Transnational Connections and the Comparative Approach

JANE CHAPMAN
University of Lincoln, UK

ABSTRACT

Connections between Britain and non-Anglophone countries have always been strong. Authors, publishers, advertising agents, and other generators and transmitters of popular culture were all well aware of the global marketplace. For example, Louis James long ago told us of the importance of French literature in the 1840s popular market and Palmegiano has compiled a brief monograph outlining nineteenth-century British views of European journalism in 44 periodicals.1 The question is how can the researcher identify and study them? This article argues that the most obvious way is by using periodicals to research trans-national themes: modernism, "orientalist" trade, cultural and scientific exchange, design and fashion would fall under this heading. Much work has been done on these areas in general, but in periodical studies the field of comparative study beyond the English-speaking world and the British Empire is still relatively unexplored. The author has researched some areas for further exploration, focussing on Germany, France and Japan: science periodicals in Europe, women's uses of periodicals in late nineteenth-century Japan versus Anglophone and European countries, periodicals for ex-patriot communities and satirical publications.

TRANSNATIONAL COMPARISONS: ADVANTAGES AND HINDRANCES

By the advent of the twentieth century, various technologies detailed elsewhere in this volume had combined to influence both
the extent and the speed at which information was transmitted globally, as well as the nature and presentation of content involved. As these systems were developed, clear indications emerged from newspaper and periodicals that different parts of the world were being drawn together in different ways, with different emphases and to varying extents. One cannot pretend that the production and consumption of periodicals in the nineteenth century was uniform across the globe. Periodicals were forms of communication limited to literate, urban, industrial and mainly Western societies until quite late: if they appeared elsewhere they were usually an imported form, a part of the colonial apparatus, as the volume edited by J. Don Vann and Rosemary VanAsdel showed twenty years ago. It is important to remember, however, that there are very clear non-colonial cases: hence the stress in this chapter on Europe and Japan.

Hitherto, linguistic barriers have often lead to the exclusion of material from non-Anglophone countries even while we knew that – say – both France and Germany heavily influenced the Anglophone world of ideas through the Enlightenment and Romanticism. We knew too that French was, in the nineteenth century, the lingua franca of diplomacy, and that its publishing was international in outlook with much to say about other societies. Like German and most European languages, its grammar and vocabularies are not totally alien to English. Nonetheless, comparative attempts to study comparative European publishing remain uncommon. Whether this will change with the advent of online tools (however imperfect), such as Google translate, remains to be seen; for the moment, the researcher – or group of researchers – still needs to enjoy linguistic competence in two or more languages. With the welcome advent of European Society for Periodical Research (ESPRit) based in the Netherlands – whose lingua franca is English – transnational comparison may be facilitated, though even amongst ESPRit members many papers given at its conferences remain nationally based.²

The advantages of a comparative approach to media history are many. Not only does it reflect the reality of much of the nineteenth-century culture industry, but greater insight can be
gained by considering influences on developments within a framework, since the researcher can weigh up the relative importance of each element of the framework in different countries. If comparative methods are defined by “a concern with causal analysis, an emphasis on processes over time, and the use of systematic and contextualised comparison” of similar and contrasting cases, then big questions can be asked, and big outcomes explained.3 In the social sciences, comparative historical analysis has a distinguished tradition not only to identify commonalities and similarities but also to pinpoint specificities and differences.4 Comparison can lead to testing of theoretical propositions in ways that a focus on a single case study cannot. Factors can emerge that would not be apparent, allowing the examination of different implications, both quantitative and qualitative. Comparative content analysis in the case of periodicals is likely to reveal differences in outlook, attitudes towards profit, work and leisure, education, ethics and religion. This could lead to further work on linkages between text and audiences, or respective growth in various markets or countries, differences in growth, format, advertisers and adverts as indicators of wealth, style, trends, early systems of marketing, café and coffee house or other communal usage, the work or wages of journalists, and to what extent periodicals may emerge from different publishing systems.

However, the comparative approach is not without its difficulties. The choice of cases can be easily open to criticism and therefore needs to be justified, for others may see different points of comparison or lines of enquiry. It is possible to carry comparisons too far (and in the process to stretch beyond the limits of credibility), or to be over selective. The risk arises also that comparative statements can become too simplistic, tenuous or generalized, open to intellectual challenge as being inaccurate or misguided.5 This is why, in the dialogue between concept and evidence, the researcher needs to be systematic and pay careful attention to the context of each item analysed.

Many of these aspects have been touched upon in a comparative study of eighteenth-century English and French periodicals6 that revealed, inter alia, that only 20 per cent of
dwellings promoted by English advertisers were aimed at the wealthy, as opposed to 60 per cent in France’s “ancien regime.” Quantitative classification according to price and size for property sales and rentals provided indications of the aims of advertisers to reach either élite or non-élite readerships. This is just one of a range of indicators analysed by the authors that permits them to conclude that whereas English-language periodicals in this period articulated middle class aspirations, French periodicals before 1789 continued to reflect aristocratic attitudes. If this confirms what we might expect given the differing political regimes, the comparative method led to a conclusion that periodicals in both cultures played a subtle role in shaping social realities, “not only a mirror of perceived reality but also an instrument of action and organisation.”

Palmegiano’s qualitative study of British journalism about its European counterparts, seems to confirm this, if indirectly, by suggesting that study of the Other invites reflection on the self: British journalists throughout the century kept using European journalism to ask questions about the purpose of the press, how it was to regulated if at all, what the role of aesthetics was in journalistic writing, and, not least, what exactly a journalist was.

**TRANSNATIONAL SCIENCE**

By the second half of the nineteenth-century, transcontinental flows of ideas were a given in certain fields: Samuel Scudder’s *Catalogue of Scientific Serials of all Countries Including the Transactions of Learned Societies in the Natural, Physical and Mathematical Sciences, 1633-1876*, first published in 1879, is a confirmation of this. Suzanne Zeller points to a contemporary hope that inventory science in the young Dominion of Canada would encourage “public pride, prestige, confidence resulting from scientific achievements” and bridge “cultural and political divisions” – a view that Elizabeth Tilley, in her study of the *Dublin Penny Journal*, believes could equally be applied to Ireland. By 1900 internationalization of academic disciplines had accelerated rapidly, led by German, French and British academies, which came together in an International Association
of Academies in 1899, with the first meeting in 1901. Such cooperation was reflected in the establishment in 1907 of the Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik (International Weekly for Science, Art and Technology). However, evidence for a desire that knowledge be considered international can be discerned in the British Academy (1869-1916) which Gillian Beer refers to as demonstrating “a wonderfully inclusive ideal of free intellectual movement between disciplinary forms and across national boundaries.” Its founding editor Charles Edward Appleton was profoundly influenced by German commitment to research and its dissemination across, particularly the Litterarisches Centralblatt für Deutchland (1850-1944) which was set up to provide a vollständige und schnelle Übersicht über die gesamte literarische Thätigkeit Deutschlands (“a fully continuous and rapid survey of the whole of Germany’s literary activity,” 1 October 1850, p. 1, no. 1) at a time when “Deutschland” in political reality comprised a set of independent states. Appleton, however, aimed for the Academy to systematically survey the whole of European literary and scientific activity despite national differences between the French, German and British ideals of intellectual endeavour – a subject that surely calls for more comparative research amongst periodicals.

Social Darwinism is ripe for comparative study in periodicals, building on work by Janet Browne that has focused on aspects of popularisation, and that of Susan Sheets-Pyenson comparing periodicals in London and Paris in relation to the emergence of a “low” (popular) scientific culture. Although the late nineteenth-century popularisation of science has provided a focus for scholars, it has not necessarily led to the critical mass of comparative study that one would have hoped for: most studies remain nationally orientated. The SciPer Index, or ‘Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical: An Electronic Index’, for example, only deals with periodicals published in Britain. That said, some scholars have given their attention to the cataloguing of the history of scientific periodicals, examining the growth of science publishing in Europe.
The American WessWeb (Western European Studies Section) would be a useful initial port of call for further study of European scientific periodicals, or indeed for comparative study of European journals in general. For each language, indexes, guides and websites are divided up into centuries, and brief notes on bibliographies are helpful. For the selection of German language periodicals (see the section “Old News: Historical Newspapers”), for instance, the nineteenth-century section lists Austrian, German and German Jewish periodicals. Zefys is the German-language national historical newspaper digitisation project, through which one can access relevant German-language material not only published in Germany and the German states, but also from elsewhere in the world such as the Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung (1899-1916) published in Dar es Salaam.

The Union Catalogues for Austria and for different regions of Germany are worth consulting: further information on these can be found at Info Connect “Union Catalogues in Europe” and at the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek. There is, in addition, a German national union catalogue of periodicals published in French by Dominique Baudin, while the Bibliotheksdienst (the periodical of German bibliographies) can be consulted for articles about the latest projects on digitalisation. Finally, the British Library has quite a large collection of German periodicals published in London. These include bilingual, sometimes trilingual, journals including some on the London social scene, illustrated periodicals and supplements to newspapers, and a large number of trade journals and holdings of market reports. At once it will be seen that language and country do not necessarily coincide either in terms of present-day holdings or nineteenth-century origins, the study of which will necessitate appreciation of different publishing systems with their own legal, technological, political, social and economic contexts.
This is just as much the case with French-language periodicals, which may as well be published Belgium or elsewhere as in France. But a comparative study of French periodicals nonetheless suggests other priorities, especially those relating to metropolitan centres. During the second half of the nineteenth century Paris consolidated its position as the global capital of art and fashion, with discourses that are exemplified in the pages of the influential literary and artistic periodical *La Revue Blanche* (1889-1903), a complete run of which is available online through Gallica, the digitisation project by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF). Haute couture developed using a system pioneered by the Englishman based in Paris, Charles Worth and from the early 1860s was mentioned frequently in fashion magazines such as *Le Magasin des demoiselles* (1844-96) and *La Mode illustrée* (1860-1937) and *La Mode de la mode* (1808-1892). French fashion plates had been copied in expensive British fashion magazines since at least *La Belle Assemblée* (1806-1847); from the 1860s they penetrated even the penny weekly market such as the *London Journal* and *Bow Bells*. Usually national studies of fashion tend to be conducted through the prism of transnational movements, concepts and theorisations such as modernity, gender, individualization, with magazines providing merely an evidential contribution, for example in Delhaye: comparative study of the periodicals themselves is lacking. There are some studies of journals in the same language, but fewer scholars take the intrepid step of inter-linguistic comparative study of fashion periodicals themselves, despite the fact that all the foundations have been laid.

French archives are plentiful and easy to access online or in major libraries, and the choice of periodicals to research is extensive. In fact, French historians have excelled in the way they have identified and assessed holdings, not just in major collections such as the BNF but also in a range of provincial, private and academic archives. There are records of the vast
periodical market being indexed from as early as 1897, when the Annual Index to French Periodicals (the Répertoire Bibliographique des Principales Revues Françaises) edited by M. D. Jordell, was launched. The first edition registered 146 publications, but by the second edition in the following year (1898) there were 257.

The British Library holds an excellent list of reference works for French periodicals and newspapers as well as print, CD-ROM and microfiche versions of bibliographies such as those of the BNF periodicals department, and standard texts such as Hatin and Bellanger.24 For background information on new bibliographies, digital projects and academic articles about bibliographic issues, researchers can consult the Bulletin des Bibliothèques de France (BBF), an official publication that provides much useful information, including the entire back catalogue of the BBF revue since its beginnings in 1956.25 Place and Vasseur’s valuable bibliography covers the years 1840-1930 for a select number of both famous and lesser known French literary periodicals, with facsimiles of cover pages, an introduction to each journal and full bibliographic description, including physical characteristics, editors, and collaborators, as well as table of contents per issue. It also includes an index of names cited. The Bibliographie de la littérature française de 1800 à 1930 by Hugo Thiemein 1933 is still useful for its inclusion of periodical articles: it lists, for example, a contemporary bibliography for learned societies by de Lasteyrie published between 1888 and1918.26 Another useful finding aid is SUDOC – Système universitaire de documentation27 – an online union catalogue of French university libraries, includes “Myriade,” a union catalogue of 250,000 periodical titles in French libraries and archive centres, including 2000 non-university establishments, such as municipal libraries.

The most useful online resource for researchers is probably Gallica where many periodicals are online. Taking La Lumière as an example (a “non-political” journal for the arts and sciences), under “heliography” Gallica provides title, author, publisher, date of publication, type, language, format, frequency, and a list of the on-line holdings that can be accessed. In addition, Gallica links
up to other digital holdings, such as the Bibliothèque numérique de Roubaix (an example of local history archives online), and provides some brief background information on periodical and press history and on individual daily newspapers (“les principaux quotidiens”).

Probably the most fruitful area for comparative study with France derives from the period itself: after the French Revolution, many countries followed political events in France closely. This interest is reflected in the British Library’s periodical manuscript holdings comprising some 20,000 caricatures and illustrations produced in France and Germany at the time of the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War and the ensuing Commune. Such events were extensively reported – and sketched – in British newspapers and periodicals, such as the Illustrated London News.

Caricature is a very fruitful area of comparative image analysis, and especially study of satirical magazines. Its pioneering track record in political satire is one of France’s strongest contributions to nineteenth-century publishing history. As the century progressed, so too did satirical and humorous denunciations of power by outlandish journals such as Le Charivari (1832-1937), Philipon’s Le Journal pour rire (1848-1855), and later LeTam-tam (1835-1845), Le Chat noir (1881-95), Le Courrier français (1884-1913), Gil Blas (1879-1914) or the many other publications that, despite constant battles with the censor (even after the liberal press law of 1881), developed a significant, faithful readership. Gil Blas epitomised the characterisation of modernism as aiming, as its masthead declared, amuser les gens qui passent, leur plaire aujourd’hui, et recommencer le lendemain (“to amuse people passing by, please them today, and begin again tomorrow”). Such an approach was intended to provide an immediate, performative connection with readers, according to Schiau-Botea (2013, Part 1: 28). Besides their British analogues, such French periodicals merit comparison with popular German satirical papers such as Fliegende Blätter (1845-1944) and Simplicissimus (1896-1967, with interruptions) both of which had circulations of almost 100,000 by the end of the century.
The role of periodicals as agents for transcontinental cultural transmission needs to be investigated in the case of bigger conceptual areas such as Orientalism and the origins of European modernism. A modernist journals project online, based at Brown University and the University of Tulsa, only deals with English language periodicals; while the *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* does cover Britain, the United States and Europe, the project remains strikingly divided by country and language. This leaves plenty of scope for more in-depth work into the nature of the start of European modernism as demonstrated in periodicals as a vehicle for communication, even if comparisons that extend beyond the transatlantic pose different questions.

**Japanese Women’s and Expatriate Periodicals**

Japan is now known as one of the most literate societies with an exceptionally high consumption of print and online materials, but periodical publishing is relatively recent. The development of its newspaper industry was encouraged centrally by the government during the Meiji period (1868-1912), studies of which, such as James Huffman’s, demonstrate a very rapid shift from small craft to industrial models. This may seem problematic for comparisons with the West. Although the comparative historian may well seek common factors between national examples, it is not axiomatic that countries, or thematic aspects under study, should be at the same state of development.30 So how far can a comparative study work when shared points of development are none too obvious, or when chronologies differ? Japan modernised and opened up to western influence at a rapid pace during the Meiji period, and the flow was by no means simply one way. While the study of late nineteenth-century *japonisme* in the arts is well established in the west, and orientalist depictions of Japan in the western press have also come under scrutiny,31 less known is the effect of the west on Japan. Meiji thinking aimed “to re-conceptualise Japanese culture and Japanese notions of civilization, not slavishly explore Western culture and society as though it were
the non-negotiable model toward which Japan must be transformed and this is reflected in contemporary periodical publishing. A comparative study of cross-cultural influences and changing attitudes using English language publications and secondary scholarship is feasible, depending on the choice of topic.

The early Meiji period witnessed a flowering of women’s self-expression, education and discussion of women’s position and work, for example. Some educated Japanese women travelled to Europe, followed Western literary and religious discourses, organised their own literary societies and other networks, and used periodicals to communicate the new ideas that they acquired. Millicent Fawcett and other Western women were looked up to, and England’s success in combining enlightenment influence with economic, military and intellectual prowess was noted. The formative years of women’s movements in Japan and their role models has been well researched contextually, but the way periodicals provided communities of interest has not. We do know, however, that journals became vehicles for self-publishing by girls, a platform for excerpts from or reviews of influential foreign literary texts, forums for discussion and information sharing on developments abroad, and for political and social discourse.

In terms of the availability of Japanese archives to people outside of the country the Meiji Shinbun Zasshi Bunko (founded in 1927 to archive historical publications, newspapers and periodicals) at the University of Tokyo is particularly useful. The library collections include 2,030 newspapers and 7,550 periodicals, in addition to original prints and earlier editions from the Meiji era. The other major online database is CiNii (Scholarly and Academic Information Navigator). This is a database service which can be searched with academic information of articles, books and journals. It is free of charge although there are some institutional fixed price users.

Access to these is difficult without knowledge of Japanese, though there are some interesting contemporary observations from non-Japanese perspectives, such as those of Alice Mabel Bacon, originally published in 1902. Educational ideas and
missionary work featured strongly in Japanese publications, but English-language periodicals for foreigners (of which the University of Hawaii at Manoa has compiled a list and chronology derived from a Japanese website) would often report on controversial articles in Japanese language publications, the response these received, and whether or not they were censored.

According to Adam Geczy, “Meiji Japan was deeply complicit in demarcating specific associations and in customizing its cultural aesthetic for Western consumption in which gender and objects were intertwined. In their march to modernization, the Meiji went to great lengths to define the role of women.” The classic image of this is the family photograph in which women wear kimonos and men wear western suits. Yet during the 1880s upper-class Japanese women tried to respond to Paris fashions, and impressions of British male sovereignty were formed that contributed to an “obverse orientalism.” Periodicals were pivotal in the birth of Japanese couture and the gradual process of domination by Western fashion and dress.

Conversely Japan’s influence on all of the arts in Europe and America was so momentous that many western periodicals carried material on Japanese dress whether in articles, images or fiction such as Zola’s *Au Bonheur des dames* (itself run in *Gil Blas* in 1882). Triangulation between European and Japanese trade, consumerism and periodicals would yield interesting results, for despite many studies of cross-cultural influence, the role of periodicals has not hitherto been seriously considered. How for example did Arthur Lazenby Liberty employ or simply appear in the press beyond advertising? By the end of the nineteenth century, Liberty’s could claim a virtual monopoly on supply and taste-making across Europe, encouraged designers and artists, and supported various oriental cultural societies, such as the Japan Society (founded 1891). Liberty dresses with their loose kimono-influences were strongly supported by journals such as *Aglaiia* (1893-4), the organ of the healthy and Artistic Dress Union. There were also many other importers of Japanese goods into Europe such
as the German art dealer Siegfried Bing. Following his launch of the Maison de l’Art Nouveau in Paris, dominated by Japanese arts which he had been importing since 1870 (along with William Morris prints), Bing started his own magazine, entitled *Le Japon Artistique* (1888-91). The scale of such transcontinental activities is evident in periodicals such as the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (1859-2002) which mentions other traders such as the Sichel brothers, who in one year alone, imported 5000 objects.42

Yokohama was the hub of trade and Western influence, with a strong business community of British expatriates. It is clear from the *Japan Gazette Hong List and Directory* (1875-1881) that adverts by furniture brokers and furniture depots aimed at collectors and importers were numerous, and that the trade in manufacturing and supply of Japanese art and carved cherry wood curios was providing ample employment for wood carvers.43 The foreign business community in Yokohama has received some attention from scholars,44 but a comparative study of their lifestyles could be conducted through the prism of the English language newspapers to be found through the Hawaii index mentioned earlier such as the *Japan Weekly Mail* (1870-1950), Hansard’s *Japan Herald* (originally the *Nagasaki Shipping List and Advertiser*, 1861). The French-language *L’Echo du Japon* (1875-80) will provide another perspective.

One of Yokohama’s most interesting long-time residents was the satirist and artist Charles Wirgman, who in 1862 established, wrote and illustrated *Japan Punch* to relieve the boredom of foreigners living in Tokyo and Yokohama. Wirgman made himself into Mr Punch, using anecdotes, stories and features that were full of puns, satire and caricatures of his friends and others, including the editors of the English-language newspapers. His monthly picture newsheet continued somewhat sporadically through to 1887, and was republished in 1976 as a 10 volume set. His drawings were carved into wood by Japanese carvers, printed onto thin local paper and then compiled into a string-tied booklet that was woodblock printed until 1883, when production converted to lithograph printing.45
Interestingly, Wirgman’s style is considered to be an important influence on manga art.

CONCLUSION

As these examples show, there is clear evidence that the nineteenth century enjoyed cross-cultural and cross-language influence, trade, discussion of difference and comparisons: so too should scholars of nineteenth-century periodicals. Language barriers can be overcome, but researchers must be able and willing to work hard at assimilating varying national and cultural contexts. While this may well constitute the biggest inhibition to such study, it is nonetheless also its most enriching undertaking.

NOTES

1. See James, Fiction, (pp. 159-169), Palmegiano, First Common Market.
3. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, Comparative Historical Analysis, 6
4. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, Comparative Historical Analysis, 3.
5. The authors also usefully remind us of the classic theoretical formulations of the comparative approach by Park “Reflection”, Deutsch “Growth” and George “Quantitative and Qualitative.”
9. When the International Association collapsed in 1914 it was considered a catastrophe (von Ungern-Sternberg, “Scientists”, 129). The current International Council for Science (founded in 1931) regards the International Association as its origin (see <http://www.icsu.org/about-icsu/about-us/a-brief-history/>).
12. See for instance Cantor and Shuttleworth, Serialised, Henson, et al., Culture and Science.


20. Through Gallica <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb34430449p/date> and <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb344304470/date>; there is a printed bibliography by Arthur Jackson.


23. For example Mackie’s study of early eighteenth century periodicals, *Market à la Mode*.


26. *Bibliographie générale des travaux historiques et archéologiques publiés par les sociétés savantes de la France*.


29. There is a digital version of *Simplicissimus*; see <http://www.simplicissimus.info>.

30. See for example Chapman, *Comparative Media History*; Chapman, *Gender, Citizenship and Newspapers*.

31. See e.g. Yokoyama, *Japan*.

33. Patessio, Women and Public Life in Early Meiji Japan; Walthall, The Weak Body of a Useless Woman; Patessio and Ogawa. ‘To become a Woman Doctor in Early Meiji Japan (1868-1890) Anderson “Place”

34. The database can be found at <http://www.meiji.j.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>. Though Google translate may initially prove helpful, the researcher will need the assistance of a Japanese speaker to navigate this site successfully.


37. Gezcy, Fashion and Orientalism, 123.

38. Gezcy, Fashion and Orientalism, 117.

39. See e.g. Checkland, Sato and Watanabe.


41. Cunningham, Reforming Women's Fashions, 123-5.

42. Cunningham, Reforming Women's Fashions, 117.

43. Several issues of the Japan Gazette are available through Google Books.

44. Cortazzi and Daniels, Britain and Japan, 1859-1991; Blum, Yokohama in 1872; Hoare, Japan’s Treaty Ports and Foreign Settlements; Pedlar, The Imported Pioneers.

45. Wirgman was also a painter who trained and influenced a number of Japanese artists, becoming ‘almost a god-like figure to Japanese painters intent on learning Western style painting’ (Rogala, Genius, 224).

REFERENCES


Rueschemeyer, D. 2003 Can one or a few cases yield theoretical gains? In J. Mahoney & D. Rueschemeyer (Ed.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (pp. 305-336). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


Tilley, E. 2004. Science, industry, and nationalism in the *Dublin Penny Journal.* In Louise Henson et al. (Eds.), *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media* (pp. 139-150). Aldershot: Ashgate.

**JANE CHAPMAN**

PROFESSOR OF COMMUNICATIONS,
SCHOOL OF ENGLISH AND JOURNALISM,
LINCOLN UNIVERSITY, UK.
E-MAIL: <JACHAPMAN@LINCOLN.AC.UK>