7. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Papers*, in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Vol. 2, ed. Edmund Gosse (London: Cassell, 1906), 289–443, 423.
8. Stevenson, *Virginibus*, 423.

Britain

KIRSTIE BLAIR

IN the opening of this brief polemic, I must acknowledge conscious bias: as of 5 a.m. on the morning after the Brexit referendum, I am a card-carrying member of the Scottish National Party. This was not anticipated. Brought up in Belfast as an Ulster-Scots Unionist with a determination to be "British" rather than "Irish," and educated in the most English of institutions, I am now in the awkward position of being grateful for the Irish state's continuing political claim on Northern Ireland, which renders me an EU citizen. Once, I was clear that I was British. Now, I am not so sure. Once, I considered myself a scholar of Victorian Britain. Now, I am increasingly aware that up until 2013 I was exclusively a scholar of Victorian England, and, in the present moment, my research is strongly aligned with "Scottish studies," a field which has had surprisingly little dialogue with "Victorian studies."

In recent years, the field of Victorian literature and culture has seen crucial, transformative work on global Victorian studies, world Victorianism, transnational, transatlantic, transcultural, and cosmopolitan Victorian studies. This has involved substantial questioning of nationalisms and national boundaries. What I want to suggest, however, is that in placing British literature within a more "global" concept of Victorian literature and culture, the complexities of national, regional and local identities *within* "Victorian Britain" have sometimes been subsumed or ignored. How many works of scholarship on British-based writers or texts are published each year in which the phrases "Victorian culture" and "Victorian literature" actually mean *English* culture and literature? Are we in danger of reproducing a clustering of resources not simply towards England, but towards London and the south of England, which has been increasingly recognized and critiqued in twenty-first

century British politics and society, and was far from unproblematic in the nineteenth century?

As a very crude indication of the likely answer to this question, searching the MLA database for keywords from 1990–2017 produces 657 combinations of "Victorian" and "England," 328 for "Victorian" and "Britain," 60 for "Victorian" and "Ireland," 31 for "Victorian" and "Scotland," and 23 for "Victorian" and "Wales." With 133 results, "Victorian" and "India" outweighs Scotland, Wales, and Ireland combined; "Victorian" and "London" produces three times as many results (468) as those on Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. "Scottish" in combination with "Victorian" seems more promising, with 475 results ("Welsh" produces 81). But, this is in comparison to 1547 results for "Irish" and "Victorian." The results for "nineteenth" as a search term are similar: 58 for Wales, 83 for Scotland, 177 for Ireland, and 656 for England (296 for London). More anecdotally, searching major journals and rereading *The Year's Work in English Studies* for the last five years suggests that work on Ireland and Victorian literature is reasonably healthy, with recent book-length publications including Tina O'Toole's *The Irish New Woman*, Matthew Campbell's *Irish Poetry Under the Union*, and Christina Morin and Niall Gillespie's edited *Irish Gothic*. Nineteenth-century Irish history has also benefited from new revisionary work, especially concerned with Ireland in Britain and the wider world, by K. Theodore Hoppen, Niall Whelehan, Fintan Cullen, Barry Crosbie, and others.[1]

Work on Wales and Welsh literature, and indeed on Welsh history in the period, appears far more limited. We might consider Annmarie Drury's discussion of Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion*, in *Translation as Transformation in Victorian Poetry*, under this heading, and M. Wynn Thomas's new *The Nations of Wales: 1890–1914* is in part "Victorian" in scope, but, broadly speaking, the field of Victorian Wales remains very small. Work on Victorian Scottish literature and culture is also limited, though collections such as *Scotland and the 19th-Century World* may indicate a small-scale revival.[2] At this moment, however, it is fair to say that considerably more scholars of Victorian literature and culture are researching Victorian London than are researching any other part of the British Isles.

I am not necessarily suggesting that we need to redress this balance but that we need to acknowledge and interrogate its existence. Turning to Caroline Levine's brilliant and influential essay, "From Nation to Network," for instance, Levine rightly asks us to consider "why Britain especially matters," and notes that scholars "whose work stays within

Britain often say nothing about the national frame."[3] But the national frame she refers to as "British" is implicitly English, since there is no mention of the gradual development of alternate "national frames" in Scotland and Wales. If—as I entirely agree—there is a problem in allowing the assumption that "Victorian" authors are "born in Britain" to go unrecognized, there is another problem in suggesting that writers born in Scotland or Wales would have necessarily considered themselves "British-born."[4] What did the "national frame" look like from the perspective of networks of literary production centred on Glasgow, or Cardiff? Is "British-born" the right term for Highland poets writing radical political protest verse in Gaelic? Unlike Irish literature, which does tend to be carefully acknowledged as a separate tradition, writers who identified as Scottish and Welsh, especially if they lived in Scotland or Wales and lacked access to London's resources, are often rendered invisible in scholarship by a "British" framework.

This critique is of course not confined to Victorian studies, as it is a broader concern of "new British" or "four nations" history.[5] But it was also a complaint made with increasing frequency by Victorian writers, though often in reverse: rather than objecting that "Britain" was synonymous with "England," writers protested that "England" was used when "Britain" was intended. In 1882, for instance, George Bruce, a St. Andrew's poet, vehemently condemned "the *present fashion* of falsifying History and Geography, by substituting "*England*" for "Great Britain and Ireland"": Bruce's newspaper poem on the Highland Regiment in the Battle of Tel-el-Kebir, in Egypt, argues that the battle was won "Caledonia's style!" and that newspaper reports describing this as an English victory sought to conceal "auld Scotland's fame." Yet, Bruce also argues that in winning this imperial victory, Scotland demonstrated a greater loyalty to both "ancient Britain" and the newer "Great Britain" than England did: "Britain's *soul* in Scotland lies!"[6] As historian Graeme Morton has most trenchantly argued, this kind of "unionist nationalism" complicates both our sense of Britishness and of Scottish (and indeed Welsh and Ulster) nationalism in the Victorian period.[7]

At a moment when the long-term future of the United Kingdom and Great Britain in their current forms appears doubtful, it is important to notice how Britain's position on "Britain" is shaped by a specifically Victorian history. When the Foreign Minister, a leading architect of Brexit, sparks a major news story by inadvisably quoting Kipling's "Mandalay" from memory on a visit to Myanmar, this indicates a strand of Victorian imperial nostalgia very evident in current fantasies of

British freedom and independence outside the EU.[8] When the Welsh leader of the openly xenophobic and British nationalist UKIP party poses by a Chartist statue, arguing that UKIP are the heirs of Chartism, currents of Victorian working-class radicalism and nationalism intersect (or clash) with the forms these currents take in twenty-first century Wales.[9] Or, when the First Minister of Scotland argues that Scotland needs a separate immigration policy in order to offer "a welcoming hand and an open heart to those seeking to make a contribution here in Scotland," she speaks to a different Victorian nationalism: the nascent Scottish rights movement and its preference for defining Scottish identity in terms of affiliation rather than birthplace.[10] As Patrick Edward Dove declared at a meeting of the National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights in 1853, "Whoever—whatever man—whether he be black, white, red, or yellow, the moment he identifies with the institutions of Scotland, that moment he became a member of the Scottish nation, and Caledonia must throw around him the mantle of protection."[11] Though "relevance" can be a dangerous concept, especially in U. K. academia, both our students and ourselves might benefit from working with Victorian literature and culture to understand further what "Britain" meant for the four nations of the British isles, and what it means now, to and for Britain and the wider world.

Notes

1. K. Theodore Hoppen, *Governing Hibernia: British Politicians and Ireland 1800–1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Fintan Cullen, *Ireland on Show: Art, Union and Nationhood* (London: Routledge, 2012); Barry Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks: Migration, Social Communication and Exchange in Nineteenth-Century India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
2. Gerard Carruthers, David Goldie, and Alistair Renfrew, eds., *Scotland and the 19th Century World* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012). For an overview, see Michael Shaw, "Transculturation and Historicisation: New Directions for the Study of Scottish Literature c.1840–1914," *Literature Compass* 13, no. 8 (2016): 501–51.
3. Caroline Levine, "From Nation to Network," *Victorian Studies* 55 (2013): 647–66, 651.
4. Levine, "From Nation," 649, 651.

5. For valuable state-of-the-field essays, see Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips, eds., *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (Houndsmills: Palgrave, 2004).
6. G. Bruce, "The Battle of Tel-el-Kebir," reprinted in *The Poets of the People's Journal*, ed. Kirstie Blair (Glasgow: ASLS, 2016), 182–83.
7. Graeme Morton, *Unionist Nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland, 1830–1860* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999).
8. Robert Booth, "Boris Johnson caught on camera reciting Kipling in Myanmar temple," *Guardian*, September 29, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/sep/30/boris-johnson-caught-on-camera-reciting-kipling-in-myanmar-temple.
9. "Leave rally in Newport, Wales," *Guardian* June 24, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2016/jun/24/eu-referendum-brexit-live-europe-leave-remain-britain?page=with:block-576d3bc6e4b0be24d34f5ede.
10. "Nicola Sturgeon speech marking 20 years since Scotland's devolution referendum," Scottish National Party, September 11, 2017, https://www.snp.org/nicola_sturgeon_speech_20_years_since_scotlands_devolution_referendum.
11. Cited in Morton, *Unionist Nationalism*, 142.

Canon

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"THE great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad," wrote F. R. Leavis in 1948, initiating the Great Tradition.[1] Great works, Leavis argued, were timeless, universal, "vital" (to use a favorite term). Seventy years later, however, we tend to see literary texts as historically enmeshed, we are skeptical of claims of literary quality, and we consider ourselves entitled to discuss any text that intrigues us. How did such a radical change occur?

The turning point came a generation after Leavis, in the canon wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Led by Allan Bloom (*The Closing of the American Mind*), Roger Kimball (*Tenured Radicals*), Harold Bloom (*The Western Canon*), and Dinesh D'Souza (*Illiberal Education*), these writers