

GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Although there are now more than forty volumes in the Studies in Imperialism series, none of them – as Stuart Ward points out in his Introduction – have taken much note of the post-1945 period in British cultural imperialism. This collection of essays goes some way to remedying this omission, even if the essays are closer to being first rather than last words on the subject. At the very least, the research here justifies this field as a legitimate subject for study. It would, after all, seem highly unlikely that a state could divest itself of 'the largest empire the world has ever known' without there being some influence upon metropolitan culture. These essays demonstrate just how great that impact was, particularly when they reveal that cultural movements which were formerly seen as radical were often deeply embedded in the imperial experience.

The range of cultural expressions illustrated here, although wide, is far from exhaustive. This book contains excellent examples of analyses of elites and their pressure groups, of the theatre, satire, sports, films, children's popular literature, travel, 'reverse migration' and the experiences of people of Commonwealth origin in Britain. Yet much remains to be explored. The effects of the end of formal empire are surely also to be found in literature, art, architecture, music, museology, the development of the press and other media, and in shifts in educational practices and fashions. The fact of the matter is that the built environment and 'sites of memory', rather like the walls and structures of the Roman Empire, are going to be with us for a very long time. In that sense, the memory of empire and its cultural effects can never be wholly sloughed off.

It may be that those who hurry down Whitehall seldom reflect on the extraordinary imperial façade of the Foreign Office with its busts of heroes; that passers-by in Kensington Gore scarcely notice the statues of Livingstone and Shackleton that project from the walls of the Royal Geographical Society; and that visitors to the Victoria and Albert Museum are only dimly aware of the imperial origins of some of its collections. Moreover, even if familiar and overlooked, statues and war memorials everywhere speak of an imperial past. The very landscape of Britain has empire inscribed upon it. Grand towers to commemorate imperial heroes dominate the skylines of Dingwall and Glen Prosen in Scotland, while even the small northern Perthshire town of Alyth, where I now live, has its Boer War memorial in its central square.

Such examples of buildings, monuments and statuary, together with the dim memories and sometimes vague unease that go with them, can be replicated throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. Not the least of such 'sites of memory' are the street names which bespeak of propagandist and celebratory naming practices of the past. London possesses no fewer than seven Livingstone roads or streets. The Indian 'Mutiny' heroes Henry Havelock and Colin Campbell have twelve and eight respectively, while Napier has as many as thirteen. The territories and geographical features of the former empire are also well represented. Jamaica has three and Rhodes and Rhodesia four. The Nile

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has three (no doubt named for Nelson's victory, the Admiral himself having twenty-one!) and the Indus one, while many well-known and more obscure places in the Indian subcontinent are similarly remembered. Moreover, the naming of streets can act as a narration of the trading connections of Glasgow and other port cities.

Yet such sites of memory can also become sites of contest. Travelling once in the Orkney Islands, I discovered the great tower which commemorates the death of Lord Kitchener in the sinking of HMS *Hampshire* in 1916. Remotely situated though it is, someone had spray-painted 'Imperialist Scum' on its base. More formal controversies break out from time to time. Recently, the Mayor of London (ironically called Livingstone) proposed that the statues of unknown (to him and the general populace) generals like Havelock and Napier should be removed from Trafalgar Square. The tenor of the subsequent widespread and often choleric debate was highly instructive.

Such sites are inevitably going to stimulate an intriguing mix of controversy and indifference, protective and destructive urges for many years to come. Such reactions constitute another post-imperial fever chart, as do so many of the cultural forms represented in this book. Stuart Ward is to be congratulated for organising the 'Implosion of Empire' conference at the University of Southern Denmark in 1999 and for so creatively bringing these essays together.

John M. MacKenzie