5AAEB041 The Fin-de-Siècle

Level/Semester taught: Year 2 module/Band 2 taught Semester 2
Convenor: Professor Clare Pettitt
Teachers: Professor Clare Pettitt, Dr Brian Murray
Credit value: 15 credits

Teaching Arrangements: 1 hour lecture & 1 hour seminar weekly
Assessment One 1,000 word essay (15% of final mark), due mid-semester. One 3,000 word essay (85% of final mark)

MODULE OUTLINE:
Conventionally, the Victorian fin-de-siècle has been seen as a transitional period, trapped between High Victorianism on the one hand and the onslaught of Modernism on the other. In recent years, however, the fin-de-siècle has become one of the most dynamic fields in literary studies. This module will focus on a range of literature from the period, and consider the ways in which socio-cultural debates at the time – around questions of gender and sexuality, degeneration/regeneration, radical politics, urbanism and empire – inform the literature of the period. From the New Woman to the New Journalism, the 1890s was a period of exciting cultural innovation.

TEXTS YOU WILL NEED TO OBTAIN
(a number of the shorter novels are readily available online as e-texts, but all are also easily found, and cheap, secondhand):

Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (1895)
Henry James, The Turn of the Screw (1898)
Lisa Rodensky, ed., Decadent Poetry from Wilde to Naidu (Penguin Classics)
Elaine Showalter ed. Daughters of Decadence (Virago, 1993)
H.G. Wells, The Island of Dr. Moreau (1896)
H.G. Wells, The Time Machine (1895)
Oscar Wilde, Complete Works (Collins edition is good value) – read The Picture of Dorian Gray and The Importance of Being Earnest over the winter break.
Edmund Gosse, Father and Son (1908)

Also, the course will be relying on readings posted on KEATS. You need to bring this material class – either printed out in hard copy form, or easily accessible via laptop/ipad.

LECTURE AND SEMINAR LECTURE AND SEMINAR READING

Week 1: Introducing Aesthetes and Decadents (CP)
Pater, Huysmans, Symons (extracts on KEATS)
Wilde, ‘Preface to Dorian Gray’ (in Complete Works)

Week 2: Londoners in the 1890s (BM)
Conan Doyle, The Sign of Four (extract on KEATS)
Amy Levy, selected poems (KEATS)
Grossmith, Diary of a Nobody (extract on KEATS)
W.E. Henley and Richard Le Gallienne poems (in Decadent Poetry)
Week 3: Monstrous Bodies (BM)
H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (purchase or available as e-text)

Week 4: Sexuality and the New Woman (CP)
Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (purchase)
George Egerton, ‘A Cross Line’ (in *Daughters of Decadence*).

Week 5: Sexualities, Queer Turns (CP)
Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray; The Importance of Being Ernest* (in *Complete Works*)
Lionel Johnson, Lord Alfred Douglas, Michael Field poems (in *Decadent Poetry*)
Selections from the Wilde Trial (KEATS)

Reading Week

Week 7: The Old Gods and the New (BM)
Walter Pater, ‘Apollo in Picardy’; *The Renaissance* (extracts on KEATS)
Poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins, Mary F. Robinson, Michael Field (KEATS)
Oscar Wilde, ‘De Profundis’ (*Complete Works*)

Week 8: Ghosts and Hauntings (CP)
Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (purchase or available as e-text)
Charlotte Mew, ‘A White Night’ (in *Daughters of Decadence*)
Oliver Schreiner, ‘Three Dreams in the Desert’; ‘Life’s Gifts’ (in *Daughters of Decadence*)
M.R. James, ‘Canon Alberic’s Scrapbook’ (KEATS).

Week 9: Visions of Empire (BM)

Week 10: New Technologies (CP)
H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (purchase or available as e-text)
‘The Cinematograph’ (KEATS)

Week 11: Inventing ‘the Victorians’ (BM)
Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son* (1908)
Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (1918) [Extract on KEATS]

Supplementary bibliography:
Ellmann, Richard, *Oscar Wilde* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988 etc)
Freeman, Nicholas, *Conceiving the City* (Oxford University Press, 2007)
Ledger Sally and Roger Luckhurst (eds.), *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c. 1880-1900*, (Oxford University Press, 2000)
Ledger, Sally, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Manchester University Press, 1997)
Ledger, Sally and Scott McCracken (eds.), *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge University Press, 1995)
Powell, Kerry, *Oscar Wilde and the Theatre of the 1890s* (Cambridge University Press, 1990)