

NATIONAL IDENTITY

Sondeep Kandola

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INTRODUCTION

In the United Kingdom in the Victorian period, contemporary commentators concerned themselves with questions of a collective 'national character' rather than the modern, and arguably more individualistic, concept of 'national identity' (Mandler 2006). The Victorian period saw the development of a science of national character which was shaped in both its domestic and imperial iterations by the pressures of imperial expansion, technological progress and attendant discussions of culture and ethnicity. Theorists, critics and historians such as John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold, Thomas Babington Macaulay, and Robert Knox variously sought to identify the attributes of not only the English national character but also those of their Celtic confreres and colonial peoples and the historical, cultural and political agency (or lack thereof) that arose from it in increasingly racialised and scientific terms. Where English national stereotypes such as industriousness, vigour, discipline and self-sufficiency were seen to have powered both the Industrial Revolution and Britain's imperial mission, racist stereotypes of the Irish as feckless, savage, and mercurial were used to explain away outbreaks of political dissent. Historians Kumar 2003 and Mandler 2006 have pointed to the incremental Anglicization of the four nations that made up the United Kingdom in this period. For Kumar, this was a form of internal colonialism that was engineered by the English (the 'wealthiest, most numerous, and most powerful group within the United Kingdom') which was then successfully repeated overseas to form a second land empire (p.589). The success of this Anglicization saw historian John Seeley confidently assert in his 1883 lectures *The Expansion of England* that his contemporaries should no longer confine themselves to the domestic affairs of the British Isles but to the 'Greater Britain' which, for him, referred to the white settler dominions of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. However, Seeley also believed that the privilege of an English identity could not be extended to India as a colonised territory. Rising national confidence both in Britain's growing primacy on the world stage as an industrial powerhouse and in the success of its 'civilizing' imperial mission was inevitably undermined by instances of mass labour unrest and events such as the Great Hunger (1848-52), the Indian Mutiny (1857-8) and the Boer Wars (1880-1; 1899-1902). Literature of the period, from the novels of Charles Dickens to the *fin-de-siècle* poetry of Rudyard Kipling, played a crucial role in registering and negotiating the social and political changes afoot in Victorian Britain and beyond which were both shaped by the national character and also came to reshape it.

GENERAL OVERVIEWS:

Responding to domestic and imperial pressures across the Victorian period, thinkers like Carlyle, Macaulay, Bagehot, Arnold, Mill, and Seeley variously debated the different historical, political and racial characteristics displayed by the member states of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and its citizens. The sections that follow are, firstly, concerned with Victorian conceptions of national character, as shaped by internal and external pressures and debates, and the evolving

historiography of the concept of the Victorian nation state to the present day. The second section examines Victorian and modern understandings of the political and cultural ramifications of the maintenance of the Union of the four nations that constituted the U.K. in the nineteenth century.

THEROISING THE VICTORIAN NATION

With mass social upheaval and inequality resulting from the Industrial Revolution, the first two decades of Queen Victoria's reign saw an ongoing debate on the so-called 'Condition of England' question. In three keynote publications the Scottish Historian Carlyle 1829, 1839, 1843 warned against the deleterious effects of this 'mechanical age' which had sapped the nation's moral and spiritual vigour. Mandler 2006 credits J.S. Mill from the 1840s onwards in inaugurating a 'true 'science of national character' based on 'ethnicity, culture, custom and political development' which would eventually 'guide the civilising process among 'backward' peoples such as the Irish ...the Indians and Africans' (Mandler, 2006, 49 and 51). Macaulay 1848 wrote his hugely successful five-volume *History of England between 1848 and 1858* in which he celebrated the progressiveness of the British constitution whilst excluding women, the working class and colonial peoples from it. In response to the expansion of empire in 1873 Bagehot 1881 wrote in a Darwinian key that a 'real nation' like England, unlike its colonies, had been fortified by 'long ages of transmitted discipline' to survive the pressures of modern cosmopolitanism and globalization (Bagehot, 1881, 40). Yet commentators of the 1880s and 1890s such as Maine 1885, driven by the country's economic downturn and an attendant decline in its imperial zeal, worried over a degeneration of the once positive qualities of the English national character (industrious, stolid, independent) into stagnation. From the 1980s onwards, the rise of postcolonial studies spawned new theories accenting the modernity of the nation state which addressed the construction of national identities (post-Enlightenment) and the political and cultural nationalisms they fostered. Influentially, for Anderson 1983 the nation is, in effect, an 'imagined' community because its members will claim fraternity and an affiliation with each other without having met in person. In line with postcolonial analyses of the impact of Empire on the colonies and *vice versa*, Kumar 2003 produced a study of English national identity in which he identified the imperial strategy that underpinned the Victorian project to consolidate Englishness into a metonym for Britishness *per se*. Tracing the attendant rise of a 'distinct English historiography', Kumar's study examined 'the clarification and codification of the English language, the elaboration and canonization of the "great tradition" of English literature, the celebration of a particular type of landscape as quintessentially English' at the end of the Victorian period (Kumar, 2003, 592).

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

An influential study which argues that the nation is a relatively new concept born from Enlightenment ideals and is 'imagined' as a 'deep horizontal comradeship' between members which claims sovereignty because in the modern period no dynastic monarchy can claim authority over it. Critics, however, have challenged both the Eurocentric and gender bias of Anderson's model.

Bagehot, Walter. *Physics and Politics Or Thoughts on the Application of the Principles of Natural Selection and Inheritance to Political Society*. London: Kegan Paul, 1881
These lectures from 1873 question whether the national character of the English, largely unchanged since the time of Chaucer, could adapt to the changing social and political conditions of the nineteenth century. For Bagehot, the future success of English national identity against the pressures of cosmopolitanism and globalism was assured by uninterrupted settlement that facilitated the unconscious transmission of the national character through the ages.

Carlyle, Thomas. 'The Sign of the Times'(1829) <https://victorianweb.org/authors/carlyle/signs1.html>.
Chartism (1840) <https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Chartism.html?id=kaelVuyDq20C>
Past and Present (1843) ed. Duff-Traill, Henry. *The Collected Works of Thomas Carlyle (vol. 10)*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010.

Three passionate texts that fulminate against the decline in vigour and moral energy experienced by the British as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Coining the phrase 'the Condition of England question', the Scottish historian, satirist and essayist heavily criticised the mechanisation of the human spirit and thought and the mass social inequality induced by rapid industrial progress.

Kumar, Krishan. *The Making of English National Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

An engaging study of English nationalism which both argues that culture rather than politics was the bedrock of the modern nation state and that the Celtic nations of the United Kingdom were muted, albeit often compliant, in this form of internal colonialism.

Macaulay, Thomas Babington. *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second* (1848) ed. Hugh Trevor-Roper, London: Penguin 1979

Macaulay's wildly successful, yet conservative, account of how Britain became the beacon of progress, liberty and modernity.

Maine, Henry Sumner. *Popular Government*. London: John Lane, 1885.

A distinctly pessimistic account by the historian on the negative impact that the progress of democracy was having on the English national character at the end of the Victorian period.

Mandler, Peter. *The English National Character. The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006.

A magisterial study tracing the development of the study of national character in the nineteenth century to more recent iterations of it. A forensic analysis of the impact that thinkers such as J.S. Mill, Edward Freeman and John Seeley had in articulating what it meant to be English in the Victorian period.

Mill, John Stuart. *A System of Logic: Ratiocinative and Inductive*, in J. M. Robson (general editor) *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, 33 vol. Toronto and London: Toronto University Press and Routledge Kegan Paul, 1963. VIII, 900-907.

In book VI, Chapter 5, of *A System of Logic* Mill begins to develop a highly influential science 'Of Ethology, or the Science of the Formation of Character' with which to analyse 'the theory of the causes which determine the type of character belonging to a people or to an age' and thereby shape 'the opinions, feelings, and habits of the people' (pp.904-5).

THE UNION

Given that it was a political insurgency in Ireland in 1798 that had led to the creation of the new nation state of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1800, the response to, and ensuing ramifications of, the addition of 5 million Irish citizens to Britain was understandably mixed. In response to the influx of Irish manual workers to cities such as Liverpool and Manchester, Carlyle 1840 railed against both Irish emigration to the mainland and the government's mismanagement of the Union. The ensuing Great Hunger in Ireland (1845 -52) saw the deaths of 1 million people and the emigration of another million and exposed the horrific inequalities of land tenure and systemic racism that the (Catholic) Irish suffered. This catastrophic event ultimately led to a series of Land Wars from the 1870s onwards and terrorist attacks on the mainland in pursuit of Irish independence. In 1867, Arnold 1891 proposed inaugurating a Chair in Celtic Literature at Oxford University to alleviate this violent political discord and foster a new sense of understanding and fraternity between the Celtic Irish and their Anglo-Saxon confreres. From the late twentieth century onwards, the processes of devolution in the United Kingdom have produced analyses of how consensual the formation of Great Britain and, latterly, the United Kingdom actually was. Brockliss and Eastwood 1997 read the United Kingdom in its Victorian iteration as a largely uncontested process of absorption while Kumar 2003 has described it as an insidious process of Anglicization. Robbins 1995, Mandler 2006 and Evans 2011 have argued that, despite the Irish Question haunting the British state, the concomitant growth of domestic material prosperity and imperial wealth in Victorian Britain saw its Scottish and Welsh members relatively at ease with participating in its 'manifest destiny'. Sanguinely for Mandler, the removal of political disabilities from non-Anglican Christians by the 1830s 'only riveted individual liberty and diversity more centrally into the self-definition of the English in order to make their traits a more plausible core for a plural multi-national Britishness' (p.33). Slightly outside of the Victorian period, Trumpener 1997 argued that the Anglicization of the Union and the concomitant growth of the British Empire led to a Celtic cultural renaissance, the recovery of a 'Bardic Nationalism', while

Corbett 2000 read the marriage plots of nineteenth-century Irish fiction as an allegory for Ireland's contested position in the Union.

Arnold, Matthew *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867). Project Gutenberg ebook from the Smith Elder & C. 1891 edition.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5159/5159-h/5159-h.htm>

An influential lecture which argues for the setting up of a Chair in Celtic Literature at Oxford in order to temper the excesses of a martial Anglo-Saxon philistinism that had produced violent political dissent in contemporary Ireland.

Brockliss, Laurence and Eastwood David (eds) *A Union of Multiple Identities. The British Isles, c. 1750–c. 1850* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997).

This study argues that the formation of the U.K. was a largely consensual process in which the 'increasing cultural and political primacy of English' should not be 'equated to hegemony' as other identities persisted within it (p.2)

Thomas Carlyle *Chartism*

<https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Chartism.html?id=kaelVuyDq20C>

Despite impugning the Irish character at length, Carlyle blames England's misgovernment of Ireland for the influx of waves of Irish emigrants to British cities.

Corbett, Mary Jean. *Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 1790–1870: Politics, History and the Family from Edgeworth to Arnold*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.

Analyzing novels by Edgeworth, Owenson, Gaskell, Kingsley, and Trollope, as well as writings by Burke, Carlyle, Engels, Arnold, and Mill, Corbett deploys postcolonial and feminist theory to show how cross-cultural contact between England and Ireland was negotiated through tropes of marriage and family in the Victorian period.

Evans, Eric. *The Shaping of Modern Britain: Identity, Industry and Empire 1780 – 1914*. London: Routledge, 2011

This economic history painstakingly explores how the development of such central institutions as the church, education, health, finance and rural and urban life transformed Britain into the world's first industrial power.

Mandler, Peter. *The English National Character. The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006.

An informative and scholarly analysis of how Victorian commentators (inevitably, white, male and middle-class) conceived of the English (Anglo-Saxon) national character in sociological, historical and racial terms and how this came to shape the Union and Empire.

Robbins, Keith. 'An imperial and multinational polity: The 'scene from the centre', 1832–1922' in Grant. Alexander and Stringer, Keith (eds.). *Uniting the Kingdom The Making of British History*. London: Routledge, 1995.

An insightful essay on the relationship between the four nations and the growth of the British Empire across the Victorian period.

Trumpener. Katie. *Bardic Nationalism, The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997

Trumpener explores how the increasing Anglicization of the United Kingdom led to a revival of Celtic culture in the nineteenth century through poetry, novels, the study of Celtic languages and antiquarian research.

RACE, GENDER AND EMPIRE

The following sections examine the evolving sense of British national identity effected in the period with regards to race, gender and Empire. The first section examines the various juxtapositions of the Saxon and the Celt in Victorian racial discourse by commentators such as Kemble, Knox and Laing. The second section examines how the role that gender played in the self-conception of the nation

was, until recently, a decidedly masculinist affair despite the iconic roles accorded to Queen Victoria and her mythic avatar Britannia. The final section examines the impact that the Empire had on British national identity in the Victorian period. From Dilke and Seeley's popular visions of a Greater Britain to, more recently, Porter's claim of a widespread domestic indifference to it, the impact of the Empire on national identity continues to exercise Victorian and modern critics.

SAXON V. CELT

In the Victorian period, the juxtaposition of Saxon and Celt along racial and cultural lines was instrumental in defining national character and, by extension, came to foster ideas about a people's claims to an authentic and sustainable nationhood. In comparison to perceived continental despotism and anarchy, it was claimed that Britons enjoyed access to stable institutions and fair parliamentary representation which was derived from the rudimentary democracy practised by the Saxon (Teuton) tribes who settled England during the Dark Ages. Historian Kemble 1849 asserted that the modern English had inherited their love of freedom and independence and the harmonious and equitable relations between the sexes that they enjoyed from their Anglo-Saxon forebears. Young 2008 offers a powerful account of the rise of Saxonism in the first half of the century and its dialectical relationship to Celticism. Later chapters trace how racial scientists such as Robert Knox and W.F. Edwards assigned moral qualities to the physical features of different races. For Knox 1850, while the Anglo-Saxon was 'boorish', he was nonetheless [t]houghtful, plodding, [and] industrious beyond all other races'. Knox (a Lowland Protestant Scot himself) was particularly disdainful of what he considered to be the degenerate and primitive Celtic races of the United Kingdom with special opprobrium directed at the Irish Celt. While Knox openly advocated genocide for the Irish, commentators more sympathetic to the Celtic races such as Renan 1854 emphasised the imaginative and poetic character of the race. As described by Young 2008, a sea-change in Victorian race relations was effected from the mid-century onwards by new discoveries in racial science that posited (somewhat inconveniently) that the modern English were actually a mix of Saxon and Celtic elements. For his part Arnold 1891, exasperated by his countrymen's Saxon philistinism, believed that the English should marshal the best parts of their German, Celtic (and Norman) racial inheritance (respectively, scientific endeavour, a delicacy of perception, and decisiveness) to better 'know' the Celt and vice versa. However, by effectively codifying the Celt as feminine, Arnold strategically disenfranchised the Celt and ultimately rejected political independence from the English for him in the future. Where, according to Mandler 2006, Scottish historian Laing 1842 was happy to subsume the Scottish national character within the perceived superiority of the English race and with Pike 1866 using the annual Welsh festival of culture (the Eisteddfod) to write his prize-winning essay on the mixed Teutonic and Celtic make-up of the *English*, the Celts' desire for political independence from England appears largely to have been the preserve of Irish nationalists alone across the century.

Arnold, Matthew *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867). Project Gutenberg ebook from the Smith Elder & C. 1891 edition.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5159/5159-h/5159-h.htm>

An influential lecture which argues for the setting up of a Chair in Celtic Literature at Oxford and sees Arnold deploy contemporary racial theory to implicitly encode Celticism as the feminine, mystic and melancholy foil to a masculine and vigorous Anglo-Saxon culture.

Kemble, John Mitchell. *The Saxons in England: A History of the English Commonwealth Till the Period of the Norman Conquest*, (1849) volume 1 Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1849

<https://archive.org/details/saxonsinengland04kembgoog/page/n10/mode/2up?view=theater>

Kemble, a talented philologist of Old English, relied on original sources for his *History of the Saxons in England* to explore how the comparative political equanimity that Britain apparently enjoyed had emerged from the laws and culture bequeathed to it by its Anglo-Saxon forebears from the eighth century onwards.

Knox, Robert. *The Races of Men. A Fragment*. (1850)

https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The_Races_of_Men.html?id=

Knox's infamously racist treatise, an avowedly 'Zoological History' of mankind, which reserved its special ire for the Irish Celt which saw Knox advocate the ethnic cleansing of the Irish race around the time of the Great Hunger.

Laing, Samuel. *Notes of a Traveller on the Social, Political State of France, Prussia, Switzerland, Italy and Other Parts of Europe During the Present Century* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1854).

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=kLFHAAAIAAJ&pg=PA272&lpg=PA272&dq=Notes+of+a+traveller+laing+on+national+identity&source=bl&ots=2mH4LSdaLu&sig=ACfU3U2OZ7DaoOhlOfWCsHMV8HMndKgmVQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi3xreUvqX5AhVqR0EAHbURBbkQ6AF6BAgoEAM#v=onepage&q=Notes%20of%20a%20traveller%20laing%20on%20national%20identity&f=false>
Discusses how 'climate, soil and situation' has led to 'civic and political liberty, in wealth, intelligence and industry' in Britain when compared to other nations on the continent (267).

Pike, Luke Owen. *The English and their Origin: A Prologue to Authentic English History* (1866) (London: Longman and Green, 1868)

Pike argues against Knox on the immutability of race and on the prevalent Teutomania of his peers to instead posit that the modern English are a mix of Teutonic and Celtic races where characteristics which previously were perceived to be Teutonic in origin were actually Celtic in derivation.

Renan, Ernest. 'The Poetry of the Celtic Races' in *The Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Essays* (1854) London and Felling-On-Tyne: Walter Scott Publishing, 1896. 1- 60.

<https://ia802706.us.archive.org/12/items/poetryofcelticra00renauoft/poetryofcelticra00renauoft.pdf>

Renan influentially describes the Celts banished to the hinterlands of Europe as essentially 'a timid and reserved race living altogether within itself, heavy in appearance but capable of profound feeling, and of an adorable delicacy in its religious instincts (p.1).

Young, Robert J.C., *The Idea of English Ethnicity*. Oxford: Blackwell Manifestos, 2007.

Young offers a fascinating, if contentious, discussion of how the idea of Englishness was transformed in the course of the nineteenth century to the present day. Includes discussions of the rise of Saxonism, 'Englishism', scientific racialism and anti-Celticism in the Victorian period which, under the exigencies of an expanding empire, eventually gave way to a more tolerant and inclusive idea of Englishness in the twentieth century.

GENDERING THE NATION

Until recently, the (largely) masculinist tenor of scientific and historical studies of national character produced in the Victorian period tended to obscure the role that women played in the construction and projection of British national identity on both the domestic and imperial fronts (see Hall, 1992). Here, it is germane to note both classic feminist explorations of how gender shaped ideology in the Victorian period (Poovey 1988, Hall 1992) and the changing role and attributes accorded to two seemingly interchangeable and endurable female icons of Britishness: Queen Victoria, herself, and her mythical avatar Britannia. Historians such as Thompson 1990 have noted the pliability of Victoria's public image as variously deployed in art, print and pageantry for the purposes of maintaining not only the Union in Scotland (Finlay 2002) but also maintaining political equanimity on the domestic front (as 'mother of the nation') and in symbolising Britain's imperial dominance in her later role as Empress of India. Matthews 2000 notes the conflation of Queen Victoria with the iconic figure of Britannia as symbols of national power with Britannia often depicted with Victoria's face. He has also traced the transformation in meaning accorded to this iconic figure of British power and stability, one which for him 'played a role in the transitional stages leading to nationalism and the transformation of a state into a nation-state and a nation-state into an Empire" (Matthews, 2000, 819), as depicted in William Dyce's painting *Neptune Resigning to Britannia the Empire of the Sea* (1846) and, in the aftermath of the Indian Mutiny, 'Retribution' (1858) by Edward Armitage. In Ireland at the end of the century, the folklore figure of Cathleen ni Houlihan was deployed in plays and poems by W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory to depict a country in decline and in urgent need of a cultural renaissance and, by extension, political independence. The rise of masculinity studies from the end of the twentieth century onwards has brought new attention to the way in which the idea of 'manliness' (rather than masculinity) was a central trope in defining the national character as seen in Alderson 1998. Tosh 2005 argues that an aspirational manliness which was characterised by independence, self-reliance and industriousness (again, said to derive from Teutonic antecedents) cut across the classes and achievement of it carried

within itself the potential for universal (male) suffrage. Studies by Brantlinger 1988, Bristow 1991, and Deane 2014 respectively have shown how the empire and attendant fiction provided a stage on which to revivify English martial masculinities putatively depleted by a feminising domestic life.

Alderson, David. *Mansex Fine: Religion, Manliness and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998)

This engagingly written study traces the centrality of Protestantism to Britishness and manliness in the nineteenth century and, with reference to works by the writers such as the Brontes, Oscar Wilde and Gerard Manley Hopkins, explores conceptions of the male body. In the case of Hopkins, notions of male hysteria and the body are discussed in the context of Catholic/Celtic Ireland.

Bristow, Joseph. *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's world*. London: Routledge 1991

Examines the Victorian obsession with boyhood as an agent of imperial civilisation in popular fiction, adventure novels by Kipling, Ballantyne and Stevenson and the 'Boy's Own Paper'.

Brantlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830 – 1914*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Brantlinger's seminal study explores the centrality of imperial masculinity to British art and politics in the Victorian and Edwardian period. He pays particular attention to fiction by Arthur Conan Doyle, Joseph Conrad, H. Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling and John Hobson and non-fiction

Dean, Bradley. *Masculinity and the New Imperialism Rewriting Manhood in British Popular Writing, 1870-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

In this lively study, Dean examines the revision of ideas of self-control and manliness in relation the New Imperialism promoted by Disraeli and his successors in popular fiction. Dean's study traces the decline of mid-century ideals of masculinity into the unfettered violence and imperial brinkmanship that marked the British empire at the end of the century.

Finlay, Richard J., 'Queen Victoria and the Cult of Scottish Monarchy' in *Scottish History: the Power of the Past* (ed.) Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002, 209-224.

This fascinating essay demonstrates how Queen Victoria in her self-presentation as both mother, monarch and (putative) heir to the Stuart line, came to embody and stabilise the Union in Scotland.

Hall, Catherine. *White, Male and Middle-Class, Explorations in Feminism and History*. London: Polity Press, 1992.

In this influential collection of ten essays, Hall explores the ways in which gender (and class) difference shaped nineteenth-century England. She argues that English national identity in the Victorian period was defined by the control of women and colonial subjects by white middle-class men.

Matthews, Roy. "Britannia and John Bull: From Birth to Maturity," *Historian*, 6.4 (2000): 799-820

Matthews offers an enjoyable and informative discussion of the different meanings accorded to these national icons through paintings, sculpture and the press in response to national events, with a particular focus on the Victorian period.

Poovey, Mary. *Uneven Developments: the Ideological Work of Gender in the mid-Victorian England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Poovey examines a number of sources, from medical treatises to literature, to explore how gender difference was constructed and contested in the period and came to shape both political ideology and a resistance to it in the British experience.

Thompson, Dorothy. *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power*. London: Virago, 2001.

A readable study that traces the impact that Victoria's changing (and eminently pliable) roles as variously a middle-class wife, mother, widow, queen and Empress came to shape the ways in which the British came to conceive of themselves in both the domestic and imperial arena.

Tosh, John. *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire*. Men and Women in History. New York: Pearson Education, 2005

Tosh, the pre-eminent scholar of Victorian masculinity, offers insightful discussions of the evolution of masculine identities in the period and focuses on topics such as middle-class fatherhood and Methodism in England. The final section of the book deploys gender theory to explore the attractions of the Empire to Victorian males.

EMPIRE

The amount of interest (or lack thereof) shown in the Victorian period by domestic audiences towards Britain's burgeoning Empire and the attendant extension of its global influence continues to be debated. Recent commentators, describing domestic responses to colonised territories such as India, parts of Africa and the white settler colonies of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, while noting variables such as class, tend to fall into either the 'minimalist' or the 'maximalist' camps. Said 1993 in his seminal work *Orientalism* traces the ways in which empire allegedly suffused all aspects of nineteenth-century British culture, Hall 2000 argues that a consciousness of empire heavily impacted the Reform Act of 1867 and Cannadine 2002 asserts that the history of the British Empire could not be separated from the history of Britain. However, other commentators such as Porter 2004 can find little evidence of a dominant imperial mind-set at work in Britain and argue that the working classes, in contrast to the upper and middle-classes, had no investment in, or awareness of, the empire. This is seemingly belied by an event such as the 'Great Exhibition of Works of Industry of all Nations' which saw six million people of all classes flock to wonder at 100,000 exhibits, emanating from Britain to China, to marvel at Britain's industrial and imperial ascendancy. Entirely funded by public subscription and with 'shilling days' that allowed an (unexpectedly) well-behaved working class to marvel at both industrial innovations and exotic goods from around the world, the Exhibition, as Auerbach and Hoffenberg 2008 note, broadcast British triumphalism to the world, and strengthened the nation's perception of its own imperial identity. Where Kumar 2011 argues that despite the 'key' role played by Scots, Irish and Welsh in the running of Empire, it was 'English common law, English administration, the English parliamentary system, the English monarchy, English education, English culture, and the English language [that was] used throughout the empire' by contrast, Thompson has shown 'how, among the constituent identities of the United Kingdom, it was the *English* identity which was most obviously suppressed by the [British] imperial adventure.' Bell has traced the development of the idea of 'Greater Britain' in the closing decades of the Victorian period. As perpetuated by Dilke and Seeley, the highly popular idea of Greater Britain, offered a utopian vision of the closer union of Britain and its white settler colonies and was conceived as a global Anglo-Saxon state with which to counter Russian, French, American and German expansion variously underway on the world stage.

Auerbach, Jeffrey and Hoffenberg, Peter H. (eds.) *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008

This collection of nine interdisciplinary essays considers the Exhibition using postcolonial perspectives. Divided between essays considering the participation in the event of specific countries, other essays deal with broader issues such as the connections between the Exhibition, class and social reform.

Bell, Duncan. *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900*. Princeton NJ, Princeton, 2007.

Bell explores the reasons behind the idea of 'Greater Britain' gaining traction in the work of Victorian commentators such as Goldwin Smith and John Seeley. According to Bell, Greater Britain became a 'popular rallying cry' for those who believed that an Anglo-Saxon nation state which straddled the world could solve Britain's social problems by outsourcing them to white imperial settlements (Bell, 2007, 31).

Cannadine, David. *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*. Harmondsworth, Penguin 2002

Cannadine proposes that the British empire was secured from the 1850s onwards by replicating the hierarchical structures already in place in Britain. This is an engaging study about the role played by class in both the imperial mind-set and in the Empire itself.

Dilke, Charles Wentworth. *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-Speaking Countries During 1866-7*. London: Macmillan & Co., 1869.

A keynote Victorian text about national identity which argues in racist terms that the highly developed civilizational influence which had already successfully shaped Britain's white settlements (America etc.) promised to transmit Anglo-Saxon values globally and would eventually come to gird the globe and overcome the 'cheaper [non-European] races' (chapter 22) .

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/41755>

Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall. *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class,*

Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2000.

In her contribution to this collection of essays, Hall offers a powerful discussion which examines how debates about the 1867 Reform Act in Britain were shaped by imperial considerations in Jamaica and domestic considerations in Ireland and how these debates, in turn, laid the foundations for parallel legislation in the colonies.

Kumar, Krishan. 'Empire, Nation, and National Identities' in *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, Andrew Thompson (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 298-329.

A useful analysis of the relationship between Britain's two empires which saw, firstly, the Anglicization of Celtic peoples as a result of the Union and secondly, the resulting attempt to Anglicize imperial territories abroad with the aid of Scottish, Welsh and Irish administrators, doctors, and other foot-soldiers of Empire.

Porter, Bernard. *The Absent-Minded Imperialists, Empire, Culture and Society in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Porter's scholarly, if controversial, study explores a number of sources (mass circulation newspapers, popular songs, school textbooks etc.) and discovers a distinct lack of evidence that an imperial mind-set had cascaded down to the working-class in the period apart from occasional outbursts of popular jingoism at the end of the century. Notably, Porter argues against Edward Said's proposition that imperialism suffused all aspects of British culture.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1993.

In this seminal work Said powerfully explores the influence that British novelists from Jane Austen to E.M. Forster had in shaping and maintaining the British Empire from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. Said traces the attendant impact that nationalist movements and decolonisation had on Western authors in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Seeley, John *The Expansion of England, Two Courses of Lectures* (1883). London: Macmillan, 1914.

<https://archive.org/details/expansionofengla00seeluoft>

Seeley argues that permitting the white Dominions to have independence from Britain would see the United Kingdom secede power and prestige to Russia and the United States. Instead he proposes that England remain in charge of a federal union of settler nations to maintain its primacy in world affairs. Notably, Seeley considers India and its vast territories to be a continued drain on England's energies.

Thompson, A.S. *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. London and New York, Routledge, 2005.

Thompson strikes a middle ground between the maximalist and minimalist schools by arguing that 'the empire's impact, far from being forceful and aggressive, was often subtle and unobtrusive' (p.241). The study offers an even-handed discussion that explores how aspects of political and material culture from the Victorian period produce conflicting evidence of the impact of empire on British national identity.

LITERATURE

Where a distinct congruence between the nation, modernity and the novel in the nineteenth century has been variously identified by critics such as Edward Said and Patrick Parrinder, the scholarship on Victorian poetry in terms of articulating and challenging the national self-image was, until recently, comparatively sparse. The sections that follow examine the reception history of the Victorian novel and the instrumental role it continues to be accorded in shaping the various forms of national identity available to the Victorians. In turn, the second section examines the mixed critical reception afforded to Victorian poetry as an expression of nationality.

THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

Notably for Parrinder 2006 'there is a direct link... between the peculiarities of the novel as a literary genre and the part played by novelists in the definition of Englishness', with the heterodox form of the novel functioning to interrogate national identity (an expression of the cultural nation-state) rather than to confirm national character (the articulation of the hegemonic state-nation) (p.14). With the Victorian period witnessing the exponential growth in popularity of the novel due in part to an increase in literacy, the expansion of periodical publishing and social mobility, genres (in broadly chronological order) such as the 'Condition of England novel', realism, sensation, the (Victorian) Gothic and imperial romance proliferated. Moreover, Brantlinger 1990 argues that imperialism pervaded every aspect of Victorian fiction. However, the very expanse of the novels made available in the digital age makes any generalisations about the Victorian novel and national identity difficult to sustain. Since the publication of F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* in 1948, the Victorian novel, intimately associated with the construction of the English canon and university syllabi alike, remains curiously pliant to the application of different theoretical positions which have included Marxism, feminism and psychoanalysis. Notably, the rise of postcolonial studies in the last four decades, has afforded new insight into the development of metropolitan fiction and identities in the period. Gikandi 1997 argues that the colonies were a 'contrastive space' used to consolidate English identity (p.46). Ebbatson 2006 identifies a growing interest in the provincial and the rural, as embodied in recent studies of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. The work of Knight 2004 and Nash 2012 amongst others into Irish, Scottish and Welsh writing suggests the comparable devolution of the academic field of English literature which continues to throw new light on the forms of national identity expressed in the Victorian novel.

Brantlinger, Patrick. *Rules of Darkness. British Literature and Imperialism, 1830 – 1914*. 1990 Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990

Brantlinger offers a ground-breaking analysis of how imperialism can be seen to pervade a range of Victorian fiction and non-fiction texts by writer such as Thomas Macaulay, Frances Marryat and William Thackeray. He argues that events such as the Indian Uprising led to the justification of the colonialist project and the encoding of negative and destructive images of the colonies that continued into the twentieth century.

Ebbatson, Roger. 'Englishness and the Victorians' *Literature Compass* 26 (2006) 1408-1421
An insightful article which offers an excellent overview of important studies on Englishness and Victorian literature over the last three decades.

Gikandi, Simon. *Maps of Englishness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997

Gikandi reads texts by Thomas Carlyle, Anthony Trollope and Mary Seacole to argue that Englishness developed in the space between the metropolis and the colonial margins.

Knight, Stephen. *A Hundred Years of Fiction. From Colony to Independence*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press. 2004.

Knight's seminal account of Welsh writing in English which includes an opening section on the gradual development of English-language Welsh fiction in the Victorian period before a fuller discussion of the major development of novels and stories about the industrialisation of the country

F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition. George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*. London: Faber & Faber, 2011

Leavis's highly influential vision of the English novel in which he identified George Eliot and Henry James as the great novelists of the Victorian period continues to impact the teaching of English literature in schools and universities to this day.

Nash, Andrew. 'Victorian Scottish Literature', in Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 145-58.

Responding to an assumed decline of Scottish literature to parochial and nostalgic concerns in the Victorian period, Nash's essay looks to the Victorian popular press in Scotland to reveal the development of an energetic tradition of vernacular prose.

Parrinder, Patrick. *Nation and Novel. The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

A scholarly and readable examination of the relationship between the novel and English identity which includes nuanced chapters (7- 11) on, amongst others, the Brontës, Dickens, Thackeray and Kipling

VICTORIAN POETRY

Insofar as poetry predates the novel (arguably) by millennia, its significance in terms of national identity cannot be underestimated. However, the critical reception of Victorian poetry, especially when compared to the Victorian novel, has been somewhat uneven. Levine 2007 argues that in the twentieth century Modernist poets like T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound announced a definitive break from their Victorian forebears and New Critics of the 1940s such as Cleanth Brooks were similarly dismissive of what they perceived to be the apparently prolix and irregular nature of the form *per se*. While studies of the novel responded to the rise of critical theories such as Marxism, feminism and deconstruction it was not until the 1990s that Victorian poetry was seriously interrogated in academic criticism in works such as Armstrong 2019. Lucas 1990 is a seminal study which offered formalist analyses of poetry by Tennyson and Browning. In Lucas's estimation, Tennyson was the mouthpiece for the state nation and became increasingly xenophobic as his career progressed. Armstrong's magisterial study of 1993 *Victorian Poetry. Poetry, Poetics and Politics* offered readings of a range of Victorian poets from Tennyson to James Thomson to uncover radical critiques of Victorian culture and politics. A work more specific to the question of Victorian poetry and English national identity is Reynolds 2001 study *The Realms of Verse 1830-1870, English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building*. Reynolds examines the poetry of the Brownings, Tennyson and Clough whose various interests in causes such as the Italian Risorgimento and issues such as marriage raised questions about individual liberty, community and union that operated, Reynolds argues, as displaced reflections on being a citizen of the United Kingdom. In recent years, the academic study of Victorian poetry has both taken a neo-formalist turn and also variously reclaimed the work of lesser-known English poets (particularly women) as seen in Armstrong, Bristow and Sharrock, 1996 and Thain and Vaddillo 2006. Similarly, Collins and Rundle 1999 and Potolsky 2013 examine the work of Irish and Decadent poets in both their national and transnational contexts. Particularly responsive to the question of Victorian poetry and national identity is Martin 2012 in which the question of how poetic meter was obsessively discussed by Victorian poets and the public alike is explored because of its ramifications for the study of English poetry and an attendant conception of national identity. By examining philological texts, grammar books, poets' handbooks, Martin's study explores the impact that the conflict between the privileging of a non-classical Anglo-Saxon accentual tradition over classical metre, as favoured in upper-class education in Latin and Greek, had on shaping national identity from the Victorian to the Modernist period.

Armstrong, Isobel. *Victorian Poetry. Poetry, Poetics and Politics*. Abingdon, Routledge: 2019. In this rich study, Armstrong challenges received wisdom about Victorian poetry by uncovering the unconventional and radical aspects of a range of Victorian poets from Tennyson to Swinburne. An updated version of 2019 includes a new section on *fin- de-siècle* poets such as Kipling and Alice Meynell

Armstrong, Isobel; Bristow, Joseph; Sharrock, Cath (eds) *Nineteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

This ground-breaking anthology contains works by celebrated Victorian women poets such as Elizabeth Barrett-Browning and Christina Rossetti and lesser-known working-class, colonial and political writers.

Collins, Thomas J. and Rundle, Vivienne. A. *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory* Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1999

Collins, Thomas J. and Rundle, Vivienne.

A comprehensive anthology which features several lesser-known English poets and includes twenty-five contemporary discussions of poetics

Ebbatson, Roger. 'Englishness and the Victorians', *Literature Compass* (26) 2006 1408-1421

Ebbatson's illuminating essay on the representation of Englishness in Victorian literature includes an informative overview of the subject in some recent literary studies

Levine, Caroline. 'Formal Pasts and Formal Possibilities in Victorian Studies' *Literature Compass* 4/4 (2007): 1241–1256

An energetic article surveying in formalist terms the reception of the Victorian novel in comparison to Victorian poetry.

Lucas, John. *England and Englishness: Ideas of Nationhood in English Poetry, 1688-1900*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1990

Lucas's ground-breaking study includes chapters on the expression of English national identity in Tennyson and Robert Browning's poetry and its relationship to the Establishment and the State.

Reviewers, however, note the absence of female voices in the study.

Martin, Meredith. *The Rise and Fall of Meter: Poetry And English National Culture, 1860—1930*.

Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2012

Martin examines the significant role that meter had in the teaching of the English language and poetry in the Victorian period and beyond. Martin argues that by memorizing, reciting and marching to poetry in schools, poetry was weaponised in the First World War.

Potolsky, Matthew. *The Decadent Republic of Letters. Taste, Politics, and Cosmopolitan Community from Baudelaire to Beardsley*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013

Potolsky examines the relationship between English and French Decadent poets to explore the transnational aspect of a previously derided fin-de-siècle school of English poetry

Reynolds, Matthew. *The Realms of Verse 1830-1870. English Poetry in a Time of Nation-Building*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Reynolds revisits mid-century Victorian poets such as the Brownings to explore the impact of national identity on their poetry.

Thain, Marion and Ana Parejo Vadillo, eds. *Fin-de-Siècle Literary Culture and Women Poets*. Special issue of *Victorian Literature and Culture* 34 (2006): 389–684.

This edited collection includes several articles that rethink the relationship between national identity and poetic form.