



Provided by the author(s) and University College Dublin Library in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite the published version when available.

Title	Britain at the Fin de Siècle
Authors(s)	Daly, Nicholas
Publication date	2015
Publication information	Saler, M. (ed.). The Fin de Siècle World
Publisher	Routledge
Link to online version	http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415674133/
Item record/more information	http://hdl.handle.net/10197/6528

Downloaded 2020-05-24T04:28:48Z

The UCD community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. Your story matters! (@ucd_oa)



Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.



Britain at the Fin de Siècle

On January 1, 1877, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Maharajas of Mysore, Gwalior, and Kashmir, the Khan of Khelat, and other Indian leaders assembled at the Imperial Durbar in Delhi to mark the proclamation of Queen Victoria (in absentia) as Empress of India. Medieval in theme, and with costumes and decor designed by Rudyard Kipling's father, Joseph Lockwood Kipling, the extravagant display was presided over by Lord Lytton, the viceroy (Codell 2013). Not everyone was happy with such theatrics, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* was by no means alone in its view that "a tinsel title has been proclaimed with a tawdry and theatrical display of magnificence", that the extravagance was unlikely to impress the native princes, and that it was inappropriate at a time of famine in Southern India (*Pall Mall Gazette* 1877). Nonetheless, such pageantry was the ceremonial expression of a geopolitical reality: that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Britain was on top of the world, notwithstanding continuing and emergent rivalries with other powers. There was plenty more of this kind of pageantry to come: in 1887 and 1897 kings, princes, and other leaders from all over the world gathered in London to celebrate Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees. The Queen was an Empress, and London was not just a national capital, but an imperial capital that directly or indirectly controlled vast swathes of the globe, from Australia and New Zealand, to parts of Africa, Asia and North and South America.

If the growth of Britain's overseas territory had not always been in accordance with a long-term plan, clearly by the late nineteenth century it was increasingly self-aware about its imperial status. Apart from state pageantry, such awareness registers in the political sphere in, for example, the policies of the pro-empire Liberal Unionist party, but it also left its imprint in the cultural realm, in self-consciously imperial literature, music, and fine art, from adventure yarns, to imperial marches, to paintings of Roman opulence. However, less comfortable forms of national self-consciousness were also apparent. For example, there was a growing perception that Britain was falling behind such countries as Germany and the U.S. both economically and technologically. Similarly, some commentators realized that Britain was one power among others both in Europe and in the imperial scramble, and warned that Britain itself could easily succumb to invasion. In the cultural realm, while some writers embraced international influences, others were distrustful of what they saw as unhealthy imports: naturalism, symbolism, and decadence, for example. Thus at a time when we might expect supreme confidence, we see as much self-doubt as self-assurance. These are metaphors of course: nations are complex, contested, and partly imaginary constructs, rather than individuals, and perhaps should not be ascribed feelings. But for heuristic purposes we can usefully see some tendencies as indices of confidence and national assertion, where others suggest

an inward and anxious turn. In this chapter I want to look at fin-de-siècle Britain as an imperial center, and to consider some of the reasons for those expressions of anxiety.

London, Imperial Capital

In Chapter 1 of Arthur Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes tale, *A Study in Scarlet*, Dr Watson, who has been wounded in the shoulder in Afghanistan, is sent back to England to recuperate his health on an invalid's pension. As he tells us, "Under such circumstances I naturally gravitated to London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained" (1888: 6). It is not something we can imagine any of, say, Dickens' characters saying, and is one of many indications in the literature of the period that London was now seen less as a national capital than as an imperial metropolis. In the physical fabric of the city we can see signs of the same imperial mood, which easily outlived Victoria. In 1905, a wide new street, Kingsway, was opened between Holborn and Aldwych. The imperial connotations of its broad sweep were captured in a Kiplingesque song written by Caroline Elgar, to accompany a melody by her husband, Edward:

The newest street in London town,
The Kingsway, the Kingsway!
The newest street in London town,
Who'll pace it up and pace it down?
The brave, the strong, who strive and try,
And think and work, who fight and die
To make their England's royal way
The King's Way, the King's Way!
(Elgar 1905)

The song envisages the street as the bricks-and-mortar embodiment of an invisible road that links London to "England's sons across the sea", a message not so very different from *Land of Hope and Glory*, Elgar's earlier imperial anthem, part of the *Coronation Ode* composed in honor of Edward VII in 1902.

Other capitals had fine, wide streets and imperial buildings too, of course, and empire was in the air more generally. As Eric Hobsbawm notes, "gigantic monuments to national self-congratulation and imperial propaganda ... filled the new German Empire" as well as Britain, and "statuomania" was the tendency of the age (Hobsbawm 1989: 222). But London dwarfed other capitals in terms of sheer size. By 1900 the population of Greater London stood at 6.5 million, which was about one fifth of the total population of England and Wales. This was more than twice the size of Paris, and even New York trailed far behind, at around 3.4 million; it was in fact a greater population than quite a few European countries; outside of Europe and North America, no city was anywhere close to London in size -- Tokyo had some 1.5 inhabitants, and Bombay and Calcutta were close to the million mark (Lampard 1973: 9). In Peter Hall's terms, London was a world city, not just a very large centre of population, but a major hub of political power, commerce, finance, consumption, and information-gathering and dissemination, inter alia. Its extraordinary size was, perhaps, to be expected of a country that had long embraced urban life, and that had seen phenomenal growth of

population. Already by 1851 more Britons lived in towns and cities than in the countryside, a shift that took place elsewhere only in the twentieth century. Moreover, Britain's overall population had surged more generally, from around 8 million in 1800 to 32 in 1900; in the same period the population of France grew from 29 to 38, nothing like as dramatic and increase. Even more remarkable, perhaps, was that this population growth had taken place while Britain was sending out significant numbers of emigrants to its Anglophone settler colonies and the United States, as well as exporting imperial soldiers and administrators. Unlike the settlers, of course, the latter categories tended to return: Doctor Watson's route to London via Afghanistan was by no means atypical.

The Home Front

At a time when Britain ruled directly or indirectly vast tracts of the globe, some feared that it was about to be eclipsed. Such feelings ranged from concerns that Britain might be outstripped economically by Germany and America, to fears that the country was about to be invaded by hostile continental powers. The latter prospect underwrote a wave of "invasion narratives", from Sir George Tomkyns Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking; Reminiscences of a Volunteer* (1871), to Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), as well as more fantastic tales, like *Dracula* (1897) and *The War of the Worlds* (1897). Such invasion fiction evolved in the 1900s into the anti-German propaganda of journalist, novelist, and self-appointed "spy-hunter", William Le Queux, author of such volumes as *The Invasion of 1910*, serialized in the *Daily Mail* in 1906, and *Spies of the Kaiser: Plotting the Downfall of England* (1909). Nor did invasion-anxiety issue in print only: just as fears of French invasion had led to the formation of the volunteer movement during the reign of Napoleon III, at the fin de siècle similar concerns underpinned the formation of such bodies as the National Service League, the Legion of Frontiersmen, and even Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts (MacDonald 1993: 5).

Other threats loomed closer to home. Irish MPs in Westminster, led first by Isaac Butt and later by Charles Stewart Parnell, had pressed for Home Rule for Ireland from 1870, and unsuccessful Home Rule bills were introduced by the Liberals under William Gladstone in 1886 and 1893. (Jackson 2003). Those Liberals who were hostile to Gladstone's plans split from the party to become the Liberal Unionists under Joseph Chamberlain. But it was not only the Home Rulers who dominated the headlines: the Irish Republican Brotherhood (or "Fenians") demanded an independent Irish republic rather than some measure of Home Rule, and they were committed to extra-parliamentary methods to achieve their goal. Having seen the failure of open rebellion, its leaders turned to the methods of modern urban terrorism. Indeed, this was also international terrorism insofar as the IRB had considerable support from Irish America. London's transport and administrative centers were targeted in the early 1880s, with bombs detonated at Paddington, Victoria and Gower Street stations; Whitehall, the House of Commons, and the headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Department of the police, among other locations. Deaths and injuries were relatively low, given the number of devices used. But these attacks, together with those of anarchists in the same period, showed that the heart of the empire was far from being invulnerable, and writers from Robert Louis

Stevenson to Joseph Conrad were quick to explore the symbolic significance of such actions. (Ó Donghaile 2010).

Direct action – though not dynamite – also came to be used by another group who felt their political rights were being ignored: women. The campaign for female suffrage in Britain was mounted by such bodies as the National Society for Women's Suffrage, the Women's Franchise League, and the Women's Social and Political Union (Smith 2007). It was the last group under the leadership of Emmeline Pankhurst (two of whose daughters, Christabel and Sylvia were also major figures in the campaign) that stepped up the campaign from 1905, and from 1908 pioneered the use of window-smashing and later arson, bombing, and hunger strikes to highlight their cause. The treatment of women demonstrators, and the use of force-feeding in prisons in 1909 made it evident that whatever its chivalric rhetoric, the state was prepared to use violence against women when it felt under threat. Nonetheless, the movement prevailed: in 1918 for the first time women achieved a qualified measure of suffrage; by 1928 women could vote on the same terms as men. The movement was less successful, perhaps, in achieving broader changes to the way in which gender operated in politics and society (Smith 2007: 3).

While most suffrage activists were Liberals, Emmeline Pankhurst had attempted to forge links with the labour movement, and Sylvia Pankhurst became as committed to socialist politics as to women's suffrage, leading the East London Federation of Suffragettes. For these were also the years of the rise of Labour, against a background of growing discontent with working conditions: the Match Workers Strike of 1888, and the London Dock Strike of 1889 put the spotlight on the grim conditions of many workers. The gradual extension of the franchise (for men) over the course of the century meant that by the 1890s the working class had some actual political muscle. Former Scottish miner Keir Hardie was elected as an "Independent Labour Candidate" for West Ham South in 1892, and founded the Independent Labour Party the following year. The modern Labour Party grew out of the Labour Representation Committee, formed in 1900 with Hardie as Chairman, to bring together the trades unions and socialist parties. The emergence of Labour as a party radically altered the political landscape of Britain, which had long alternated between Conservative and Liberal rule. By the 1920s Labour would displace the Liberals as the main opposition party, and in 1923 it would form its first government, in coalition with a section of the Liberal Party.

The campaign for women's suffrage and the rise of Labour were national movements, but they both took place in an international context too. Hardie, for example, was a committed internationalist, and active in the Socialist International. He toured the settler colonies as well as India and Japan to promote the cause of labour, and tried to make common cause with German socialists against the arms race. He was thus placed in a difficult position when working-class voters in Britain joined in the national enthusiasm for war. Emmeline Pankhurst toured the U.S. and Canada, and attracted enthusiastic crowds eager to hear about the campaign for suffrage, but when war came her loyalty was to Britain, and she committed the movement to supporting the war against Germany; Sylvia Pankhurst, like Hardie, took a different view, and campaigned against conscription – after the war she was a leading voice in international socialism. Another feminist and socialist campaigner of these

years, Annie Besant, became a very different sort of international figure. Long a critic of Britain's role in India, as president of the Theosophical Society she moved to Adyar, Madras, home to the organization's headquarters. She became actively involved in politics, and was elected president of the Indian National Congress in 1917.

Culture

The realm of culture did not float free of the political and social concerns of the period. In fine art, Britain's martial exploits – and reversals – had long been a source of pictorial subjects, and this strain was continued in the work of such artists as Elizabeth Thompson, Lady Butler (*Scotland Forever!* [1881]); the Irish-born George William Joy (*The Death of General Gordon* [1893]); and Charles Edwin Fripp (*The Battle of Isandhlwana* [1885]). No visitor to the annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy could fail to notice that Britain saw itself as a military power with extensive overseas interests (Lambourne 1999: 412-437). We can see a somewhat different imperial imagination at work in the lush classical interiors of the Dutch-born Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, who turned late-Victorian Britain into decadent Rome in such paintings as *In the Trepidarium* (1881) and *The Roses of Heliogabalus* (1888). But in this period British art was also beginning to move away from the narrative-driven paintings of the Academy. A reaction had set in as early as the 1860s in the work of the American-born (but London and Paris-based) James Abbott McNeill Whistler, who insisted that painting was not about telling stories. His canvases asserted the importance of composition rather than theme with such titles as *Arrangement in Pink, Red, and Purple* (1883-4). Whistler's ideas were echoed in much of the aesthetic philosophy of the 1890s, including that of Oscar Wilde.

In the literature of this period, we can see a bifurcation between “hearties” and Aesthetes. It is a very loose division -- the literary coteries of this period sometimes overlapped, and some writers were “non-aligned” -- but it nonetheless has a certain explanatory usefulness. Insofar as the labels correspond to real social and literary behavior, the “hearties” were more likely to be part of the, “Henley Regatta” as Max Beerbohm described it, the informal circle that gathered around the editor and poet W.E. Henley, including, at times, H.G. Wells, R.L. Stevenson, J.M. Barrie, Rudyard Kipling and others, though few of these shared Henley's dislike of “Decadence”. The more aesthetically inclined were likely to be regular attenders at the Cheshire Cheese pub in Fleet Street, home to the Rhymers' Club, a group of poets that included Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Ernest Rhys, T.W. Rolleston, and W. B. Yeats (Beckson 1992: 71-94; Buckley 1945). Yeats was one of the club's founders, and his friend, the prominent Fenian John O'Leary was a regular visitor, which suggests that nationalism as well as aestheticism was a component of this literary culture. These were not the only coteries in London, of course. The aesthetic poet and critic Alice Meynell, for example, had her own literary salon, and through her literary column in the *Pall Mall Gazette* wielded considerable influence (Schaffer 2000: 159-96).

Wilde favored the Rhymers, but was not a regular visitor, and did not appear in the anthologies of the Rhymers that appeared in 1892 and 1894. He was already by then a well-known figure, and had played a crucial role in

popularizing the ideas of aestheticism, through, for example, his public talks and journalism, and his own self-presentation. His novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, appeared in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in 1890, before appearing in revised form in 1891, with a Preface that set out a number of Wilde's artistic maxims. Readers were assured that "there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all" and that "Vice and virtue are to the artist instruments of an art" (Wilde 1890: 4). Yet, in the *Picture*, a moral seems to be offered, and Walter Pater's idea that our all too brief lives should be a search for new sensations is turned into a sort of Gothic parable: Dorian lives a life of refined debauchery, but it is his portrait – and the people around him – who pay the price of his actions.

Among the hearties, the Anglo-Indian Kipling was the one most likely to extol the virtues of the active, imperial life in strident, public poetry. Thus in 1899 he was urging the United States in verse to "take up the white man's burden" in the London *Times* of February 4. In the year of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee he warned Britain that it should be more humble in its divinely-inspired imperial might:

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe--
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law--
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget -- lest we forget!
(Kipling 1897)

"Recessional", from which these lines come, was clearly public poetry too, appearing first in the London *Times* – this is the voice of Britain's unofficial imperial poet laureate writing to his people. Such pieces are the more sombre corollaries of the slang-filled celebrations of the imperial legions in such poems as "The Absent-Minded Beggar" and "Gunga Din". It was the latter Kipling, the author of *Barrack Room Ballads and Other Verses* (1892) that Robert Buchanan had attacked in an essay in *The Contemporary Review* in 1899, "The Voice of the Hooligan", which reminds us of the hostility as well as adulation that the imperialist poet generated among his contemporaries (Attridge 2003: 70-91).

The Rhymers' work for its part appeared in anthologies published with small print runs, and bought by a coterie audience – many of them other poets, one assumes. *The Book of the Rhymers Club* (1892) makes the occasional humorous sally, as in T.W. Rolleston's "Ballade of the 'Cheshire Cheese' in Fleet Street":

The modern world, so stiff and stale,
You leave behind you, when you please,
For long clay pipes and great old ale
And beefsteaks in the Cheshire Cheese
(Rolleston 1892).

But for the most part this is private poetry: the regulars at the Cheshire Cheese were interested in interiority, in the evanescence of consciousness, in love, in the

city, and above all else in literary form. Ernest Dowson, for instance, wrote neo-classical love poetry with a decadent flavor – crying for “madder music and for stronger wine” to rid himself of the fatal lure of the “pale, lost lilies” of his old love, Cynara (Dowson 1891). Others wrote about spiritual doubts, or, as in Yeats case, celebrated the supposed non-modernity of the Celtic fringe in incantatory poems like “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”. Despite their obvious differences the Hearties and the Aesthetes had certain things in common, in particular an interest in re-energizing English literature by bringing into it global material. While Kipling injected new energy into English literature by taking empire as his raw material, Arthur Symons and others were hoping to renew English poetry using French Symbolism; Rhys and Yeats drew on the Celtic fringe, and Yeats would later try to create a new form of poetic drama by studying, inter alia, Japanese Noh theatre.

We can recognize a similar division between an outward/imperial and an inward look in prose fiction, though again there are also areas of overlap. On the one hand, there was a “revival of romance”; on the other a literature of consciousness along continental lines began to develop (Daly 1999). On the side of romance are the Edinburgh-born Robert Louis Stevenson, and H. Rider Haggard, both promoted, like Kipling, by Henley, who edited the *Scots Observer*, and later the *National Observer*. In their work we see a new cathexis around space, graphically represented by the treasure-maps of *Treasure Island* (1883) and *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885), which link the idea of overseas adventure to fabulous wealth. Neither novel is straightforward propaganda for empire, of course, but in them we do see an investment in exotic space as dangerous but exciting and rewarding. Targeted at “big and little boys”, as the dedication to *King Solomon’s Mines* puts it, these tales of homosocial adventure are part of the dreamworld of an increasingly imperial society. Nonetheless, they are far from naïve artefacts. Haggard had spent some time in South Africa, and his African characters are sometimes complex figures: Billali, a leader of the Amahagger people in *She* (1887), is a more developed character than the handsome English hero, Leo, for example. At the time, Haggard and Stevenson’s work was taken up and given a literary defence by folklorist and proto-anthropologist Andrew Lang, who argued that the English novel needed to be rejuvenated by tapping the wells of primitive narrative – it needed to get away from domestic plots and embrace the action-driven narrative of epic (Daly 1999: 18-19).

The “romance” school was in self-conscious reaction against not only the older domestic fiction of Dickens and Eliot, but the contemporary influence of French naturalism, and the more formalist fiction of consciousness that was beginning to gain ground. One of the pioneers of that fiction of consciousness was the American-born Henry James (naturalized as a British citizen in 1915), who was formulating his own very different ideas about the novel in the years of the “revival of romance”. For James, renewal in the novel could only come through a greater awareness of literary form: treatment, not content, was the key. One should not exaggerate the extent to which James was immune to the appeals of dramatic content. *The Princess Cassamassima* (1886) is, after all, a novel about terrorism in London, which was, as we have seen, very much in the news at the fin-de-siècle, even if James’s narrative largely focuses on the same issues of moral choice that preoccupy the protagonists of his more domestic tales. Nor was he uninterested in securing powerful readerly effects, and his

ghost stories, including *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) are among his most successful works.

James's closest ally in the reformation of the novel in English was a fellow immigrant, a Pole, Joseph Conrad (Jozef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski), who became a British citizen in 1886. But if Conrad shared James's commitment to literary form, his 20 years of experience at sea gave him a very different store of raw material on which to draw, and the ability to conjure up versions of South America, Southeast Asia and West Africa as readily as he could London, however European his perspective might remain. In Conrad, the imperial imagination of Stevenson and Rider Haggard undergoes a sea-change into something at once more stylized and more phobic: the African cornucopia of *King Solomon's Mines* and the all-powerful Queen Ayesha of *She* (1887) return in nightmarish form in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), where Africa allows Europeans to play out fantasies of absolute power and enormous wealth, but at the cost of turning them into monsters like Kurtz. Yet Conrad's sophisticated vision is scarcely less Eurocentric, even if in his work the exotic spaces of empire become a backdrop for European disintegration and self-questioning rather than for manly adventure and treasure-hunting. Despite their imperialism, Rider Haggard's work is rather more inclined to recognize Africa's actual presence outside of the European imagination, perhaps because he had lived for some years in Natal, and had considerable respect for the war-like Zulu people.

Naturally, these twin tendencies of "romance" and proto-modernism were not the only ones at work in these years. The "New Woman" was a term introduced by the novelist Sarah Grand to describe the woman who has "proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's-Sphere" (cited in Christensen Nelson 2000: ix). The term was quickly taken up in the journalism of the period, and the educated and independent New Woman became a contested figure: an ideal for some, but a figure of fun for those who were happier that women kept to their Sphere. In fiction the term "New Woman" writers has been used to describe, among others, Ella Hepworth Dixon, George Egerton, Sarah Grand, Mona Caird, and Netta Syrett. The term thus encompasses authors relatively traditional in their approach to fiction as well as the more experimental. Insofar as there is an underlying unity it is provided by their shared political interest in the place of women in society, and their relative frankness about sexual topics. Among the more experimental, Egerton (Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright) drew on her knowledge of European fiction -- she translated Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* in 1899 -- to produce stories that are remarkable for compression, elision, and the use of stream of consciousness to represent her characters' interiority. Her first collection of stories, *Keynotes* (1893) was published by John Lane as the first volume in the Keynotes Series, which provided a showcase for a number of women writers. Lane, with Elkin Mathews, also published the iconic fin-de-siècle journal, the *Yellow Book*, which also featured the work of many women writers (Christensen Nelson 2000: xiii). For those who felt that Britain was facing some kind of cultural collapse the frankness and experimentalism of the "New Woman" writers were, of course, seen as symptomatic.

Egerton's Scandinavian influences should remind us that one of the most celebrated fictional "New Women" was Henrik Ibsen's Nora in *A Doll's House*, which premiered in Copenhagen in 1879, though it was not performed in English

translation for another ten years. The play's representation of a woman who turns her back on her husband and her assigned domestic role sent shock-waves through international drama and literature. Ibsen's most faithful disciple in Britain was the Irish playwright and critic George Bernard Shaw, who wrote *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* in 1891 to explain the work of the Norwegian to an Anglophone audience, and to advance his own social critique. In his plays, Shaw borrowed both Ibsen's willingness to deal with difficult and even taboo topics, and his rejection of the melodramatic conventions that still dominated the theatre of the day. There are no last-minute rescues; the "action" is talk, and often the main effect aimed at is not to thrill the audience, but to leave them less sure of their preconceptions. *Mrs Warren's Profession* (written in 1893, but not performed until 1902, and then privately), for instance, never mentions that profession by name, and we see neither brothels, nor weeping fallen women; instead Shaw highlights the hypocrisy of a society that pays women starvation wages for factory and service jobs, but affects to be outraged when women choose sex work instead. The play was more or less unperformable given Britain's censorship of the stage; on tour in the United States it was hugely controversial, and a 1905 New York production was stopped by the police for a period, though the principal objections were probably to the play's references to incest, not prostitution – one review described the play as "illuminated gangrene" (Harrington 50). Faced with official censorship, and the indifference, or hostility, of the larger paying public, the work of dramatists like Ibsen and Shaw depended to a considerable degree on the venues provided by the emergent private theatre societies. These included Jacob T. Grein's Independent Theatre Society in London, and the Irish Literary Theatre Society, one of the forerunners of Dublin's Abbey Theatre.

In the early years of the twentieth century, when Ibsenism seemed rather dated, a new wave of foreign influence manifested itself in London's literary bohemia, as Ezra Pound began to make his presence felt (Brooker 2007: 52-71). With the appearance of his edited anthology *Des Imagistes* in 1914 international, or at least transatlantic, modernism came more clearly into focus: contributors included the English writers F.S. Flint, Ford Madox Ford, and Richard Aldington; the Americans H.D., William Carlos Williams, and Amy Lowell; the Russian-born John Cournos; and the Irishman James Joyce. But this new departure also had Victorian roots. Pound befriended the residual Rhymers when he arrived in London in 1908; and some of the other Imagists had come from the Poets' Club, a group that owned kin to the Rhymers' Club (Beckson 1992: 93; Brooker 2007: 46).

For the majority of the population of the fin de siècle world the work of the Rhymers and Imagists was very remote stuff indeed, and even H. Rider Haggard may not have played too large a role in their experience of culture. Popular culture in the sense of that which was enjoyed by the working-class majority of the population was something else again. The music halls represented one facet of this other world, and such figures as Marie Lloyd (Matilda Alice Victoria Wood) and Dan Leno (George Wild Galvin) were familiar to many who were not readers of books. Lloyd is still remembered for her racy humor, her bitter-sweet songs about the lot of working-class women, and for her occasional clashes with the Social Purity movement. Leno started as a clog-dancer and "Irish" comic vocalist, but became known for his comic monologues.

He was making 250 pounds a week at the height of his earning power according to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and was well-known enough to colonize print culture by lending his name in 1898 to his own ½-penny comic, *Dan Leno's Comic Journal*, which ran for 93 issues.

Both Lloyd and Leno survive for us on film, the second industrial revolution's major contribution to culture: Lloyd in such later pieces as *Marie Lloyd at home and Bunkered* (1913); and Leno in *Dan Leno's Day Out* (1901), *An Obstinate Cork* (1902), and quite a few other comic shorts. The Lumière's had put on their first films at the Grand Café in Paris in December, 1895, and two of Britain's film pioneers, R.W. Paul and the American-born Birt Acres developed their own motion-picture technology at much the same time. At first film was no threat to older forms of entertainment, and was to some extent seen as just another visual novelty, folded into existing music hall and travelling fair entertainments. Its ability to bring home to British audiences such distant events as the Boer War helped it through this early phase. Eventually, though, it would become established enough to lure performers away from music hall, vaudeville (in the U.S.), and the stage. Charlie Chaplin, the one-time clog-dancer who first appeared on the music hall stage in the 1890s, is probably the best-known of these figures; Stanley Laurel [Arthur Jefferson] followed a similar trajectory.

The Economy, Migration, and Transatlantic Ties

Britain continued in this period to be a major manufacturing economy, though the second industrial revolution saw the United States and Germany make major advances. Some commentators worried that Britain was about to lose its competitive edge, and blamed such factors as deficiencies in scientific and technical education, and the denigration of industry and commerce by a social system that still looked to land-ownership as the basis of prestige. On the other hand, if there were reasons to fear the nation's being eclipsed in manufacture, there was little doubt that Britain, and especially London, had consolidated its position by century's end as a major hub – perhaps the major hub -- for financial services: “The City” would loom ever larger in London's vision of itself (White 2008: 3).

1873 to 1896 were the years of the “long depression” in many parts of the world, and Britain was not immune to its effects. But insofar as this affected food production, its effects were relatively limited, since Britain had ceased to be primarily an agricultural nation, and had become a net importer of food. Grain came from the mid-western states of the U.S.; by the end of the century refrigeration meant that meat could be imported from as far away as Australia, New Zealand and South America. As Eric Hobsbawm notes, in Britain only one sixth of the workforce worked on the land, a much lower figure than elsewhere in Europe (1989: 20), and a much lower figure than in Ireland, where industrialization was relatively underdeveloped outside the North. (There the Land War of the 1880s was in part caused by the agricultural downturn.) Scotland had followed England and Wales towards urbanization and industrialization; the numbers employed on the land plummeted, as the production of coal, iron, and ships grew dramatically.

If the general tendency was for people to move from the country to the towns, some went a good deal further in search of work, or more lucrative work, or a better life. We are familiar with this narrative in the case of Ireland and Scotland, but England and Wales were also exporting millions. Between 1815 and 1924 some 25 million people emigrated, with numbers reaching their zenith in 1913, long after the years of greatest population growth; even allowing for the human flows in the other direction, this still leaves a net emigration figure of 18 million (Belich 2009: 126, 129, 142 n.133). As James Belich notes, economic explanations alone are probably insufficient to account for this massive transfer: it is by no means clear, for example, that the majority of migrants were displaced farm workers, and the very poor were a minority (2009: 128-129). For the most part this was emigration to the Anglophone settler colonies of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and of course the former settler colony of the United States.

There were also inward population flows. Along with returned imperial sojourners came an increasingly diverse immigrant population: German metal-workers, Irish labourers, Jewish garment workers from Russia, Chinese sailors, Indian missionaries, and many others made Britain, and especially London, their home. Some of these immigrants found the imperial metropolis a good place from which to see empire steadily and whole. A former temperance lecturer from Dominica, Celestine Edwards, organized the first Pan-African Conference in London in 1900, and London, like Paris, became a place where anti-imperial movements grew (White 2008: 151). But flows of people, if not of ideas, met formidable obstacles. In response to fears that Britain was absorbing too many “alien” elements – Jews in particular -- the first modern legislation to control immigration appeared in 1905, and harsher measures were to follow (Glover 2012).

Some immigrants were given a much warmer welcome. From the 1870s on a very intimate version of the “special relationship” between Britain and the United States was developed by marriages between moneyed Americans and titled Britons. When hotel heiress Minnie Stevens married Captain Arthur Henry Paget, the grandson of the Marquis of Anglesey in 1878, the *New York Times* noted that among the guests at St Peter’s in Eaton Square were several “American beauties who have become allied by marriage to the English nobility” (Anon. 1878), including Lady Randolph Churchill (née Jeanette Jerome), Viscountess Mandeville (née Consuelo Yznaga), and the Honourable Mrs Carrington (née Warden). In some cases at least, it was not so much American beauty that was in demand as American money, and the fin de siècle “dollar princess” became a much-discussed phenomenon. There were no less than nine of these alliances of cash and titles in 1895, the most high-profile of which was that between Consuelo Vanderbilt and the Duke of Marlborough (MacColl and Wallace 2009). Other marriages that year included that of department-store heiress Mary Leiter and Lord Curzon; and that of street-car heiress Pauline Whitney and Almeric Paget, later first Baron Queensborough, and brother-in-law of Minnie Stevens. The trend continued into the Edwardian period: in 1903, for example, real-estate heiress Mary (“May”) Goelet married the Duke of Roxburghe, and Alice Thaw (coal heiress) married the Earl of Yarmouth. Sometimes there was money on both sides, as with the marriage in 1906 of Nancy Langhorne (the divorced Mrs Robert Shaw) to William Waldorf Astor,

later the 2nd Viscount Astor, one of an Anglicized branch of the American Astors, whose money had originally come from the fur industry; Nancy Astor would go on to become the first female member of parliament. There were so many of these transatlantic matches that a publication called *Titled Americans* appeared to update interested readers on those heiresses who had secured titled husband (Anon. 1890). On both sides of the Atlantic audiences could see a musical-comedy version of such financial marriage plots in *The Dollar Princess* (1909), adapted by George Grossmith Jr. (New York version) and Basil Hood (London version) from the German *Die Dollarprinzessin* (1907) by A.M. Willner and Fritz Grünbaum. Long before then we see a fictional index of the greater prominence of Americans in British affairs – and not just romantic ones – in the form of the heroes and heroines of Henry James, and the characters of Bram Stoker and Arthur Conan Doyle, e.g., Quincey Morris (*Dracula*) and Irene Adler (“A Scandal in Bohemia”).

The War in South Africa

While the Empire was still expanding, there were also setbacks. The most famous of these, perhaps, was the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), which Britain won, but at enormous cost. A detailed account of the war’s origins is beyond this brief survey, but the principal factors included the fierce struggle for control of the mineral wealth of South Africa’s Boer states, ongoing geopolitical rivalries with Germany, and the participation of such ardent imperialists as Cecil Rhodes. Britain encountered fierce resistance from the Dutch settlers of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and the death-toll reached levels that Britain had not seen since the Crimean War: some 22,000 troops died, many of them killed by disease, and inadequate medical treatment of non-fatal wounds. As Thomas Pakenham notes, in financial terms the conflict was the most expensive to the British state since the Napoleonic wars, at a cost of some £200 million (Pakenham 1979: 512). For some commentators the war in South Africa was a lesson in how ill-prepared Britain was for major warfare, and it focused anxieties about the decline of the national “stock”: modern city life was producing a race of men who were less fit for combat than their forefathers. Max Nordau’s *Entartung* had appeared in English translation as *Degeneration* in 1895, part of a whole corpus of works about the deleterious effects of modern life. The crisis rhetoric around the Boer War fitted neatly into such accounts, even if the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904) eschewed the term degeneration itself (Pick 1993: 185). For the general public, the distant war was made vividly present by the expanding news industries, and by new media technologies. Britain’s first halfpenny daily paper, the *Daily Mail* appeared in 1896, and the *Daily Express* followed in 1900 – the war in South Africa helped them reach an enormous readership. The Box Brownie camera, which appeared on the market in 1900, enabled the most inexpert of photographers to capture images from the war zone. More importantly, perhaps, the fledgling film industry brought the war home in a way that had never been possible before: audiences came to see troops boarding ships for South Africa, arriving in South Africa, and even some long-range battle scenes, though the guerilla warfare of the Boers did not lend itself to being successfully filmed. To meet the appetite for more exciting footage, film companies recreated war scenes at home. Sometimes these were passed off as real war footage, leading to charges of

“photo-faking”. So closely were the new medium and the war aligned that the cinematograph was advertised as the “Boerograph” and “Wargraph” (Daly 2004: 62, 65). The war in South Africa was not just a modern, industrial one in terms of the means with which it was fought, then, but also in terms of the way in which it was relayed to the non-combatants at home. In this respect it looked forward to the conflict that would decisively end the long nineteenth century, the First World War.

Conclusion

There is no single national “mood”, or even structure of feeling in fin-de-siècle Britain. Cultural historians are more likely to be struck by the intimations of anxiety, since in the most ebullient of adventure romances there are moments of doubt; and even Kipling saw fit to warn Britain that it might yet be at one with the ruined cities of Nineveh and Tyre. And yet, in the political sphere there is abundant evidence of imperial confidence. Late Victorian imperial pomp did not end with Victoria, any more than the British empire itself did, and the Delhi Durbars of 1903 to mark the coronation of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, and of 1911 to mark that of George V and Queen Mary, were extended and elaborate affairs. Indeed, Britain was still adding territory to the empire in this period. If the Boer War sent shudders through the military and political establishment, it would be some time yet before Britain began to lose its empire, and its position as a “superpower” *avant la lettre*.

Bibliography

Anon. (1877) “The Imperial Durbar at Delhi”, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Tuesday, January 2, 1877. British Newspapers Online. Web.

Anon. (1878) “Minnie Stevens Married”, *New York Times*, July 29: 3. Web.

Anon. (1890) *Titled Americans. A List of American Ladies Who Have Married Foreigners of Rank. Annually Revised. Illustrated with Armorial Bearings* (1890), New York: Street & Smith.

Attridge, Steve. (2003) *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Beckson, Karl. (1992) *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History*, New York: W.W. Norton.

Belich, James. (2009) *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939*, Oxford: Oxford UP.

Brooker, Peter. (2007) *Bohemia in London: The Social Scene of Early Modernism*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 2007.

Buckley, Jerome Hamilton. (1945) *William Ernest Henley: A Study in the 'Counter-Decadence' of the 'Nineties*, Princeton: Princeton UP.

Christensen Nelson, Carolyn, ed. (2000) *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles and Drama of the 1890s*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview.

Codell, Julie. (2013) "On the Delhi Coronation Durbars, 1877, 1903, 1911." BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History. Ed. Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net. Web.

Daly, Nicholas (1999), *Modernism, Romance, and the Fin de Siècle*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

-- (2004) *Literature, Technology, and Modernity, 1860-2000*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Dowson, Ernest. (1891) ""Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae", Literature Online. Web.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. (1888) *A Study in Scarlet*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.

Elgar, Alice. (1905). "The King's Way", The Elgar Society, Pomp and Circumstance Marches, Elgar.org Web.

Glover, David. (2012) *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora in Fin-de-Siècle England: A Cultural History of the 1905 Aliens Act*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Harrington, John P. (1997) *The Irish Play on the New York Stage, 1874-1976*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

Hobsbawm, Eric. (1989) *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, New York: Vintage.

Jackson, Alvin. (2003) *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000*, Oxford: Oxford UP.

Kipling, Rudyard (1897) "Recessional", Literature Online. Web.

Lambourne, Lionel. (1999) *Victorian Painting*, London: Phaidon.

Lampard, Eric. (1973) "The Urbanizing World", in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, eds., *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, vol. 1, London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul: 3-57.

MacDonald, Robert H. (1993) *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

MacColl, Gail and Carol McD. Wallace (1989) *To Marry an English Lord or, How Anglomania Really Got Started*, New York: Workman.

- Marshall, Gail (ed) (2007) *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Ó Donghaile, Deaglán. (2010) *Blasted Literature: Victorian Political Fiction and the Shock of Modernism*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Pakenham, Thomas. (1979) *The Boer War*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Pick, Daniel (1993) *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848–c.1918*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Rolleston, T.W. (1892) “Ballade of the ‘Cheshire Cheese’ in Fleet Street”, in The Rhymers’ Club, ed., *The Book of the Rhymers Club*, London: Elkin Mathews, 1892: 46.
- Schaffer, Talia (2000) *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes*, Charlotte: University of Virginia Press.
- Showalter, Elaine (2002) *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, New York: Little, Brown.
- Smith, Harold L. (2009) *The British Women’s Suffrage Campaign, 1866-1928*, London: Longman.
- White, Jerry. (2008) *London in the Nineteenth Century*, London: Vintage.
- Wilde, Oscar (1890), *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2007, ed., Michael Patrick Gillespie.

Fin de siècle. What are the key tropes of late 19th-century literature? How did writers respond to the desires and anxieties of the time? Dark desires and forbidden pleasure are at the centre of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Greg Buzwell examines the interplay between art and morality in Oscar Wilde's novel, and considers its use of traditional Gothic motifs as well as the theories of the new aesthetic movement. Read more. Music by Fin de Siècle & Alexander Eremichev Idea & visual realisation - Nick Dreyden Art-concept, movings & choreography - Polina Mitryashina Makeup & style Music by Fin de Siècle & Alexander Eremichev Idea & visual realisation - Nick Dreyden Art-concept, movings & choreography - Polina Mitryashina Makeup & style Fin de Siècle. We met about 15 years ago both being members of indie rock band «Bunshee» at the time, and we kept in touch ever since. «There Is No Place Like Home» was first recorded back in 2017 in collaboration with experimental music band «All in Orchestra» and was finally released in 2020 as a part of my «Fin de Siècle» project. As I'm working on the second single...I'm absolutely certain that Alex is the best way to make this song more powerful and sincere.