Introduction:
the cultural construction
of the British world

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This book examines the dissemination and exchange of ideas within the British world between 1763 and 1997. In particular, it is concerned with looking at the ebb and flow of concepts integral to the circulation of imperial culture, as well as the beliefs, practices and outcomes associated with them. In doing so, it builds on two key developments in scholarship since the turn of the century: first, the historiographical integration of domestic and imperial cultures, and second, the identification of a coherent, if precarious, 'British world' system straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The former, associated with historians such as Catherine Hall, Antoinette Burton, John MacKenzie and Andrew Thompson, has broken from a previous tendency to seal empire hermetically from metropolitan history. Far from being a phenomenon 'out there', the empire crucially shaped such 'domestic' events as the Second Reform Bill (1867) and the campaign for women's suffrage in the late nineteenth century. At the same time, imperial themes permeated what Thomas Richards has called the 'commodity culture' of Victorian Britain. The tendency of this 'new imperial history' has been not only to bring empire 'home' but also to decentre imperial culture; rather than ideas and institutions flowing from a metropolitan centre to a colonial periphery, they travelled in multiple directions, sometimes bypassing the British Isles altogether.[1] Indeed, contestations of what Stuart Ward has referred to as the 'minimal impact' thesis – the idea that metropolitan Britain remained impervious to developments happening in the periphery – have effectively demonstrated that Britain's domestic and overseas histories are in fact inseparable from one another. For Ward, as for an increasing number of scholars, empire was central not only in the construction of both metropolitan and colonial identities, but also in the manner in which imperial dimensions continue to influence Britain and many of its former colonial possessions today.[2]

The second major theme on which this collection builds is the 'British world' model, or more specifically upon John Darwin's reconception of this model as the 'Empire project'.[3] In Darwin's account, a British world system, based on migration, London's financial dominance and the Indian Army predominated from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. This British world included, but was not limited to, the formal empire; indeed, formal annexation of territory often embodied a failure of the system to operate efficiently. Likewise, decolonisation was not coterminous with decline, but remained compatible with an effort to preserve the British world system by other means, in a changing geopolitical environment. By the end of World War II, British economic weakness and the loss of India's army forced the British world system to rely increasingly heavily on alliance with the United States, until, by the late 1960s, the system collapsed.

This book draws on both of these departures in imperial historiography; indeed, in many ways it integrates them by reconceptualising the British Empire as a 'system' foregrounded by imperial culture. It is based on the premise that the British world was held together by more than the material factors of demography, economics and military power: there was what the book terms a 'cultural British world' underpinning much of Darwin's system, one that we argue was structured around a complex series of multilateral networks based on leisure, family organisation, ideologies, legal cultures, religion and scientific practice.[4] Although this 'cultural British world' was a crucial factor in cementing Darwin's 'British world-system', their borders did not necessarily correspond, either geographically or chronologically. Cultural practices, institutions and ideas could, on the one hand, potentially expand beyond the borders of anything that could meaningfully be called a 'British world-system' and survive its demise, while, on the other hand, the 'world-system' could potentially extend to a given territory through financial or military power even in the absence of any meaningful British cultural penetration. What seems clear, however – and what the book argues – is that the borders of the 'cultural British world' and the 'British world-system' overlapped considerably, and that, by transcending the conventionally defined boundaries between metropolitan and colonial space, the cultural British world helped to ensure the system's cohesion by supplying the cultural sinews that served to reinforce the institutional, political and economic bonds of empire.

Moreover, this cultural world was not necessarily centred on conventional themes associated with investigations in the cultural history of the British world – such as sport, film, theatre and the media – nor was it strictly bound to the old colonies of white settlement that,

along with the United States, became what James Belich has called the 'Angloworld'.[5] Rather, this book views the cultural British world as a much more inclusive, dynamic and mutually constitutive space that could penetrate areas in which the British never settled in large numbers and that accommodated traditional gender, racial, class and ethnic divisions. The book argues that a less familiar, though no less significant, range of cultural interactions and expressions fashioned between 'coloniser' and 'colonised' often served to support, reinforce and, at times, supplant more traditional cultural practices in linking British communities around the globe and in contributing to a shared sense of British identity during this period. Indeed, this was a British world in which the transmission and exchange of cultural practices were as much attributable to the forces of 'contestation' as they were to those of 'construction'. Such practices under investigation here, for example, include the contributions of elites (metropolitan and colonial) and their pressure groups in challenging traditional modes of legal and economic thought and, in turn, giving rise to new political cultures within the empire; the role of humanitarianism, anti-slavery movements and literary criticism in shaping national and imperial identities; the dynamics of imperial networking, careering and the role of 'regional' domestic cultures in shaping 'British' culture; and the importation to Britain from the empire of various material, scientific, legal and financial cultures in shaping metropolitan attitudes, thought and society. Moreover, by highlighting the close interplay between less 'popular' cultural themes and the empire's shifting economic and political imperatives in different geographical contexts and at different periods in time, this book advances a particular reading of 'empire as culture' in a way that does not downplay the crucial role of the empire's economic, diplomatic and political dimensions. Indeed, one of the wider aims of the book is to emphasise how cultural practices across the empire were never neatly bounded, isolated phenomena occurring within some sort of specially designated 'cultural space'; rather, they were frequently born out of the empire's diverse political, military and fiscal imperatives and, as such, ought to be integrated within a broader imperial institutional and economic context.

One of the principal aims of the book, then, is to anchor the volume firmly within the existing literature while at the same time laying the groundwork for a new research agenda that moves beyond conventional approaches to the study of 'empire and metropolitan culture'. Specifically, it seeks to advance an understanding of the conduits and directionality of cultural flows throughout the British Empire by demonstrating how a plethora of imperial cultures were constituted in the traffic of ideas, practices, habits and assumptions that permeated

the 'British world-system' (a process largely downplayed within the existing historiography). These cultural practices were sometimes self-consciously adopted in the service of empire; in other cases, they simply constituted attempts to reproduce familiar practices abroad. In still other cases, 'British' practices were in fact cultural borrowings. Moreover, even if cultural practices supported the British world system, they were not necessarily contained by it. Many survived the demise of any convincing British world system – the prevalence of cricket in many former colonies is an obvious example – although with the rising predominance of American culture within late twentieth-century globalisation, the global penetration of Japanese, Chinese and other popular or mass cultures, and the resurgence of various national and regional cultures, such legacies could no longer in any meaningful sense help to constitute a 'cultural British world'.[6] Rather, at most, they remain isolated and selective legacies within distinctly non-British cultures. In this regard, what we are calling the cultural British world not only helped to cement the British world system, but was even to some extent coterminous with it and dependent upon it.

In its attempts to examine the integrative nature of a cultural British world, this book identifies the period in the immediate aftermath of the Seven Years' War as a logical point of departure. The 1760s, in particular, constituted what Tony Ballantyne has described as a 'globalising decade', a time when rival imperial states, fronted by Britain, embarked upon voyages of exploration and discovery, commercial expansion and territorial conquest. As nascent colonial powers began consolidating their newly acquired overseas possessions and negotiated a whole series of informal economic arrangements and treaties with non-colonised lands, associated warfare, scientific enterprise, as well as commercial, legal and administrative institutions fashioned new bodies of knowledge and cultural networks.[7] Within these networks, expatriates, settlers and indigenous peoples generated an entirely new system of global information gathering and exchange, often determining the movement of people, goods, ideas and capital moving back and forth across the British world in the process.[8] Built variously upon kinship structures, educational and religious institutions, ethnic as well as fraternal organisations, clubs and societies, these networks connected private, official and provincial interest in both the metropole and colonies, and constituted what Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson have described as the 'software of empire'. This 'software' ultimately enabled the operation of a vast system of mobility and exchange across the empire through which shared cultural practices and knowledge helped to tie the British world together.[9]

Indeed, at the heart of scholarly attempts to challenge the old historiographical certainties of class and nation, as well as to unsettle more traditional paradigms in imperial history such as 'metropole' and 'periphery', is the need to think of Britain and its empire as much more fluid, porous and mutually influencing sites than has previously been assumed. Since the early 1990s, scholars of the 'new imperial history' have made productive use of network theory in demonstrating how Britain's constituent parts each successfully generated, hosted and replenished dense interconnecting sets of social networks that played fundamental roles in the evolution of both the metropolitan union-state and its worldwide empire. Within this broader, more nuanced narrative, historians are increasingly moving away from a study of the simple bilateral relations involving 'metropole' and 'periphery', to the more complex multilateral relationships engendered through the webs of contact, dialogue and exchange that were fashioned directly among Britain's colonial societies . Moreover, within domestic British history, there is growing acknowledgement that previously accepted under-standings of the origin and meaning of 'Britishness', as well as that of a largely Anglo-centred 'British' empire, need to be problematised and revised.

Following the publication of several regionally focused studies examining the distinct experiences of empire among the four primary ethnic groups that constituted 'British' in the nineteenth century – namely English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh – John MacKenzie, among others, has called for a 'Four Nations' approach to British imperialism.[10] While the domestic histories of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales have long been viewed in regional and national contexts, the history of the British Empire (integral to the unfolding of the history in each of these locations) has until the early 2000s been treated separately. Traditional accounts of metropolitan-focused imperial history have tended to view the history of the British Empire almost exclusively from the perspective of England, situating London as the unparalleled, even hegemonic, imperial metropolis from where ideas, capital and power all flowed outward to the colonies in the periphery. Metro-centric versions of imperial history, as typified by Peter Cain and Antony Hopkins' seminal concept of the 'Gentlemanly Capitalist', can be most productive in highlighting the reality of the empire's dominant economic and political machinery in London, but the preponderance of literature on the history of empire to date that has effectively privi-leged England as the undisputed imperial centre belies not only the crucial role that Scotland, Ireland and Wales played in the empire and in the fashioning of 'British' imperial culture, but also that of indig-enous peoples and 'colonial' institutions themselves.[11]

At the same time, while endorsing the 'decentring' of imperial culture embodied in the 'new imperial history', this book is emphatically concerned with *British* culture in the empire and along its edges. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler have criticised the common formulation of an 'indigenous "response" or "resistance" to an imperialist initiative' as failing to 'capture the dynamics' of the encounter; we argue, in parallel terms, that the cultural British world was similarly dialectical.[12] Moreover, this was a cultural world that evidently encompassed parts of the empire outside of the colonies of white settlement; as such, the book ventures beyond Bridge and Fedorowich's call for 'the delineation of Britishness across the old Dominions' to examine regions of the empire where the English language was not necessarily a crucial determinant in defining 'British' culture.[13] Whether as migrants to settler colonies or outposts of informal empire, or short-term expatriates to the tropical colonies, Britons sought to recreate the institutions familiar from home: clubs, sport, educational systems and, where possible, family structures; at the same time, despite attempts to maintain social distance from their colonial subjects, these institutions adapted to specific colonial contexts.[14] Similarly, although Britons abroad may have interpreted their colonial experience through categories forged in metropolitan contexts, these categories were often shaped through the colonial encounter, and frequently by colonised peoples themselves. This point takes in not only political ideologies but also governing strategies, including, for example, the policing of venereal diseases.[15] In this regard, this book goes beyond the notion of 'mutual constitutiveness' to examine the agency of the subjects of empire in the making of British culture in what Richard Price refers to as the 'middle grounds'. Colonised people were, after all, instrumental in running the empire; and it was in the colonies, not in the metropole, that power relations were negotiated and empire was made. As Price has argued, the colonies, far from being passive and receptive sites of European imperialism, 'were places where various kinds of hybridities' flourished. Hybridity, he reminds us, 'whether it be a cultural, social, or sexual kind … dilutes the power of the colonizer', thus giving rise to an imperial culture that was 'not entirely dependent on imperial largesse'.[16]

While the book places the agency of the subjects of empire in the fashioning of a cultural British world at its fore, it is, at the same time, very much concerned with placing such interactions in a broader, more comparative framework. As Antoinette Burton notes, empires and nations were ultimately porous constructs whose 'borders' were continually crossed by the migration of peoples, ideas and goods, rendering them 'precarious, unmoored, and in the end, finally unrealizable'.[17]

As such, any study of a cultural British world would in effect necessitate a comparative study that seeks to reposition the history of the British world within a wider global narrative. However, as Burton points out elsewhere, there is a danger that integrating the British Empire into global history can recast the whiggish British exceptionalism long familiar from domestic history. As a result, 'English democracy, English abolitionism, [and] the English civilizing mission' are credited as primary engines of globalisation, most notably (but by no means exclusively) in the work of Niall Ferguson. For this reason, Burton calls upon scholars to study the British Empire fully within the context of its interactions with other empires and with other colonial and national cultures: to 'write the British empire into world history in terms of its proportionality rather than its exceptionalism, in terms of its role in the co-production of imperial globality rather than its originary character, in terms of its limits rather than its inflated and ultimately self-serving image'.[18] The essays in this book very much support Burton's exhortation, placing the British world not as the driver of globalisation but as a fluid and often precarious 'system', engaging not only with small kingdoms and stateless tribes, but with such empires as the Qing, the Ottoman and the Mughal, as well as the newly emergent United States of America. It was, in part, through these interactions that a cultural British world began to emerge in the mid-eighteenth century and that it shared much in common with rivalling imperial powers and states. By connecting the colonial and post-colonial eras in ways that illuminate the continuities between each time period, the book offers readers insight into how historians can combine fresh archival material with the latest methodological and theoretical approaches to create complex and subtle assessments and understandings of colonial dynamics and culture.

This book is organised around eleven thematically related essays, each offering a timely rethink about the cultural interconnectedness of Britain's imperial past. In its examination of a series of new perspectives on the cultural dynamics of the British world, the book brings together a myriad of different methodological approaches and styles by individual authors. Throughout the book, detailed, individual case study-focused chapters are complemented by others that adopt a much broader, synthetic approach. In contrast, other chapters, in their attempt to highlight the complex, overlapping networks that defined this global system, seek to frame their work in more comparative and contrastive studies. Chapters One and Two offer sweeping examinations of Britons' cultural engagement with the indigenous peoples they encountered in their empire, through accounts that between them show markedly different attitudes toward colonial peoples. Philippa

Levine's chapter relates British representations of nakedness both to the changing character of imperialism and to changes in British domestic culture. In doing so, it traces the contrasting themes of the 'noble savage' and the 'naked native'. The former, more emblematic of the early modern travel writers' and painters' views, envisioned indigenes unsullied by the artifice of European civilisation, even if most agreed that some aspects of the civilising mission were essential. This openness to the merits of non-European peoples could underwrite missionary and educational efforts, including the imperial conquest that would facilitate such efforts. The shift to the 'naked native', on the other hand, paralleled the rise of a greater cultural pessimism about the possibilities for integrating imperial subjects into British civilisation. One could argue that this increasing pessimism on the part of Britons 'at home', in turn, shaped the attitudes of Britons in the empire, reinforcing the tendency, for example, to establish racially exclusive clubs and neighbourhoods, such as the Indian hill stations or Hong Kong's Peak.

In contrast to Levine's account of Western commentators casting 'natives' as foils for their rule, Christopher Bayly's chapter shows that British intellectuals could learn from Asians, in that way bringing the latter's voices directly into the British cultural tradition. In doing so, his chapter draws important connections between two separate bodies of historical scholarship, namely the 'new imperial history' and an emerging 'global intellectual history', to examine some of the ways in which British-born radicals and socialists based in Asian colonies sought to critique empire for its effect primarily on indigenous peoples and societies (as opposed to highlighting the effects that imperialism had on the British constitution). Through an examination of several key individuals, including James Silk Buckingham, Alan Octavian Hume and Phillip Spratt, Bayly explores how a common 'radical scepticism' among such people gave rise to a particular strain of 'liberal imperialism' within Indian politics that sought to drive anti-colonial thought and to push for reform in imperial governance from outside the metropolitan centre. Rather than simply impose their own beliefs and personal philosophies upon their Asian counterparts, these individuals sought to articulate and position their political concerns within a discourse grounded in themes that spoke directly to particular Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim sensibilities. Crucially, the melding of various strains of metropolitan and Indian intellectual thought in such ways enabled a mutually beneficial flow of ideas circulating across the globe during this period, at once facilitating the construction of specific Asian notions of anti-colonialism as well as promoting a 'benign form of orientalism' among a wider European and American

audience. Significantly, while many of these British-born radicals were employed as colonial officials while in Asia, Bayly demonstrates that their motivations and desire for political reform within the empire extended beyond the traditional theme of political economy to include humanistic, religious, aesthetic and sexual concerns.

Chapters Three, Four and Five examine the place of political thought, including humanitarian ideals, in tying together the cultural British world. Yet, as Philip Harling, Michelle Tusan and Martin Wiener all show in various ways, the role of political thought was not straightforward. Harling and Tusan show, for example, that any attempt to import British humanitarian ideals, whether free trade and anti-slavery or human rights more broadly, could run into challenges on the ground, whether because of conflicting interest groups, conflicts between ideals and economic interests, or recalcitrant institutions.

Accordingly, Harling's chapter examines the Caribbean sugar industry in the years after 1846, when sugar duties were abolished and British 'free sugar' competed against the slave-produced sugar of Brazil and Cuba. Unfortunately, the removing of duties led to what Harling calls a 'free-trade crisis' in sugar monoculture in Trinidad and British Guiana, as sugar prices plummeted even as planters' expenses rose, for labour costs increased dramatically as slavery was abolished in the empire. As former slaves fled or sharply reduced their working hours, many British commentators interpreted this behaviour in racial terms as slothfulness. Ultimately, only the government-supported importation of indentured labour from India and Africa – a form of labour closer to slavery than its defenders would like to admit – saved the sugar industry. Harling sees this policy as a compromise of *laissez-faire* and humanitarian ideals, and accepts the broader argument that British attitudes toward empire in the second half of the nineteenth century were more authoritarian and racially exclusive than they had been in the early part of the century. Still, he shows that the humanitarian impulse never disappeared completely. Anti-slavery, in particular, was more than simply self-congratulatory justification; it remained central to how many British saw themselves and the purpose of their empire, and helped to check the worst imperial excesses.

Where Harling focuses on trade, Tusan examines humanitarianism in diplomacy, as well as the British expatriate networks on which this diplomacy depended. Her chapter traces Henry Layard's career as Ambassador in Constantinople as a case study of the role of diplomats and civil servants in promoting Britain's late nineteenth-century informal empire in the Near East. Pointing out that much of the existing scholarship focuses on travellers' narratives, Tusan shows that diplomats and civil servants built more sustained networks of

political advocacy and humanitarianism. She examines a circle of expatriate supporters cultivated by Layard, whose philanthropy and political activism, particularly in response to the Bulgarian Atrocities (1876) and Russo-Turkish War (1877–78), helped to create a British humanitarian culture in the Ottoman Empire. This humanitarianism outlasted Layard's ambassadorship, for example in pursuing famine relief in the 1880s. Tusan argues that Layard and his fellow expatriates were largely unsuccessful in their attempts to reform Ottoman institutions. They did, however, cement the idea that Britain had a moral obligation to intervene in the Ottoman Empire, and, as a result, help to underscore the role of this new culture of diplomacy in the making of the British cultural world. In addition, Tusan's chapter reminds us that the British cultural world was not confined by the boundaries of empire.

Like Harling and Tusan, Wiener points to the complexity of the relationship between British political ideals and imperial governance; unlike the other two, though, Wiener's chapter points not to the difficulty of translating ideals into concrete political action, but to the question of imperial belonging. In particular, his chapter focuses on liberal political ideals, especially those concerning representation. He uses two late nineteenth-century case studies, Trinidad and Bengal, to argue that these ideals could, depending on context, serve either to defend British settlers' exclusive legal and racial privileges or inclusively to articulate the rights of colonial subjects. Denying both a whiggish narrative of a 'gradually and steadily expanding inclusion' of colonial subjects in the blessings of English liberty and the exclusionary narrative of British settlers securing their freedoms at the expense of all others, Wiener shows that British political culture was multivalent, offering a shared master-language whose meaning and scope could be contested.

The British world was, of course, not only an arena to imagine through metropolitan political categories; it was also an arena in which Britons (and especially those from the so-called 'Celtic periphery') could make careers and through their movement back and forth across the empire could influence the spread of specific forms of 'British' culture and values. In Chapter Six, Barry Crosbie examines the British world through the lens of nineteenth-century Ireland by demonstrating how Irish military, religious and professional networks in India all operated in ways that recognised the centrality of Ireland and Irish people in imperial power-brokering and in the construction of 'British' imperial identities and culture. Crosbie's chapter gives credence to historiographical emphasis since the turn of the century on developing an understanding of how Britishness (both at home and

abroad) was shaped through the activities of various ethnic groups within the context of the wider British and Hibernian Isles (in this case, the Irish), whose own particular identities and cultural practices were frequently brought to bear upon colonial peoples and institutions. By foregrounding the centrality of Ireland to Britain's imperial mission in India through an examination of a wide range of 'Indo-Irish' connections and exchanges – including those at the level of scientific, religious and political thought – his chapter highlights the multifaceted and essentially pluralised nature of 'British' imperial culture by enunciating a sense of Irishness and Britishness which overlapped extensively, affording advancement and belonging to a group at once colonial and imperial.

Whereas the first six chapters of the book focus most heavily on the place of British political ideals, and Britons themselves, in the British world, the remaining chapters employ concrete case studies to expand upon one of the book's central themes, namely the decentring of the cultural British world. Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine focus principally on the realm of ideas, while Chapters Ten and Eleven examine how consumer culture across the British world was made tangible. All five chapters demonstrate the multi-directional character of intellectual exchange, with Britons selectively learning from the 'natives' they encountered, even as colonial subjects selectively borrowed from a useable British culture.

John Carroll's and Mark Hampton's chapters (Chapters Seven and Eight) are bookends to Britain's modern engagement with South China, with Carroll's examining the period before the British imperial expansion into China and Hampton's focusing on the period around its conclusion. Carroll's chapter examines the cultural engagement of British travellers in Canton prior to the Opium War. He argues that the typical scholarly focus on Sino-British political and diplomatic relations, as well as the eventual outbreak of war in 1839, has obscured a wide-ranging cultural engagement that can be seen in these travellers' accounts. Rather than using China purely as a mirror by which to define their own superiority, British traders and missionaries allowed their observations of Canton to challenge their previously held views of China. Moreover, they made precise distinctions between Chinese civilisation and Chinese manners, and between the Cantonese and inland Chinese. Although the later nineteenth century would see unequal treaties and extraterritoriality, these British travellers' attempts to 'sort out' China laid the groundwork for more productive Sino-British cultural interactions in the twentieth century. Through this analysis Carroll's chapter addresses the ways in which British popular knowledge about the world beyond the British Isles

was being transformed during the early nineteenth century through first-hand accounts. In focusing on Canton, he revises the prevalent understanding of British attitudes toward China as something that needed to be 'opened up' (especially during a period in which British attitudes toward China were becoming critical), thereby making the case for seeing the diplomatic and commercial relationships between Britain and China through a cultural lens.

Hampton's chapter examines Hong Kong between 1945 and 1979 as an imagined space in which a British 'unbridled capitalism' could flourish even as Britain itself developed a welfare state 'consensus'. Drawing on political pamphlets, novels, memoirs, journalistic accounts, politicians' speeches and trade organisations' papers, it argues that Hong Kong was widely seen by expatriates as a place in which British values survived after having been quashed in a 'declining' Britain. At the same time, Hong Kong provided a foil against which neo-liberal think-tanks could highlight Britain's need to revive an enterprise culture. Hampton shows that, in fact, Hong Kong's status as a *laissez-faire* economy was overstated, as the government increasingly intervened in such fields as housing, public health, education and infrastructure. In addition, this meme depended on assumptions that the Chinese were compulsive workers uninterested in leisure, and that Hong Kong Chinese were politically apathetic, both of which collapsed in the late 1960s. Despite these tensions, this distinct idea of a Hong Kong Britishness provided a cultural legacy that survived the collapse of the 'British world'. At the same time, by preserving what were often called neo-Victorian economic ideals, Hong Kong constituted a model to which anti-Keynesian British politicians of the 1970s could point.

Where Hampton's chapter focuses on popular economic discourse in and about Britain's last major colony, in Chapter Nine Christopher Hilliard shows the selective borrowing of a British literary tradition outside the metropole, including in ways that could subvert the notion of a cultural British world. Hilliard examines the influence within the empire of the Leavisite literary critical movement, as exemplified by F. R. Leavis's journal *Scrutiny* and Q. D. Leavis's book *Fiction and the Reading Public*. He takes issue with a common assumption that Leavisite criticism was hegemonic in the mid-twentieth century, either in Britain or in the empire. Moreover, contrary to those who see Leavisite criticism as a vehicle for asserting metropolitan cultural dominance at the expense of colonial or native cultures, Hilliard shows that it acted in more complicated ways. Taking India and New Zealand as case studies, Hilliard shows that Leavisite criticism provided a tool for critics to evaluate their own emerging national literatures. In doing

so, Hilliard provides an example of the way in which British culture helped to constitute a British world, not through top-down dissemination of specific values, but through cultural practices that were re-appropriated in local contexts.

In Chapters Ten and Eleven, Tillman Nechtman and Bronwen Everill demonstrate the ways in which colonial material and consumer culture operated both in the metropole and in the colonial context, in both cases helping to define national identity. Nechtman's chapter examines the manner in which late eighteenth-century nabobism and material culture combined to raise important questions among a domestic British audience about how empire impacted upon contemporary understandings and articulations of Britishness as well as what constituted 'British' culture. By showing how returning East India Company employees used material possessions as a means of narrating and documenting their experiences in India, Nechtman argues that their architecturally alien homes, pets, foreign objects, styles and fashions 'functioned on a more complex register' than simply 'being different' to the tastes of ordinary, everyday Britons. For the nabobs, their material possessions and attachment to South Asian cultural norms reflected their 'global biographies' and lives spent outside of Britain. Despite fierce opposition from a sceptical and hostile British public who understood their 'Indianness' as confirmation that their time abroad had 'changed them' and had rendered them 'less British', nabobs such as William Hickey, Francis Gillanders and David Hare ignored public criticism and, through the life-styles they led in Britain, forced domestic audiences 'to come face to face with the material reality of the South Asian empire'. Nechtman explores how, by building 'micro-Indias' across the British landscape in the form of South Asian-inspired homes and estates, the material culture of the nabobs contributed to the fashioning of a hybrid British identity that recognised the crucial role of the colonies and of indigenous cultural practices and objects in defining more clearly ideas of nation and empire at home.

While Nechtman's chapter focuses on the influence of Indian material culture on the metropole, Everill's chapter examines the role of material culture in shaping the colonial history of Sierra Leone, particularly in relation to how the growth of 'legitimate commerce' in the region in the 1840s helped to shape the lives of repatriated former slaves and influenced their relations with both the metropole and other West African states. She argues that through their participation in domestic political movements, their use of petitions and anti-slavery rhetoric and through their purchases and sales of imperial-produced goods and commodities, Sierra Leoneans played an important role in developing mid-Victorian ideals of modernity and citizenship.

These political and economic actions, in turn, helped to connect the mutually reinforcing processes of commerce and consumption across the British world at the time. As an important yardstick for measuring the relative success of Britain's imperial civilising mission throughout the empire, the experiment of introducing 'legitimate commerce' and new patterns of consumerism in nineteenth-century Sierra Leone had important implications for the emergence of Sierra Leonean identities as well as for the continuation of the British imperial project across colonial West Africa.

The essays in this volume are by no means exhaustive, nor do they offer a comprehensive treatment of the emergence and subsequent development of a 'cultural British world' between the mid-eighteenth and late twentieth centuries. But they do contribute in a rich variety of ways to an emerging body of work that seeks not only to 'bring empire home', but also to locate British history and culture within broader, more dynamic global contexts. No doubt some of the material presented in this book will feed back into lively debates on the heterogeneous nature of 'Britishness', and on the cultural construction of a British world that extended beyond the physical boundaries of both nation and empire, as well as those of racially exclusive, largely English-speaking settler societies. In this regard, David Lambert and Alan Lester have argued that any imagined 'imperial space' – such as the cultural British world under investigation here – should be seen neither as something that is constructed hegemonically from above nor rising reactively from below, but rather as an arena of mutually reinforcing mobility and exchange: 'the sphere of a multiplicity of trajectories … coming together … in specific ways and at a specific time'.[19] By reconceptualising the British Empire as a 'system' that transcends the conventionally defined boundaries between metropolitan and colonial space and that stresses both the centrality and heterogeneity of the cultural practices that reinforced the institutional, political and economic bonds of that system, it is hoped that this collection of essays will illustrate afresh the central importance of the empire-wide dissemination and exchange of ideas – the ebb and flow of concepts integral to the circulation of imperial culture and in the construction of the British world.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1 Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003); Catherine Hall and Sonya M. Rose, *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (London: Pearson Longman, 2005); John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Antoinette Burton, *Empire in Question: Reading, Writing, and Teaching British Imperialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). For a vigorous criticism of this historiographical trend, see Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

2 Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 4. On the impact of decolonisation on metropolitan culture, see also Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

3 John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). See also James Belich's magisterial *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

4 Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, 1850–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

5 Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (eds), *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003); Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (eds), *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005); Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007); Catherine McGlynn, Andrew Mycock and James W. McAuley (eds), *Britishness, Identity and Citizenship: The View from Abroad* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011). The vast majority of the essays in these collections focus on the Dominions.

6 See, e.g., C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993); Simon J. Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media Were American: U.S. Mass Media in Decline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

7 Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism and the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 4.

8 See, for example, Barry Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks: Migration, Social Communication and Exchange in Nineteenth-Century India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London and New York, 2001); Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815–45: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005); Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks, and the British Academic World, 1850–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Christopher Prior, *Exporting Empire: Africa, Colonial Officials, and the Construction of the British Imperial State, c. 1900–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

9 Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, p. 16.

10 See, for example, Keith Jeffery (ed.), *'An Irish Empire'? Aspects of Ireland and the*

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11 P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688–2000* (London: Routledge, 2nd edn, 2001).

12 Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 6.

13 Bridge and Fedorowich, *The British World*, p. 8.

14 Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1939* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987); Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism 1900–1949* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (London: Penguin, 2004); Patrick F. McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880–1935* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Lanver Mak, *The British in Egypt: Community, Crime and Crises, 1882–1922* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012). On the concept of settler colonialism more generally, see Robert Bickers (ed.), *Settlers and Expatriates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Lorenzo Veracini, '"Settler Colonialism": Career of a Concept', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 41 (2013), 313–33.

15 Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Martin J. Wiener, *An Empire on Trial: Race, Murder, and Justice under British Rule, 1870–1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Michelle Tusan, *Smyrna's Ashes: Humanitarianism, Genocide, and the Birth of the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); James Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic During the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

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17 Antoinette Burton, 'Who Needs the Nation? Interrogating "British" History', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 10 (1997), 227–48.

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