



19th Century UK Periodicals

19th Century U.K. Periodicals: Empire Review and Value Analysis

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Overall impressions:

Series 2 of the UK Periodicals: Empire project capitalizes on the prominence of imperialism and colonialism as key issues in British studies, transnational history and the social sciences, not to mention current public discussions beyond the academy. The selection of periodicals reflects a sophisticated response to trends in academic research and teaching on empire. Moreover, it makes available to a wide audience the necessary resources for efficient yet conceptually rigorous historical study.

A review of competition in the field indicates that this collection fills a current void in the field of digital publishing: a one-stop, full-text database for English-language periodicals published throughout the British Empire during the century which saw the peak of that empire's geographical reach and international dominance. No other publishers yet offer a comparable resource, which provides comprehensive access to important primary source periodicals published in a variety of international locations beyond metropolitan Britain.

Most importantly, the Gale empire collection is in tune with the most conceptually up-to-date scholarly approaches to issues of British imperialism and colonial experiences during the nineteenth century. Over the past three decades, no doubt, empire has become increasingly central to the study of nineteenth-century metropolitan British history. Simultaneously, historians of formerly colonized regions such as Africa and South Asia have pursued social, cultural and economic critiques detailing the impact of foreign rule on the material and psychological wellbeing of native societies. Starting in the 1980s, imperial and colonial topics generated substantial attention from fields beyond history such as literary criticism, art history and postcolonial area studies. Consequently, scholarly research and teaching on empire in the past two decades has attempted to bridge the traditional divide between the political history of Britain and its empire, and the more recent turn toward cultural and area studies.

Today, scholars working on the nineteenth-century British Empire generally employ approaches that can be characterized as transnational, multi-sited, and oriented toward communities beyond locality (i.e., women, soldiers, administrators and missionaries across the empire). Historians, social scientists and cultural theorists alike aim to bring together evidence from various locations in the British Empire to craft broad explanations of power, information networks, governmentality, and cultural transmission. This work requires the breaking down of traditional borders between "home" and the "empire," as outlined by leading scholars such as Ann Stoler, Fred Cooper, Catherine Hall and Antoinette Burton during the "transcolonial" turn in imperial studies. The Gale Empire Series speaks to each of these trends, in its



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authentic full-text reproduction of publications representing wide-ranging interest groups throughout metropolitan Britain and the nineteenth-century colonial world.

Research and teaching trends:

The following is a brief introduction to the topics and themes which have acquired substantial currency among scholars working on the nineteenth-century British Empire. These are trends which dominate ongoing research, teaching, and graduate work, for which the Gale empire digital collection provides particularly fertile resources. They include: press history and Victorian readerships; the impact of the empire on metropolitan Britain; science, information and empire; comparative colonialism and “popular culture”; gender; missionary activities; and anti-slavery and race.

These observations, and the following elaborations, are summarized from a review of recent university syllabi and in particular, the sophisticated and clever outline posted by James Vernon and Thomas Metcalf, leading scholars of nineteenth-century Britain and its empire at UC-Berkeley (<http://history.berkeley.edu/faculty/Vernon/H280C-SPRING02/>). I have also consulted bibliographical lists by London’s Institute for Historical Research (<http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Resources/update.html>), and nineteenth-century book reviews in current issues of the *Journal of Commonwealth and Imperial History*, the *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, the *Journal of British Studies*, and the *Victorian Periodicals Review*. These sources offer the most up-to-date surveys of monographs on the nineteenth-century published by leading academic presses with particular strengths in the fields of British imperial and colonial history, such as Yale, Cambridge, Oxford, Manchester, Duke and Harvard university presses; and Palgrave-MacMillan and Ashgate publishers.

It is also worth noting the increase in these research fields represented at leading academic conferences, such as the North American Conference on British Studies to be held in November 2007 in San Francisco. The conference schedule will be made public shortly at www.nacbs.org. An advance schedule indicates that of 42 panels representing a variety of chronological and topical areas of British studies, one in six panels directly addresses colonial and imperial themes and one in four covers the nineteenth century. Examples of particular interest include “A Taste for Empire: Food, Drink and Imperial Identities”; “Exploration, Travel and the Making of Space”; and “Anglobalization: Recent Critics and Defenders of Empire.”

Relevant themes:

Press history and new readerships:

The field of Victorian periodical studies has long occupied literary critics and Victorianists (such as those who painstakingly compiled Poole’s Index and the Wellesley Index). More recently, it has proven of wider appeal to scholars studying empire and popular culture in metropolitan Britain; the nineteenth-century boom in democratic print culture; and the impact of imperialism on vast new reading audiences which formed communities of thought in Britain and throughout the Empire. Leading scholars in this field include John MacKenzie (University of Manchester), Judith Walkowitz (Johns Hopkins) and Chandrika Kaul (University of St. Andrews).

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Further, in light of Gale’s recently released collection supporting the study of “New Readerships” in Victorian Britain, the empire collection is particularly exciting, as it promises to expand the possibilities for research in women’s, juvenile and specialty periodicals beyond domestic Britain to the colonial, international sphere. Its full-color format is also in line with trends in art history and literary criticism which explore the “visualization” of empire through prose text and periodical illustrations (see selected essays from MacKenzie’s path-breaking *Empire and Popular Culture* (1989) and more recently, Robert Grant, *Representations of British Emigration, Colonization and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800-1860* (Palgrave, 2005).)

Domestic impact of the British Empire:

The Gale empire collection is also poised to captivate scholars actively engaged in debating the relative importance of imperialism for British metropolitan life and politics in the nineteenth-century. This conversation recently has been headlined by prominent historians such as Niall Ferguson (Harvard), Bernard Porter (Newcastle), John MacKenzie (Manchester) and Charles Maier (Harvard), responding to influential studies produced by cultural critics such as the late Edward Said. Porter’s *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (Oxford, 2004), Andrew Thompson’s *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Longman, 2005), and works by MacKenzie in particular have opened a demand for concrete, quantifiable historical evidence of when, in what terms, and to what extent, the possession of overseas territories shaped political debates and attitudes across metropolitan Britain. Newspaper reportage is an essential gauge for such research. Further, the Gale digital archive will prove highly useful as it provides access to periodicals published not only in London, the oft-acknowledged imperial metropolis, but in other cities and industrial centers such as Edinburgh and Manchester. Moreover, the issue of variegated British regional responses to imperialism, i.e. Scottish engagement with the overseas empire, is quite well represented among the selected periodicals.

Science, exploration and technologies of empire:

A survey of recent university syllabi and published monographs shows that the relationship between scientific trends and colonialism is, at present, perhaps the dominant thematic issue in the research and teaching on Britain’s nineteenth-century empire. The Gale collection speaks strongly to a variety of subfields beneath the scientific banner, in its inclusion of the journals of numerous learned and scientific societies in Britain and in various colonial locations. One leading area of current historical research is colonial health and medicine, including questions of disease, contagion, imperial control of native medicine, the effect of the tropics on European bodies, and colonial motherhood. These topics have informed successful research by historians such as E. M. Collingham, Ronald Hyam (Magdelene, Cambridge) and Elizabeth Buettner (University of York). The Gale archive will allow researchers in this field direct access to health advertisements and trends in medical thinking as presented in periodicals from across the empire.

The Victorian preoccupation with landscape, geography and exploration is another major area of current inquiry. Historians such as Dane Kennedy (George Washington University) have investigated nineteenth-century frontier expeditions, mapmaking and geographical societies as they impacted broader imperial organization and rule. Several recent books on landscapes and ecological imperialism have also been reviewed in the spring 2007 edition of *Journal of Commonwealth and Imperial History*.



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In a related vein, the wider study of imperial communications, colonial intelligence networks and information dissemination has boomed in the past decade. The most influential among scholars concerned with this field is Chris Bayly (St. Catharine's, Cambridge), perhaps the foremost current historian of South Asia and the British Empire.

Comparative settler colonialism and imperial careering: migration, gender and “popular culture”:

A third broad field which the Gale collection would benefit is “transcolonial” research—a term lifted from the 2006 volume edited by Dane Kennedy and Durba Ghosh (Cornell), *Decentering Empire: Britain, India and the Transcolonial World*. Issues included under such a designation include comparative regional colonialism; and travel and communication not just between metropolitan Britain and the colonies, but across the empire.

Further, historians such as Catherine Hall (UCL) and Alan Lester (Sussex) have popularized the study of personnel networks and “imperial careering”—that is, the individual histories of various men and women of British and Irish descent who lived in various colonies as agents of imperial rule. They represented the development of an interconnected colonial network and a ruling culture apart from the dictates of metropolitan politicians and planners. Such histories are currently quite difficult to trace, requiring the mining of various overseas archives usually inaccessible to junior researchers. The Gale collection, through full-text searching and multi-regional holdings, will accelerate this process.

Moral and intellectual trends in empire: evangelical missions, anti-slavery and race:

The recent turn toward combining political, cultural and intellectual history in investigating the nineteenth-century imperialism has also led to an outpouring of studies on missionary activity throughout the British Empire. Catherine Hall's *Civilising Subjects* (2002) is a much-acclaimed example of this turn. The proposed Gale collection includes a rich variety of missionary literature, representing various Christian and Jewish communities and their projects throughout the British Empire. Such holdings are essential for students engaged in the sort of comparative research agenda outlined by Hall, Norman Etherington (University of Western Australia), Sujit Sivasundaram (Caius, Cambridge) and others.

Also on the intellectual register, recent scholarship has attempted to make sense of the overlap of British anti-slavery with the acceleration of highly racialized, discriminatory imperialism which emerged by the mid-century. To be sure, “race” has long been an analytical staple in postcolonial history writing. Today, political theorists and scientific historians are paying close attention to explaining the hardening of British intellectual racism in the mid-Victorian era, at the intersection of cultural chauvinism, moral/legal theory and popular science. Leading scholars in this field include Jennifer Pitts (Princeton), Karuna Mantena (Yale), Kenneth Morgan (Brunel) and Tony Ballantyne (University of Otago). Researchers in this field will benefit from the UK Periodicals: Empire project as it provides access to a variety of intellectual metropolitan review magazines and the journals of racial-scientific groups such as the (now infamous) London Anthropological Society.