

# Empire and Globalisation

*Networks of People, Goods and Capital  
in the British World, c. 1850–1914*

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of new infrastructure – especially transport infrastructure – migrants, moreover, needed capital and credit. British investors, both institutional and private, supplied much of this money. Their information-determined preference for colonial stocks and shares was an important feature of financial markets in the second half of the nineteenth century, and is explored in Chapter 5.

#### 4 Markets and consumer cultures

##### Introduction

This chapter explores a key feature of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century globalisation, namely the emergence of the empire's settler societies as the fastest-growing export market for the British 'metropole'.<sup>1</sup> Not only did these colonies consume comparatively high levels of British exports, the share of income they devoted to British goods also deepened relative to other parts of the developed and developing world over time. The latter is an intriguing fact with implications for how we perceive the evolution of colonial consumer behaviour prior to the First World War. Most importantly, it suggests a quickening of economic relationships within the British World at this time: a more precise and intensive drawing together of the interests and needs of Britain and its settler colonies. Migrant consumers, it seems, were becoming more, not less, wedded to the British product, as other competing uses for their income, such as the consumption of local or foreign (non-British) goods and services, became available to them. Why, then, did British products fare so well in these markets, and why did colonial consumers, by that time free to buy from anyone in the international marketplace, spend such a large share of their income on them?

We argue that a good part of the answer lies in the rich and layered interconnections that characterised the British World – the ethnic and cultural ties that bound settlers emotionally, financially and spiritually to 'home'. Thus, at root, the dominions' ability to absorb high volumes of British imports from the mid century had its origins in British

<sup>1</sup> Detailed studies of the character of British colonial trade date back at least as far as John Stuart Mill. According to Mill, British colonial trade was so 'British' that it was not really external trade at all, but domestic. Mill's focus, however, was on the mid nineteenth century and the colonial dependencies – territories not at liberty to set their own fiscal or monetary policy, and which functioned as specialised producers for a wider economy, the financial and commercial centre of which was very much in the United Kingdom. For a useful discussion of Mill's views, see I. Greaves, 'The Character of British Colonial Trade', *Journal of Political Economy* 62 (1954), 1–11.

emigration. It was emigration that conditioned consumption habits within the colonies such that their tastes, expectations and values were readily familiar, communicable and comprehensible to manufacturers back in Britain; and it was emigration that enabled a rapid establishment of trust between commercial partners in the colonies and Britain, thereby facilitating long-distance trade.

The British 'diaspora' was hardly unique in this regard. Trade often develops more readily between peoples sharing a common identity, whether that identity be ethnic, religious or political.<sup>2</sup> Exploiting such ties was a perfectly rational response to the challenges of the market economy, rather than a form of economic escapism. Ethnic groups, in particular, are known to have developed distinct structures of economic opportunity.<sup>3</sup> The dense set of associations found within such groups promoted forms of co-operative behaviour that were distinctly (and materially) advantageous to group members.<sup>4</sup> Instead of relying on impersonal contractual bonds, which, when available, may often be unreliable, merchants and manufacturers from the same ethnic background have frequently looked to effective 'trust networks' to provide fast and accurate information about business conditions, to co-ordinate multiple far-flung transactions, and to secure good behaviour from distant, difficult-to-monitor clients. Consumption, meanwhile, is recognised to have been profoundly influenced by the 'cultural baggage' that settlers carried.<sup>5</sup> Settlers attached specific meaning and value to the goods that they purchased. These goods, and the lifestyle that went with them, were thus very much part of the global cultural flows set in train by mass migration.

Applying these insights to the study of the British World economy allows us to move away from the rather hackneyed view of colonial markets as passive 'bolt-holes' or 'safe havens' from the competitive forces of an international economy. By improving the quality and quantity of information flows, by bridging relations between producers and consumers, and by facilitating the adoption of new technologies, imperial networks contributed powerfully to the growth in trade and the convergence of

<sup>2</sup> See for example A. Grief, 'Contract Enforceability and Economic Institutions in Early Trade: The Maghribi Traders' Coalition', *American Economic Review* 83 (1993), 525-48; T. Menkhoff and S. Gerke (eds.), *Chinese Entrepreneurship and Asian Business Networks* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002); and G. T. Haley, C. T. Tan and V. C. V. Haley (eds.), *New Asian Empires: The Overseas Chinese, Their Strategies and Competitive Advantages* (London: Butterworth Heinemann, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> A. Portes and M. Zhou, 'Gaining the Upper Hand: Economic Mobility among Immigrant and Domestic Minorities', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15 (1992), 491-522.

<sup>4</sup> J. S. Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988), 95-120.

<sup>5</sup> See especially L. Young, *Middle Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia and Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

income levels that were such marked features of English-speaking societies from 1850 to 1914.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, they did so without sealing off Britain or its settler colonies from the wider international economy. The co-ethnic webs of trade explored in this chapter were, however, also systems of power and domination that incorporated some parts of colonial society and not others. Hierarchies of race and class determined access to the business and professional networks spawned by the empire, just as notions of status, gentility and gender shaped patterns of colonial consumption. Such interplay of culture and economy is, of course, characteristic of all marketplaces, and historians are increasingly recognising how deeply embedded markets are in distinctive traditions and practices that influence how they are conceived and how they function.<sup>7</sup> In the case of British World markets, much work remains to be done to uncover what these traditions and practices actually were.

We begin with Britain's trade statistics, introducing new comparative data on the proportion of income spent on British products by colonial, American and Argentine consumers. This data reveals how 'non-market' advantages can help to explain why such large volumes of British products were typically absorbed by the settler colonies, while making it clear that much of the increase in the proportion of British exports going to these markets was the result of their mounting affluence, and not simply of their (growing) fondness for the wares of British producers. With the quantitative groundwork laid, the chapter then moves on to explore the more qualitative underpinnings of the British exporter's engagement with the settler colonies. What were the main sources of the advantages that Britain enjoyed there? The analysis is conducted under three headings: commercial policy and structures, international trade networks, and cultures of consumption. In each case it is shown how it was the social and institutional consequences of demographic expansion that struck most decisively at the roots of economic activity within the British World, albeit in ways more subtle and complex than has often been appreciated.

### Exports and empire

An important aspect of Britain's trade history of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is the rise of Britain's settler colonies as a major outlet for its exports. Table 4.1 neatly illustrates this 'imperial

<sup>6</sup> K. O'Rourke and J. G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> M. Bevir and F. Trennmann (eds.), *Markets in Historical Contexts: Ideas and Politics in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Table 4.1. *British exports by regions, 1871–1913 (quinquennial average percentages).*

	1871–5	1881–5	1896–1900	1909–13
British settlement colonies	12.0	16.2	16.7	17.5
British India	8.9	12.9	11.8	11.9
Rest of the empire	5.9	5.9	5.6	5.6
Developed countries	47.2	39.4	39.3	35.9
Rest of the world	26.0	25.6	26.6	29.1

Source: P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688–2000* (London: Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 153, 432.

drift'. Between 1871 and 1913, the proportion of all British exports going to the empire rose from 26.8 per cent to 35 per cent, a rise in stark contrast to the shrinking share taken by the developed countries of industrial Europe and the United States. Not all parts of the empire, however, shared equally in this growth. In fact, the leading recipients of the increased flow of British exports to the empire were the settler colonies – Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa.

Why did these particular markets prove so accessible to the British manufacturer? Attempts to answer this question go back to the end of the nineteenth century, when the trend first became apparent.<sup>8</sup> Since then a wide variety of factors have been adduced, the most common of which are shared language, currencies, tastes, institutions and expectations; the use of preferential tariffs; their governments' practice of buying British first where possible; dependence on British investment for continued development; and the density of their transport and communication links with Britain.<sup>9</sup> Taken separately or together, such considerations are thought to

<sup>8</sup> For a contemporary view, see A. W. Flux, 'The Flag and Trade: A Summary Review of the Trade of the Chief Colonial Empires', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 62.5 (1899–46), 489–533, esp. pp. 522–33; for subsequent scholarly assessments see P. J. Cain, 'The Economic Philosophy of Constructive Imperialism', in C. Navari (ed.), *British Politics and the Spirit of the Age: Political Concepts in Action* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), pp. 41–65; F. Coetzee, *For Party or Country: Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Popular Conservatism in Edwardian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 42–8, 61–70, 85–98, 117–25; A. L. Friberg, *The Wary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 24–79; E. H. Green, 'The Political Economy of Empire, 1880–1914', in A. Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 vols., Vol. III: *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 346–70; and A. S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880–1932* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), pp. 85–9, 104–9.

<sup>9</sup> D. K. Fieldhouse, 'The Metropolitan Economics of Empire', in J. M. Brown and W. R. Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 vols., Vol. IV: *The Twentieth*

have afforded British exporters unique advantages in the markets of both Britain's formal and informal empire.

While many contemporaries clearly saw these advantages as a godsend that, if properly built upon, could secure the future for British industry in troubled times,<sup>10</sup> later commentators have been more inclined to regard them as temptations that in the long run promised – and indeed delivered – ruination.<sup>11</sup> Yet how reasonable is it to draw such a strong and

*Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 88–113; D. K. Fieldhouse, 'For Richer, for Poorer?', in P. J. Marshall (ed.), *Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 110–12; F. Capie, 'Britain and Empire Trade in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', in D. Alexander and R. Ommer (eds.), *Volunes not Values: Canadian Sailing Ships and World Trades* (Memorial University Newfoundland: Maritime History Group, 1979), pp. 3–29; F. Crouzet, 'Trade and Empire: The British Experience from the Establishment of Free Trade until the First World War', in B. M. Ratcliffe (ed.), *Great Britain and Her World, 1750–1914: Essays in Honour of W. O. Henderson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), pp. 209–35; F. L. McDougall, *Sheltered Markets: A Study of the Value of Empire Trade* (London: J. Murray, 1925); D. C. M. Platt, 'Trade Competition in the Regions of Recent Settlement', in D. C. M. Platt with A. J. H. Latham and R. Michie (eds.), *Decline and Recovery in Britain's Overseas Trade, 1873–1914* (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 91–138; and S. B. Saul, *Studies in British Overseas Trade, 1870–1914* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1960).

<sup>10</sup> A. J. Sargent, *British Industries and Empire Markets* (London: HMSO, 1950); F. L. McDougall, *The Growing Dependence of British Industry upon Empire Markets* (London: HMSO, 1929). As Feinstein noted, 'those who foresaw a grim prospect of increasing foreign competition and declining sales, looked for a solution in the expansion of Britain's exports to the empire'; C. H. Feinstein, 'The End of Empire and the Golden Age', in P. Clarke and C. Trebilcock (eds.), *Understanding Decline: Perceptions and Realities of British Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 218. To many, however, it was to prove no more than a short-term fix, because, by isolating itself from the vivifying effects of competition, dependence on the 'soft' markets of the empire 'dulled the senses of many exporters' and ensured the continued decline of British industry. For similar statements and sentiments, see E. J. Hobbawm, *Industry and Empire* (London: Pantheon Books, 1969), pp. 191–2; W. A. Lewis, *Growth and Fluctuations, 1870–1913* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), p. 121; Saul, *British Overseas Trade*, p. 229 (from which the 'dulled the senses' quotation comes); C. P. Kindleberger, 'Foreign Trade and Economic Growth: Lessons from Britain and France, 1850–1913', *EcHR* 14.2 (1961), 295–300; F. Crouzet, *The Victorian Economy* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 357; C. Barnett, *The Lost Victory: British Dreams, British Realities, 1945–1950* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 12; and G. Owen, *From Empire to Europe: The Decline and Revival of British Industry since the Second World War* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), pp. 185–7. For researchers who have cast doubt on the assumption that Empire markets were necessarily 'soft', see S. Pollard, *Britain's Prime and Britain's Decline: The British Economy, 1870–1914* (London: E. Arnold, 1989), pp. xii, 37, 268; B. W. E. Alford, *Britain in the World Economy since 1880* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 53–4; C. R. Schenk, *Britain and the Sterling Area: From Devaluation to Competitiveness in the 1950s* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 81; S. J. Nicholas, 'The Overseas Marketing Performance of British Industry, 1870–1914', *EcHR* 37.4 (1984), 489–506 (p. 491); S. J. Nicholas, 'Locational Choice, Performance and the Growth of British Multinational Firms', *Business History* 31.3 (1989), 122–41; B. R. Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 99–100; and A. S. Thompson and G. Magee, 'A Soft Touch? British Industry, Empire Markets, and the Self-Governing Dominions, c. 1870–1914', *EcHR* 56 (2003), 689–717.

damning conclusion of British economic performance from the type of data presented in Table 3.1<sup>12</sup> A closer examination of the problems of using movements in the share of British exports to a particular location as a gauge of Britain's non-market advantages there is instructive.

The first thing to note is that shifts in the dominions' share of British exports across time tell us relatively little about the nature or extent of the advantages enjoyed there by British manufacturers. Such data cannot distinguish between the different factors that may cause the proportion of a nation's exports to a particular market to vary. In addition to what we might call 'imperial advantages', growth in an exporter's reliance on and penetration of a colonial market may have resulted from a variety of other considerations including greater price competitiveness, income growth, population expansion, better after-sales service and advertising. Given the various factors at play, it would be misleading to take the movements of export or import shares in the British World as a sure sign that Britain's demographic connection to these societies had in itself (positive) repercussions for British trade.

A further difficulty with using export shares to assess the extent of the commercial advantages enjoyed by Britain in the settler colonies is that such an approach looks at these markets, whether as a group or independently, in isolation. Yet 'imperial advantage' was relative rather than absolute. What determined the attractiveness of dominion markets was not just their pro-British tastes, institutions and policies, but the fact that these attributes were not shared to the same extent in other markets. Consequently, the advantages that British exporters enjoyed, say, in New Zealand, were influenced by the nature of Britain's relations not just with New Zealand itself but with consumers, producers and governments in other potential markets, both inside and outside the British World. If governments in these other markets had decided to impose hefty tariffs on British exports, then, *ceteris paribus*, the New Zealand market would have become more open than before to British manufacturers, even though nothing had actually changed in New Zealand. In a world of growing international trade, the benefits of imperial advantage cannot therefore be determined in isolation.

Fortunately, there is an alternative way of examining the nature of British markets in the colonies and elsewhere that addresses these problems. This method considers the habits of typical consumers in those

<sup>12</sup> For other cases, where raw exports shares are used, see for example S. B. Saul, 'The Export Economy, 1970-1914', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research* 17:1 (1965), 5-18 (pp. 5-6); Nicholas, 'Overseas Marketing', p. 49; Schenk, *Starling Area*, p. 81; and Capie, 'Empire Trade', p. 11.

Table 4.2. *Index of Britain's revealed advantage in selected countries, 1870-1913 (quinquennial average).*

Period	Australia	NZ	Canada	South Africa	Argentina	USA
1870-4	2.78	3.48	2.17		1.85	0.51
1875-9	3.43	4.20	2.12			0.31
1880-4	3.66	3.82	2.13			0.41
1885-9	3.87	3.80	2.20			0.47
1890-4	3.27	3.74	1.90		2.74	0.47
1895-9	3.95	4.24	1.70			0.39
1900-4	3.93	5.14	2.04		1.66	0.35
1905-9	3.16	4.59	1.90		2.13	0.32
1910-13	3.43	4.57	2.07	6.09	1.85	0.30

*Notes:* Before 1900 the Argentine figure is based on 1870 and 1890 data alone.

Similarly, the South African figure for 1910-13 is based on data from 1913 only. The gaps in the South African and Argentine data that this causes arise because there are no continuous GDP series for those countries for the period between 1870 and 1913.

*Source:* G. B. Magee, 'The Importance of Being British? Imperial Factors and the Growth of British Imports, 1870-1960', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 37 (2007), 341-51 (p. 352).

locations, asking specifically whether those consumers purchased disproportionately large volumes of British wares. It is a germane question, for if 'imperial advantages' mattered at all, they must have done so because they actively induced, conditioned or perhaps compelled colonial consumers to spend more of their income on British products than they otherwise would have. Such an approach has the merit of targeting more precisely the commercial benefits of colonial markets than does the mere movement of export shares.

Table 4.2 examines whether this was indeed the case in some of the British manufacturers' most important export markets during the late Victorian and Edwardian era. It reports the share of each of these markets' income devoted to the purchase of British goods *relative* to the proportion spent on average in western European markets (Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands) where the British are perceived to have had no special advantage. The resulting figure is called the 'index of revealed advantage'. One could also express this index in per capita terms as the proportion of the average individual's income that was spent on British exports in one market relative to the proportion expended in the 'neutral' markets of western Europe. Either way, the index of revealed advantage - by introducing comparability of consumption and by focusing on the importance of British products in the consumer's

overall expenditure – captures the effects of advantage exhibited in any market more precisely than measures based purely on export shares. Moreover, it enables the scale of non-market advantages to be gauged and compared across place and time. The further the index rises above 1, the greater the advantage for British products in the market; at 1 that market's consumption would be identical to the western European.<sup>13</sup>

Turning to Table 4.2 itself, we can see that, right up to the First World War, British producers did enjoy a commercial 'advantage' in the dominions – an advantage that translated itself into a demand for their products, and that was felt most strongly in New Zealand, South Africa and Australia.<sup>14</sup> The advantage grew deeper over time in New Zealand and South Africa, and to a lesser extent in Australia. In 1870, for example, New Zealanders on average allocated about 10 per cent of their income to the purchase of British products (around three-and-a-half times more than a western European consumer did), rising to just over 13 per cent (or just over four-and-a-half times more than a European) by 1913. Canada was also favourably disposed to British exporters in this period, albeit less so than the other dominions. Its rate of consumption remained fairly stable throughout at a level approximately comparable to Argentina's; that is, both Canadians and Argentines on average spent about twice the western European proportion of income on British exports. By contrast, continuous and intensifying struggle for the US consumer's dollar, especially from the 1890s, epitomises the experience of British producers attempting to export to America. Table 3.2 indicates that US consumers on average devoted to British exports between a third and a half of the proportion of income that western Europeans did. Thus, despite its demographic links to Britain and common language and traditions, America remained a comparatively tough market for the British to penetrate. In this regard, Britain was no different from other European exporters wishing to establish a market in the protectionist United States.

Taken together, the figures in Table 4.2 suggest that international markets prior to the First World War were not completely 'neutral'. They

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, an index reading of 2.0 literally means that that market's consumers spend twice as much of their income on British exports as a weighted average of western European consumers. By contrast, a reading of less than 1 denotes that consumers in that market use relatively less of their income on British goods than those in western Europe. Such a market might be described as relatively disadvantageous for British exporters. Given space limitations, no attempt is made here to discuss the background to the index or revealed advantage. Readers are referred to G. B. Magee, 'The Importance of Being British? Imperial Factors and the Growth of British Imports, 1870–1960', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 37 (2007), 341–51, where a full discussion of the meaning and construction of the index, and the logic underpinning it, is given.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Platt, 'Trade Competition', pp. 110–17.

confirm the view of contemporaries and some later scholars that dominion markets did indeed devote a disproportionately large portion of their incomes to British imports, and indicate a role for non-market factors in Britain's nineteenth- and twentieth-century trade history.

Such a finding needs to be interpreted with care, however. That pro-British advantages existed, does not in itself, for instance, prove the common allegation that dominion markets were 'soft' or 'featherbedded'. Indeed, as work elsewhere has demonstrated, despite these advantages, British World markets still proved challenging for many British exporters. By any reasonable criteria, they were certainly no easy escape from competition.<sup>15</sup>

To understand the nature of dominion markets, it is necessary to grasp that British manufacturers' turn towards them during the late Victorian and Edwardian era was strongly governed by the rapidly rising wealth of these societies.<sup>16</sup> Here there is a crucial distinction between levels of consumption and what caused those levels to change over time. Level and change are separate phenomena, a distinction not always appreciated in the literature on Britain's colonial trade. A simple analogy may help make the point. Imagine that your neighbour likes to eat out at her local Chinese restaurant. Last year, she spent \$250 there, but this year her accountant observes that she has spent \$500. If the accountant therefore concludes that your neighbour's love of eating at the local Chinese has obviously grown in the last twelve months, he would have in essence assumed that her expenditure patterns have been driven entirely by changed preferences. Yet, before we can accept such a view, we must rule out other possible explanations. Has your neighbour's income increased? Or has the restaurant dropped its prices? If we investigate further and find that your neighbour's income has doubled over the last year, while prices at the restaurant have remained unchanged, then it is reasonable to conclude that her preference for eating out has probably not altered at all, since she would be actually spending the same proportion of her income at the Chinese. In other words, while our neighbour's liking for Chinese food certainly induced her to frequent the restaurant in the first place, in this instance it did not cause her to spend more of her money there.

The moral of this story is that, like the accountant above, we must be wary of committing the fallacy of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* when examining commercial activity in the British World. What promoted the high

<sup>15</sup> Thompson and Magee, 'A Soft Touch?'

<sup>16</sup> Recent econometric analysis of colonial demand for British products, for example, provides clear quantitative evidence of the influence of income growth. See Magee, 'Importance of Being British?', pp. 355–67.

levels of consumption of British goods in the past was not necessarily what caused any subsequent increase in demand for British goods in the future. Mindful of this caution, the following sections of the chapter seek to identify some of the main reasons why consumption *levels* of British products remained so relatively high in the settler colonies throughout the late Victorian and Edwardian era.

### Official policy

Operated for reasons of power, empires, it is often said, were integrated by force. Yet how did ministers and officials try to mesh together markets in the British World? How far, for example, did they seek to obtain special commercial benefits from the settler colonies? State intervention in the field of discriminatory export duties – or ‘preferential tariffs’, to use the language of the time – generated a great deal of political controversy in the early twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> Businessmen were drawn into these debates,<sup>18</sup> and their attitudes are discussed in greater detail below (see ‘Chambers of Commerce’, below, pp. 145–50). Yet despite vigorous campaigning on the part of Joseph Chamberlain and the ‘constructive imperialists’, Britain clung tenaciously to ‘his holiness free trade’, as Marx disparagingly termed it. For many later Victorian and Edwardian politicians the commitment to free trade was indeed held with all the passion and emotion of a religious belief. The alternative, protection, threatened not only tariffs, and higher prices for consumers, but greater government interference more generally.<sup>19</sup> There were also differing views as to the commercial potential of the English-speaking parts of the empire, and a widespread apprehension as to whether they could ever be economically self-contained.

Britain received a series of tariff preferences in dominion markets from the 1890s, all granted on the latter’s initiative, even though it did not finally reciprocate until 1919.<sup>20</sup> Cecil Rhodes led the way in 1896, inserting a clause in the charter of the British South Africa Company. Tariffs on

<sup>17</sup> The classic account remains A. Sykes, *Tariff Reform in British Politics, 1903–13* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). For more recent contributions to the debate see Cain, ‘Economic Philosophy’; E. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the Conservative Party, 1880–1914* (London: Routledge, 1995); and A. S. Thompson, ‘Tariff Reform: An Imperial Strategy, 1903–13’, *Hy* (1997), 1033–54.

<sup>18</sup> A. Marrison, *British Business and Protection, 1903–32* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 104.

<sup>20</sup> Fieldhouse, ‘Metropolitan Economics’, p. 90. The details below come from Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, pp. 90–6 and L. Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: Manipulation, Conflict and Compromise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 109–18.

British goods entering Rhodesia were not to exceed the level of the Cape Colony tariff prevailing at the time of the Charter. This (latent) preference eventually came into effect in 1906, albeit that Britain’s exchange of goods with Rhodesia was too small for it to matter. A more significant step was taken in 1903 when a customs union conference, comprising all of the South African colonies, adopted a general tariff that treated British imports differentially. A further step was then taken in 1906 when a new agreement lowered duties for English exporters while generally raising them on foreign products. This was but one of several tactics used at the time to block further American economic penetration of the South African market. Here political power was certainly made to count – and this episode is discussed below (see pp. 141–2). Subsequently, in 1910, when the Union adopted the Transvaal’s protectionist tariff rather than the Cape’s revenue-producing tariff, the economic geography of the region began to change. Henceforth British manufacturers had to take local manufacture much more seriously if they were to preserve their market share.

Meanwhile in Canada J. A. Macdonald’s Conservative government responded to pressure from local manufacturers, and the spectre of rising unemployment, by introducing in 1879 a ‘National Policy’ of protective tariffs to secure the home market – competition from American imports was particularly acute at this time.<sup>21</sup> Over the next decade the number of manufacturing establishments, and the capital invested in them, grew. Subsequently, in 1897, Wilfred Laurier’s Liberal government adopted a general tariff, maintaining a high level of protection, yet providing for ‘moderate but promising preferences on imports from sister countries of the empire’.<sup>22</sup> Rates were reduced on goods for countries that reduced their charges on Canadian exports. The rates on some British imports were lowered by almost a third, which in turn stimulated British export performance to Canada during the early twentieth century.

The New Zealand parliament carried a preferential trade bill in 1903, granting preferences to Britain and providing for similar reciprocal arrangements with Australia and Canada. In 1906 this principle of preference was further extended: the duty on certain British exports dropped by nearly 1 per cent, while the duty on foreign goods increased and preference was extended to a wider range of British goods.

Before 1901 each Australian state devised its own tariff regime. Victoria was staunchly protectionist, while New South Wales adopted

<sup>21</sup> M. Bliss, *Northern Enterprise: Five Centuries of Canadian Business* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), pp. 227, 247–9, 300.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

tariffs for revenue raising purposes. Federation saw the removal of customs houses along state borders. In 1907, a new Australian tariff bill was piloted through the Commonwealth parliament by Alfred Deakin, Joseph Chamberlain's most dependable colonial ally. It gave preference to British goods by increasing the duties on foreign goods, and by increasing the number of goods on an 'empire free list'. By 1909, two-thirds of British imports paid duty, 'but at a rate that on average allowed them to be priced about 5 per cent lower than the competition'.<sup>23</sup>

As Table 3.2 shows, none of the tariff or other forms of preference afforded to British products before 1914 had a marked effect on colonial consumption patterns.<sup>24</sup> There were exceptions, some of which date back to developments earlier in the century. A clause of the 1842 Copyright Act aimed to protect the imperial trade in books by forbidding colonial reprinting of texts copyrighted in Britain. Though difficult to police, it helped British publishers gain access to colonial markets, and a high proportion of the revenues of nineteenth-century London booksellers came from supplying books, magazines and other types of print to British expatriates and settlers. The 'colonial edition' – books published in series that contained mainly new British novels, and sold cheaply as the only likely solution to the problem of pirated publications – was the main device used to try to control the English language market.<sup>25</sup> Colonial editions were commonplace by the early 1900s, with seventeen London publishers issuing them. They were intended to 'share the fruits of British civilisation with Britons abroad', with many titles 'glorifying British virtues and British military success overseas'.<sup>26</sup> Macmillan was the leading publisher of these editions, launching its successful 'Colonial Library' in 1896 and 'Empire Library' in 1913. Australasian and South African booksellers thrived on their sales; Australia was the largest market for British book exports, with rapid growth from 1870 to 1884 and from 1893 to 1914.<sup>27</sup>

The 'economic hegemony' of London publishers could no longer be taken for granted by the end of our period, however, as a result of the arrival of the publishing house advance of the 'old Dominions'.<sup>28</sup> In other

<sup>23</sup> D. Meredith and B. Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy: Continuity and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 51.

<sup>24</sup> On this point, see also Saul, *British Overseas Trade*, p. 217.

<sup>25</sup> G. Johanson, *A Study of Colonial Editions in Australia, 1843–1972* (Wellington: Monash University Press, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> Geographical proximity allowed US publishers to corner the Canadian and West Indian markets, but it was only during the two world wars that they were able to move temporarily into other colonial markets.

<sup>28</sup> Meredith and Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy*, pp. 370–1.

spheres of consumption the competition was still fiercer. Australia and Canada actually saw the overall level of advantage for British goods fall slightly, rather than rise, during the early twentieth century. The benefits of the preferences, moreover, were often illusory. Duties could be raised on foreign manufactures rather than lowered on British ones. Meanwhile, much dominion protection focused on items locally produced, and thus not directly in competition with British exports anyway.<sup>29</sup>

The only real deviation from this rule of non-interference in international trade were the formal agreements reached by private companies (not governments) in relation to the chemicals and tobacco industries. The chemicals agreement divided the world into 'spheres of influence', with the dominions categorised as 'natural' British markets.<sup>30</sup> It was mainly concerned with alkalis and explosives; not until the 1920s were dyestuffs and fertilisers included. Similarly, American and British tobacco firms agreed to confine themselves to their respective national markets, while transferring all foreign investment and export trade to a British-registered joint venture called British American Tobacco – BAT rapidly became the leading cigarette manufacturer in Australia, Canada and South Africa.<sup>31</sup> The tendency towards cartelisation in these two industries helped to prevent American and German firms from monopolising British World markets, but they were atypical.

The support given by the British government to the development of imperial transport and communications was of greater significance. State-conferred commercial advantages in this sphere are hard to quantify, including as they did the various forms of subsidy offered to private shipping companies by governments (British and colonial), and military expenditure on the Royal Navy, which, *inter alia*, played a vital role in keeping shipping lanes open to imperial (and international) trade. Nonetheless, oceanic transport was a vital dimension in strategic thinking about the empire,<sup>32</sup> and shipping lines clearly had economic as well

<sup>29</sup> F. V. Meyer, *Britain's Colonies in World Trade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 90–112; Saul, *British Overseas Trade*, p. 217.

<sup>30</sup> W. J. Reader, *Imperial Chemical Industries: A History*, 2 vols., Vol. I: *The Forerunners, 1870–1926* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 60.

<sup>31</sup> H. Cox, *The Global Cigarette: Origins and Evolution of British American Tobacco, 1880–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 4–6.

<sup>32</sup> J. N. F. M. à Campo, 'Engines of Empire: The Role of Shipping Companies in British and Dutch Empire Building', in G. Jackson and D. M. Williams (eds.), *Shipping, Technology and Imperialism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), pp. 63–96; R. Kubicek, 'The Proliferation and Diffusion of Steamship Technology and the Beginnings of "New Imperialism"', in D. Killingray, M. Lincoln and N. Rigby (eds.), *Maritime Empires: British Imperial Maritime Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 100–10 (pp. 63–96); J. F. Munro, *Maritime Enterprise and Empire: Sir William Mackinnon and His Business Network, 1823–93* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 87, 504.



as military and political benefits. This, therefore, was a field of policy in which government and private enterprise were inextricably and beneficially linked. Mindful of the need for regular communications between Britain and its colonies, politicians were reluctant to rely on the vagaries of the free market. This created a context in which private shipowners and shipping companies, conscious of their strategic significance, could lobby effectively for government subsidies and support.

There was, of course, nothing new about government taking an interest in the regulation of shipping. Until 1849 the Navigation Acts had confined all trade to and from the colonies to British or colonial ships, with predominantly British and colonial crews.<sup>33</sup> But in the wake of their repeal, other countries did not throw their ports open to British shipping in the way that had been hoped, and foreign vessels became a familiar presence in trades from which they had been formerly excluded. Competition in shipping grew, especially from America and the Baltic seafaring nations. Aided by heavy investment in steamship technology, Britain managed to claw back some of the ground it lost to these competitors during the 1870s and 1880s. Yet after the 1890s, Britain's position was further eroded, both in terms of the tonnage using her ports and her share of the world's steam tonnage. The exception was shipping services to British possessions: these actually grew before the First World War.<sup>34</sup> In the case of New Zealand, for example, the proportion of shipping movements attributed to British-owned ships increased from 87 per cent in 1890 to 97 per cent in 1910.<sup>35</sup>

Several British shipping companies developed close imperial connections – Donald Currie's Union-Castle Line, Sir Alfred Jones' Elder Dempster & Co., and the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company (P&O). Each became adept at portraying itself as a national enterprise carrying on a public service. P&O's steamers have even been referred to as the 'flagships of imperialism'.<sup>36</sup> The network of lines created by the company fanned out to all parts of the empire east of Suez. In peace-time,

<sup>33</sup> S. Palmer, *Politics, Shipping and the Repeal of the Navigation Laws* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960). See also S. L. Engerman, 'Mercantilism and Overseas Trade, 1700–1800', in R. Floud and D. N. McCloskey (eds.), *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, 3 vols., Vol. I: 1700–1860 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 198–9.

<sup>34</sup> F. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688–2000* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), p. 159.

<sup>35</sup> J. Mcaloon, 'Scots in the Colonial Economy', in T. Brooking and J. Coleman (eds.), *The Heather and the Fern: Scottish Migration and New Zealand Settlement* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2003), pp. 97–8.

<sup>36</sup> F. Harcourt, 'The P&O Company: Flagships of Imperialism', in S. Palmer and G. Williams (eds.), *Charred and Uncharred Waters: Proceedings of a Conference on the Study of British Maritime History* (London: National Maritime Museum, 1981), pp. 6–28.

life in the colonies was made more palatable by the regular delivery of P&O mails, and by the prospect for emigrants and officials of more frequent journeys home. In war-time, the Admiralty turned to P&O for troop transports, for hospital ships and for the movement of supplies. Imperial mail contracting was also important to the development of several steamship companies. Postal subventions were obtained from British and colonial governments. They 'provided shipowners with the basis for maintaining a comparatively rapid and regular service, essential to the stimulation of a dependable flow of commercial traffic which in its turn brought income'.<sup>37</sup> These contracts in turn brought in other official business for stores, troops and emigrants.

A further way in which the shipping companies restricted competition from foreign rivals in the sphere of colonial trade was by the system of 'rings' or 'conferences' that controlled rates and allocated business between national lines.<sup>38</sup> The conference system was introduced to, among other places, Australia in 1884 and South Africa in 1886. A policy of 'deferred rebates' was offered to merchants who agreed to use its services exclusively – in South Africa this was 5 per cent of the freight paid.<sup>39</sup> The conference system ensured that British lines had the right to carry all merchandise bound for the colonies from continental ports.

Why were British and dominion politicians prepared to tolerate such collusive arrangements between companies to pool capacity, and to fix freight rates and the number of sailings? The establishment of steamship services between Britain and its colonies provided the maritime foundation for the growth of overseas trade. By placing shipping companies on a more profitable basis, the conference system encouraged investment in services that might otherwise have remained irregular and inadequate. The conference system was not without its critics, however. By 1906 there were serious complaints against the working of the South African shipping 'ring', in particular. A Royal Commission reported in 1909 that the conference system was necessary and its practices justified. Three years later, the South African government finally moved to end the rebate system, albeit that the conference continued to exist; merchants agreed to carry on shipping their goods by conference lines and the lines in turn charged uniform rates previously agreed.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> A. N. Porter, *Victorian Shipping, Business and Imperial Policy: Donald Currie, the Castle Line and Southern Africa* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society, 1986), p. 273.

<sup>38</sup> P. N. Davies, 'Shipping and Imperialism: The Case of British West Africa', in G. Jackson and D. M. Williams (eds.), *Shipping, Technology and Imperialism* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), pp. 46–63 (pp. 54–60).

<sup>39</sup> A. W. Kircaldy, *British Shipping: Its History, Organisation and Importance* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1919), pp. 184–5.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

A more direct source of advantage to British exporters to dominion markets came from the Crown Agents for the colonies. Like the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (see Chapter 3), the Crown Agents were an ancillary administrative agency.<sup>41</sup> Part of their function was to provide advice on financial legislation to the Colonial Office and the Treasury. They also helped the dominions (and Crown Colonies) to raise loans in the City (see Chapter 5). But their remit extended to commercial affairs, and they regularly executed major construction projects for the colonies. With responsibility for drawing up and supervising contracts for these projects, they purchased, inspected and shipped all the materials required. The settler colonies subsequently withdrew their patronage and established agencies of their own in London, so by 1880 the operations of the Crown Agents were mainly restricted to the dependent empire, although they continued to act for the Cape Colony, Natal, New Zealand, Western Australia, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal on certain financial matters into the early twentieth century.

A major aspect of the public works supervised by the Crown Agents was the building of railways. In 1868 Queensland (a separate colony from 1859) decided to obtain its railway materials through the Crown Agents, and by the mid 1870s the Cape and Natal were doing likewise. The sheer volume of this work led to successive increases in the size of the Crown Agents' Office and in their procurement activities.<sup>42</sup> Here they enjoyed wide powers of discretion. They provided all of the materials and equipment necessary for the construction and maintenance of railways, obtaining supplies through their own list of approved firms. On receiving an order, the Crown Agents contacted one of these firms or solicited bids from several of them. Supplies ranged from engines, trucks and carriages to rails, bridges and workshop machinery, to lighting, cement and coal. The Agents looked either to firms already used extensively by English and Scottish railway engineers, or to firms that had a proven track record of working for colonial governments. This practice undoubtedly worked to the advantage of British manufacturers. Crown Agents also appointed the engineers, inspectors and staff who were involved in preparing designs and specifications, and in supervising the railway's construction and subsequent operation; this again worked to the advantage of British firms.

Not surprisingly, charges of monopoly and accusations of favouritism were levelled at the Agents, especially from the companies that had failed to obtain concessions and contracts. But the policy of preferential

<sup>41</sup> L. E. Davis and R. A. Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The Economics of British Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 13.

<sup>42</sup> A. W. Abbott, *A Short History of the Crown Agents and Their Office* (London: The Crown Agents, 1959), p. 23.

purchasing was vigorously defended at the time, and has been since.<sup>43</sup> The Agents, it is argued, had a wide range of contacts and experience through their work in building railways throughout the empire, from which the colonies stood to gain. The list of companies they utilised was extensive, and long-term business relationships were developed with them. Firms on the list had a good deal to gain by remaining in the Crown Agents' favour, and there were remarkably few complaints about the quality of materials they supplied. The Agents, moreover, were not a profit-making organisation, and economies of scale made their services cheap. Ultimately, the survival of the Agency depended on colonial satisfaction with the performance of its duties. There were significant strengths to the system, therefore. Hence when the Cape's Agent-General took over from the Crown Agent in 1881, the list of approved firms for railway materials was extended but it continued to consist of British firms of known reliability. Indeed, according to one recent study, 'the benefits provided by the Office of the Crown Agents for the Colonies in the vital areas of purchasing and loan management were too evident' to succumb to 'mere petty carping'.<sup>44</sup>

To summarise: the empire was not an active ingredient in economic policy-making, but neither did the British state eschew any role whatsoever in promoting imperial trade. At the level of basic infrastructure, it clearly encouraged private interests to develop transport and communication networks, and provided the naval and military power to make these networks safer and more secure. British and colonial governments were happy for Crown Agents to purchase primarily or even exclusively from British producers. What they were not prepared to do was consciously shape the empire into an economic system with pre-determined characteristics: this was the logic of a system of preferential tariffs, whether they aimed at a full-blown imperial *Zollverein* (customs union) or merely closer market integration. The dominant policy of free trade did not allow for commercial relations to be shaped purely in imperial terms. However, as we are about to see, free trade did not prevent British producers from exploiting certain 'non-market' advantages in the settler colonies.

### Trans-national networks

Long-distance trade is challenging. Transport, information and monitoring costs are all high, and foreign markets tend to be less predictable than

<sup>43</sup> See for example D. Sunderland, *Managing the British Empire: The Crown Agents, 1833-1914* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 18, 21, 60.

<sup>44</sup> Davis and Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire*, p. 188.

those at home. Scholars of international business even have a name for this – ‘psychic distance’.<sup>45</sup> They suggest that the level of uncertainty in a foreign market is influenced by differences in the education, language, customs and legal systems of the ‘home’ and ‘host’ country. The less the differences, the smaller the ‘psychic distance’, and the more likely goods are to flow between markets.

A variety of trading networks helped British merchants and businessmen to operate in geographically distant markets.<sup>46</sup> These networks nurtured a sense of shared purpose among their members, secured good behaviour, and disseminated up-to-date and accurate information about business conditions and individual reputations. Networks of family and kin, for example, developed effective trust in trade, especially in the eighteenth century when other more formal types of network were not yet established.<sup>47</sup> To be sure, there were drawbacks to the family as a form of trans-national enterprise: the ‘pool of talented members was usually small and the capacity to check or punish delinquency was often limited’.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, kin-based enterprises could draw strength from the loyalty that existed within the family core, from intermarriage between family members, and from their hierarchical structure and the ‘patriarchal’ authority exercised by the head of the family.<sup>49</sup>

A good example of a colonial business emerging from an extended family network is that of the Glaxo Company.<sup>50</sup> Glaxo’s origins lie in the merchant firm of Joseph Nathan, a Londoner who migrated to the goldfields of Victoria in the 1850s and who subsequently settled in Wellington, New

<sup>45</sup> B. Kogut and H. Singh, ‘The Effect of National Culture on the Choice of Entry Mode’, *Journal of International Business Studies* 19 (1988), 411–32; Nicholas, ‘Locational Choice’, pp. 122–41.

<sup>46</sup> For the distinction between formal trading networks and personal or semi-formal trading networks, see S. Sugiyama and L. Grove (eds.), *Commercial Networks in Modern Asia* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001), pp. 2–3; once created, the former (often infrastructural) continued to operate regardless of what happened to the individuals or groups that created them. Whereas the latter shared their resources and services only with the individuals or groups that created and/or belonged to them.

<sup>47</sup> N. Zahedi, ‘Economy’, in D. Armitage and M. J. Braddick (eds.), *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 51–68 (p. 66).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> G. H. Boyce, *Information, Mediation and Institutional Development: The Rise of Large-Scale Enterprise in British Shipping, 1870–1919* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); J. Forbes, *Muir, Maritime Enterprise and Empire: Sir William Mackinnon and His Business Network, 1823–93* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003).

<sup>50</sup> The detail below is drawn from H. Jepcutt, *The First Fifty Years: An Account of the Early Life of Joseph Edward Nathan and the First Fifty Years of His Merchandise Business that Eventually Became the Glaxo Group* (Ipswich: n.p., 1969); R. P. T. Davenport-Hines and J. Slinn, *Glaxo: A History to 1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 7, 13–14, 27–8, 30, 37–9, 43–5.

Zealand. He set up a general merchandise business with his brother-in-law, Jacob Joseph, exporting wool and importing goods such as groceries, stationery, patent medicines, drapery and ironmongery. By the end of the 1870s the firm’s agencies and stores reached into most parts of New Zealand, while Nathan’s economic interests had expanded to include property development, banking and transport. The organisation of the firm was based on the dispersal of Joseph’s several sons, some based permanently in Wellington, others in London. New Zealand remained the centre of trading, and the working capital continued to be provided by Joseph, who, from 1894, made London his home.

By the end of the century, Nathan’s company was importing a wide range of merchandise from England that it then sold to various farmers’ co-operative associations. It also acquired several agencies from British firms, and began exporting frozen butter and cheese to Britain as agents for New Zealand farmers on commission. In the early 1900s the firm made a major commercial breakthrough when it developed dried milk powder for infant food, using the name ‘Glaxo’, which was registered as a trademark in 1906. One of Joseph’s sons was sent to England to develop a market for the product, which was sold to infirmaries, infant welfare clinics and local municipal authorities across the country. Although the business had now developed the formal structure of a company, it was still very much a family affair. Indeed, Glaxo shows how an internationally dispersed family network could continue to provide a cost-efficient method of doing business across imperial spaces well into the twentieth century.<sup>51</sup>

Religious groups likewise provided the basis for successful trading networks. Faith communities such as the Jews or the Quakers developed channels of communication across the British World that provided members with strong support in times of need and sanctioned certain types of behaviour. As with the family, members of a religious group could take a person’s word as his bond. Take the Quakers, for example. They owned some of Britain’s most famous food and drink enterprises, the fortunes of which were dependent on colonial supplies of raw material or the tastes of colonial consumers: Cadbury’s and Fry’s (chocolate), Rowntree’s (cocoa), Huntley and Palmer (biscuits), and the Sturges (soft drinks) spent much of their time procuring high-quality colonial ingredients or developing lucrative markets among settlers.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly,

<sup>51</sup> M. Casson and H. Cox, ‘International Business Networks: Theory and History’, *Business and Economic History* 22 (1993), 42–53 (pp. 47–8).

<sup>52</sup> C. Delheim, ‘The Creation of a Company Culture: Cadburys, 1861–1913’, *AHR* 92 (1987), 13–44; R. Fitzgerland, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution, 1862–99* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); T. C. Kennedy, *British Quakers, 1860–1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001);

the enlightened polices these firms pursued towards their workforces in Britain could be extended to workers in the colonies only by taking direct responsibility for production. The Sturges did so successfully in British-controlled Montserrat, although they never hired any of their management staff locally, nor did they consider making and bottling their drinks there. Meanwhile, Cadbury's became embroiled in a controversy over the treatment of plantation workers on the Portuguese islands of San Thome and Principe – plantations that they did not own but from which they bought part of their supply of cocoa beans.

Trust was not, of course, confined to family or faith networks. During the second half of the nineteenth century other types of association – freemasonry is a case in point – spread British influences, practices and traditions overseas.<sup>53</sup> The Masonic brotherhood functioned as 'a kind of global patronage network that helped men to find employment, secure promotion, and cope with hardship'.<sup>54</sup> From the mid century, 'ideas, information, money, and people flowed with increased intensity across the whole Masonic network'.<sup>55</sup> By the late 1880s, there were over 820 lodges to be found across the empire. Merchants, planters and professionals were all widely involved, with respectability a key aspect of membership.<sup>56</sup>

The export not only of masonry, but of a wide array of voluntary clubs and societies, was in fact a distinctive feature of the British World.<sup>57</sup> Although the commercial impact of these associations remains largely undocumented, it is clear that they provided fellowship, mutual support and opportunities for personal advancement for the more upwardly mobile classes of British society. They also developed relations between business, professional and official groups in the colonies, and circulated ideas about commerce, technology and trade.<sup>58</sup>

The rest of this chapter, however, turns from the informal to the more formal commercial structures of the British World: professional

A. Tyrrell, 'A Business of Philanthropy: The Montserrat Company, 1856–1961', *The Journal of Caribbean History* 38 (2004), 184–212; I. Williams, *The Firm of Cadbury, 1831–1911* (London: Constable, 1931).

<sup>53</sup> P. J. Rich, *Elites of Empire: The English Public Schools, Ritualism, Freemasonry and Imperialism* (London: Regency, 1989), pp. 82–100.

<sup>54</sup> J. L. Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasonry and British Imperialism, 1717–1929* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 208.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6. For a fascinating account of how Cornish freemasonry aided both the migration of Cornish miners and mine managers and the dissemination of mining information around the (mainly British) world, see R. Burt, 'Freemasonry and Business Networking during the Victorian Period', *EcHR* 56 (2003), pp. 657–88.

<sup>57</sup> P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1530–1800: The Origins of an Association World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 388–429.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 452–3.

organisations, patent systems, Chambers of Commerce and international exhibitions. These 'arteries of empire' expanded rapidly after 1850, facilitating the spread of business information, consumer fashions and technological know-how.

### *Professional diasporas*

Professional people were highly mobile across an English-speaking world. Their mobility was, however, less a by-product of imperial policy, and more the result of individuals acting on their own initiative to build careers abroad.<sup>59</sup> At home, expanding education coupled with relatively inexpensive professions ensured that there was keen competition for jobs; many people therefore turned to the colonies instead. Professional knowledge and skills were readily transferred to the dominions, which had yet to train their own citizens in sufficient numbers to supply a growing demand for chemists, doctors, engineers, patent agents, lawyers, teachers and the like. Some of the professionals who left Britain were peripatetic, moving around (and sometimes beyond) the British World, while others settled permanently in their new place of abode. Nor is it simply a case of professional people contributing to, and gaining greatly from empire.<sup>60</sup> In Britain itself, key characteristics of professionalism – trained expertise, disinterested public service and selection by merit – were developed and defined through empire; the aspirations and agendas of professional bodies increasingly reflected their overseas colonial membership; and the voluntary activity of the professional classes was readily transferred to an imperial stage, deepening its sense of purpose and enhancing its prestige in the process.

Take, for example, engineering. Victorian notions of technological development were closely tied to ideas of moral progress. Armed with a 'civilising' ideology, and sensing economic opportunity, increasing numbers of British engineers ventured abroad from the 1840s, without the

<sup>59</sup> For the imperial reach of British scientists, see, for example, the meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which spread to the settler empire in Montreal (1884), Toronto (1897), South Africa (1905), Winnipeg (1909) and Australia (1914); J. Morrell, *Gentlemen of Science: Early Years of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 412, 493; B. Marsden and C. Smith, 'Introduction: Technology, Science and Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century', in Marsden and Smith (eds.), *Engineering Empires: A Cultural History of Technology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 231.

<sup>60</sup> A. S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), pp. 17ff.

need of government support.<sup>61</sup> The first markets for their expertise were in Europe and the USA, but these countries were anxious to build industries and infrastructures of their own. It was in the colonies that British engineers had their greatest impact. Projects ranged from the mining of minerals, to railway, harbour and canal construction, to bridge and dam building. By the turn of the century, the two main professional bodies of engineers had a fifth of their membership – over a thousand people – based in the colonies.<sup>62</sup>

We can explore the experience of engineers by honing in on two important branches of the profession – railways and mining. The importance of the engineering profession rose to new heights during the railway 'boom' or 'mania' of the 1840s. The main lines of Britain's railway system were mostly complete by the 1870s, after which British engineers became increasingly occupied with constructing and promoting railways in Britain's expanding empire.<sup>63</sup> 'Overseas, almost all of the early railways relied on British engines and expertise; conceived in the interests of trade, railways themselves became the great British export.'<sup>64</sup> Orders piled in for equipment and stores – coal, rails, spikes, signals, iron for bridges, pumps, rolling stock and locomotives; even basic items – picks, hammers, buckets, wheelbarrows and small tools – were exported from Britain.

The majority of the railway engineers who supervised construction had received their training in England and Scotland. It was they who surveyed the terrain, drew up drawings and specifications for bridges and stations, liaised with contractors and ensured that work was done according to their requirements. Crucially, it was they who decided where the materials for the railways should be procured, and they naturally favoured familiar products. Railway locomotives, for which the settler colonies provided a major export market, are a case in point.<sup>65</sup> Several large locomotive firms

<sup>61</sup> See, especially, the work of R. A. Buchanan: 'The Diaspora of British Engineering, Technology and Culture 27 (1986), 501–24; *The Engineers: A History of the Engineering Profession in Britain, 1750–1914* (London: Kingsley, 1989); and *The Life and Times of Isambard Kingdom Brunel* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2002), pp. 83–102.

<sup>62</sup> T. Johnson, 'The State and the Professions: The Peculiarities of the British', in A. Giddens and G. Mackenzie (eds.), *Social Class and the Division of Labour: Essays in Honour of Ilya Neustadt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 199.

<sup>63</sup> A. Burton, *The Railway Empire* (London: John Murray, 1994), p. 249; N. Faith, *The World the Railways Made* (London: Bodley Head, 1990), p. 146.

<sup>64</sup> S. Garfield, *The Last Journey of William Huskisson* (London: Faber, 2003), p. 211.

<sup>65</sup> Thompson and Magee, 'A Soft Touch?', p. 698. The exception here is Canada, where the big Montreal foundries, which had grown up on the demand for marine engines, had little difficulty making new steam engines. Already, by the 1850s, the Kingston works were building engines, as was James Good of Toronto. See Bliss, *Northern Enterprise*, p. 239.

in Britain benefited from colonial demand, the most important being the North British Group, which built locomotives 'for the entire empire', a connection 'proudly displayed' in its histories.<sup>66</sup> British superintending engineers were tough taskmasters, however. They designed precisely what they wanted, visited suppliers prior to their departure from the UK to approve designs and to place provisional orders, and were not slow to relay their views on the shortcomings of existing engines to British manufacturers.<sup>67</sup> Engines were often substantially modified to meet the requirements of colonial topography and climate.

The early history of railway building in Australia is instructive here.<sup>68</sup> Largely built by British engineers, it was not surprising that Australia's first railways used British practices and British equipment. In 1854, the first steam-operated railway opened in Victoria. It ran a distance of two-and-a-half miles from Flinders Street to Port Melbourne. Owned and operated by the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay Railway Company, the railway placed orders for locomotives, rolling stock and other equipment with Robert Stephenson and Company in England, although exceptionally, and owing to a delay on delivery, a locally built engine had to be ordered from Robertson, Martin and Smith of Melbourne. This engine was delivered in ten weeks with the help of Langland's Port Phillip foundry, which constructed the boiler.<sup>69</sup> For the most part, however, the materials required for railways in Australia, including iron and steel rails, were shipped from Britain – Australia lacked the manufacturing capacity to cope with large orders. John Whinton, for example, arrived in 1856 as chief engineer for the New South Wales lines.<sup>70</sup> Born in Yorkshire, the son of a Wakefield land agent, he gained his experience working on the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire railways, and then on the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton line. During his thirty-two year term of office in New South Wales 2000 miles of track were laid down. These included two remarkable zig-zags by which the main line westwards from Sydney crossed the Blue Mountains and the great Hawkesbury River Bridge, opened in 1889. To build at this rate, Whinton turned to Thomas

<sup>66</sup> J. M. MacKenzie, 'The Second City of the Empire: Glasgow – Imperial Municipality' in F. Driver and D. Gilbert (eds.), *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 223.

<sup>67</sup> For example, see J. Brunton, *John Brunton's Book: Being the Memories of John Brunton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), pp. 82–3.

<sup>68</sup> See especially here Burton, *The Railway Empire*, pp. 226–48.

<sup>69</sup> R. Tesoro, *A Pictorial History of Australian Railways, 1854–1970* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1971), pp. 16–17.

<sup>70</sup> I. Brady, G. Johnson, S. Sharp, G. Smith, R. Taaffe and A. Watson, *New South Wales Railways: The First Twenty-Five Years, 1855–1880* (Broadmeadow, NSW: Australian Railway Historical Society, 1980).

Brassey for skilled railway labourers, and to a variety of British companies for cheap and reliable equipment and supplies.

Certainly, the colonial construction of goods vehicles was encouraged early on. Yet not until the 1880s did New South Wales railways begin to look to a mix of locally manufactured and British engines. Even then, imported engines remained cheaper, and the larger works in Britain maintained the upper hand over local manufacturers because of their economies of scale. The same was true of rolling stock. The construction of the first passenger vehicles for New South Wales was entrusted to the prolific rolling stock manufacturer, Wright and Son of Birmingham. It was not until 1877, when a series of longer-term contracts were introduced, that local builders of rolling stock were able to establish a secure base for their business. The experience of South Australia was very similar.<sup>71</sup> During the first decade of the Southern and Western line – the 'Pony railway', as it was sarcastically called by its critics – seven types of engine were tried, all of which were ordered from British firms, among them Avonside (Bristol), Neilson (Glasgow), Cross (St Helens) and Kitson (Leeds). Only in 1876 were instructions issued to build a locomotive locally at the Ipswich government shops – a further five were constructed there the following year.

Overseas mining enterprises also created lucrative opportunities for British engineers and major markets for British firms. Melbourne, for example, became a boom-town during the gold rush of the 1850s, the base for many mechanical engineers 'who established flourishing enterprises in Australia'.<sup>72</sup> Some of the business these engineers generated went the way of local firms. But expatriate mine managers and engineers put considerable amounts of business the way of companies 'back home'. In South Africa, as we have seen, there were a large number of Cornish miners, engineers and mine managers employed on the Rand. They opened up opportunities for Cornish engineering companies to sell rock drills, beam engines, compressors, pumping and lift equipment, and a whole variety of other goods. Yet rather than encouraging commercial innovation and better design. A good example would be Holman Brothers – 'the Camborne firm that laid the foundations for Cornwall's world class export market in mining machinery'.<sup>73</sup> Holmans had stores in

<sup>71</sup> J. Armstrong, *Locomotives in the Tropics*, 2 vols., Vol. I: *Queensland Railways, 1864–1910* (Brisbane: Australian Railway Historical Society, 1985).

<sup>72</sup> R. A. Buchanan, 'The British Contribution to Australian Engineering', *The Australian Dictionary of Biography Entries*, *Historical Studies* 20 (1993), 401–19 (quote from p. 406). See also G. Blamey, *The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963).

<sup>73</sup> S. P. Schwartz, 'Cornish Migration to Latin America: A Global and Transnational Perspective', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Exeter (2003), pp. 231–2. On

Johannesburg, British Columbia and Coolgardie in Australia. Facing considerable competition from American manufacturers in South Africa,<sup>74</sup> the company's directors travelled between Cornwall and Johannesburg on a regular basis, meeting mine managers and supervisors. They were well aware of the different working conditions in the Transvaal mines, and well acquainted with the important figures in the mining industry. The free flow of people and information between Cornwall and the Rand helped to build the experience and expertise of Cornish engineering firms that was crucial to their success. Although Holmans exported mining machinery around the world, the goldmines of the Witwatersrand remained among its best customers; the company's rock drills won several competitions there, and employees at its 'No. 3 factory' could often be seen working overtime to meet South African orders.

If the situation in South Africa was different from Britain's other dominions it was partly because of the way in which imperial patriotism intruded into debates about manufacturing as a result of the South African War (1899–1902). Alfred Milner's drawing of the Transvaal more firmly into Britain's orbit led to the imposition of a special 'permit system' on interior travel for non-British citizens, one effect of which was to impede the return of American mining engineers and entrepreneurs to the Rand. The permit system helped to stem the expansion of American trade in South Africa, as did strict inspections of incoming American products, delays to and cancellations of official contracts, a lack of local credit, high freight rates (combined with the rebates to British shipping firms mentioned previously), and new preferential customs duties.<sup>75</sup>

American exports to South Africa had grown at an alarming rate in the later nineteenth century, especially stores and equipment for the extractive industries. Although in 1870 America's trade with the region was meagre, this changed with the discovery of gold. By 1896, American mining managed approximately half of all mines on the Rand. Like the British engineers, they tended to direct contracts for equipment to their

Holman's involvement in South Africa, see C. Carter Holman, *Cornish Engineering, 1801–2001: Two Centuries of Industrial Excellence in Camborne* (Camborne: CompAir, 2001), pp. 29, 30–3, 41–9.

<sup>74</sup> Many of the capital goods required by the growing mining industry (including elevators, skips and stamp batteries) came from the United States, which provided keen competition in the sales of rock drills too. See J. T. Campbell, 'The Americanization of South Africa', in R. Wagnleitner and E. T. May (eds.), *Here, There and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000), p. 39.

<sup>75</sup> A few US firms were able to by-pass these measures by incorporating themselves in Canada. See Campbell, 'The Americanization of South Africa', p. 40; R. W. Hull, *American Enterprise in South Africa: Historical Dimensions of Engagement and Disengagement* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), pp. 70–7.

own nationals, with the Ingersoll Drill Company a leading beneficiary.<sup>76</sup> Thus, by the end of the century, America had become the largest supplier of heavy equipment and electrical equipment to South Africa's goldmines, and the second largest supplier of all South African imports.

All this revived British fears of American economic influence. In the words of Henry Birchenough, a special British commissioner sent to report on South Africa, 'America is undoubtedly our most formidable rival present and future.'<sup>77</sup> Three influential books appeared during the South African War to alert people to the threat, one by Stafford Ransome (a former British mining engineer in South Africa), one by F. A. Mackenzie (*The American Invaders*), and another by W. T. Stead (*The Americanization of the World*). These publications set the scene for a campaign to weaken American commerce. After 1903, there were far fewer American mining engineers employed on the Rand. 'Even those who retained their positions lost their powers of purchase and control of personnel.'<sup>78</sup> By the end of 1904 American imports to South Africa had halved, and the decline continued for four more years. The winner was Britain, whose exports increased throughout this period, amounting to some 60 per cent of the total South African market by 1913.

British firms did not have it all their own way, however. Of particular interest is the Transvaal's electricity industry, where pro-British sentiment was vigorously asserted during and after the reconstruction era.<sup>79</sup> By 1907, the three main power companies operating on the Rand had been consolidated into a new operation, the Victoria Falls Power Company. The German banks and the German industrial giant Allgermeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft (AEG) bought their way into a British colony by paying a British-controlled 'African Concessions Syndicate' an exorbitant price for its shares.<sup>80</sup> Their clear intention was to monopolise the South African market for steam-powered electricity-generating machinery. Predictably, the Transvaal Institute of Mining Engineers protested strongly against AEG's tactics. On two separate occasions the Institute's British professionals drew on deep-seated anti-German sentiment among

<sup>76</sup> T. I. Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee: The United States and South Africa, 1870-1914* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1978), pp. 30-2; Campbell, 'The Americanization of South Africa', pp. 38-9.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Campbell, 'The Americanization of South Africa', p. 93.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>79</sup> Our analysis of this industry draws on N. L. Clark, *Manufacturing Apartheid: State Corporations in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); R. Christie, *Electricity, Industry and Class in South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

<sup>80</sup> For the role of German entrepreneurs, bankers and industrialists in the economic development of modern South Africa, see J. D. F. Jones, *Through Fortress and Rock: The Story of Gencon, 1895-1995* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1995).

English-speakers in the Transvaal to bolster their opposition, only to be rebuffed by the mining magnates and the government. The mining magnates seemed interested only in mechanising their industry, increasing productivity and reducing reliance on black labour. The government, meanwhile, insisted that the Transvaal's economy was benefitting greatly from increased supplies of cheap electricity, so that there was no need to put contracts for machinery out to open tender. In this instance, at least, the 'buy-British' argument had little purchase in business or official circles. In 1911, the Victoria Falls Power Company's new Vereeniging station came into operation. Sammy Marks likened it to a 'South African *Sheffield* on the Rand'. In truth, it would have been better likened to Berlin - the industrial heartland of AEG.

#### Patents systems

Technological convergence was not restricted to the railway and mining sectors; nor was it the product of professional mobility alone. The emergence of colonial patent systems and professional patent agencies had an integral role to play.<sup>81</sup>

In most countries there was a long tradition of granting patents; Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and other nationals were all well accustomed to their use. The evolution of affordable and enforceable patent protection was in fact central to the development of a modern market for technological ideas. Patents worked because they offered a sensible compromise between the competing interests of the owners of the new technology, who wished to protect their intellectual property by controlling its use, and society at large, whose interests were obviously best served by the widespread adoption of new, more efficient technology. Both parties could clearly benefit, and once this was realised and the systems issuing them trusted, there was a strong incentive to extend the arrangement to as many jurisdictions as possible. Successful inventors, such as Thomas Edison (1847-1931), therefore took the patenting of their inventions in non-American patents systems, including colonial ones, very much as a matter of course.<sup>82</sup>

Reflecting this willingness to patent across national boundaries was the fact that patent offices and agents in every system worked to establish

<sup>81</sup> The section draws from G. B. Magee, *Knowledge Generation: Technological Change and Economic Growth in Colonial Australia* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2000), esp. pp. 138-80, 208-14. Unless otherwise stated, this is the source of the material cited.

<sup>82</sup> P. Israel and R. Rosenberg, 'Patent Office Records as a Historical Source: The Case of Thomas Edison', *Technology and Culture* 32 (1991), pp. 1094-101; Magee, *Knowledge Generation*, p. 83.

contacts and to exchange relevant information and publications with their counterparts elsewhere. As a result, by the latter half of the nineteenth century British and Colonial Patent Offices held vast libraries containing reports and specifications of the patents that had been issued in various parts of the world. The richest information in their collections, however, inevitably related to colonial and British patenting. Moreover, from 1864 the British *Commissioner of Patents' Journal* published and circulated booklets, which furnished information on how prospective patentees could protect their inventions in each of the settler colonies.

Patent agents also contributed to this pro-colonial informational asymmetry. By selling their specialist knowledge on the acquisition and management of patent protection, they were crucially placed to influence the dissemination of information and technological knowledge. So important had their role become in the patent system that, as early as 1851, the progress of approximately 90 per cent of all patent applications in Britain was directed by a patent agent. In the colonies, too, patent agents quickly became important to the running of the local patent systems.<sup>83</sup>

In Australia, for example, the first practising patent agent appears to have been William Henry Ritchie, who began operating out of an office in Melbourne from about 1857. He was soon followed by others, many of whom had prior experience as lawyers, engineers or even patent agents back in Britain. The profession actively sought to preserve these ties to Britain, and it was not uncommon for patent agents from the colonies to visit and interact with like-minded colleagues in London. The Melbourne-based patent agent Edward Waters, for example, visited and presented a paper on Australasian patents to the Chartered Institute of Patent Agents in London in 1885, an interest in Australia and the empire that the organ of the British Institute followed up subsequently with articles on patenting law and practice in the colonies. These visits and various exchanges of information appeared to have had the desired effect. A manual compiled by two leading British patent agents in 1905 listed the relatively small Australian system among the twenty or so in which it was worthwhile for inventors to seek patent protection.<sup>84</sup> Australia, like the other dominions, was therefore clearly part of an international patenting network, albeit one centred in London.

The footprint of Australia's imperial status is clearly evident in the records of the Colony of Victoria's patent system. Established in 1857, the Victorian system was without doubt the largest, the most modern

<sup>83</sup> H. I. Dutton, *The Patent System and Inventive Activity during the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1852* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 86-96.

<sup>84</sup> E. Edwards and A. E. Edwards, *How to Take Out Patents in England and Abroad* (Edwards and Co., 1905).

and the most effective in pre-Federation Australia.<sup>85</sup> It was popular with local and overseas inventors alike. Not only did non-Australians, predominantly Americans and Britons, manage to lodge approximately a third of all applicants between 1857 and 1903 (when the Victorian system was superseded by that of the Australian Commonwealth), their patents related to all areas of the economy, not just the primary and mining sector. Indeed, the strengths of their patenting overwhelmingly lay in the manufacturing and service sectors. That said, it can hardly be claimed that the Victorian system was a truly level playing field for most international inventors. Given its grounding in British patent law, the Victorian Patent Office practices and procedures were bound to be more familiar – and hence accessible – to British inventors and their agents. Thus, British World connections – personal, professional and official – made the typical British inventor more aware of Australia than foreign counterparts. This is why in most years British patent applications there outnumbered even American ones, despite the amazing scale of American inventive activity that was taking place at this time.

#### *Chambers of Commerce*

If trans-national history is conceived as 'the study of the ways in which past lives and events have been shaped by processes and relationships that have transcended the borders of nation states',<sup>86</sup> then business networks should be seen as a primary manifestation of it. As one scholar observes, 'businessmen in regional industries in different countries sometimes had more in common with each other, through the mutually dependent demands of a shared trade, than they had with their fellow citizens operating in other spheres of interest'.<sup>87</sup>

Something of the significance of these business networks can be seen from the colonial Chambers of Commerce. By the second half of the nineteenth century these chambers were well established in settler societies. They were also increasingly well networked with each other. Cape Town's Chamber, for example, was founded in 1861. With the encouragement of its first president, the merchant, financier and politician John Ebdon (1787-1873), it rapidly established itself as an important civic institution. Although many of the matters it dealt with were of local significance

<sup>85</sup> B. Hack, *A History of the Patent Profession in Colonial Australia* (Melbourne: Clement Hack and Co., 1984), pp. 11-15; Magee, *Knowledge Generators*, pp. 16-19.

<sup>86</sup> A. Curthoys and M. Lake, 'Introduction', in Curthoys and Lake (eds.), *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2005), pp. 5-20 (p. 5).

<sup>87</sup> B. M. King, *Silk and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 85.



only, the Cape Chamber exchanged information on markets and prices with other colonial Chambers, and sent representatives to commercial gatherings in London and Canada – practices that gained momentum over time.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, founded the previous decade in 1851, was an influential force in the city's history. Its first president, William Westgarth (1815–89), was another merchant, financier and politician, one of the most respected men in the infant colony of Victoria. Westgarth formed the Melbourne Chamber almost single-handedly, and later helped to found the London Chamber of Commerce in 1881. He was well-known for his support of good causes, his advocacy of manhood suffrage, the secret ballot and state education, and the quality of his writings on early Australia. Following his return to England to establish a stockbroking firm in 1857, he was an influential adviser to those Australian colonies trying to float loans and strengthen their City borrowing credentials.<sup>89</sup> Like the Cape Chamber, the Melbourne Chamber was very much outward-looking. Imperial communications were a consistent concern.<sup>90</sup> The Chamber campaigned vigorously for a fortnightly mail service with Europe, for the extension of the telegraph from Ceylon to Australia, and for an imperial postal union, arguing that the progress and development of colonial trade were being retarded for want of such things. It also pressed for the formation of a Colonial Wool Merchants' Association in London to improve the mode of warehousing Australian wools in the United Kingdom – this was eventually set up in 1868–9.

British and Colonial Chambers of Commerce were first brought together in London in 1886 for the Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire (CCCE).<sup>91</sup> This self-declared 'true Parliament of British Commerce' met again in London in 1892, 1896 and 1900, and then in Montreal in 1903. In 1911, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire was formed. The Federation's headquarters were

<sup>88</sup> R. F. M. Immetman, *Men of Good Hope: The Romantic Story of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, 1804–1954* (Cape Town: Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, 1955), pp. 179–86, 259–62.

<sup>89</sup> W. Westgarth, *Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne and Victoria* (Sydney: G. Robertson and Co., 1888). See also J. B. Cooper, *Victorian Commerce, 1834–1934* (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1934); and G. Serle, 'Westgarth, William (1815–89)', in H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>90</sup> See especially the memoir of its long-standing secretary, B. Cowderoy, *Melbourne's Commercial Jubilee: Notes from the Records of Fifty Years' Work of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce* (Melbourne: Mason, Firth and McCurcheon, 1901), pp. 12–23, 34–43, 61–75, 97–8, 133, 143.

<sup>91</sup> B. H. Brown, *The Tariff Reform Movement in Great Britain, 1881–95* (New York: Routledge, 1943), pp. 92–3.

in London. It organised biennial conferences, held alternately in London and the dominions.<sup>92</sup> Intent upon improving commercial relations across the empire, the Federation's proceedings make it clear that it was nonetheless primarily concerned with settler states. So much is apparent from the many resolutions it passed on preferential trade. Opinion was divided as to their desirability, with Canadian delegates coming out strongly in favour, and Manchester delegates remaining resolutely opposed. This stand-off highlighted the starkly differing perspectives between cotton manufacturers tied predominantly to the Indian market, and other sections of the business community with commercial interests stretching across the self-governing dominions. The latter tended to feel more threatened by Germany and the United States, and were thus more sympathetic to measures calculated to protect colonial markets from foreign competition.

The majority of delegates, however, adopted a pragmatic position on the subject of preferential tariffs: namely, that whatever their pros and cons, there was little mileage in a policy of fiscal reform until all the settler colonies could confidently subscribe to it. Indeed, although the Federation provided a major forum for the business community to debate tariffs, much more of its time was spent discussing a raft of more practical and pressing commercial questions. These ranged from the codification of commercial law and procedures for bills of exchange; to postal and telegraphic facilities, routes and rates; to the liability of shipowners for damage to cargo; to charges for maintaining lighthouses, buoys and beacons (and who should bear them); to questions of labour conciliation and arbitration (where advances in Australia and New Zealand were of particular interest to delegates); to emigration (where government was encouraged to use every means available to encourage people to go to the colonies); to the need to adopt more uniform (metric) systems of weights, measures and currency. Significantly, the majority of the resolutions on these subjects were co-sponsored by British and dominion delegates, and virtually all were adopted unanimously after they had been carefully and constructively examined.<sup>93</sup> It would take a much longer and more intensive study of the Federation to evaluate its contribution to commercial reform across the British World, but the evidence adduced here suggests that it played a major, if hitherto neglected, role.

Among the glaring omissions in the proceedings of the Federation is that of the impact of colonisation upon 'coloured' or indigenous

<sup>92</sup> Copies of the *Official Reports* of the Congress can be consulted at the Guildhall Library, London, MS 18.278/1.

<sup>93</sup> For a flavour of the topics and the discussion surrounding them, see, for example, *Official Report of the 3rd Congress of the Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire, 9–12 June 1896* (1896), MS 18.278/1.

peoples. Indeed, if racial exclusion has been an 'inevitable counterpart' of globalisation,<sup>94</sup> then the Chambers of Commerce offer insights into how imperial networks, while linking up markets through the spread of information and technology, marginalised particular subordinate groups by depriving them of access to the very structures that might have helped to empower them.

The moment one begins to think of the British World as a series of overlapping networks through which knowledge and ideas were exchanged, goods traded and people travelled, then questions of who belonged to them and who did not, and of the implications of being included or excluded, need to be addressed. South Africa provides a useful case study. The Cape Town Chamber excluded people on grounds of wealth, status and colour. Unlike Nigeria, where Africans were not excluded from commercial life until after 1897, Cape merchants were predominantly white and European for most of our period, allowing perhaps for a small number of individuals who may have been light-skinned descendants of white slave-owners and probably non-African slaves.<sup>95</sup> The Cape Chamber consisted of an established mercantile elite (or 'grand bourgeoisie') with a long history of engagement with the imperial economy and personal links with metropolitan capital: sixty or so men who would all have known (or known of) each other.<sup>96</sup> They can be contrasted with the less prosperous and colonially oriented middle-class businessmen, retailers and merchants (English- and Dutch-Afrikaans-speaking) who looked instead to municipal institutions to establish their identity and press their claims.<sup>97</sup> Initially, therefore, there does not appear to have been any active racial exclusion on the part of the Cape Chamber. Rather, in keeping with many 'elite' civic institutions of this period, it was not felt necessary to stipulate that blacks could not be members. There was an annual subscription of £5, which was high enough to have put off small traders of whatever ethnic background.<sup>98</sup> In general, it seems to have been more a question of Africans preferring accumulation in cartle and land, while lacking access to the necessary credit (provided on the basis of social class as much as colour) and transportation to engage in mercantile activity. In

<sup>94</sup> A. Hoogvelt, *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 130.

<sup>95</sup> We are grateful to Vivian Bickford-Smith for steering us through the complexities of commercial life in the nineteenth-century Cape and African involvement in it.

<sup>96</sup> Immetman, *Men of Good Hope*, pp. 178, 184.

<sup>97</sup> T. Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order* (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 1996), pp. 164–7.

<sup>98</sup> Racial exclusion may have been more apparent in the Eastern Cape where Chambers were formed in Port Elizabeth in 1864, East London in 1873 and Graaff-Reinet in 1875, but further research is required to confirm whether this was so.

those places where indigenous entrepreneurs did gain a foothold – such as the Eastern Cape where transport riding became a field for coloured and Black enterprise, especially among the Khoikhoi who fell under missionary influence – technological development (in this case, the railways) destroyed livelihoods, as did lack of access to credit and the ability to buy land outside cramped reserve areas.<sup>99</sup> What is not in doubt is that, for a small number of affluent and privileged Europeans, membership of the Cape Chamber brought the benefits of access to commercial bodies in Britain promoting Cape trade,<sup>100</sup> of contact with other colonial Chambers, and, from 1879, of representation at the regular collective gatherings of the empire's Chambers of Commerce in London.

Meanwhile, in Natal, there was a sizeable and successful Indian merchant community.<sup>101</sup> It was made up partly of the larger and wealthier Muslim merchant groups, originating from Surat and Porbandar, and joined together by family and kinship ties. These merchants defended their privileges and status as 'British Indians' and enjoyed relatively good trading relations with white wholesale merchants and retail customers who valued their business and reputation for punctual payment. The other section of Natal's Indian merchant community, the so-called 'dukawallahs', were small storekeepers or shopkeepers, either ex-indentured Hindu labourers or Muslim 'passenger Indians', operating in semi-urban and rural areas. They were resented by the smaller English shopkeepers, who later began to rail against the entire Indian merchant class. After the grant of responsible government to Natal in 1893, pressure upon parliamentarians mounted from white residents and businesses to pass discriminatory legislation. The bigger Indian merchants and storekeepers were forced out of Durban's commercial district, licence-renewal applications were refused and the number of Indian-owned shops on West Street fell dramatically. Faced by such pressures, Natal's Indian merchants felt compelled to organise commercially to defend their interests. Whereas previously they had formed themselves into associations for the purpose of protecting and celebrating their religious, cultural and social distinctions, they now initiated political campaigns to protest against discrimination in trade. This culminated in the formation of a

<sup>99</sup> See here R. Bouch, 'Mercantile Activity and Investment in the Eastern Cape: The Case of Queenstown, 1853–1886', *South African Journal of Economic History* 6 (1991), 18–37; A. Muller, 'The Economic History of the Port Elizabeth–Uitenhage region', *South African Journal of Economic History* 15 (2000), 20–47.

<sup>100</sup> For example, the Cape of Good Hope Trade Society, the South African Association, and the South African Merchants Committee.

<sup>101</sup> See especially V. Padayachee and R. Morrell, 'Indian Merchants and Dukawallahs in the Natal Economy, c. 1875–1914', *JSAAS* 17 (1991), 71–102, from which the rest of this paragraph is drawn.

separate Indian Chamber of Commerce in 1908 during the depths of a severe depression in Natal, exemplifying the racial boundaries that, by this time, had developed around the colonial Chambers.

### Exhibitions

Exhibitions, international and imperial, grew in popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century. Only a small percentage of the 14,000 exhibitors at the Crystal Palace (1851) were colonial, and foreign countries were allocated more space than the empire in its official catalogue. Subsequently, however, explicitly imperial events were organised, most notably the Indian and Colonial exhibition of 1886.<sup>102</sup> In addition to the exhibitions staged in Britain, which tended to present the 'metropole' as the hub of the 'imperial economy', there were many inter-colonial events, and these had a different dynamic.

Melbourne staged six such exhibitions in 1854, 1861, 1866, 1872, 1875 and 1880-1. Together they attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors, and paved the way for the city's more elaborate Centennial Exhibition of 1888-9, which was probably witnessed by more Australians than any other single event before the First World War.<sup>103</sup> Each exhibition was designed to encourage trade (import and export) and to attract new capital into the colony. The exhibition of 1880-1 was intended to stimulate a recovery from the economic and political turmoil of the late 1870s, while the exhibition of 1888-9 promoted Melbourne as a sophisticated, industrialising city that symbolised the ideals of a manufacturing age. Indeed, by the 1880s it was noticeable how a previously strong prejudice against colonial-made goods had begun to dissipate,<sup>104</sup> as the products of other countries had to make way for those of Victoria, aided of course by the colony's introduction of tariffs, which not only raised revenue but helped

<sup>102</sup> In London, there was also a 'Greater Britain' exhibition in 1899, and a 'South African Products' exhibition in 1907, plus several provincial exhibitions focusing on empire. For an overview, see P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); and P. H. Hoffenbergs, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>103</sup> *Official Record of the Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne, 1888-89* (Melbourne, 1890), pp. 124-7; G. Davison, 'Festivals of Nationhood: The International Exhibitions', in S. L. Goldberg and F. B. Smith (eds.), *Australian Cultural History* (Melbourne: Australian Academy of Humanities, 1988), pp. 158-77 (p. 172). For the full range of inter-colonial exhibitions, see J. E. Findling (ed.), *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851-1988* (New York: Greenwood, 1990).

<sup>104</sup> *Official Record of the Centennial International Exhibition*, p. 124.

to foster an economically and politically significant manufacturing base by the end of the century.<sup>105</sup>

The displays of locally and British-manufactured goods at these colonial exhibitions provided a focus for negotiations to open up new channels of trade, as did their official catalogues (which contained large amounts of information on exhibits, the contact details of organisers and even prices of displayed merchandise) and the private advertising distributed by companies. The fact that companies often redesigned products for exhibitions in the hope of additional sales is significant. Williamson's, a leading British manufacturer of printed and patterned floorcloths and linoleum, provides an example of the benefits that could flow from exhibitions. In the twentieth century, Australia was one of the company's most important markets. The springboard for its sales to Australia was the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition of 1888-9. After this, Williamson's products drew widespread interest and the major retail emporiums of Australia added them to their catalogues.<sup>106</sup> A marked surge in export orders from Australia is reported to have followed.

Melbourne was not unique in staging exhibitions that stimulated imperial trade. New Zealand's Chambers of Commerce organised similar events, filling their displays with local, Australian and British products. Dunedin was first off the mark in 1865 (it subsequently staged another exhibition in 1889-90) and Christchurch followed suit in 1882 and 1906-7.<sup>107</sup> Every effort was made to link the colony's social and material progress. In the words of James Cowan, official historian of the Christchurch exhibition of 1906-7:

[it was] a solid advertisement for New Zealand products and manufactures, as a trade-bringer and a means for fixing, if only for a brief period, the attention of the outside world upon the individuality, the ego of this new country, the special trend of genius that animates its people, and the expression in concrete form of its progress in useful industries and the amenities that soften life and sweeten man's feelings towards man.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>105</sup> For the importance of manufacturing interests as protagonists for these exhibitions, see J. Parris and A. G. L. Shaw, 'The Melbourne International Exhibition 1880-81', *Victorian Historical Journal* 51 (1980), 238-49. For Victoria's protective policies, see Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 224.

<sup>106</sup> Historical Houses Trust of New South Wales, *Floorcoverings in Australia, 1800-1950* (Glebe, NSW: Historical Houses Trust, 1997), pp. 48-51.

<sup>107</sup> G. McLean, 'The Colony Commodified: Trade, Progress and the Real Business of Exhibitions', in J. M. Thomson (ed.), *Farewell Colonialism: The New Zealand International Exhibition, Christchurch 1906-7* (Palmerston North: University of Auckland, 1998), pp. 27-38.

<sup>108</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 35.

Indeed, these exhibitions were commercial opportunities in their own right. They brought business into local economies: for transport, hotels, restaurants and cafés; for publishers and printers (biographical compilations were produced for an elite market); and for a range of firms manufacturing commemorative goods.<sup>109</sup>

To form a clearer view of the perceived value of these exhibitions to British and colonial business it is necessary to look more closely at a particular event – the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 and, specifically, Canadian participation in it. Canada had been actively promoting the possibilities of immigration, investment and trade for some time beforehand.<sup>110</sup> At the Great Exhibition in 1851 it had sought through its displays, which ranged from raw minerals to industrial and craft products, to point to the growing diversity of its produce.<sup>111</sup> Subsequently, emigration agents in Britain had taken up the work of publicising Canadian goods.<sup>112</sup> The Colonial and Indian Exhibition at South Kensington was one of the first to focus on the empire. While much attention has been paid to the propagandist functions of such gatherings, including their trumpeting of the economic advantages of empire to the populace, much less notice has been taken of the opportunity they provided to colonial producers and consumers to take the measure of the British market.

Canada was the most economically developed self-governing colony at this time. It occupied the largest exhibition space (some twenty-eight times as large as that allotted to it in 1851) and sent the greatest number of exhibitors.<sup>113</sup> The Canadian Federal Government encouraged Canadian

<sup>109</sup> J. R. Gold and M. M. Gold, *Cities of Culture: Staging International Festivals and the Urban Agenda, 1851–2000* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 68.

<sup>110</sup> But Canada was by no means the only colony to see the exhibition's commercial potential. Australian wines received a lot of attention at this event – George Francis Morris, a Lancashire-born emigrant-turned-goldfields-grocer, who then turned his hand to winemaking in Rutherglen, made contacts with potential buyers, and within a few years his property at Fairfield was one of the world's largest vineyards and wineries. His exports to the UK were helped by the rationalisation of duties at this time: imports of Australian wine increased by almost 150 per cent from 60,000 gallons in 1885 to 145,000 gallons in 1886. Several English merchants were also inspired to start, or stick to, the Australian wine trade as a result of the exhibition, including the buyer, Peter Bond Burgoyne, who later established his own winery at Mt Ophir, and Walter Pownall, whose company became a major purchaser from South Australia. See D. Dunstan, 'A Sobering Experience: From "Australian Burgundy" to "Kanga Rouge": Australian Wine Battles on the London Market, 1900–1981', *Journal of Australian Studies* 17 (2002), 179–210.

<sup>111</sup> S. Murray, 'Canadian Participation and National Representation at the 1851 London Great Exhibition and the 1855 Paris Exposition Universelle', *Histoire sociale/Social History* 32 (1999), 1–22.

<sup>112</sup> H. Gordon Skilling, *Canadian Representation Abroad: From Agency to Embassy* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1945), p. 47.

<sup>113</sup> We have drawn mainly on the work of one of our MA students here: J. Fukushi, 'Canada and the British Imperial Economy in the Late Nineteenth Century: A Case of the

exhibitors to display at South Kensington by carrying their products to London free of charge, installing their displays in the Canadian court and maintaining them during the exhibition, and returning them to Canada if they so wished. It also appointed a large team of agents for each province to visit leading industrial establishments and to persuade them to participate. For example, A. W. Wright, the agent for Ontario, emphasised to Canadian manufacturers and merchants the value of the reports of the exhibition carried in the English newspapers in opening up new markets for their goods – a form of free advertising not to be missed. The Canadian display at South Kensington was organised under different headings, one of which was entirely devoted to Canadian manufacturing. Other colonies exhibited relatively few machines, most of which were for mining, whereas Canada exhibited over a hundred. It was especially proud of its agricultural implement displays.

Canada, in fact, led the world in labour-saving farm machinery.<sup>114</sup> It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Canadian manufacturers of agricultural implements and tools saw the exhibition as an ideal opportunity to develop their presence overseas. There were forty-four of them in total, many from Ontario, and they eagerly targeted potential business partners, pursuing their benefit in spite of criticism from the London press that Canadian exhibits were 'too shabby'.<sup>115</sup> They had already successfully driven American manufacturers out of their domestic market, and now sought to expand overseas – the best markets were in England, Australia and Argentina. The lightness and durability of their products was the chief selling point. They were also able to gain valuable insights into the special requirements of British farmers – harvesting machines, for example, had to be adapted to break up straw into larger pieces. In some cases, enquiries about Canadian products led directly to overseas orders. Cocksbutt's secured a large contract for its ploughs, and opened an agency in England after the exhibition closed, while the Hart Emery Wheel Company started to export to Queensland soon after. Indeed, the exports of Canadian agricultural implements to Britain more than doubled the year following the exhibition, and it would seem surprising if there were no connection.<sup>116</sup>

Colonial and Indian Exhibition in 1886', unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Leeds (2005). See also C. Tupper, *The Colonial and Industrial Exhibition: Official Catalogue of the Canadian Section* (1886); and W. G. Phillips, *The Agricultural Implement Industry in Canada: A Case Study of Competition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956).

<sup>114</sup> For a discussion of the Canadian agricultural machinery industry, see Bliss, *Northern Enterprise*, pp. 241–2, 244, 306–8.

<sup>115</sup> *Toronto Globe*, 1 May 1886, p. 6.

<sup>116</sup> They amounted to £3,539 in 1886, and continued to grow thereafter to £347,996 at the end of the century. *Statistical Abstract for the Several Colonial and Other Possessions of the United Kingdom in Each Year from 1886 to 1900* (1901), Cmd 751, pp. 122–3.

What was true for Canadian exporters was true for British and other colonial producers. If they were to compete on quality as well as price, they had to get the measure of empire markets, and to understand the specific needs of the customers to whom they wished to sell. Imperial exhibitions greatly facilitated this process by bringing both parties into closer contact at venues purposely designed to promote long-distance trade. The fact that these exhibitions spread so rapidly to the dominions, and were even staged multiple times in a single place, further speaks of the importance that colonial as well as British businessmen attached to them. None of this is to deny their propagandist functions – the visual imagery of empire had a strength and immediacy that the written word often lacked – but we need equally to be alert to their commercial and financial motivations and effects.<sup>117</sup>

### Britishness: cultures of consumption

The study of material culture is a vibrant field of research.<sup>118</sup> What we consume, and the way we consume it, is widely recognised as a marker of identity. By exploring tastes in food, furniture and fashion scholars have sought to understand how people in the past perceived themselves and were in turn perceived by others. Commodities, it is argued, were culturally specific: they took on a symbolic value from the environment in which they were produced.

After 1850 consumerism intensified across the English-speaking world.<sup>119</sup> The rise of bourgeois society in Britain, the United States and the settler colonies saw a language of 'needs' increasingly displaced by a language of 'wants', particularly in the sphere of household goods. Women led the way in forging this expressive genteel culture, its values and practices. Notions of gentility surrounding the nineteenth-century household fuelled the demand for certain types of goods, and shaped the meaning attached to them.

The question of how far British habits of consumption, as well as marketing and advertising practices, were shaped by the colonial encounter is a complex one.<sup>120</sup> Certainly, by the end of the nineteenth century, several leading British companies were actively, even aggressively, exploiting imperial sentiment in selling their products at home. But British firms

<sup>117</sup> Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*, pp. 84–8.

<sup>118</sup> For a key study, see Young, *Middle Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>119</sup> P. N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 30, 47.

<sup>120</sup> For references and a commentary on the recent literature, see Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*, pp. 44–9.

also found themselves at an advantage in responding to colonial consumer preference. They were often the first to establish distribution networks in the colonies, and they were in a good position therefore to try to inculcate, as well as to exploit, 'British' tastes. This is not to deny that colonial South Africans, Canadians, New Zealanders and Australians ate, drank, dressed and generally behaved in distinctive ways: they did, and colonial preferences did not slavishly follow imported British (or European) styles. People in the colonies lived differently, and so, even when goods were imported from Britain, the use to which they were put, and the meanings they acquired, could change.

There was not always a need for product differentiation between Britain and its colonies. Thus in the case of the serialised fiction syndicated to colonial weekly newspapers by Lancashire's provincial press (Australia and New Zealand proved its most durable market), rather than targeting particular kinds of client or consumer, it was assumed that a single, standardised list, based around sensational novels, would appeal equally to overseas settlers and people in the provinces in Britain. 'Syndication amounted to an imposition of the metropolis's cultural machinery on that of the (settler) colonies, since it cramped literary production, or at least opportunities for publication, in the colonies.'<sup>121</sup>

The same is true of many so-called 'comfort' foods and drinks. 'We are what we eat' is a popular refrain, and food is said to be 'loaded with cultural meaning and value' – a crucial element in defining national identity.<sup>122</sup> The fact that 'British' food was widely consumed in the dominions partly reflects a preference for the familiar, partly a residue of earlier eating habits, and partly perhaps a desire to sustain cultural and historical bonds.<sup>123</sup> For example, long after their arrival, middle-class colonists continued to rely on British cookery books and household guides. Not until the end of the century did they begin to be locally produced. The most famous is Mrs Beeton's skilfully marketed *Book of Household Management* (1859–61), a major publishing success story of the Victorian era.<sup>124</sup> Such guides played an important role in acculturation. To be sure, much of the food derived from their recipes was locally grown, and merely took on

<sup>121</sup> C. Hilliard, 'The Provincial Press and the Imperial Traffic in Fiction: 1870s–1930s', *JBS* 48:3 (July 2009), 653–73. The colonies' share of provincial newspapers' fiction department revenue was approximately 20 per cent from the 1870s through to the 1920s.

<sup>122</sup> P. Manning, *Migration in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 127.

<sup>123</sup> A. Wessel, 'There's No Taste Like Home: The Food of Empire', paper presented at the British World Conference, University of Melbourne, July 2003.

<sup>124</sup> N. Humble (ed.), *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management: Abridged Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and K. Hughes, *The Short Life and Long Times of Mrs Beeton* (London: Random House, 2007).

British trademarks. Yet some of it was actually imported from Britain. By contrast, there is little evidence of indigenous foods from the dominions being exported back to the 'mother country'; in fact, colonists tended to overlook such foods, or regarded them as inedible. Interestingly, this situation was different from that of the Victorian Raj. In their letters to the editors of British magazines, memsahibs proffered Indian recipes – those for curry were especially popular, as such dishes were regarded as a relatively easy way for housewives in Britain to use up leftovers.<sup>125</sup>

Usually, however, British products had to be adapted for colonial tastes. Alcoholic drinks are an example. The three leading Scotch whisky blenders – Buchanan, Dewar's and Walker's – all developed major markets in Australia, Canada and South Africa. The whisky industry boasted an above average export performance, and its products tended to follow the South African Rand and in the Australian Outback it was strong-flavoured, fiery whiskies that were most prized, so much so that a much higher proportion of grain whisky had to be put into colonial blends.<sup>126</sup>

The case of Australia is worth exploring a little further here.<sup>127</sup> It was once claimed that 'no people on the face of the earth ever absorbed more alcohol per head of population'.<sup>128</sup> Yet the reality was somewhat different. Tea was a better thirst quencher and was consumed in large quantities in Australia, even when compared to Britain. The drinking of alcohol peaked in periods of economic prosperity during the 1830s, 1850s, 1870s and 1880s, and then slumped during depressions. During the convict years, when rum and brandy were favoured spirits, alcohol seems to have offered migrants an opportunity (temporarily) to escape the harsh realities of settler life. Subsequently, from the mid century, the consumption of alcohol reflected the growing prosperity and security felt by many settlers. Whisky grew in popularity during these years: by the 1890s, more of it was drunk than all of other spirits combined. However, during the nineteenth century there was a long-term decline in spirit drinking, and a gradual shift from spirits to beer. Unlike whisky, imported beer faced stiff domestic competition. Beer was expensive to transport and deteriorated rapidly with age. This encouraged local production. Australian breweries already accounted for 80 per cent of total consumption by the late 1880s,

<sup>125</sup> N. Chaudhuri, 'Shawls, Curry, and Rice in Victorian Britain', in N. Chaudhuri and M. Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 231–46.

<sup>126</sup> Thompson and Magee, 'A Soft Touch?', pp. 699, 708.

<sup>127</sup> Our analysis is based on A. Dingle, 'The Truly Magnificent Thirst': An Historical Survey of Australian Drinking Habits', *Historical Studies* 19 (1980), 227–43.

<sup>128</sup> R. Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 35.

albeit that local production developed more rapidly in New South Wales than it did in Victoria, which was more dependent on British imports. From the early 1900s, a lighter chilled Australian beer, different in style from English ales, was introduced by the New York brothers W. R. & M. Foster. On the back of this new, 'lager style' of beer, which was better suited to a hot climate, Fosters greatly increased production.<sup>129</sup>

Fashions in clothing and home decoration also provide insights into the spread of consumer culture across the British World. Among middle-class emigrants – an 'Anglo' bourgeoisie, as they have been called – there is evidence that, as early as the 1830s and 1840s, women were recreating changing metropolitan tastes in clothes and furnishings.<sup>130</sup> The maintenance of such connections demonstrated their determination to stay in touch with friends and family back home through correspondence and, later, through the reading of British magazines. Dresses, tablecloths, curtain fabrics and other domestic items were either requisitioned from relatives or ordered directly from British firms; the poor quality and expense of locally available goods helps explain why. Because many early settlers relied on parcels sent by their families back home this transfer of goods does not show up in export statistics, although relatives may well have been reimbursed by remittances (see Chapter 3).

Such consuming habits need to be set in the context of colonial cultural sensitivities. There was a widespread fear of being labelled 'provincial', 'unfashionable' or 'backward' by metropolitan visitors to the colonies; strongest in the early-to-mid 1800s, it persisted into the second half of the nineteenth century. More generally, there was the bourgeois desire to assert social status – a desire that intensified later in the century as a result of the rise of home ownership, the growth of suburban living, and the widening range of domestic furnishings and other household goods. A study of household inventories in Edinburgh, Delaware and Sydney shows how there were marked continuities across English-speaking societies in terms of the ownership of commodities through which the rising middle-classes sought to establish a sense of identity: drawing and dining room tables, bedroom wardrobes, bathroom equipment, china services and pianos. Consumers in these cities purchased similar goods and used them in similar ways, a practice reinforced by the fact that their codes of etiquette were derived from the same body of texts. On this basis, it

<sup>129</sup> D. Dunstan, 'Boozers and Wowers', in V. Burgmann and J. Lee (eds.), *Constructing a Culture: A People's History of Australia since 1788* (Fitzroy, Victoria: Penguin, 1988), pp. 96–123 (pp. 108–10), and 'A Sobering Experience', pp. 179–81.

<sup>130</sup> A. Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 74; M. Weidenhofer (ed.), *Colonial Ladies* (South Yarra, Victoria: Gordon and Gotch, 1985), p. 14.

is possible to speak of a 'transnational Anglo culture', which was less a case of pale imitation and more of an authentic cultural continuity across 'Greater Britain'.<sup>131</sup>

Three case studies will help us to establish how far these bourgeois household and consumer goods were actually exported from Britain. The first is decorative tiles. Marketed to colonial consumers as high-status goods that could not be purchased locally, decorative ceramic tiles represented the cutting edge in British aesthetic fashion.<sup>132</sup> They gained in popularity from the 1850s, and the two biggest tile producers were Maw and Co., and Minton's. Both companies were successful exporters, with expertise in handling large overseas contracts. They faced relatively little competition from foreign manufacturers until the end of the century. Tile exports to Australia, New Zealand and Canada accounted for a large share of their overseas orders, and lavish catalogues were produced specifically for colonial markets. For a while British-manufactured tiles were also in demand in the United States. But after the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia an American tile industry emerged; American consumers tended to prefer classical styles, while colonial consumers favoured pictorial and ornamental designs. Ceramic tiles were expensive. Hence they were purchased mainly by wealthy emigrants, or to adorn prestigious public buildings. For example, the Scottish decorator Daniel Cottier and John Lyon, who opened a branch of their firm in Sydney in 1873, decorated many big private houses 'in the latest London style', while public commissions included St Anne's Chapel in Fredericton; the Calgary Herald Building; the Canadian Pacific Railroad Hotel in Vancouver; St John's Cathedral in Saskatoon; St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne; St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney; and the Parliament House buildings in Queensland, Perth and Melbourne.

A second case study is floor and table coverings. The later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the launch of linoleum as a household word.<sup>133</sup> Linoleum's appeal was strongly linked to middle-class concerns about cleanliness and home-making – Mrs Beeton's manual provided two recipes for polishing linoleum floors. The main centres of production were London, Lancaster and Kirkcaldy, and the industry grew rapidly from

<sup>131</sup> Young, *Middle Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>132</sup> The rest of this paragraph draws on L. Pearson, 'The World at Their Feet: Decorative Tile Exports by British Manufacturers, 1850–1910', paper given at *Imperial Globalisation? Trade, Technologies, and Transnationalities within the British Empire, c. 1800–2000*, 10–11 September 2004, British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol. We are grateful to Dr Pearson for discussing the implications of her research with us during the conference.

<sup>133</sup> P. J. Gooderson, *Lord Linoleum: Lord Ashton, Lancaster and the Rise of the British Oilcloth and Linoleum Industry* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), pp. 17, 25–6, 30–51, 107, 113.

the 1890s to 1914. Williamson's was a leading manufacturer. Benefiting from rising living standards and an increased demand for house decoration and furnishings, the firm specialised in printed and patterned floorcloths at the cheaper end of the market, and higher-quality cork linoleum for wealthier consumers. Steam-powered rotary printing techniques allowed Williamson's to produce a variety of designs more quickly and cheaply than its rivals. Australia was a key market. First displayed at the Melbourne exhibition in 1888–9, linoleum was then actively marketed through the catalogues of retail emporiums.<sup>134</sup> A marked surge in export orders to Australia was recorded in 1904. By 1913, the empire as a whole was taking 58 per cent of exported floorings from Britain. There was a steady growth of demand from South Africa, New Zealand and Canada, while Australia continued to account for the largest share.

Musical instruments, including the organ, were likewise exported all over the British World.<sup>135</sup> Compared to the piano, national schools of organ building differed widely. Moreover, unlike pianos, organs were a community's possession, purchased for town halls and churches by civic or congregational effort. At the forefront of Victorian music technology, organs attracted a lot of public attention at international exhibitions, and provided the basis for a flourishing export business for firms such as William Hill and Sons and Henry Willis and Sons. Missionaries were the first carriers. The Reverend Henry Williams received a mechanical barrel organ in New Zealand in 1830, one that apparently still survives. After this date, the estimate books for organ manufacturers contain a steady stream of empire references. Australia and New Zealand proved the best customers, although in South Africa both Afrikaans and English churches ordered organs from Britain up to 1914, as did many town halls.<sup>136</sup> British organs were popular because British-trained organists saw them as world leading in terms of quality and reliability. The colonies welcomed the instruments and, up to a point, the people who played them, although they did not always favour British music.

No discussion of material culture would be complete without reference to clothing and fashion. As early as the 1840s, following the sharp fall in prices of cotton fabrics in Britain, the export of clothes to the

<sup>134</sup> Historical Houses Trust of New South Wales, *Floorcoverings*, pp. 48–51.

<sup>135</sup> The key study is by Stephen Banfield, 'Towards a History of Music in the British Empire: Three Export Studies', in K. Darian-Smith, P. Grimshaw and S. Macintyre (eds.), *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), pp. 63–90. The rest of this paragraph is drawn from this source.

<sup>136</sup> Canada, by contrast, does not appear to have imported many organs from Britain. The United States was a leading supplier, and French-speaking Canada had a first-rank company of its own, Casavant Frères of St-Hyacinthe, established in Québec in 1879.

Cape and Australia had become a lucrative business. For example, the London family firm, E. Moses and Son, which specialised in cut-price, ready-made clothing, profited from a surge in Australian orders during this decade.<sup>137</sup> After 1850, stylish dress became a sign of social status and moral worth among middle-class settlers. Developments in the production and marketing of clothing, and the rise of the modern department store, laid the foundations of the modern fashion industry.<sup>138</sup> Complete outfits were offered to migrants, as well as bedding, washing and eating gear, and a chest to contain them. By the 1860s, Moses and Son had opened several branches throughout the settler empire.

Australia boasts some of the best research into clothing habits and fashions.<sup>139</sup> Australia's manufacturing of cloth was at first limited: the severe depression of the 1840s stifled expansion, as did the outpouring of good-quality textiles from Britain. The same was true of footwear, where a lack of local tradesmen fostered a dependence on imported goods. The British company, C. and J. Clark, opened up a lucrative market in the colony of Victoria during the gold rush, although it faced considerable competition from America later in the century.<sup>140</sup> From the mid century, the migrants who poured into Australia were consumers as well as producers, and relatively prosperous ones too. The total value of imports per head expanded accordingly. Wealthier settlers even sometimes ordered their clothes direct from England. The slower economic expansion of the late 1860s, and the implementation of tariffs in Victoria in 1867, subsequently saw a fall in imported clothing and footwear.<sup>141</sup>

Much colonial urban dress was modelled on European styles. If not imported, it was made up with overseas patterns. In their quest for respectability, the merchants and businessmen of Victoria and New South Wales adopted the British preference for dark-coloured outfits, consisting of frockcoats, trousers and waistcoats, often offset with a tall top hat. Men in Queensland were understandably more reluctant to follow this sartorial trend, which was hardly suited to its tropical climate. (Even in

<sup>137</sup> S. Chapman, 'The Innovating Entrepreneurs in the British Ready-Made Clothing Industry', *Textile History* 24 (1993), 5–25, esp. pp. 14–22.

<sup>138</sup> See, for example, R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750–1870: A Tragedy of Manners* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 85–6, and, more generally, 'Cross-Continental Cross-Fertilisation in Clothing', *European Review* 14:1 (2006), 135–47 (p. 119).

<sup>139</sup> See especially the seminal study by M. Maynard, *Fashioned from Penury: Dress as Cultural Practice in Colonial Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), from which the rest of this paragraph is drawn.

<sup>140</sup> G. B. Sutton, 'The Marketing of Ready-Made Footwear in the Nineteenth Century', *Business History* 6:2 (1964), 93–112 (pp. 99–102, 109).

<sup>141</sup> K. Buckley and T. Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers: Capitalism and the Common People in Australia, 1788–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 99.

Melbourne and Sydney lighter clothing was favoured during the summer.) Meanwhile, the quality garments worn by middle-class Australian women were usually imported. Australian women admired the styles of dress from Paris as well as London, and social refinement in female clothing was European rather than exclusively British. In Australia's sunny climate, women, moreover, preferred boldly designed garments in brighter colours. That said, Australian women wishing to adopt a genteel lifestyle paid close attention to codes of social practice in Britain, including dress. Indeed, for much of the nineteenth century what was on offer to them locally was limited and more expensive. Hence the tendency for Australian department stores to combine the retailing of imported British goods with local garment-production. While dependence on British garment manufacturers varied over time, and was possibly more pronounced for high-quality goods, British producers made deep inroads into the Australian market from the 1840s.

Indigenous peoples adopted European styles of clothing, too. However, when non-Europeans did don western garments they mostly did so voluntarily (rather than because they were required to do so), and they invested them with their own symbolic meanings.<sup>142</sup> In South Africa the first people to take on such clothing were male converts to Christianity in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>143</sup> As the Comaroffs have argued, 'clothing was a morally charged medium for missionaries'; the naked or semi-clad, 'native' body evoked degeneracy and disorder, and the campaign to clothe Africans 'was inseparable from other aspects and axes of the civilising mission'.<sup>144</sup> Thus visitors to mission stations on the Eastern Cape commented approvingly on how Africans wore English (or English-style) clothing, such as frock-coats, suits, ties, socks and shoes. Yet there were limits to what whites thought acceptable, and Africans pushed right up against them. While missionaries desired that their flocks should be covered, and saw clothing as a part of their civilising offensive on African men, they became increasingly concerned with Africans' use of European dress. They felt such dress was often worn immodestly to display wealth and status, or even to express opposition to white supremacy.

How much of this clothing would have been imported from Britain? The question is hard to answer. During the period 1835–70 we know

<sup>142</sup> H. Hendrickson (ed.), *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 2.

<sup>143</sup> See here Ross, 'Cross-Continental Cross-Fertilisation in Clothing'; and K. Ruether, 'Heated Debates over Crinolines: European Clothing on Nineteenth-Century Lutheran Mission Stations in the Transvaal', *JSAAS* 28 (2002), 359–78.

<sup>144</sup> J. L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2 vols., Vol. II: *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 218–73 (quotations from pp. 229, 236).



that Britain's share of the Cape's imports fluctuated between 60 and 80 per cent, and that textiles and clothing in particular made up the largest part of these goods.<sup>145</sup> However, traders at this time passed infrequently through the interior of the Cape, and Africans largely lacked the means to purchase their wares. Mission societies had therefore to appeal to the generosity of the British public. Used apparel, collected for the poor and needy at home, was also sent abroad. Meanwhile, missionaries and their wives gathered old clothes whilst on furlough and carried them back to the Cape on their return to their station.<sup>146</sup>

Subsequently, mineral discoveries, labour migrancy and urbanisation made European clothing more widely available.<sup>147</sup> On the diamond fields of Kimberley, the inflow of migrants led to a rapid rise in purchasing power from the early 1880s. For black workers clothing formed an important marker of their passage into a new community. On either side of Du Toitspan Road were shops that were emporiums for imported and colonial goods, where migrants were introduced to the wonders of consumerism. Some of this clothing was plain working garb: so-called 'oilman's clothing', such as hats, boots, shirts and the like. Yet fancy and luxury attire was also on sale. To impress their peers, Christian converts wore trousers and tails at weekends, the accessories of a civilised existence; other mineworkers wore a variety of more garish garments, including cast-off military tunics from imperial regiments. Labour migrants took European clothes home for their families, or to sell, as well as purchasing imported cloth, which their wives then used to make clothing for themselves. Similarly, it was social standing rather than a desire to conform to European norms that influenced the dress codes of African miners on the Witwatersrand. Here well-stocked shops, catering specifically for black labour migrants, grew up next to the compounds on the Reef. Popular items of clothing included leather boots, hats, frock- and waistcoats, jackets, shirts, socks, belts, canes and umbrellas. European clothing that was rare and exotic at home marked a man as a *gzyva*' (a man returned from wage work).<sup>148</sup> It is probable that much of this clothing was second-hand: sent to South Africa from Britain: when new, and then later sold on to so-called 'mouses'. These were Jewish traders, mostly from eastern Europe, who were famous throughout southern Africa for

<sup>145</sup> J. Inggs, 'Port Elizabeth's Response to the Expanding Economy of Europe, 1820-1870', *South African Journal of Economic History* 3 (1988), 61-84 (pp. 71-5).

<sup>146</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 237.

<sup>147</sup> See P. Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994), pp. 60, 101-2, 124, 173.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

retail and wholesale trading, and who took goods into the interior to sell from their wagons or to rural traders.<sup>149</sup>

Perhaps the major item of clothing imported from England for indigenous Africans, however, was the woollen blanket.<sup>150</sup> Blankets were an integral part of the costume of many ethnic groups during the second half of the nineteenth century, replacing skin cloaks, and worn in both ritual and everyday contexts.<sup>151</sup> Recommended by their versatility, blankets could be secured at the shoulder, or pinned around the waist; they could cradle babies; and they provided bedding. The demand from Basotho people, for example, was such that the company of Wormald and Walker of Dewsbury in Yorkshire began designing blankets for Basutoland (today's Lesotho) well before the turn of the century. Blankets were sold through the rural trading stores. The famous merchant firm, Fraser Limited, founded in the 1870s by the Ipswich immigrants Donald and Douglas, and based in Wepener in the Orange Free State, generated large profits by importing blankets into southern Africa, paying particular attention to this branch of merchandise.<sup>152</sup> The blanket, however, had to be designed to suit African tribal fabric and design preferences, not to reflect European ones, even if the names given to particular styles sometimes reflected their British origins.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, to protect market share, and guard against heavy losses, it was vital to keep abreast of (shifting) African tastes. The 'Victoria' line, depicting the 'beloved' British Queen, and produced during her Jubilee Year of 1897, was probably the best-known blanket. Sixty years later one of Wormald and Walker's agents

<sup>149</sup> For a contemporary fictional account of eastern European Jews, who had fled the pogroms for South Africa, at first to trade from a mule-drawn buggy, and later from a local store, see Pauline Smith's *The Beadle* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927), pp. 13-17. Smith was born in 1882 in Little Karoo in the Cape colony; her father, a doctor, was an Englishman born in China; her mother was a Scottish nurse from Aberdeenshire. Her novels depict isolated, resourceful, conservative colonists (Dutch, English and Scots), and are memorable for their fine evocations of the place and people of the Little Karoo. See D. Driver (ed.), *Pauline Smith* (Johannesburg: McGraw-Hill, 1983); and G. Haresnape, *Pauline Smith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). See also C. Van Onselen, *The Fox and the Flies: The World of Joseph Silver, Rackeiser and Psychopath* (Richmond: University of Virginia Press, 2007), p. 272.

<sup>150</sup> C. Danziger, *A Trader's Century: The Fortunes of Frasers* (Cape Town: Purnell, 1979), pp. 45-7.

<sup>151</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, pp. 263-7.

<sup>152</sup> T. Keegan, 'The Making of the Rural Economy from 1850 to the Present', in Z. A. Konczacki (ed.), *Studies in the Economic History of Southern Africa*, 2 vols., Vol. II: *South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland* (London: Cass, 1991), pp. 36-63 (p. 44).

<sup>153</sup> Hence J. Prestholdt's observation that consumer tastes and demand on the [African] 'periphery' were often more significant in the formation of global economic systems than commentators allow: 'On the Global Repercussions of East-African Consumerism', *AHR* 109 (2004), 775-83 (pp. 755-60).

could still remark that 'the Victoria is ... the hallmark of the well-dressed Basotho'.<sup>154</sup>

Australia's Aboriginal population present an equally fascinating case.<sup>155</sup> Ignoring the importance of codes of bodily decoration to Aboriginals, British settlers regarded their nakedness as a sign of inherent inferiority. From the first moments of settlement, Aboriginals were given European clothing and encouraged to dress in ways that conformed to western habits. As in South Africa, this was often at the instigation of missionaries, with posed photographs of Aboriginals wearing frock-coats and holding Bibles up as evidence of the soundness of their conversion. That said, Aboriginals often discarded government or missionary-issued clothing when they returned to the bush, or sold or exchanged such garments for liquor.

During the 1840s and 1850s, men's trousers and shirts, and women's petticoats, were worn by Aboriginals mostly when they were in direct contact with settlers, either in their employment as stockmen or domestic servants, or when they ventured into towns. During these decades it became more common to see Aboriginals dressed like Europeans. The policy of encouraging Aboriginals to settle on supervised mission or government reserve stations accelerated the process of acculturation. On Victoria's reserves, Aboriginals were given a clothing ration each year, or cloth to make clothes. They also bought clothing from travelling hawkers (usually Indians), or from mail order catalogues. The *Illustrated Australian News* of 25 August 1865 remarked on how Aboriginals on the Coranderrk reserve were 'all dressed in European clothes, not received in charity, but acquired by the earnings of their own industry'.<sup>156</sup> Indeed, surviving photographs show how elegantly Aboriginals on reserves were dressed, a fact remarked on by many of the visitors to these stations.<sup>157</sup>

While some of the European clothing worn by Aboriginals may have been imported from Britain, such as that purchased by mail order from department stores, more of it (especially of the hardwearing variety) was probably manufactured locally – the clothing industry of Victoria gained in strength from the mid century and became a large employer

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>155</sup> On Aboriginal dress, see R. Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800* (Crow's Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2005), pp. 113, 137, 140–2, 149; A. Massola, *Coranderrk: A History of the Aboriginal Station* (Kilmore: Lowden Publishing, 1975), especially the photographs in this collection; and Maynard, *Fashioned from Featery*, pp. 59–72. We are also grateful to Richard Broome for guiding us through the complexities of this subject.

<sup>156</sup> Quoted in Massola, *Coranderrk*, p. 64.

<sup>157</sup> D. E. Barwick, 'And the Lubras are Ladies Now,' in F. Gale (ed.), *Women's Role in Aboriginal Society* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1994), pp. 51–63 (p. 57).

of labour.<sup>158</sup> More likely still, Aboriginals on reserves made the clothes themselves, as during the 1860s and 1870s Aboriginal women had rapidly acquired sewing skills. Neither should we see western dress as a sign of the erosion of Aboriginal identity or self-esteem. As Richard Broome explains, Aboriginals tended to adopt British culture voluntarily and only in so far as it suited them to do so. Like their fight for equal wages, clothing offered Aboriginals an opportunity to assert their equality with British settlers.

The same desire can be observed off the reserves. For instance, when the Daisy Hill people from the Maryborough region of Victoria found surface gold nuggets during the 1860s 'they spent the money on clothing, dressing themselves in black suits, bell toppers and crinolines ... cutting such airs as to greatly amuse everyone who chanced to see them'.<sup>159</sup> Such behaviour can just as plausibly be read as an act of cultural defiance as imitation. Indeed, the rather stark distinction made by officials on the Royal Commission on the Aboriginals (1877) between 'necessary' and 'ornamental' dress suggests white disapproval of Aboriginal peoples wearing anything other than the most basic and functional articles of clothing.<sup>160</sup> In this light, it is interesting to read a report on the Coranderrk station published five years later. It was littered with complaints from Aboriginal witnesses that they had been given insufficient clothing by its superintendent, who then struggled to explain to officials why his order books contained so many items of more expensive clothing.<sup>161</sup>

Consumption, therefore, was a rather blunt tool of conquest. If the civilising mission in the settler colonies was founded on an assumption that western commodities, especially clothing, could bring about a revolution in the habits of Africans or Aboriginals, the reality proved different. Limited access to such goods and the people who traded them, low purchasing power, the resilience of local costume, the ridicule sometimes directed at those wearing European garb, the fear of missionaries that those who did wear it would become puffed up with their own self-importance, and the syncretic clothing styles that emerged – all these things

<sup>158</sup> Cooper, *Victorian Commerce*, pp. 135–6; Cowderoy, *Melbourne's Commercial Jubilee*, p. 61. In 1868, as much as 24.2 per cent of Victoria's industrial workforce (some 4,347 people), was already employed in the colonies' clothing and footwear factories; this figure continued to grow over the latter half of the century, reaching 27.2 per cent (12,941 employees) by 1882–3 and 30 per cent (19,265 employees) by 1900. These data come from C. J. R. Lange, *Industrial Awakening: A Geography of Australian Manufacturing, 1788 to 1890* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), p. 744.

<sup>159</sup> Quoted in Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, p. 149.

<sup>160</sup> *Royal Commission on the Aboriginals: Report of the Commissioners*, Vol. I (1877), p. 47.

<sup>161</sup> *Report of the Board Appointed to Enquire into the Present Condition and Management of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station*, Vol. II (1882).

stood in the way of implanting new cultures of consumption among indigenous peoples.

Among Europeans, by contrast, commodities, and the specific ways in which they were used, were emblematic of British culture – especially bourgeois culture. Much of the economic power that derived from 'Britishness' was tied to its associations with bourgeois consuming culture. Middle-class women played a particularly important role here. As we have seen, their concerns, tastes and buying power were formative in terms of colonial demand. In this way, it is possible to conceive of the growth of branches of trade in the colonies as an essentially 'domestic' expansion process that was driven by middle-class female desires.

Increasingly, merchants and manufacturers from Britain seized upon the settler colonies to expand markets for their products. Their branding of British goods – for example, the way they were linked to particular towns or cities – often evoked the proximity, familiarity, and even romance, of the 'mother country'. Moreover, the fact that these goods were widely advertised in colonial newspapers, displayed at colonial exhibitions and agricultural shows, and (later) featured in newsreels, documentaries and films further worked to the advantage of British exporters who had a sharp eye for consumer preferences and how to exploit them. This continued to be true right up to the First World War, at which point the Americanisation of consumer society in some parts of the British World began to gather pace.<sup>162</sup>

### Conclusions

If the phenomenon of globalisation is that of 'a world of things in motion', then the logic of the market has been central to it.<sup>163</sup> During the nineteenth century, the effects of falling transport costs, tariff liberalisation and mass migration intensified the integration of global commodity, capital and labour markets.<sup>164</sup> Yet these global markets were embedded in complex cultural matrices.<sup>165</sup> Co-ethnic networks, in particular, played a

<sup>162</sup> Campbell, 'The Americanization of South Africa', pp. 41ff.

<sup>163</sup> A. Appadurai, 'Grassroots Globalisation and the Research Imagination', in A. Appadurai (ed.), *Globalisation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 1–22 (p. 5).

<sup>164</sup> D. K. Das, *The Economic Dimensions of Globalization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); D. Held, A. McGrew, D. Goldblatt and J. Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); O'Rourke and Williamson, *Globalization and History*.

<sup>165</sup> J. Brewer and F. Trennmann, 'Introduction: Space, Time and Value in Consuming Cultures', in J. Brewer and F. Trennmann (eds.), *Consuming Cultures: Global Perspectives, Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 1–17 (p. 13); P. du Gay and M. Pryke (eds.), *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life* (London: Sage, 2002).

key role in overcoming obstacles to the circulation and exchange of economic knowledge. 'As commodities travel greater distances, knowledge about them tends to become partial, contradictory, and differentiated.'<sup>166</sup> By building trust and reciprocity, co-ethnic networks in the British World broke down barriers to long-distance trade, and thus helped to match consumer tastes to producer knowledge and skills. They also helped to spread new scientific and technological ideas, to facilitate the transfer of labour, to develop commercial facilities, and to improve transport and communications infrastructure. In short, they were instrumental in expanding British World trade.

The irony here, of course, is that for a long time, empire markets were perceived not as an engine of economic convergence and modernity but exactly the reverse – a form of economic escapism. Reliance on 'safe', 'soft' or 'sheltered' colonial markets supposedly debilitated British manufacturing by depriving it of the competitive stimulus that would have come from fuller participation in European and American trade. By retreating into the empire, industry in Britain is said to have managed (for a while) to hold at bay the globalising forces of commodity market integration, only eventually to pay the price for failing to invest in new technologies, or to renovate and restructure their business organisation.

However, recent scholarship has become more mindful of the relationship between group values and beliefs and levels of economic performance, and the capacity of culture to promote (as well as retard) economic growth.<sup>167</sup> Ethnic affiliation, in particular, is understood to have influenced trading patterns, present and past. Whether it be Chinese business networks in South East Asia during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries,<sup>168</sup> or the networks forged by Maghribi traders in the eleventh century Mediterranean, it is now clear that such networks could either facilitate trade by deterring opportunistic behaviour, or hinder it by becoming too exclusive in their membership.<sup>169</sup> A key conclusion drawn from these examples is that trade can often develop more readily, and effectively, among people sharing a common identity, whether that identity is ethnic, religious or political.

<sup>166</sup> A. Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', in A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 3–64 (p. 56).

<sup>167</sup> M. C. Casson and A. Godley, 'Cultural Factors in Economic Growth', in Casson and Godley (eds.), *Cultural Factors in Economic Growth* (Berlin: Springer, 2000), pp. 1–43; D. S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (London: W. W. Norton, 1999), esp. pp. 516–18.

<sup>168</sup> Menkhoff and Gerke (eds.), *Chinese Entrepreneurship*; and Haley, Tan and Haley (eds.), *New Asian Empires*.

<sup>169</sup> Grief, 'Contract Enforcement'.

In the British World of the 'long' nineteenth century, the information, trust and reciprocity flowing through co-ethnic networks created value for those lucky enough to participate in them, yet further marginalised and impoverished those who were not. In this sense, 'imperial globalisation' was far from being truly global in its reach. The business and commercial networks upon which this first 'wave' of modern globalisation was built not only exhibited a strong bias towards the empire's Anglophone societies, they exposed the marked social and ethnic prejudices within those societies.

To what extent were these powerful exclusionary tendencies offset, or at least concealed, by Britain's dogged pursuit of tariff liberalisation before 1914? Unlike the English-speaking world's other major power, the United States, Britain did not seek to shelter its own industries behind tariff walls, nor did it favour a view of the international order based around exclusive economic zones. This policy ensured a degree of openness in the world economy, and helps to explain why Britain's commercial and financial relationships with the dominions mapped so easily on to its relationships with foreign states, and why the two sets of relationships often strengthened and reinforced each other. To be sure, the economy of the British World had its own cultural dynamic. Yet this dynamic did not prevent Britain, or the dominions, from engaging with, and expanding into, the wider world economy.

However, the conspicuous failure of the United States to subscribe to this heady vision of 'free trade, empire and universalism',<sup>170</sup> increasingly pushed politicians and businessmen in Britain to reconsider the relationship between tariffs and trade loyalties. While subject to ebbs and flows, the level of media and political attention to American competition in trade grew steadily throughout these years. According to one commentator, 'America loomed larger than any other foreign nation as a commercial or emotional force in many portions of the Empire, especially in Canada'.<sup>171</sup> Thus, in the sphere of trade, the Anglo-American relationship took a different course from that of migration (Chapter 3) and finance (Chapter 5). Much of what people consumed in the colonies, and the way they consumed it, was a marker of identity. In choosing what

<sup>170</sup> See here A. Howe, 'From Pax Britannica to Pax Americana: Free Trade, Empire and Globalisation, 1846–1948', *Bulletin of Asia-Pacific Studies* (2002), 137–59.

<sup>171</sup> Heindel, *The American Impact on Great Britain, 1898–1914: A Study of the United States in World History* (New York: Octagon Books, first published 1940, reprinted 1968), p. 163. America traded four or five times as much with Canada as with all the other British dominions combined, so there is no surprise that the proposed Canadian-American Reciprocity Agreement of 1910 provoked such heated political controversy; see B. Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895–1914* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), pp. 124–30.

to eat, wear or drink, or how to furnish their homes, people made statements about themselves, and these statements frequently expressed how they perceived their role in, and relationship to, the colonising process. Yet this 'cross-fertilisation' in consumption<sup>172</sup> was increasingly squeezed in the case of the United States by its move from revenue-raising to protectionist tariffs, and by the rapid growth of its domestic industries. It is only evident with respect to genteel habits of consumption.<sup>173</sup> High tariffs actually helped British migrants to transfer their skills and technology to the United States, and to develop new crafts and industries there – the 2,000 or so Staffordshire potters who poured into Ohio from the mid century eventually broke Britain's virtual monopoly over the production of earthenware.<sup>174</sup> Fast becoming its greatest trade rival, America's relationship to the British World was decidedly, and increasingly, ambiguous.

<sup>172</sup> For this term, see Ross, 'Cross-Continental Cross-Fertilisation in Clothing'.

<sup>173</sup> The similarities in English and American consumer behaviour were much stronger in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both in terms of the consumption of groceries (tobacco, sugar products and tea) and durables (haberdashery, clothing and tableware); see C. Shammas, 'Changes in English and Anglo-American Consumption from 1550 to 1800', in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 177–205.

<sup>174</sup> W. E. Van Yugt, *British Buckeyes: The English, Scots, and Welsh in Ohio, 1800–1900* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006), pp. 135–7.