Gothic Invasions

Imperialism, War and Fin-de-Siècle Popular Fiction

Ailise Bulfin

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by

Ailise Bulfin

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Introduction: The Call to Arms

Figure 1: 'History Repeats Itself. (*Scene in a London Restaurant.*) "Nero fiddled while Rome was burning."' *The Windsor Magazine*, 1 (May 1895), p. 480. Reproduced with the permission of the Board of Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin.

In 1913 on the eve of World War I, a lurid speculative novel entitled *To Arms!* dramatically warned its British readership that military danger loomed – not on the European horizon on which it would soon present, but from the Far East. Penned by M. P. Shiel, this 'yellow-peril' thriller imagined the moribund Chinese Empire, goaded by increasing European interference in its territory, gathering itself to mount a devastating counter-invasion. Proffering an eerily prescient vision of the whole world drunk on the 'vertiginous vintage' of war, Shiel's narrative mobilised the entire population of China into a westward-bound war-host which reduced Britain and Europe to a state of 'howling anarchy', before being ultimately defeated.[1] If this grim scenario sounds highly improbable – as it most certainly was – this does not, however, mean that Shiel's alarmism was entirely out of kilter with the sentiments of its historical moment. Some years previously, a cartoon in the popular *Windsor Magazine* had proffered a succinct, satirical version of the same premise in a cartoon entitled 'History Repeats Itself' (see Figure 1), which intimated that like the Roman Empire, hedonistic Britain was about to meet its demise. Its putative assailants were not Rome's historical adversaries, however, but China and Japan, new oriental 'barbarian' invaders whose representatives are shown ensconced in a London restaurant wryly comparing fashionable society to Nero's Rome (as the caption indicates). Given that the balance of power in east–west relations was firmly tilted towards Europe at the time, the cartoon's sentiment – like Shiel's fictional vision – is sufficiently incongruous to invite further interpretation. Its immediate reference point was the recently concluded and fiercely fought Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5, in which Japan had convincingly defeated China. Thus contrary to the conspiratorial cordiality implied in the cartoon, relations between China and Japan were acrimonious, while Japan had been prevented from realising the full extent of its territorial gains from China by overbearing European intervention.[2] In this context, the suggestion that China and Japan were comfortably poised to effect the fall of imperial Britain is strongly indicative of a strain of anxious thinking about invasion and imperial decline that seems quite detached from the geopolitical realities of European political and military pre-eminence.

The inclusion of the cartoon in a lightweight, family-oriented magazine like the *Windsor*, which did not specialise in political commentary, attests to the pervasiveness of this kind of imperial concern, showing that Shiel's relatively obscure thriller was not alone in voicing it. Indeed, as contemporary popular authors engaged with a range of topical foreign-policy concerns regarding British security, similarly gruesome scenarios were reiterated across a burgeoning body of popular fiction. Fevered visions of oriental hordes sacking Europe ran alongside tales of exotic supernatural marauders in gothic fiction, of devilish foreign villains in crime fiction and of brutal European invading armies in early science fiction, demonstrating, among other things, that the fiction of fin-de-siècle Britain was burdened with a good deal of anxiety. While this is an established, though not uncontested, critical perspective from which to view the fin-de-siècle period and its literature, what is less explored is the extent to which the fears articulated in such seemingly disparate fictions may be partially attributed to a common cause.[3] This was the underlying but pervasive concern that the integrity of the island of Great Britain might soon and suddenly find itself breached by some form of intrusive alien agency – in other words, these narratives are structurally united by an underlying concern with invasion. Deploying Michael Hughes and Harry Wood's broad definition of anxiety as a fluid social response to patterns of threatening change, this concern may be termed invasion anxiety.[4] A kind of paranoid doppelgänger to the brash confidence of jingoism, invasion anxiety turned on the notion that there was a price to be paid for ceaseless imperial expansion. In this view, imperialism, given its basis in military force, could end up provoking some kind of consequent incursion into Britain – by the armies of rival European imperial powers, or even by the hordes of less 'civilised' nations in armed or immigrant guise. This paranoid inverted logic, which structured Shiel's novel and the *Windsor* cartoon, is replicated across a body of popular fiction in which British security was destabilised by some form of exaggeratedly menacing, external aggressor. By uncovering this common logic, this study reveals the extent to which Britain in the years preceding World War I was haunted by invasion anxiety though ostensibly at its imperial zenith. It also brings to light the role of the gothic literary

tradition in giving suitably gruesome fictional form to this persistent social anxiety across a range of fin-de-siècle popular narratives, identifying key structural similarities between the antagonistic binaries underpinning invasion anxiety and the gothic mode.

From a temporal perspective, this study understands the term fin de siècle in its broadest sense – that connoted by the idea of the 'long nineteenth century', which in some significant senses only concluded with the outbreak of World War I.[5] To retain a manageable focus, analysis is restricted geographically to invasion fiction published in Britain, though comparable works were published across the British Empire and in most Western imperial nations at this time – yellow-peril fiction, for example, was popular in Australia, France, Germany and the USA. The Introduction begins by theorising the relationship between the practice of imperialism and the socio-cultural phenomenon of invasion anxiety. It then examines how invasion anxiety manifested itself transgenerically across a wide range of fin-de-siècle popular fiction, paying particular attention to the mediating role of the gothic mode in this process and to the significant colonial connections of many of the authors of invasion fiction.

Invasion anxiety and imperialism: continual war and 'new dangers'

> If *we* are to *maintain* our position as a *first-rate* Power, we must, with our Indian Empire and large Colonies, be *Prepared* for *attacks* and *wars*, *somewhere* or *other* CONTINUALLY!
>
> Queen Victoria, letter to Prime Minster Disraeli (28 July 1879).[6]

As is well documented, the period from 1890 to 1914 when tales of invasion boomed was also the era of high imperialism for Europe, during which the trade networks, spheres of influence and territorial acquisitions of its 'great power' nations grew at an accelerated pace. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the British Empire's landmass quadrupled in size and its population grew by 88 million, as it gained control, directly or indirectly, of Egypt, the Sudan, large portions of East, West, South and Central Africa, Malaysia, North Borneo, Upper Burma, Chinese ports, Afghan

border territories, Kuwait, Bahrain, Cyprus, the New Territories, and several Pacific islands.[7] The self-congratulatory tones of the President of the International Congress of Orientalists in 1892 summed up the resulting British sense of achievement aptly: 'It is simply dazzling to think of the few thousands of Englishmen ruling the millions of human beings in India, in Africa, in America, and in Australia'.[8] Underpinning this dazzling expansion were well-known developments in transport including the railways, the steam ship and the Suez Canal; in communications with advances in print technology and telegraphy; and in weaponry in the form of machine guns, torpedoes and rapid-fire artillery. For the same reasons, though, this was also a volatile era of dangerous rivalry between the European imperial nations and of increasing anti-colonial resistance, both of which produced numerous potentially explosive diplomatic incidents and conflicts across the globe. As Queen Victoria's emphatic warning to Prime Minister Disraeli (cited above) amply discloses, the unprecedented territorial growth of Britain's empire produced not just confidence but also grave concerns for British security. This sense of the peril as well as the opportunity entailed by imperialism is clear in the eminent historian John Seeley's famous warning in *The Expansion of England* (1883):

> The prodigious greatness to which it [Britain] has attained makes the question of its future infinitely important and at the same time most *anxious*, because it is evident that the great colonial extension of our state exposes it to *new dangers*, from which in its ancient insular insignificance it was free.[9]

The deep ramifications of these anxieties for Britain at this key historic juncture are signalled in Edward Said's convincing characterisation of contemporary British society as fundamentally informed by its engagement in imperialism: 'imperialism "was not something which was secondary and external – it was absolutely constitutive of the whole nature of the English political and social order . . . *the salient fact*"'.[10]

From a geopolitical perspective, despite the fact that Britain had not fought a major war since the last Napoleonic campaign in 1815, diplomatic incidents, border skirmishes and localised wars – most

influenced by imperial factors – were occurring on a regular basis globally. As Michel Foucault observes, despite the odds stacked against them, it is in the nature of people to 'rise up' against oppressive regimes, and therefore unsurprising that British overseas activities produced anti-colonial resistance as well as inter-European rivalry.[11] Thus, while the Victorian era has been portrayed as a time of enduring peace, the reality of recurrent 'little wars', as imperial conflict was euphemistically referred to, is evident in Boer War journalist Robert Machray's inventory of 'the numerous conflicts – practically one every year – in which the British Empire has for the past half-century been engaged up and down the globe'.[12] This reality is foregrounded in prominent political economist J. A. Hobson's sustained critique of 'the new Imperialism':

> The decades of Imperialism have been prolific in wars; most . . . have been directly motived by aggression of white races upon 'lower races', and have issued in the forcible seizure of territory. Every one of the steps of expansion in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific has been accompanied by bloodshed; each imperialist Power keeps an increasing army available for foreign service; rectification of frontiers, punitive expeditions, and other euphemisms for war are in incessant progress. The *pax Britannica*, always an impudent falsehood, has become of recent years a grotesque monster of hypocrisy; along our Indian frontiers, in West Africa, in the Soudan, in Uganda, in Rhodesia fighting has been well-nigh incessant.[13]

Uniting Victoria's admonition, Machray's observation and Hobson's polemic is a clear understanding of empire as a dangerous endeavour predicated on military force, demonstrating that contemporary insular British society was inextricably entangled in war while congratulating itself on safeguarding an era of peace.[14] Despite prevailing rationales about the 'work of civilisation', even ardent pro-imperialists such as Joseph Chamberlain were compelled to admit that '[y]ou cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs'.[15] As Anthony Pagden puts it, 'the relationship between Europe's imperial powers and the world's "barbarians" was always ultimately bellicose'.[16] This study homes in on that fundamental bellicosity, disclosing the resulting awareness of empire as a problematic martial

enterprise in the body of fiction that thematised invasion. Rather than reading this fiction broadly through the lens of empire, the chapters in this study work to elucidate the significance of the precise references to imperial quandaries and conflicts that form such an integral component of invasion narratives.

Many recent histories emphasise less hierarchical and more transnational ways of viewing nineteenth-century international relations, giving visibility to the multiple agencies at play – colonial and local – in parallel with a similar turn in second-wave postcolonial studies.[17] John Darwin rightly warns against viewing the British Empire as monolithic, characterising it instead as an improvised, heterogeneous, collaborative and uncompleted project. However, his account of Britain's minimalist approach to maintaining imperial control nonetheless reveals that military intervention, actual and threatened, underlay its rule.[18] This study is interested in the contemporary British awareness of the fundamentally coercive nature of imperial power, in the 'Maxim guns and other instruments of war' which underpinned it.[19] From this we can track the development of the corollary fear of Britain being on the receiving end of such force, and the articulation and amplification of this fear of invasion in a disparate range of popular fictional texts. Indeed, contained in Darwin's corrective view of *imperium* as contingent is an acknowledgement of the very fragility of control that gave rise to invasion anxiety.

Among the 'incessant' imperial conflicts railed against by Hobson, some of the most important were the paradigm-shaking Indian Rebellion of 1857–8 (the so-called 'Mutiny'), the ongoing cycle of Islamic nationalist rebellion in Egypt and the Sudan, the initially disastrous South African War (1899–1902), the Far Eastern crisis and ensuing Boxer Rebellion (1897–1900), and the long-running quandaries posed by Irish nationalism in its political and military guises.[20] Many of these are treated in some detail at chapter level in this study to elucidate their bearing on specific forms of invasion fiction. Key episodes, such as the iconic 'martyrdom' of General Charles Gordon at Khartoum in 1885 or the disproportionately celebrated relief of the Boer-besieged British in Mafeking in 1900, raised popular imperialist sentiment to a fever pitch, while at the same time fuelling fears about the truly tenuous nature of British

imperial authority in practice. Implicit even within the jingoist jubilance of the aforementioned Orientalist President's remark is an acknowledgement of just how slight the hold of imperialism is. From this perspective, the strident new imperialist fervour that developed in this period can be interpreted as a reaction to fears that the empire was on the brink of decline – to borrow Robert Dixon's paraphrase of Homi Bhabha, the 'new Imperialism' was as anxious as it was assertive.[21] This anxiety found visual expression in a pessimistic strain of the usually triumphalist popular tradition of imperial war art which focused on despair, defeat and doomed last stands.[22] It was exemplified by George William Joy's iconic and much reproduced *The Death of General Gordon* (1893), which imagined the war hero's last moments, and Charles Edwin Fripp's *The Battle of Isandlwana* (1885), which depicted one of the worst defeats in British military history when a modern British battalion was routed by a technologically inferior Zulu force (see Colour Plate I). These evocative images, widely disseminated in cheap prints and echoed in the illustrations accompanying newspaper war reportage and popular novels, provided a compelling visual shorthand for the anxious, defensive mindset which envisioned Britain's entire colonial holding as a locus of threat.

In addition to the continual colonial dissent (to paraphrase Victoria) and resultant strain on military resources, imperial rivalries caused Britain to face hostile relations with the other Western powers internationally and ultimately contributed to the breakdown in diplomatic relations that caused World War I.[23] There was conflict with Russia in the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia on the Afghan border and the Far East on China's coast; France was a rival in Egypt, Sudan, much of the rest of Africa and South East Asia; Germany was ascendant in Europe, and, following the 'Scramble for Africa' and the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, had gained territories in Tanganyika, South West Africa, former Ottoman lands, and was encroaching into China; and the newest imperial power, the USA, was starting to play the 'great game' successfully in the Far East and Latin America. Again Hobson's summary of the (specifically martial) dangers of this rivalry is apt:

> Although the great imperialist Powers have kept their hands off one another . . . the self-restraint has been costly and precarious . . . [T]he main cause of the vast armaments which are draining the resources of most European countries is their conflicting interests in territorial and commercial expansion. Where thirty years ago there existed one sensitive spot in our relations with France, or Germany, or Russia, there are a dozen now; diplomatic strains are of almost monthly occurrence between Powers with African or Chinese interests, and the chiefly business nature of the national antagonisms renders them more dangerous. . .[24]

Not without reason, British statesmen feared that systems of alliances were being formed against them by their European neighbours and some began to call for closer relations with one of the European powers.[25] Chamberlain, arguing in 1898 against the long-standing policy of 'strict isolation', advocated some form of European alliance lest the 'jingoes . . . drive us into quarrel, with all the world at the same time'[26] – a scenario that was frequently rehearsed in invasion tales. Furthermore, Hobson's analysis evinces an understanding of imperialism as a globalising practice that shrank the world, bringing everywhere closer together in threatening as well as productive ways so that seemingly minor events in far places could have huge ramifications given the precarious international balance of power.[27] As Arthur Conan Doyle put it in an 1897 tale of Sudanese rebellion: 'The world is small, and it grows smaller every day. It's a single organic body, and one spot of gangrene is enough to vitiate the whole.'[28]

Worst of the 'new dangers' potentially arising from the practice of imperialism was some form of invasion, regardless of the fact that it was probably the least likely to occur. Increasing immigration from the colonies and other ill-regarded regions fuelled popular fears of Britain being overrun by cheap labour; the disclosure of colonial atrocities and rebellions in the press inspired the dread of reprisals on home soil; and European rivalry over colonial possessions engendered fears, not unfounded, of global war on a hitherto unseen scale, and the consequent occupation of Britain. In Barbara Tuchman's analysis of pre-war society, for example, she asserts that in Britain by the early 1900s, '[t]he idea of invasion became almost a psychosis'.[29]

Piers Brendon similarly argues that in Britain '[b]efore the Great War it was a commonplace that "We are in the position of Imperial Rome when the Barbarians were thundering at the frontiers"', a view the *Windsor* cartoon supports (Figure 1).[30] The pervasiveness of invasion anxiety is evident even in the foreword of the *Windsor*'s inaugural issue, which enjoined the rebellious 'New Woman' to yield her claims to the men 'who must defend the country against invasion'.[31] Just as Britain had experienced severe bouts of invasion anxiety in previous times of national peril (notably during the Napoleonic wars), in the fraught period between 1890 and 1914 paranoia about imminent war and invasion was again mounting, underlying the implicitly pessimistic aspiration, in the conclusion of a triumphalist 1897 speech by Chamberlain, that 'the British Empire may present an unbroken front to all her foes'.[32]

Invasion anxiety and fin-de-siècle popular genre fiction: hypothetical foes

> We are so fond of believing that some other nation is preparing to invade us . . . that something . . . is about to happen, which fundamentally alters our position, and leaves us comparatively *at the mercy of some hypothetical foe*, that panic-mongers have always had, and always will have, a glorious time of it in our midst.[33]

Partially deriving from the contemporary view of imperialism as a practice that entailed great dangers as well as great rewards for the colonising nation, cultural studies of the fin-de-siècle period often view it as characterised by a paradoxical mixture of confidence and anxiety. Catherine Wynne terms this a 'fin-de-siècle dialectic of progress and degeneration' in which it was feared that 'all that was deemed progressive might, in fact, be its concealed opposite'.[34] Nicholas Daly similarly observes that there was 'as much self-doubt as self-assurance' present in fin-de-siècle society, and argues that '[t]he realm of culture did not float free of the political and social concerns of the period'.[35] This is certainly true of the set of popular narratives that fictionalised the invasion threat, and which formed part of the wider 'apocalyptic imaginary', as I have termed it

elsewhere, of entropic images of total war, natural disaster, the fall of civilisation and the death of the sun that expressed the pessimistic perspective in late Victorian culture.[36] These fictions may also be placed within what Daly terms the demographic imagination arising out of the explosive population growth that transformed nineteenth-century society, invasion anxiety turning on the mass movement of people (immigrants and armies) in unprecedented numbers – as in Shiel's imagined mobilisation of China's 400 million citizens in *To Arms!*[37] But more specifically, these popular texts can be positioned within the set of negative representations of empire identified by Ross Forman as articulating the range of concerns raised by imperialism's drawbacks.[38] Chief of these was the fondly held fear of invasion, as it is described in the above quotation condemning a notable 1880s invasion panic over a proposed 'Channel Tunnel' between England and France.

In the 1890s popular fiction was a rapidly growing segment of the literary market, and was starting to be categorised into distinctive genres – such as gothic, crime and science fiction (or 'scientific romance' as it was then known) – as authors and publishers competed to attract more readers.[39] Long theorised as an apt medium for engaging with pressing societal concerns (whether acting to contain or provoke them), the popular genres proved well suited to fleshing out Britain's 'hypothetical foes', as they are described above.[40] And popular authors, both 'panic-mongers' and those merely attuned to the zeitgeist, had a 'glorious time' cashing in on invasion anxiety's pecuniary potential. Considering the relationship between popular culture and popular anxieties, Darryl Jones et al. argue that:

> popular cultural documents provide unique insights into the concerns, anxieties and desires of their times, most particularly through their habitual deployment of forms of symbolic or metaphorical articulation, as a means of approaching their subjects obliquely.[41]

Thus popular fiction provided a discursive space where imperialism's tensions and contradictions could be worked over for a wide audience, and worst-case scenarios of invasion represented in direct or metaphorical form. While Robert Mighall problematises the critical tendency to draw too deterministic a connection between

popular anxieties and (specifically) gothic fiction, as this study elucidates, the plots of invasion-themed narratives across all genres tended to be framed by recurrent references to troubling real-world imperial situations that would have had an immediate significance for contemporary readers.[42] Furthermore, in addition to financial motivations, the authors and publishers of these tales often had similar admonitory goals to those warning about the invasion threat in journalism and political and military discourse.

The most obvious expression of invasion anxiety in popular fictional form was a strand of early science fiction tales which imagined the military invasion of Britain by one or more European armies after the outbreak of a major war, a strand closely related to that termed future-war fiction by pioneering literary critic I. F. Clarke.[43] Considering the possible consequences of developments in military technology and international diplomacy, these tales burgeoned in the period before 1914 as popular authors and their readers became increasingly convinced that war on an unprecedented scale was imminent.[44] Notable examples of military invasion fiction include General Sir George T. Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871); William Le Queux's *The Great War in England in 1897* (1894); Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903); and H. G. Wells's *The War in the Air* (1908) (all of which are discussed in chapter 5).[45] These tales typically dramatised the initially disastrous but ultimately vanquished military invasion of Britain, though there were many (and often more pessimistic) plot variations. Their prevalence prompted P. G. Wodehouse's 1909 satiric rejoinder *The Swoop!*, which saw a troop of 'gallant Boy Scouts' liberate Britain from simultaneous occupation by nine foreign armies.[46] The threat of invasion also figured prominently in the intersecting body of spy fiction, within which *The Riddle of the Sands* also fits, and in the related set of anarchist, terrorist and Fenian fictions – dynamite novels, as Deaglán Ó Donghaile terms them – in which small bodies of hostile aliens or alienated citizens attempted to subvert the ruling regime for political reasons, but for reasons of space and as many foreground internal dissent over external threats, these latter are not considered in this study.[47]

While it is easy to see how invasion anxiety was encoded in narratives of military aggression, the invasion theme was not limited

to texts explicitly depicting science fictional future wars but also expressed more obliquely across a range of other texts. Although military invasion fiction has been seen primarily as a subset of future-war fiction – as per Clarke's still dominant definition – this study rather views both of these related strands as part of a much wider, disparate body of fin-de-siècle popular fiction that was substantially informed by invasion anxiety.[48] This category includes fin-de-siècle gothic fiction, which was dominated by the trope of the exotic supernatural intruder – evident in the numerous vampires, demons and mummies explored in chapters 1 and 2; crime fiction with the comparably dominant figure of the foreign criminal discussed in chapter 3; and the less enduring yellow-peril tradition of oriental invasion discussed in chapter 4. Building on Jones et al.'s hypothesis that popular texts are well suited to raising social concerns obliquely, it is one of the guiding contentions of this study that regardless of the genre invasion texts were principally written within, their authors typically adopted the conventions and devices of gothic writing to delineate the invasion threat.[49] At this point, it is important to clarify that this study, building on Andrew Smith and William Hughes's account, understands the (hard-to-define) gothic chiefly as a pervasive aesthetic mode broadly characterised by preoccupation with the dark side of human experience which recurred across the nineteenth century (and beyond), transcending genre and form and affecting many literary categories perceived as unrelated.[50] At certain periods this mode was similarly instantiated in sufficient numbers of texts to produce what for the purposes of analysis may be termed a recognisably gothic genre, such as that typically referred to as the late Victorian or fin-de-siècle gothic, one of the genres under consideration here.[51] However, within all forms of invasion narrative, from those written within the late Victorian gothic genre to science fiction and crime narratives, the characteristically dark gestures of the gothic mode proved eminently suitable for depicting the potential horrors of invasion.[52]

Helpful in elucidating the relationship between fin-de-siècle popular genre fiction and invasion anxiety is Said's account of the reciprocal relationship between the progress of the imperial project and the rise of the novel as the dominant literary form in the 1800s, in which he identifies a 'convergence between the patterns of

narrative authority constitutive of the novel on the one hand, and, on the other, the complex ideological configuration underlying the tendency to imperialism'.[53] While Said focuses on the relationship between imperial confidence and canonical texts, his perspective supports an understanding of imperial pessimism – in the guise of invasion anxiety – as a formative influence on the emerging popular genres, and therefore, to a certain extent, on the very development of genre fiction in the late nineteenth century. Early science fiction owed much of its impetus to the twinned imperial themes of outward expansion and inward incursion – the former found in the imperial adventure tradition associated with H. Rider Haggard and the latter in the military (and to a lesser extent yellow-peril) invasion tale.[54] The gothic, long fixated with the consequences of boundaries breached, was notable in its fin-de-siècle incarnation for recurrently depicting supernatural intruders of imperial provenance in urban British spaces.[55] Early crime fiction, also concerned with the effort to police boundaries, flourished in a society predicated on theories of racial difference and concerned with maintaining the ever-expanding racial boundaries of coloniser versus colonised, so that the proliferating fictional foreign criminal, like the supernatural intruder, was often imperially charged.[56] In other words, all of these major genres developing at the height of imperialism tended to turn on external threats and frequently envisaged real-world antagonists to the imperial project, whether European rivals or rebellious colonial subjects, as the villains in direct or metaphorical form.

Despite this formative effect, relatively little attention has been paid to invasion anxiety as an overarching influence on fin-de-siècle popular fiction or to tracking its presence across multiple genres. Many scholars comment in passing upon the existence of invasion fiction in this period – Patrick Brantlinger, for example, including 'the fad for "invasion scare" novels' in his seminal enumeration of fin-de-siècle manifestations of social doubt.[57] Increasing attention is being paid to the military version of the invasion tale, building on Clarke's seminal body of work: for example, Cecil Eby approaches it as one of the forms of fin-de-siècle culture that helped to promulgate militarism before World War I.[58] And the theme of invasion has long been observed as prominent in the fin-de-siècle gothic, as discussed in more detail subsequently. But little work has been done

to approach the fiction of invasion from a transgeneric perspective, although Brantlinger does briefly identify Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and Haggard's *She* (1887) 'as fanciful versions of yet another popular literary form, invasion-scare stories, in which the outward movement of imperialist adventure is reversed',[59] while other critics make passing connections between military invasion tales and the invasion theme in the fin-de-siècle gothic.[60] However, all of the genres under consideration in this study significantly thematise invasion and are additionally related in two important ways: in terms of narrative structure, in that the plots tend to turn on the assumption that the practice of imperialism is in some way causative of invasion; and in terms of literary style, in that, to varying degrees, the texts make use of the well-established gothic mode to articulate the horrors of invasion, deploying its mobile armoury of tropes and devices to give shape to the threats they imagine.

Empire, war, invasion and the gothic

Many significant connections have been made between the pursuit of empire and the development of the gothic from the late eighteenth century onwards. Smith and Hughes describe an inherent relationship between imperial discourse and gothic literature in that both draw on the self/other binaries present in Enlightenment thought and work ambivalently to bolster and collapse these binaries.[61] This complements Jones's account of the gothic's emergence in the late eighteenth century as a site in which English nationalist identity could consolidate itself against that period's undesirable others – French, Irish and Catholics – at a time of national peril and invasion fears.[62] Tabish Khair, approaching the gothic primarily as a 'writing of Otherness', convincingly demonstrates the large measure to which that otherness derived from the external impetus of empire over the course of the nineteenth century.[63] Focusing on the late nineteenth century, Alexandra Warwick, echoing Said's idea of reciprocity, argues that 'the Gothic fictions of the fin de siècle both draw upon and contribute to . . . imagined Empire', helping to delineate the ambivalent imaginary version of empire available to

the insular British public in contrast with the lived experience in British-controlled territories.[64] Victoria Margree and Bryony Randall highlight the anxious aspects of this imaginary construct, identifying 'doubts about the validity and stability of empire, and fears about immigration' among the fin-de-siècle gothic's major themes.[65] Cumulatively these readings signal that the problematisation of empire was an intrinsic function of the gothic, its dark metaphors making a formative contribution to the negative imperial imaginary sketched above.

Given that invasion anxiety was an imperial concern which shared the gothic's fundamental preoccupation with antagonistic otherness and boundaries transgressed, deep structural connections can be drawn between it and the gothic – the mode even deriving its name from the infamous 'barbarian' invaders who overran ancient Rome. As Brendon has shown, in the late nineteenth century '[Gibbon's] *Decline and Fall* [*of the Roman Empire*] became the essential guide for Britons anxious to plot their own imperial trajectory', and across the spectrum of popular fiction the historical barbarians at the gates were transposed from ancient Rome to contemporary Britain – new Goths in modern guise as per the *Windsor* cartoon.[66] Two well-known critical paradigms describe some of the ways in which imperial doubts, and invasion fears in particular, were given specifically gothic form: Brantlinger's 'imperial Gothic' refers to a problematic blending of the imperial adventure story with gothic tropes, within which a major theme was 'the invasion of civilisation by the forces of barbarism'; and Stephen Arata's 'reverse colonisation' foregrounds a narrative theme in which prevailing colonial relations are reversed and 'the "civilized" world . . . overrun by "primitive" forces'.[67] Both of these paradigms emphasise the primitive nature of the invading forces and are confined to the fin-de-siècle gothic. However, both are instructive for this study's account of invasion as a transgeneric literary theme within which many types of invaders were gothicised regardless of genre, from the 'yellow fiends' of Shiel's rabid imaginings to a set of 'Mephistophelean' master criminals. Khair also builds on these paradigms in his work on colonially inflected otherness in gothic texts set in the empire's core, arguing that the gothic 'has allowed greater space for the narratives of these Others *in England*' (my emphasis) – thus supporting the centrality of invasion as a

gothic theme. However, Khair's position that this troublesome otherness was less prominent in 'most of the mainstream branches of literature' can be nuanced by adopting a transgeneric approach which demonstrates the presence of invasion anxiety in several popular genres.[68]

Another emerging perspective on the gothic mode of relevance to this study is that which emphasises its connection with the writing of conflict and war. Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet and Steffen Hantke view 'the battles of civil and national wars' – to which could be added imperial wars – of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the crucible from which the gothic emerged, giving it its characteristic preoccupation with violent, non-normative human experience.[69] This perspective can be reconciled with the widely held view of empire as formative on the gothic via the understanding set out in this study of imperialism as a fundamentally military endeavour. Reinforcing the connection between war and the gothic, Bryan Alexander observes a long-standing tendency in gothic writing to draw heavily on military discourse, while another set of critics observes the converse tendency of war writing to couch atrocity in gothic terms.[70] Investigating literary representations of war is a relatively new area in gothic studies and this study is innovative in addressing under the remit of war gothic both the fin-de-siècle fiction of imagined war and invasion, and the relationship between the gothic and imperial war, thus addressing gaps identified by Monnet and Hantke.[71] Its extensive analysis of the strategies used across the spectrum of invasion fiction to describe the horrors of conflict and subjugation confirms the emerging tenet of war gothic that the depiction of war and atrocity seems to require a hyperbolic language that exceeds the constraints of realism.

Invasion anxiety and colonial authors: 'world-big Thought'

Given the role of imperialism in engendering invasion anxiety, it is not surprising to find that authors with strong colonial connections were prominent in the ranks of those fictionalising invasion in Britain at the fin de siècle, though engagement with the theme is not restricted to them.[72] Some were colonial-born authors – like

Shiel (West Indies), Guy Boothby and Carlton Dawe (Australia), Stoker and L. T. Meade (Ireland), and Rudyard Kipling (India) – who had emigrated from these British-controlled territories to work primarily in London; others, British-born, like Haggard, Florence Marryat and George Griffith, had spent formative periods of time 'out in empire' in South Africa, India and beyond; still others like Chesney, Childers, Le Queux, Doyle, Richard Marsh and Sax Rohmer came of colonial or non-English parentage; several, in fact, straddled these categories. The work of this set of writers forms the main focus of this study, and details of their backgrounds as relevant to their visions of invasion are provided at chapter level. However, though these backgrounds varied widely, it is worth briefly considering possible commonalities here. For one thing, these authors seem to have shared a heightened sense of the immediacy of imperial issues; certainly, imperial themes and concerns pervade their wide and varied output. To borrow the rationale of Bridget Brereton and Kevin Yelvington's study of the post-emancipation Caribbean, '[while] in no way should colonialism be seen as a uniform process or monolithic structure, it must be understood as providing an ideological, political, economic, and, perhaps above all, social and cultural context' for theorising the relationship between coloniality and invasion fiction.[73] For many of these authors, their sense of being British was unavoidably inflected with the knowledge of their colonial backgrounds, or by their direct encounters with indigenous peoples, other ethnic groups of settlers, terrains and landscapes, and societies and cultures that diverged widely from the perceived norms of the insular British experience.[74] The physical journeys many of them took across the vast spaces of British-controlled territory gave them a wide-ranging understanding of empire as a material, global endeavour rather than an ideological construct or source of commodities. This account of the 'world-big Thought' – as Shiel termed the outlook of one of his globetrotting protagonists – of these writers accords with what has been designated a 'Third Wave' in fin-de-siècle studies which emphasises the need to examine the period in global terms as one of complex, multifarious exchange.[75] Key analytical perspectives recommended by James Belich et al. for approaching empire as a global endeavour are 'connectedness, including transnational relationships' and mobility,