Introduction
Rethinking the 1870s

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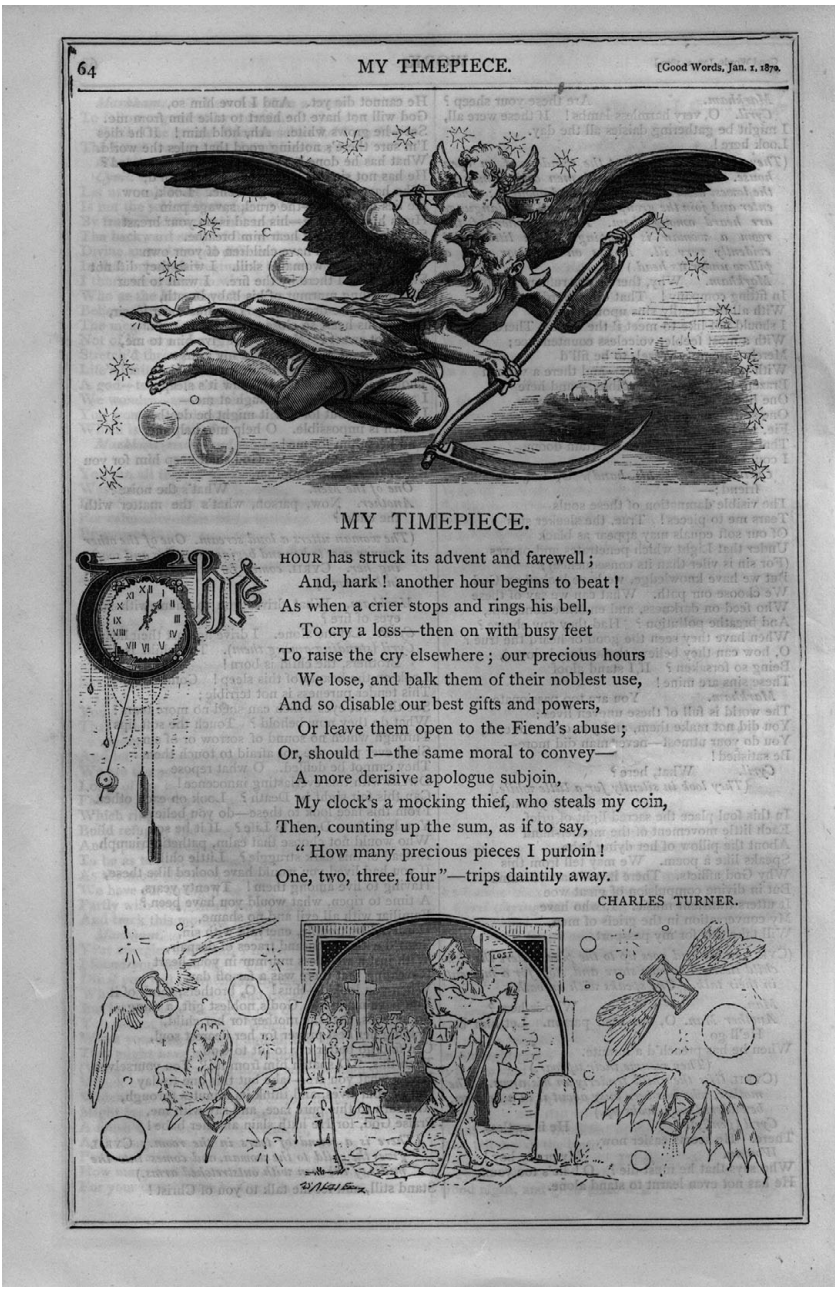
Modernity and Temporality

Cultural confidence, moral superiority, and metropolitan elitism: these characteristics of the 1870s are exemplified by Harley Granville-Barker's edited collection of essays, *The Eighteen-Seventies* (1929), which offers a nostalgic, aristocratic, Oxbridge, and high-culture account of this decade.[1] But this present collection, in the spirit of the series to which it belongs, frames the 1870s as a decade in transition, and seeks to unsettle its conventional associations while acknowledging their force and legacy. Indeed, writers of the 1870s were especially adept at questioning their current temporal moment, often betraying an overdetermined sense of their place in time, and even of temporality itself. On 1 January 1870, at the new decade's dawn, the religious non-denominational monthly magazine *Good Words* published a new year poem, 'My Timepiece', by Charles Tennyson Turner (see Figure 0.1).[2] The poem, a sonnet conveying a clock's insistent marking of time as a continual beat of nostalgia even as each moment is passing, betrays a rueful acknowledgement of the pressure of temporality as a visible, audible, and ephemeral phenomenon. The timepiece, a wall clock with weights and a pendulum mid-swing, has just 'struck' (l. 1) its chimes for one o'clock. The timepiece, caught within the Gothic decorative lettering, is the most realist representation in this complex mise-en-page, designed by John Leighton. The mechanical 'beat' (l. 2) of the hour on the clock, which the speaker alludes to throughout, is implied also to be the poem's metrical beat, fixed to the middle of the page and surrounded by multiple illustrations depicting the coming and going of time itself. This was an era of time standardized, synchronized, and mechanized: the 1870 Telegraph Act, for example, nationalized telegraphy by putting it in the hands of the Post Office, which also now managed the Greenwich time signal, and the 1880 Definition of Time Act, which legislated and enforced standard time in Great Britain and Ireland as



64 MY TIMEPIECE. [Good Words, Jan. 1, 1870.

MY TIMEPIECE.

THE HOUR has struck its advent and farewell;
And, hark! another hour begins to beat!
As when a crier stops and rings his bell,
To cry a loss—then on with busy feet
To raise the cry elsewhere; our precious hours
We lose, and balk them of their noblest use,
And so disable our best gifts and powers,
Or leave them open to the Fiend's abuse;
Or, should I—the same moral to convey—
A more derisive apologue subjoin,
My clock's a mocking thief, who steals my coin,
Then, counting up the sum, as if to say,
"How many precious pieces I purloin!
One, two, three, four"—trips daintily away.

CHARLES TURNER.

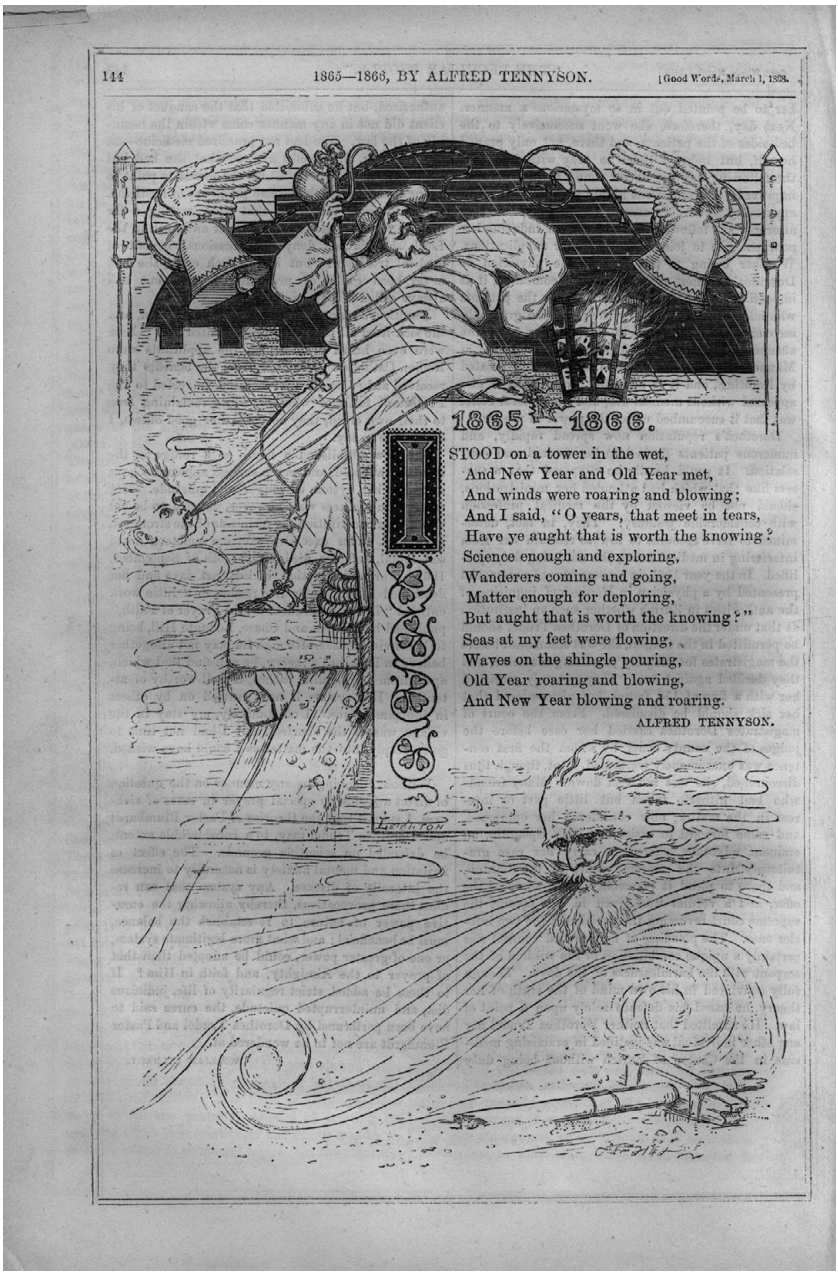
0.1 Charles Turner, 'My Timepiece', illustr. John Leighton, *Good Words* vol. 11 (1 January 1870): 64.

Greenwich Mean Time.[3] Time might be efficiently regulated and controlled, but 'My Timepiece', published in an ephemeral magazine, recognizes that the embodied experience of time is also caught between loss and gain.

Time is 'advent and farewell', coming and going, and the poem slips in between these modes as it uncomfortably measures them with its play on 'busy feet'. The tradition of new year poems often commingles a sense of old and new colliding. In fact, Turner's brother, Alfred Tennyson, had published an earlier new year poem of his own in *Good Words* two years previously on 1 March 1868, '1865–1866' (see Figure 0.2), which included a surrounding illustrative frame by Frederic Leighton (a leading artist who would become president of the Royal Academy in 1878).[4] '1865–1866' depicts the old and new year meeting, with the speaker witnessing the encounter as he is positioned on a tower, and inquiring through a violent rain storm:

> 'Oh years, that meet in tears,
> Have ye aught that is worth the knowing?
> Science enough and exploring,
> Wanderers coming and going,
> Matter enough for deploring,
> But aught that is worth the knowing?' (ll. 4–9)

This portentous question receives no response. The storm rages on. Published as a new year poem in March 1868, Tennyson's '1865–1866' is strangely dislocated from the overdetermined temporal moment it interrogates. In the print flood of mid-Victorian periodical culture, separate numbers of newspapers, magazines, and periodicals could themselves be said to be poised in an acute sense of their own moment, between issues past and issues to come, in the ever-receding temporal horizon of serial print.[5] Certainly, years later, Turner's poem seems to take up his brother's earlier question that is shouted into the storm, 'Have ye aught that is worth the knowing?', and to reply with the knowledge of time itself as a gain and a loss, as 'advent and farewell' (l. 1). This meta-knowing concludes Turner's poem with the deferred closure implied by the longing and rueful assonance of the last word 'away' (l. 14). At the opening of the new decade, the poetic conversation between the new year's poems by Tennyson and Turner suggest a twinned sense of temporality and modernity, as if the ephemeral magazine moment can temporarily fix the endless and ongoing pull between time as 'advent and farewell'. Their poetic print conversation, delayed by almost two years, involves Tennyson's persona shouting into


144 1865—1866, BY ALFRED TENNYSON. [Good Words, March 1, 1868.

1865—1866.

I STOOD on a tower in the wet,
And New Year and Old Year met,
And winds were roaring and blowing;
And I said, "O years, that meet in tears,
Have ye aught that is worth the knowing?
Science enough and exploring,
Wanderers coming and going,
Matter enough for deploring,
But aught that is worth the knowing?"
Seas at my feet were flowing,
Waves on the shingle pouring,
Old Year roaring and blowing,
And New Year blowing and roaring.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

0.2 Alfred Tennyson, '1865–1866', illustr. Frederic Leighton, *Good Words* 9.1 (March 1868): 144.

the storm with no reply, and Turner answering with a hopeless sense of the ticking clock always stealing time.

Several chapters in this collection feature different modes of conversation as intrinsic to the era and its sense of the modern. The High Victorian ideal of congenial conversation, advanced in Francis O'Gorman's chapter, was based on amiable discussion of like-minded people as equals, with the expectation of sharing common understandings and purpose without reliance on specialism or advanced knowledge (see Chapter 5). O'Gorman's examples include discourses of reviewing in 'Our Library Table' columns for the London *Athenaeum* as well as the Athenaeum Club, and the shared life and work of George Eliot and George Henry Lewes, in addition to the negative example afforded by Casaubon in Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871–2). O'Gorman also acknowledges a rejection of the mid-Victorian culture of genial conversation in the polarizing positions of Ruskin and Carlyle as prominent public intellectual figures who did not (or could not) invest in welcoming genuine debate; in fact, the High Victorian 'sage' figure was antithetical to the High Victorian aspiration for a generously spirited conversational culture. The acute sense of time lost, and answers not given, in Tennyson and Turner's dislocated poetic conversation, suggest their poems are expressions of such 'sage' culture; and yet they nonetheless engage in a poetic conversation across time that relies on the premise that poems are nonetheless consolatory. The role of literature in representing and embodying a discourse about sound between writers, scientists, and nature itself is explored by Gregory Tate (Chapter 12), who frames this conversation as 'community and harmony' (p. 271) yet also as one that includes the risk of incomprehension. Tate argues for an approach to the written vocalization of the literary voice as 'acousmatic' (p. 271), 'a sound whose physical source cannot be straightforwardly identified, located, or seen' (p. 271), playing on the ambiguous distance between voice and body, and between the immaterial and material, and reminding us that emerging sound technologies of the 1870s also relied on an acousmatic model. While the 1870s novel engages with the complexity of sounding the literary voice, Tate suggests that poetry most forcefully experiments with the conversation about sound and conversation as sound. His extended example is Emily Pfeiffer's 1876 *Poems*, in which the sonnet form affords acousmatic sound to become both material and immaterial, capturing a transcendence and divinity that might allow her poetry, consolingly, to listen to the voice of nature.

In Turner and Tennyson's poetic conversation, the experience of conversing about and through time echoes the dynamic, traced by Sue

Zemka's *Time and the Moment in Victorian Literature and Society*, of the nineteenth-century embodied experience of the moment that is framed by industrial and economic time, so that the abstract insights which appear to be outside of material reality are in fact produced by material conditions.[6] Zemka sees the investment in the moment, that increases as the century unfolds, to be a 'turn towards a hermeneutic concept of literary temporality [that] reflects the cultural needs of a society organized by modern technological time' (p. 13), for example what she terms the 'serial bliss of moments' (p. 10) that Pater advocates in his conclusion to *The Renaissance* (1873). In the present volume, Veronica Alfano addresses embodiment in Pater's writing through his conception of an aestheticism in opposition to traditional art history (Chapter 8). Alfano, in fact, frames aestheticism in this decade as emerging out of controversies, rather than conversation. Her case studies – Dante Rossetti's *Poems* (1870), Pater's *The Renaissance* (1873), and the Ruskin–Whistler libel trial of 1878 – also illuminate the contradictions embedded in aestheticism between high and low culture, surface and depth, and embodiment and abstraction, which she argues typifies the movement in the 1870s. Such an inherently doubled avant-garde moment, where the distinction between materiality and immateriality is productively uncertain, recalls Tate's discussion of sound and the literary voice in this decade, and also the poetic conversation between Tennyson and Turner that experiences time as both immediately present and always fleeting. Technologies of the present moment, James Mussell argues (Chapter 2), proliferated in the 1870s, especially after the telegraph network was nationalized in 1870. As new technologies interwove time with information flow and engaged with material and apparently immaterial media, new discursive forms emerged to represent the production, circulation, and reception of text as media. Mussell discusses flows of information in relation to Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1874–5), a novel about experiencing the temporal moment as we read, and reading as temporality, addressing media as immaterial and as material. His chapter focuses on how new media technologies of the 1870s, especially telegraphy, foregrounded information, represented text as information, and often exceeded curatorial efforts to catalogue and contain.

Previously, critics such as Janice Carlisle and Linda K. Hughes have argued that this mid-Victorian era betrays a profound sense of uncertainty as well as achievement.[7] For Carlisle, the mid-Victorian 1860s and 1870s suggest a marked shift, 'an anxious and paradoxically forward-looking regret', rather than a capitalist 'golden age' exemplified by, for example,

W. L. Burns's 1965 account in *The Age of Equipoise* (pp. 105, 107). Carlisle emphasizes the speed of social and technological change in High Victorianism, arguing that anxious nostalgia does cultural work as a defense mechanism at a time of 'high-powered explosives and high-speed communications, department stores, national holidays, ready-made clothes, subways, and team sports, . . . party politics and corporate capitalism' (p. 108). She concludes that '[e]verywhere one looked during those years, one could see ways in which political and economic and cultural life in all its varieties was being atomized, professionalized, centralized, codified, and commercialized' (p. 108). In response to this dizzying pace of change, surpassed only by our own digital era, Carlisle identifies a distinguishing feature of High Victorianism: the exhibition of a 'proleptic nostalgia', 'a temporal inversion that involves imagining a time in the future, usually after one has died, when the present will have become the past', and thus the future is imagined as 'drained of its potential threats' (p. 111). Representing anticipatory longing for something not yet in fact lost, however, also overdetermines the very present that the 'proleptic nostalgia' seeks to place into the past (p. 112).[8] Indeed, 'proleptic nostalgia' is exemplified by Granville-Barker's approach to his own 1929 collection, which is shadowed by the prefatory disclosure that this decade represents 'a period that is just about to become historical', with some contributors basing their approach to the decade on memory, and some on history (pp. vii, viii). An evaluative self-consciousness about modernity and its rapid transformations seem to catch Victorians stumbling towards a receding horizon of uncertainty – as with Tennyson's question, shouted into the storm unanswered: 'Have ye aught that is worth the knowing?'

High Victorianism

Tennyson's skepticism about the value of knowledge as the old and new collide, in this era of increasing specialization and disciplinary formation, typifies responses to High Victorianism, a term that implies a peak Victorian moment in both senses of the word: a summative achievement and an optimal moment. The 1870s have certainly been labelled as quintessentially Victorian, both 'High Victorian' (the high point of elitism, colonialism, and metropolitanism) and 'mid Victorian' (right in the historical middle of the reign). In fact, labelling the era as 'Victorian' was a key aspect to discourse about the present era in this decade. In her discussion of the mid-Victorian construction of the history of literary history, Kelly J. Mays (Chapter 1) explores the deployment in the 1870s

of 'Victorian' as a prominent term to describe the age and the literary era, especially in Edmund Clarence Stedman's immensely successful study *Victorian Poets* (1875). Mays makes clear that poetry played a definitive part in defining the literary epoch as Victorian, especially around discussions of the place of Tennyson as embodying specifically 'Victorian' poetry. She reveals the importance of the term 'composite' in 1870s critical discussion, connoting strength in diversity, variety, and plurality, and the part each poet plays in creating an organic tradition from such multiplicity. For writers in this decade, Mays discloses, 'composite' defined the epoch and the development, culmination, and anticipated decline of its poetry. Decline, indeed, was baked into the very term High Victorianism. Supremely poised and powerful, the decade typifies the cultural, linguistic, economic, political, and military supremacy of Great Britain, and the subjugation of its colonies. But, at this moment of peak power, does the centre hold? The Victorians, certainly, as Janice Carlisle points out (p. 106), betrayed concern that the only way was downwards. And, while this is an era of British global domination, casting a legacy that still shadows our own era, Victorian writers expressed apprehension and uncertainty about their place in the century. Writers of the 1870s register a doubled sense of culmination and inquiry into their current moment in time, as if caught up in a temporality and modernity that cannot easily be comprehended, articulated, or catalogued.

This decade witnessed, as Linda K. Hughes points out, hugely important societal progress, while it also made evident cracks in the British sense of dominance and power (pp. 48–9). On the one hand, there was extremely important reforming legislation, and especially significant markers of progress for women, the working classes, and parliamentary democracy itself, in the wake of the 1867 Reform Act. For example, the 1870s saw the passing of the Education Act (1870), the Married Women's Property Act (1870), women's eligibility to stand for election to local school boards (1870), the Trade Union Act (1871), the Ballot Act (1872), the Cruelty to Animals Act (1876), and the Matrimonial Causes Act (1878). This decade saw particular reform to the access and the governance of education, exemplified by the abolition of religious tests at Oxford and Cambridge Universities (1871), the opening of the first university college for women (Girton College, 1873), and London University awarding degrees for women (1878). Other substantial advances for women included the formation of the Girls' Public Day School Trust (1873), the ability to register as physicians (1876), and the formation of the Women's Trade Union League (1874).

There were undeniably major technological inventions and innovations in Great Britain and North America, such as Alexander Graham Bell's telephone prototype (1876) followed by the first public telephone (1877), Grant's Difference Engine (1876), and Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph (1877) and the lightbulb (1879). And technologies of publication and writing also saw important developments, such as the manufacture of the Remington typewriter (from 1873), the mass marketing of the Sholes and Glidden Type-Writer in the US (from 1874), as well as publishing innovations that supported mass industrial publishing and the cheapening of print, especially the increasingly widespread use of photography in publishing and the introduction of paperbacks in the 1870s.[9] Literacy rates by 1871 were 81 per cent of the male population in England and Wales, and 73 per cent of the female population; as Simon Eliot notes, these figures vary by location and socioeconomic class, but the increasing literate readership had an immense thirst for print.[10] With the expansion of mandated education and literacy, the start of the decade witnessed the beginning of a sharp and long-term increase in mass publishing.[11] Karen Bourrier (Chapter 4) traces associations between the rise of opportunities for professional women writers and the feminist movement in this decade that witnessed major legal, societal, and educational changes that benefited women as they continued to campaign for suffrage. Bourrier argues that literary authorship gave women an opportunity to represent and advocate for the improved legal and societal position of women, and the increasing numbers of professional women writers also demonstrate the emerging link between the feminist movement and women's public career opportunities. She draws on data from *Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present* to suggest that a wide range of genres were open to women writers in this decade; and, while women's journalism was fundamental to the feminist cause (as well as their speeches), and poetry protested against sexual inequality, the novel was especially prominent, with roughly 45 per cent of women writers in the *Orlando* corpus who were active in the 1870s publishing at least one novel.

On the other hand, this reforming decade in Britain, with an acute sense of its own modernity, innovations, and power, was also a decade of geopolitical turmoil and military conflict. The Third Republic proclaimed in France (1870), the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1), the unification of Germany (1871), the Paris Commune (1871), and the long-drawn-out end to the Italian Risorgimento (with Rome declared the capital of a united Italy in 1871), brought upheaval and a redrawing of national boundaries in Europe. The American 'panic' of 1873 brought an economic

depression to the US and Europe that lasted throughout the decade. There were other major military conflicts, like the Third Ashanti War (beginning in the Gold Coast in 1873), Russo-Turkish War (1877–8), Second Afghan War (1878–80), and the Zulu War (1879). Geopolitical tumult was speedily brought into British homes thanks to rapid journalistic coverage boosted by technical innovations in publishing (such as rapid production processes from 1866 as a consequence of the 'Walter' presses, and the 1870s use of gelatine 'dry plate' negatives that caused a boom in photo-journalism).[12] Queen Victoria was proclaimed (through Disraeli's Royal Titles Act) Empress of India in 1876, following the final dissolution of the East India Company in 1874 and the full transfer of power to the British government. The year of Victoria's proclamation was also the start of the Great Indian Famine (1876–8), in which between six and eight million people died, one of many famines endured by India under British rule.[13]

Along with these long but inevitably partial lists of historical events, movements, trends, and disruptions, the writers of the 1870s combine a sense of their era as modern and distinctive, but also as uncertain and contradictory. Hughes positions the 1870s as a major 'underlying shift toward modernity' in terms of a series of specific turning points that were ironically both a legacy of earlier Victorian cultural assumptions and the start of a significant swerve away from them (p. 35). Hughes focuses on the sociopolitical impact of major legislative changes, the way in which Victorian religious and scientific discourses ideologically shaped the organization of knowledge, empire and imperialism, and the 'decentering of British hegemony' with the geopolitical and financial fallout from the Franco-Prussian War and post–Civil War America. Her argument is extremely valuable for its assertion of the 1870s as a period when 'apparent stability overlay profound social change' (p. 49). This paradoxical 1870s, offered by Carlisle's and Hughes's different but complementary approaches, as a decade of confidence and apprehension, of an acute sense of temporality overlaid by an anxious backward and forward looking, has influenced my approach to this volume. Chapters in this collection present case studies that interrogate the complexity of this mid-Victorian and High Victorian era, and also elucidate the wider era of long Victorianism. In this decade of hyper-awareness about temporality and modernity, it seems especially apt to approach decennial units within literary history as provisional, relational, and permeable.[14] While each chapter lays claim to different topics and methods, the overall approach of *Nineteenth-Century Literature in Transition: The 1870s* is to interrogate the 1870s as an interlaced historical and critical category, and a decade closely interrelated

to previous decades (especially other major decades associated with reform, the 1830s and the 1860s), focusing on how writers of the 1870s understood their historical place while approaching the 1870s as a critical concept as well as temporal unit around which mid-Victorian and High Victorian formations of literature, progress, and modernity coalesce and can also be unsettled.

Literary figures that were active in the 1870s include some of the best-known and most prolific writers of the Victorian period, such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Robert Browning, Lewis Carroll, Wilkie Collins, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, G. M. Hopkins, Jean Ingelow, Henry James, Edward Lear, George Meredith, Alice Meynell, William Morris, Ouida, Walter Pater, Emily Pfeiffer, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, John Ruskin, A. C. Swinburne, Alfred Tennyson, Augusta Webster, and Ellen Wood. This collection features many of these writers while also examining other important aspects of this decade, such as settler colonial writers, lesser known periodical writers, and children's authors, as well as publishers, editors, essayists, illustrators, and reviewers who contributed to the literary and cultural climate of the decade. Many publications in this era are genre defining, perhaps none more so than George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871–2), discussed by many of the contributors from varying perspectives (see Allen and Felluga, Bourrier, Livesey, O'Gorman, Pionke, Steer, Tate), forming an extended conversation about the importance and achievement of this iconic Victorian novel. In particular, Ruth Livesey's chapter (Chapter 6) focuses exclusively on *Middlemarch* as forming a new genre of 'ethical realism' (p. 129). Livesey argues that this novel is deliberately provocative about the value given to the provincial and the local in this decade, as it concentrates on the concept of the 'middle' so based on common experience and collective identity, which chimes with Mays's discussion of the Victorian sense of a 'composite' era. Livesey charts how the narrative of *Middlemarch* foregrounds patterns and repetitions, with a multitude of protagonists that share experiences, offering an 'apotheosis of the provincial' (p. 131). At the same time that the boundary of the local in fiction is expanded, the novel also limits the power of the provincial due to a recognition of the force of the centralizing pull towards and away from London, epitomized by the railway network. In this new realist form, Livesey argues, the material and metaphorical interweave and slip as the novel gestures to a temporal *Bildungsroman* form that it refuses to honour, through resisting linear plot progression and resolution as the narrative moves towards 'an alternative temporality of affect and the momentary through flashes of intersubjective

experience' (p. 142). *Middlemarch*, for Livesey, reinvents the future of the novel itself as it discloses narratorial resistance to the historical forces that shaped it, in favour of valuing commonality and community of experience that in fact also provide moments of individual epiphany.

Other chapters in this collection address how literature of the 1870s was deeply invested in genre revising and revisioning, especially in relation to the 1860s. Sensation fiction of the 1870s is identified by Albert D. Pionke's chapter as proliferating and evolving into a 'post-sensational' genre, self-consciously accommodating readers who were well used to the shocks and scandals of popular 1860s sensation novels (Chapter 7). Pionke identifies ways in which the genre adjusted to find 'new forms of emotional and visceral connection with their increasingly desensitized readers' (p. 146). Sensation novels of the 1870s, Pionke argues, needed to adapt the genre to offer greater sensational thrills and startle readers out of their familiarity with literary tropes and plot twists. With reference to novels by Thomas Hardy and George Eliot, he suggests that the post-sensational finally becomes directly interrelated with the post-realistic. My own chapter charts how 1870s poetry responds to the new print media of the 1860s, when the flourishing of monthly and weekly periodicals featured the frequently denounced 'magazine verse' as an indicator of the worst of the new modernity (Chapter 9). As a response, the 1870s debates about poetry's place in culture and society created a sharper distinction between poetry and verse. In particular, two major new periodicals were launched in this decade – *Dark Blue* and *The Nineteenth Century* – that attempted to reorientate the debate around quality while nonetheless dissolving the difference between verse and original poetry. Debates about evaluating literary worth, value, and originality centred around periodical poems, the poetry most highly circulating among an expanding readership (especially after the 1870 Education Act), and anxieties about ephemerality and poetry were at the centre of discourses of modernity itself.

Chapters by Hannah Field and Anna Barton also grapple with the 1870s as a successor to other genres more typical of the 1860s, respectively books for children and nonsense literature. The earlier market boom in children's literature, Field argues (Chapter 11), created a new genre for the children's literary market in the 1870s: picture books (including an increasing number of movable books), a print format that emphasized the importance of technology, visuality, and materiality for child readers. The child reader was inculcated in the newly material print format, which also established new kinds of interactive reading practices. The models for a new physical format are then read back by Field against children's classics of the decade

such as Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) and Christina Rossetti's *Sing-Sing* (1872) and *Speaking Likeness* (1874), so that materiality inevitably shapes both the experience of the book and, in turn, the child reader. In a chapter that also considers Carroll and Rossetti as well as Edward Lear, Anna Barton examines 1870s nonsense literature as a follow-up to the genre so closely associated with the 1860s (Chapter 10). Barton offers a theory of the sequel that, she asserts, is integral to the decade itself. Sequels involve both 'confidence and self-consciousness' as well as 'attenuation and the likely possibility of diminishing returns' (p. 206), suggesting that 1870s nonsense literature responds to Victorian modernity with a fear of the very future it envisions and the impossible costs of equality and connection. Ruth Livesey recognizes something similar in George Eliot's ethical realism, as if achieving an understanding of common experience while innovating literary form ends up questioning the authenticity of shared knowledge, and even of reliable knowledge itself. However, in the trend to increasingly specialized knowledge, nonsense literature creates room to explore uncertainty and fragility, according to Barton, including experimental and recuperative realms of imagination.

Unsettling the 1870s

The feminist movement in the 1870s increasingly pushed for women's active participation in higher education as universities also expanded as part of the rise of disciplinarity and the embrace of secularization.[15] Attending the Cambridge Higher Lectures for Women between 1871 and 1873 was a young member of the Dutt family of Bengali writers, Toru Dutt, who would subsequently become the first woman from India to publish an Anglophone volume of poetry. These lectures were an important part of the feminist movement, as they were pivotal in opening up higher education by preparing students for the Cambridge Examination for Women. The lectures were also a precursor to the founding of Newnham College, the second women's college in Cambridge. While living at Cambridge, towards the end of a long tour with her immediate family through France and England, Toru Dutt met many prominent feminists, including Anne Clough, the first principal of Newnham, who had been closely involved in organizing the lecture series.[16] Between her return to Kolkata in November 1873 and her death in 1877 Dutt published *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876), her first book consisting of 155 translations of French poetry into English verse (including eight by her sister Aru, who died in 1874), issued by the Saptahik Sambad Press at

Bhowanipore, India.[17] The volume bore a direct debt to her travel in France, something acknowledged in the dedicatory sonnet to her father. And, in light of her attendance of the Higher Lectures, which included talks by the leading suffragist Millicent Garrett Fawcett (who co-founded Newnham College), her volume of translations can be positioned as a feminist act: jointly (and poignantly) with her sister, Toru Dutt established a professional literary identity that was inherently collaborative, transnational, and transliterary, and that reimagined the early 1870s British feminist movement into her local as well as cosmopolitan contexts.[18]

Toru Dutt had a prominent example of shared publishing close to home. One year before she attended the lectures, in 1870, the *Dutt Family Album* was published in London by the prestigious Longmans press, a volume particularly notable as the first anthology of English poetry by Bengali poets.[19] This collaboration between her father, uncles, and cousin gathered their English-language poetry in a publication format that reworked the earlier popular British literary annuals, epitomized by the *Keepsake*, in a play on the 'memento' format of the album, but also refashioning the annuals into an explicitly familial and cohesive endeavour, and addressed overtly to an English audience. By the 1870s, the literary annual, primarily associated with the 1830s and 1840s, was viewed as deeply unfashionable. *The Keepsake* was one of the last titles to limp on until its final 1857 publication. *Middlemarch*, indeed, contained a notorious scene, in chapter 27, where a copy of the latest *Keepsake* volume was integral to the discovery of a flirtation, when Rosamund is embarrassed to be caught by Lydgate as she reads a copy of the latest issue of *Keepsake* with Ned, and then hears Lydgate mock the literary annual. The strong signal conveyed by Eliot is that, by the early 1870s, the once-fashionable and luxurious literary annual was considered in Britain an antiquated format containing mawkish sentimental and low-quality content.[20] *Middlemarch* was set in the run-up to the 1832 First Reform Act, and the novel was of course published in the aftermath of the 1867 Second Reform Act. The original readers of *Middlemarch*, the novel implies, would have cringed with the forward-looking Lydgate at the reference to the literary annual. But the reformulation of the gift book format and contents represented by the *Dutt Family Album* nonetheless aligns it with *Middlemarch*'s critique, and exemplifies the uneasy but productive relationship this poetry anthology discloses with its British literary and print contexts.[21] *The Dutt Family Album*, self-consciously an Anglophone Indian poetry collection intended for an English audience, as the preface explains, makes the literary annual modern by displacing its precursor in an implicit homage that refuses to

participate in nostalgia.[22] Regardless of the apparently more modest format (blue cloth binding and unillustrated content, rather than crimson watered-silk binding and expensive copper engravings) and contents (a series of unsigned poems by family members, rather than a miscellany of poems and stories by well-known and aristocratic contributors), the publication is audacious, and unsettles, however cautiously, the national and ideological grounds on which this High Victorian era makes itself modern.

The preface, dated 13 January 1870, with a careful if familiar modesty gesture, introduces the book as a 'curiosity': the writers, declares the note,

> are foreigners, natives of India, of different ages, and in different walks of life, yet of one family, in whom the ties of blood relationship have been drawn closer by the holy bond of Christian brotherhood. As foreigners educated out of England, they solicit the indulgence of British critics to poems which on these grounds may, it is hoped, have some title to their attention.

The Examiner review thought this humility unnecessary, and praised the book as containing 'poems of uncommon excellence'.[23] Other reviews were mixed, as Gibson notes, expressing discomfort that it was neither completely Indian nor completely English (p. 186). Yet the professional and literary agency asserted by Dutts on the publication of the *Dutt Family Album* relies on their knowing reference to the British literary past in order to make space for themselves in 1870s London literary culture. Their apparently modest volume participates in a recursive and reinterpretative 1870s, productively aware of its temporal and geographical slippages. The associations between *Middlemarch* and the *Dutt Family Album* disclose a keenly felt sense of place as well as time, as both self-consciously aware, on a different scale and in different genres and publication formats, of their dissonant position between centre and periphery. *The Dutt Family Album*'s unsettled position in the world, on the event of its publication, is inscribed in the title page's epigraph from Richard Trench, evoking the competing desire to remain comfortably local with the necessity to journey onwards through an alarming ocean.

Productive unsettling is also at the heart of Toru Dutt's *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*. Also a collaborative family endeavour, and also nodding self-consciously to the ephemeral and keepsake format of the *Dutt Family Album*, this volume offers a large number of accomplished poetry translations from French to English, with scholarly notes, and also questions the act of translation itself as a moment of continual unsettling that is affective and epistemological. Toru Dutt's dedication to her father in an English language sonnet entitled 'À mon Père', plays on the root of

anthology as a gathering of flowers to imply that the act of translation needs memory to restore the original text, and that translation is not the end in itself but also and always recollection and memorialization of the original.[24] The sonnet is also meta-poem, recalling the motif of the book's title that these poems are 'gleaned', an Old French word that connotes gathering and glimmering, collecting and illuminating:

> The flowers look loveliest in their native soil
> Amid their kindred branches; plucked, they fade,
> And lose the colours Nature on them laid,
> Though bound in garlands with assiduous toil.
> Pleasant it was, afar from all turmoil,
> To wander through the valley, now in shade
> And now in sunshine, where these blossoms made
> A Paradise, and gather in my spoil.
> But better than myself no man can know
> How tarnished have become their tender hues
> E'en in the gathering, and how dimmed their glow!
> Wouldst thou again new life in them infuse,
> Thou who hast seen them where they brightly blow?
> Ask Memory. She shall help my stammering Muse. (p. 187)

Critics recently reclaim Toru Dutt's poetry as involved in a complex series of geographical, cultural, and literary translations between colonial India, Europe, and England. However, positioned at the end of a book of translations from French poetry, in this Petrarchan sonnet – itself another example of how Dutt translates the western European sonnet form into her own transnational purposes – translation, and poetry itself, has dissonance, loss, and grief at its centre, and as the very condition of its recuperation. Picking the flowers 'in their native soil' (l. 1) is 'Pleasant' and carefree, but also immediately tarnishes their beauty 'E'en in the gathering' (l. 11). The poem concludes by appealing to her father: 'Wouldst thou again new life in them infuse, / Thou who hast seen them where they brightly glow?' (ll. 12–13). As Gibson remarks, these lines invite her father to remember the poems in the original French, while also alluding to her sister, Aru, whose translations appear in the volume and who learnt French with Toru.[25] But the sonnet also both celebrates the act of gathering flowers in their paradisal habitat, or translating French poems in France into a 'garland', and laments the loss of the original poems in translation. Translation, this poem implies, is wider that the act of translating poems – remembering that Toru and Aru Dutt were translating poems from and into languages that were not their mother tongues – and writing about the act of

translation from and into foreign languages involves an inevitable loss that tarnishes beauty, like a kind of biblical fall from original grace. In this analogy, translation is a fall from Eden into knowledge, loss, and death, and the poem invites her father to 'infuse' them with 'new life' (l. 12), with the memory of their beautiful origins. And the sonnet concludes by implying that this very poem is also a kind of faltering translation, as it appeals to 'Memory' (l. 14) to restore the loss of the original vivacity of the French poems, and also (as the meter in this line ironically falters) implicitly of the loss involved in repurposing this medieval Italian poetic form for writing about translating French poetry into English for a poet whose first language was Bengali.

In a courteous appeal to her father, this sonnet, and the book of translations itself, are spaces of loss but also spaces ripe for restoration and reclamation. Translation is not an end in itself, but a restorative process by which the reader's memory is invited to recall the beauty of the original text and complete the work of translation. That word 'infuse' (l. 12), meaning to pour in, implies that translations, and this sonnet, are deanimated and depleted, needing completion by the ideal reader, her father. Perhaps ironically, Gosse's review of the volume (which does not mention this sonnet) praises her translations for 'their absolute and unaffected exactness' that refuses to polish any of the inelegances of the original poems, and also for 'recall[ing] the French more vividly than any similar volume we are acquainted with; and if modern French literature were entirely lost, it might not be found impossible to reconstruct a great many of poems from this Indian version' (p. 967). Dutt read this review, noting in a letter that it increased sales of the *Sheaf*, and adding an ironic comment on perceptions of her authenticity: 'People sometimes think that Toru Dutt is a fictitious person, and that the book is the work of some European!'[26]

This poem would not of course be easily accessible to readers in Britain until its publication in the 1880 London edition, prefaced and packaged by Gosse's memoir that exoticizes Dutt as he awkwardly claims her for a British national tradition.[27] Chandani Lokugé argues that Dutt's movement between European and Indian literary cultures and traditions is an 'in-between space' or (citing Homi Bhabha) a '"third space" identity at the point of cultural crossings' (p. xvi). The example of Toru Dutt's *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, published in two editions in India in 1876 and 1878, then in London in 1880, and reviewed by Gosse in *The Examiner* in 1876, illustrates that High Victorianism in this decade is fundamentally already unsettled and destabilized by the literary and cultural transactions

of empire, and indeed by the global circulation of print. And, although the lived reality of the 1870s was hardly paradisal for many, Toru Dutt's sonnet to her father might also provide a pluralist model for the loss as well as gain in reclaiming and translating the 1870s for the twenty-first century that, while necessarily always incomplete and partial, nevertheless illuminates a different, diverse, and self-conscious decade facing the ground (or even summit) of its own claims to modernity and power.

Unsettling the 1870s involves recognizing that the anxiety disclosed by British writers about their High Victorian era as a peak and an inevitable decline is nonetheless inevitably caught up in positions of privilege. And there is no easy recuperation of the 1870s through turning to the negotiations that colonial Anglophone literature discloses with British and European traditions.[28] And yet interrogating the underlying structures of 1870s literary culture powerfully reveals other histories of mid-Victorianism waiting to be reclaimed. This volume begins a scholarly conversation about a bigger, more capacious 1870s, while recognizing the decade's continuing legacy. In particular, Philip Steer (Chapter 13) decentres narrative genres in the 1870s by comparing rural scenes in English narratives with Australian and New Zealand settler colonial novels and memoirs, such as Lady Barker's memoir, *Station Life in New Zealand* (1872) and Rolf Boldrewood's novel, *The Squatter's Dream* (1878), in terms of the development of emerging ecological discourses. Steer argues that, while provincial novels such as *Middlemarch* represent the landscape as anthropocentric and as static, other novels and nature writing experiment with genre to represent the rural scene as a dynamic and changeable environment, representing a new kind of ecology that, in Hardy's regional novels of this decade for example, bring together the sensory worlds of human and non-human nature in an attentiveness to the local. In contrast, settler narratives of Australia and New Zealand foreground economic exploitation of the land, highlighting environmental violence. The work of decentring the 1870s is also enabled by recent digital methodologies, tools, and platforms. In this volume, Emily Allen and Dino Felluga (Chapter 3) invite us into a wide and dynamic 1870s, through the affordances of two digital projects, BRANCH and Cove. They argue that the Victoria era's novel narratives offer a retrospective vision of a deterministic teleological past that reached its peak in the 1870s with George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). However, their chapter contends, the flexibility of digital sites can offer an alternative way of accessing or 'assembling' the decade, giving a decentred, unstable, and pluralist version of the literary past, where the agency for building future

histories is handed to the ongoing collaborative efforts of the collective scholarly community as well as the site's end users.

In a cartoon for the London *Punch* on 20 April 1878, George du Maurier depicts a fashionably dressed woman in an urban street, holding an enormous phonograph that is protruding from her middle. The caption reads: 'How much better if, instead of hirsute Italian organ-grinders parading our streets, we could have fair female phonographers playing our best poets in their own original voices!'[29] Combining a racial slur with the misogynistic suggestion that women are merely transmitters and not producers of sound and poetry, this satirical cartoon betrays a concern about authenticity in a modern age of media and mediated forms. The 1870s, an apparently confident and assured mid-Victorian and High Victorian decade, productively and anxiously puts into question high and low, reform and disruption, centres and peripheries, temporality and timelessness, materiality and immateriality. This collection asks what it means to occupy this supremely 'Victorian' moment, and to listen to its voices as the legacy of the 1870s still resounds into our own lived present.

Notes

1 Harley Granville-Barker (ed.), *The Eighteen-Seventies: Essays by Fellows of the Royal Society of Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929).
2 Charles Turner, 'My Timepiece', illustr. John Leighton, *Good Words* vol. 11 (1 January 1870): 64. This poem is accessed from *Digital Victorian Periodical Poetry* (https://dvpp.uvic.ca/).
3 See Iwan Rhys Morus, '"The Nervous System of Britain": Space, Time and the Electric Telegraph in the Victorian Age', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 33.4 (2000): 455–75; Hannah Gay, 'Clock Synchrony, Time Distribution and Electrical Timekeeping in Britain 1880–1925', *Past & Present* 181 (November 2003): 107–40.
4 Alfred Tennyson, '1865–1866', illustr. Frederic Leighton, *Good Words* 9.1 (March 1868): 144. This poem, which also has a facing page illustration by an unsigned artist, is also accessed from *Digital Victorian Periodical Poetry* (https://dvpp.uvic.ca/).
5 On periodicity and time, see for example Margaret Beetham, 'Time: Periodicals and the Time of the Now', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 48.3 (Fall 2015): 323–42.
6 Sue Zemka, *Time and the Moment in Victorian Literature and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
7 Linda K Hughes, '1870' in Herbert F. Tucker, ed., *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 35–50; Janice Carlisle, 'High Victorianism', in Kate Flint (ed.), *The Cambridge History of*

Victorian Literature, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 102–23.

8 See also Anna Barton (Chapter 10), who contrasts Carlisle's 'proleptic nostalgia' with the vision of the future in Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876).

9 See Rob Banham, 'Industrialization of the Book 1800–1900', in Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, eds., *A Companion to the History of the Book* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 271–90.

10 Simon Eliot, 'The British Book Market 1800–1890', in Eliot and Rose, eds., *A Companion to the History of the Book*, pp. 291–302 (p. 293).

11 See Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836–1916* (London: Routledge, 2006), especially chapter 2.

12 See Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, eds., *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (Ghent and London: Academia Press and the British Library, 2009), pp. 496, 627.

13 See Kathleen Frederickson, 'British Writers on Population, Infrastructure, and the Great Indian Famine of 1876–8', *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, ed. Dino Franco Felluga, Extension of *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, web (23 February 2024).

14 See also Penny Fielding and Andrew Taylor, 'Introduction: Knowledge Made for Cutting', in *The Nineteenth-Century Literature in Transition: The 1880s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 1–14 (pp. 1–2).

15 On the rise of specialization see, for example, Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zom, eds., *Victorian Culture and the Origin of Disciplines* (London: Routledge, 2020).

16 See Mary Ellis Gibson, ed., *Anglophone Poetry in Colonial India, 1780–1913: A Critical Anthology* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), p. 287.

17 The volume had a second expanded edition, published also in India, in 1878, and a third expanded edition published in London in 1880, after Edmund Gosse reviewed the volume in 'A Book of Verse from India', *The Examiner* 3578 (26 August 1876): 966–7. Note that *The Sheaf* also includes several English-language translations of Heine's poems from French translations. Dutt had also begun publishing in the *Bengal Magazine* from March 1873, before her return home, a periodical that also featured other poems by her family; see Padmini Sathianadhan Sengupta, *Toru Dutt* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1968), p. 93.

18 For recent critics who have explored Dutt's transnational poetry in terms of transnationalism, see especially Tricia Lootens, 'Bengal, Britain, France: The Locations and Dislocations of Toru Dutt', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 34 (2006): 573–590. See Fawcett's own account of the Higher Lectures within the history of feminism in 'The Story of the Opening of University Education to Women', in Melissa Terras and Elizabeth Crawford, eds., *Millicent Garrett Fawcett: Selected Writings* (London: UCL Press, 2022), pp. 156–77 (pp. 165–6). For more on Fawcett, see Bourrier (Chapter 4).

19 Govin Chunder Dutt, Greece Chunder Dutt, Hur Chunder Dutt, and Omesh Chunder Dutt, *The Dutt Family Album* (London: Longmans, Green, 1870).
20 Richard D. Altick determines, from the narrative's information disclosed about the volume, that this *Keepsake* must be dated 1832, brought out for the Christmas market in 1831, although he notes that the scene between the characters occurs in Spring 1831, which he determines to be an unusual lapse for Eliot's otherwise meticulous research. See Richard D. Altick, 'Anachronisms in *Middlemarch*: A Note', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33.3 (1978): 366–72 (p. 368).
21 *The Dutt Family Album* was published by October 1870, when the advertisement notices and reviews appeared; the third bi-monthly instalment of *Middlemarch*, which included chapter 27, was issued in April 1870.
22 See Gibson's discussion of the *Album* for an account of its doubled humility and ambition; *Indian Angles: English Verse in Colonial India from Jones to Tagore* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2011), ch. 5.
23 'Poetry', *The Examiner* 3271 (8 October 1870): 645–6 (p. 646).
24 Toru Dutt, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (Bhowanipore: Saptahik Sambad Press, 1876), p. 187.
25 Gibson, *Anglophone Poetry*, p. 297, n. 1. Dutt's note to this poem also refers to the death of her sister, Aru, lamenting 'Had she lived this book with her help might have been better, and the writer might perhaps have had less reason to be ashamed of it, and less occasion to ask for the reader's indulgence. Alas!' (p. 233).
26 Chandani Lokugé (ed.), *Toru Dutt: Collected Prose and Poetry* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 320.
27 As noted by several critics; for example, see Alison Chapman, 'Internationalising the Sonnet: Toru Dutt's "Sonnet – Baugmaree"', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 42 (2014): 595–608 (pp. 595–7).
28 See also a comparable comment made by Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireless Christoff, and Amy R. Wong, in 'Undisciplining Victorian Studies', *Victorian Studies* 62.2 (Spring 2020): 369–91 (383).
29 George du Maurier, 'A Suggestion', *Punch* 74 (20 April 1878): 178.