



Religion and Victorian Popular Literature and Culture

A special issue of *Victorian Popular Fictions Journal*

edited by Naomi Hetherington & Clare Stainthorp, Autumn 2023

The category of the popular has played a significant role in the 'religious turn' in Victorian studies over the last two decades. Historians of nineteenth-century religion have increasingly turned to popular culture and folklore to challenge traditional paradigms of decline and secularisation whilst, amongst scholars of Victorian literature and visual culture, there has been an upsurge of interest in the influence of new religious movements on popular literary and visual forms. At the same time, a growing acknowledgment of the Protestant bias that has shaped the study of Victorian religion, and that can itself be traced back to colonial institutions and power structures, has necessitated urgent investigation into the roles played by non-Western and non-Christian subjects in moulding the popular religious imaginary. This special issue will explore manifestations of religion and the expression and representation of religious experience in popular culture texts of all kinds.

We seek proposals for 7,000–8,000 word articles from scholars at all levels (including postgraduate students, early-career academics, heritage practitioners and independent researchers). We welcome proposals that focus on popular narrative in all its forms arising from the long nineteenth century, and particularly encourage research that examines non-canonical and neglected poets, dramatists, novelists, journalists, journals, publishers, artists, critics and readers. We would be particularly interested in research concerning religious practices and experiences outside of Christian traditions.

Topics might include, but are by no means limited to:

- the popular religious novel
- religious typology in popular art and literature
- religion and the popular press
- hymns, sermons and liturgies
- religious objects, dress and buildings
- religious feeling
- religion, gender and sexuality
- religion and the life cycle
- religion and children's literature and culture
- religious revivals and utopias
- religion, domesticity and the family
- religion, horror and the Gothic
- missionary and travel writing
- religion and popular imperialism
- decolonising Victorian religion
- popular piety, magic and folk beliefs
- archaeology and the Bible
- spiritualism, esotericism and occultism
- religion and popular science writing
- popular freethought and blasphemy
- religion, resistance and popular reform movements

Please submit a 500-word abstract and short biography in Word format to the guest editors Dr Naomi Hetherington and Dr Clare Stainthorp at vpfareligion@gmail.com by **1 November 2021**. Final articles to be submitted by 30 September 2022.