Imperial Sceptics provides a highly original analysis of the emergence of opposition to the British Empire from 1850 to 1920. Departing from existing accounts, which have focused upon the Boer War and the writings of John Hobson, Gregory Claeys proposes a new chronology for the contours of resistance to imperial expansion. Claeys locates the impetus for such opposition in the late 1850s with the British followers of Auguste Comte. Tracing critical strands of anti-imperial thought through to the First World War, Claeys then scrutinises the full spectrum of socialist writings from the early 1880s onwards, revealing a fundamental division over whether a new conception of ‘socialist imperialism’ could appeal to the electorate and satisfy economic demands. Based upon extensive archival research, and utilising rare printed sources, Imperial Sceptics will prove a major contribution to our understanding of nineteenth-century political thought, shedding new light on theories of nationalism, patriotism, the state and religion.

Gregory Claeys is Professor of the History of Political Thought at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has edited numerous works including Late Victorian Utopias (6 volumes, 2008) and The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature (2010). He has published widely on aspects of the Owenite socialist movement, the French Revolution debate in Britain and the thought of Thomas Paine.
The books in this series will discuss the emergence of intellectual traditions and of related new disciplines. The procedures, aims and vocabularies that were generated will be set in the context of the alternatives available within the contemporary frameworks of ideas and institutions. Through detailed studies of the evolution of such traditions, and their modification by different audiences, it is hoped that a new picture will form of the development of ideas in their concrete contexts. By this means, artificial distinctions between the history of philosophy, of the various sciences, of society and politics, and of literature may be seen to dissolve.

The series is published with the support of the Exxon Foundation.

A list of books in the series will be found at the end of the volume.
IMPERIAL SCEPTICS

British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920

GREGORY CLAEYS

Royal Holloway, University of London
Contents

Acknowledgements

List of abbreviations

Introduction: audi alteram partem:
imperialism and the moral imagination

Anti-imperialism: the state of play

The two debates in foreign and colonial policy

Some strands of imperial scepticism

Conclusion

1 Positivist diplomacy

Comte, humanity and empire

Congreve and anti-imperialism

International Policy (1866)

India, Ireland, Egypt

The work of Harrison, Beesly and Quin

Universal Home Rule: carving empires into republics

Intervention and non-intervention

‘Little England’ and the analysis of empire

Conclusion

2 Socialism and empire: from Little England to socialist commonwealth, 1850–1920

Introduction

Marx and his legacy

Hyndman and the SDF

Ernest Belfort Bax: Positivism, Marxism and the nationalist controversy

William Morris and the Socialist League

Clarion call: Robert Blatchford

The Fabians, their friends, some allies and malcontents

The ILP: Macdonald, Hardie and some others

Other socialist contributions to the debate

Socialism and Little England

Conclusion
Contextualising Hobson: civilisation, utility and socialist imperialism 235

The formation of Hobson’s critique of capitalist imperialism, 1894–1902 236

*Imperialism. A Study.* civilisation and exploitation justified 245

Hobson as socialist imperialist 260

Hobson, Positivism and the ethics of humanity 271

Conclusion 281

Conclusion: the fruits of imperial scepticism: more sovereignty and less 282

Bibliography 291

Index 327
Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the indulgent generosity of various friends, colleagues and others who have commented on all or parts of this book, particularly Duncan Bell, Emma Brennan, Istvan Hont, Gareth Stedman Jones, Zoë Laidlaw, Michael Levin and Bernard Porter; for references to John Mackenzie, Stephen Meredith, Marcus Morris, Cassandra Pybus, Henry Reynolds, Francis Robinson and T. R. Wright; and to groups at the School of Government, University of Beijing; the Centre for History and Economics, King’s College, Cambridge; the Faculty of International Studies, University of Hanoi; the University of Central Lancashire; the Department of History, University of Liverpool; the Institute of Historical Research, University of London; and the University of Paris IV. Indispensable encouragement was provided by Justin Champion. My thanks are due to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding a term’s leave to complete the manuscript.

I have disturbed the repose of many librarians in writing this book, and am particularly grateful to the Inter-Library Loan staff at Royal Holloway, University of London, and to staff at the London Library; the Bishopsgate Institute; the Bodleian Library; the British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics, and particularly the Archive staff; the University of Hull archive; the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; the Maison Auguste Comte, Paris; the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester; Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University Library; the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society; the University of Liverpool Library; the University of Paris IV; the British Library and British Library Newspaper Library, Colindale; Derbyshire County Council; Keele University Library; the National Library of Scotland; Senate House Library, University of London; the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland; the People’s History Museum, and particularly Nick Mansfield; the Archive, University of Strathclyde; the Library, UCLA; and the West Sussex
Acknowledgements

County Record Office. To Richard Fisher at Cambridge University Press, to Quentin Skinner and Jim Tully, and several referees, I am also very thankful.

Parts of chapter 1 of this book have appeared previously in "The ‘Left’ and the Critique of Empire, c.1865–1900: Three Roots of Humanitarian Foreign Policy’, in Duncan Bell, ed., Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth Century British Political Thought (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 239–66. I am grateful to the publisher for permission to reprint passages from it here.

This volume is respectfully dedicated to two men who, in very different ways, helped me to see another side: George S. Andrew Jr and Nguyen Ai Quoc.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Journal Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>African Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add. MS</td>
<td>British Library Additional Manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHR</td>
<td>American Historical Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJES</td>
<td>American Journal of Economics and Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJS</td>
<td>American Journal of Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASR</td>
<td>American Sociological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJIS</td>
<td>British Journal of International Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLPES</td>
<td>British Library of Political and Economic Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSSLH</td>
<td>Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHR</td>
<td>Canadian Historical Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Contemporary Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Derbyshire Advertiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR</td>
<td>Diplomatic Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUJ</td>
<td>Durham University Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHR</td>
<td>Economic History Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJ</td>
<td>Economic Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ER</td>
<td>The English Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EW</td>
<td>Ethical World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Fortnightly Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H&amp;T</td>
<td>History and Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>History of European Ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HJ</td>
<td>Historical Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPE</td>
<td>History of Political Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPT</td>
<td>History of Political Thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Historical Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HWJ</td>
<td>History Workshop Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IESHR</td>
<td>Indian Economic and Social History Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHIS</td>
<td>Irish Historical Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IISG</td>
<td>International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJE</td>
<td>International Journal of Ethics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of abbreviations

ILP Independent Labour Party
IRHPS International Review of History and Political Science
IRSH International Review of Social History
JAH Journal of African History
JBS Journal of British Studies
JCH Journal of Contemporary History
JEH Journal of Economic History
JHI Journal of the History of Ideas
JICH Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History
JP Journal of Politics
LL Labour Leader
LPC London Positivist Committee
LPS London Positivist Society
MAC Maison Auguste Comte
MAS Modern Asian Studies
MG Manchester Guardian
MH Midland History
MRSPES Monthly Record of the South Place Ethical Society
NA New Age
NC The Nineteenth Century
NLS National Library of Scotland
NR National Reformer
P&P Past and Present
PMG Pall Mall Gazette
PR Positivist Review
Prog. Rev. Progressive Review
PSQ Political Science Quarterly
RN Reynolds’s Newspaper
RP Review of Politics
RRPE Review of Radical Political Economics
S&S Science and Society
SDF Social Democratic Federation
SPM South Place Monthly Magazine
SPML South Place Monthly List
SPMR South Place Monthly Review
SR Sociological Review
UCL University College London
VS Victorian Studies