

*Revisiting the British World: New Voices and Perspectives.*

Edited by Jatinder Mann and Iain Johnston-White.

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In 2005, *Rediscovering the British World* sought to offer a study of the state and potential of British World scholarship. An edited collection, that text approached the British World as a transnational community which developed alongside Britain's imperial expansion and the British diaspora. Recurrent points of interest included the complexities and tensions within the World, interplays and exchanges across its regions, and efforts to read history with a sense of what the British World meant to its contemporary denizens. The titular framing of the venture as a "rediscovery", signalled the perceived tendency of scholarship to overlook, diminish or simplify the place and influence of the subject in the aftermath of the Empire.

Seventeen years on, *Revisiting the British World* presents its own collection of essays as continuing on the path *Rediscovering* marked. If *Rediscovering* revolved around a general ambition to spur scholars to the advantages of recognising the British World, *Revisiting's* intention is stated in its titular claim of offering "new voices and perspectives" on the subject. As the introductory chapter co-authored by Jatinder Mann and Iain Johnston-White notes, the book aims to showcase work from established and emerging scholars to "illustrate that the transnational British World perspective continues to offer a fruitful direction of research" (p. 3). Besides neatly framing the project and pitching its value, this introduction also provides concise coverage of relevant historiographic genealogy and announces the book's nine chapters. These are directed towards a range of scholarly nooks and crannies, though several broad thematic areas can be identified.

A cluster of chapters peer into cases of transnational cultural transmission. Paul Kiem's chapter, for example, reviews the life and career of Australian caricaturist Vasco Loureiro (1882-1918) as an itinerant "British World Bohemian". Loureiro's journeys are convincingly presented as a case study of the binding networks and "cultural glue" of the British World at the turn of the twentieth century as well as its subcultures, undercurrents and boundaries (p. 133). Karen Fox examines a high culture example in the life of Australian Nellie Melba (1861-1931), using her esteemed career as an operatic soprano to illustrate transnational celebrity and cultural ownership. Certainly, the "Melbmania" that met her performances across the Empire provides a sense of her status as a shared cultural icon – an "Imperial prima donna" as one billing put it (p. 102). Lastly, in a personal favourite, Richard Scully studies how variants of the British humour magazine *Punch* were proliferated across the British World. Scully takes this as illustrating the co-ownership of a particular tradition of satirical cartooning and the presence of a humour community across the British World. As with the other chapters directed towards cultural linkages, he shows a particular interest in transnational careers, and examines those of cartoonists like Phil May, Will Dyson and David Low.

Another identifiable cluster of entries turns to the Antipodes, a region that has offered a rich site in the study of British World history and dynamics. André Brett examines the history of "separation movements" that existed within nineteenth century Australasia before the seven settler colonies were consolidated into Australia and New Zealand. The chapter features a strong restorative quality and seeks to write these movements and their visions back into the history and to impress a sense of their lingering influence. William A. Stoltz tackles a classic

concern of British World scholarship, namely challenging an assumed dichotomy between imperial subordination and national independence. Accordingly, he traces an Australian tradition of “Imperial Internationalism” pursued within the British World between federation (1901) and the late-1960s. Andrew Kelly’s chapter is a natural accompaniment to Stoltz as he turns to how Australia and New Zealand adjusted their foreign and defence policies in response to the withdrawal of the Imperial system and the developing Cold War.

A final set of chapters could be classed as probing the boundaries of identities, belonging and exclusion within parts of the British World. A chapter by Sucharita Sen, for example, perceives Anglo-Indian households as embodying the complexities of Colonial India and within sahib-subject relations as they contained both compliance with imperial hierarchies and interracial intimacies. Danielle E. Lorenz’s chapter analyses two Ontario public school history textbooks, published in 1921, examining how they imparted lessons on settler-colonial nation-building and indigenous peoples. A central feature of the chapter is an argument of the negative legacies of these discourses and the need to confront them. A chapter by Jatinder Mann examines the major shifts in collective identity which occurred as the ethnic-based citizenships of Australia, Canada and New Zealand were transformed into civic-based ones in the 1960-1970s. The chapter is focused upon the particular political and legal reforms which enacted these redefinitions, but aptly covers the broader political debates and historical contexts in which the former-Dominions adapted to the dissipation of British race patriotism.

The collection’s essays ultimately cover much of which will be of interest to scholars of the British World. A concluding chapter by Jatinder Mann and Iain Johnston-White reviews the chapters’ themes and findings to advance an argument of why the British World should be revisited. This reasserts the position that British World scholarship remains a source of valuable insight for an array of historical topics and continues to be relevant in facilitating understanding of our present world and concerns. As an exercise in demonstrating the validity of the concept and showcasing an array of scholarship, the visit is certainly warranted.