthand “backward” and “modern,” a concern with coextensive temporalities within Victorian poetry has informed much prior scholarship on the period, most notably Caroline Levine’s treatment of the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her *Victorian Poetry* article “Rhythms, Poetic and Political: The Case of Elizabeth Barrett Browning” (2011) and later in *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015).

And they were prey of the gales;
 She to the black-about air, to the breaker, the thickly
 Falling flakes, to the throng that catches and quails
 Was calling "O Christ, Christ, come quickly":
 The cross to her she calls Christ to her, christens her wild-worst Best. (ll. 185–88)

The drama of much of the second half of the poem comes from Hopkins's attempt to reconcile the journalistic details of the tragedy with the providential account of divine history provided in the poem's first section through his reading of the nun's cry: "O Christ, Christ, come quickly."

After the next three stanzas propose and reject several possible interpretations of the nun's cry, the poem appears to reach a climax when the poet has an epiphany in which the meaning of the cry is revealed and, as a result, sacred and secular histories are joined:

But how shall I ... make me room there:
 Reach me a ... Fancy, come faster –
 Strike you the sight of it? look at it loom there,
 Thing that she ... There then! the Master,
Ipse, the only one, Christ, King, Head:
 He was to cure the extremity where he had cast her;
 Do, deal, lord it with living and dead;
 Let him ride, her pride, in his triumph, dispatch and have done with his doom there. (ll. 217–34)

Understandably, this passage has induced significant confusion among critics and remains a site of substantial disagreement. What exactly is Hopkins suggesting? Is it that Christ has actually appeared to the nun during her death, as Elizabeth Schneider contends in *The Dragon in the Gate*? Or has she merely recognized that it has some divine purpose, as Catherine Phillips argues in the notes to the Oxford Classics edition of Hopkins's poems? Ironically, in the stanza where Hopkins most clearly declares his ability to at last "read" the wreck, the poem becomes most illegible. What did the nun find? Hopkins answers – "*Ipse*, the only one, Christ, King, Head" – but the answer itself remains a cypher, as resistant to interpretation as the ellipses that bisect nearly the entire passage. I would suggest that we might find in these ellipses, which seem to both mark a crossing and suggest a gap that cannot be bridged, a different way of thinking about the two temporalities in the poem: the sacred, premodern temporality that dominates the first section and the secular, modern temporality of the second. This stanza marks the point at which they are most closely joined and yet the result of this is not a translation from one mode of experience to another, such as Lysack found in her reading of Rossetti's *Time Flies*, but instead an untranslatable space between the two which indicates less a tension between them than the creation of a *mystery*, one that persists within a supposedly "disenchanted" modernity.

While the particular model of co-extensive temporalities that I have suggested here cannot simply be imported wholesale to explain the work of other Victorian poets, we might well find other forms of temporal co-dwelling within their work. Indeed, such a consideration may even help us find new avenues to speak of the poetry that largely fueled early critical accounts of the era as one marked by the clash of the old and new. For instance, we might revisit Arnold's claim that he is "Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born, / With nowhere yet to rest my head," not attending to either of the "two worlds" but instead to the unnamed, liminal world in which Arnold dwells, a world that is begotten of both the past and the future but which belongs to neither.

Short Biography

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