

# Reporting the Empire: The branding of Metropolises and Empire in the Pall Mall Gazette 1870-1900

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The flourishing of the European imperial metropolises, followed by the subsequent demise of European empires and concomitant rise of the American empire in the late 19th century has received ample attention in academic literature. (Hall and Rose, 2006; Körner and Smith, 2012; Kroes and Rydell, 2005; Maier, 2007) However, the authors based these processes often on anecdotal evidence or by using quantitative data to study underlying economic processes. In this paper, we aim to turn towards newspapers to study continuities and discontinuities in ideas of empire and metropolises over a longer period.<sup>1</sup> This echoes historians David Armitage and Jo Guldi (Guldi and Armitage, 2014) recent plea for a return to the analysis of longer-term narratives at a time when cultural historians have shown an increasing focus on micro-histories.

With the availability of large-scale digitized sources and text mining techniques, the study of long-term cultural processes is now possible in ways hitherto impossible. For this paper, we use the digitized newspaper the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which has been fully digitized with high-quality OCR recognition for the period between 1870 and 1900.<sup>2</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* was a London-based newspaper, which upon its foundation in 1865 displayed a conservative outlook. In 1883, however, when William Stead—author of the book *The Americanization of the World*—took over the editorship of the paper, it moved toward a more American style of journalism (Wiener, 2011; Scott, 1950).<sup>3</sup> This raises the question to what extent the newspaper re-focused on the United States and whether the notion of the metropolis was re-branded as an American concept.

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<sup>1</sup> This period represents a pilot study that can be extended to cover larger periods.

<sup>2</sup> This digitized newspaper is held as part of the British Library newspaper collection.

<sup>3</sup> Historian Joel H. Wiener pointed out that the phrase "Americanization of the British Press" first appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1882.

In this paper, we will show how computational methods such as Named Entity Recognition, Topic Modeling and GIS mapping (see Figure 1) can be used alongside traditional close-reading methods to gain insight into ideas of empire and the branding of cities as metropolises. Our hypothesis is that there is a shift from a preoccupation with European metropolises such as Paris, Vienna, and London to cities in the United States such as New York and Chicago.

Firstly, we will employ NER to extract place-names that we will map diachronically over the 30-year period. This will reveal the international outlook of the newspaper and by extension reveals continuities and discontinuities with the public's preoccupation of the English empire in its late mature phase and the beginnings of imperial decline in the late nineteenth century.(Go, 2011) Secondly, we will use topic modeling to extract specific events related to location within this period. This information will be compared with the international outlook provided by the NER. Moreover, the output will provide keywords that can point us toward specific articles. Thirdly, we will use a predefined list of European and American cities to determine how they figured in the imagination of the English public. Furthermore, we will employ collocation techniques as well as specific full-text queries that allow us to study the discursive representation of the city.

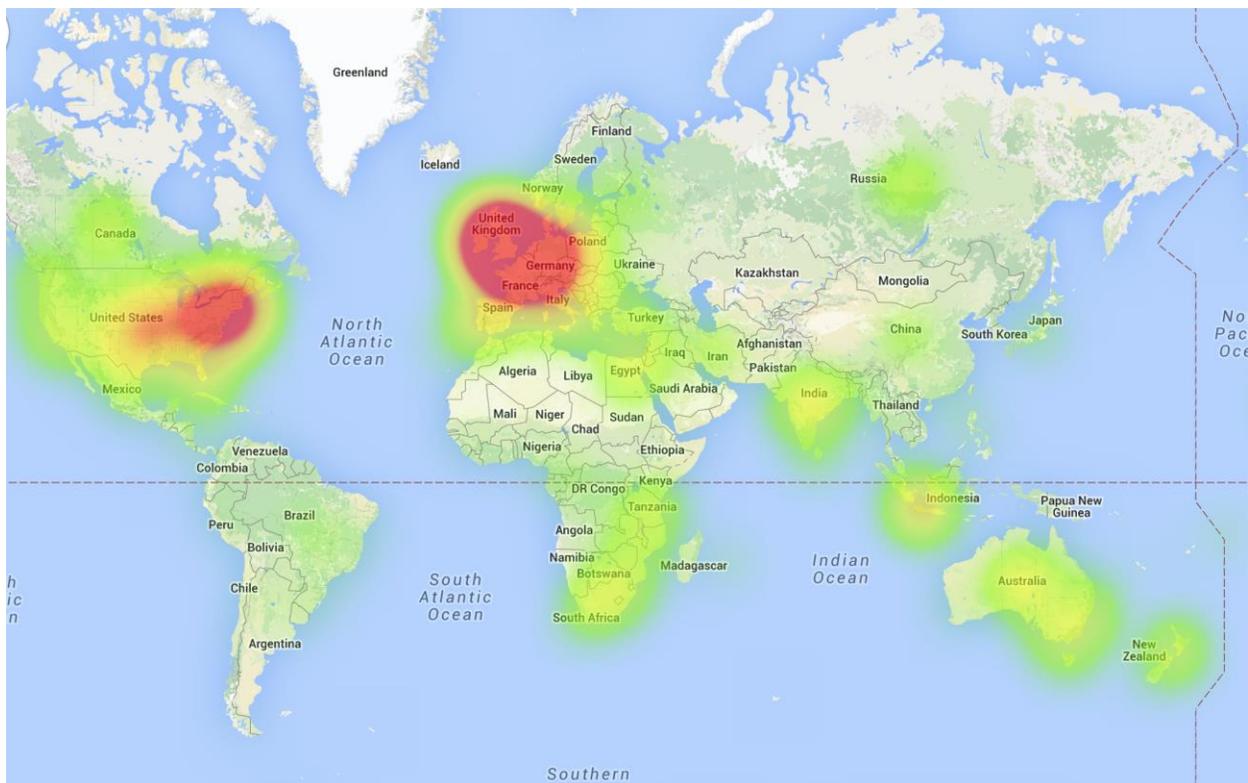


Figure 1: Heat map of locations in the first three months of 1890

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