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978-0-521-76791-0 - Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination:
Nineteenth-Century Visions of a Greater Britain

Theodore Koditschek

Excerpt

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Introduction

Four months after Adam Smith published his *Wealth of Nations*, the American Declaration of Independence put it to the test. The British Empire, which had risen with the mercantilist system of privilege and protectionism, now seemed to have joined that system in a spiral of mutual collapse: free trade, Smith had argued, would bring economic growth, social advancement, and political autonomy for colonies.¹ So it transpired, over the next few generations, that Britain found a far better trading partner in the United States than she had ever possessed with her thirteen colonies.² Like individuals, nations seemed to be learning that their enlightened self-interest was to respect the rights of others. On both levels, this required equality before the law, which, in turn, seemed to precipitate a further installment of benefits and liberties. If “liberalism” is thus defined as a loose constellation, encompassing free trade, free labor, free association, free press, and formal equality, then it is safe to say that by the middle of the nineteenth century, Britain had gone quite far toward becoming a liberal society.³ And yet these liberties were not always what they seemed. Free trade might mean freedom to starve. Free labor could be the freedom to be exploited. Equality appeared to be for propertied white men alone. Freedom of press and association were too often honored in the breach. And yet of all these contradictions, the most glaringly obvious was that the British Empire

¹ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* [1776] (New York, 1937), 1–143, 397–465, 523–626. Smith points out that “parting good friends” would bring benefits both to Britain and to her American colonies. He also entertains a more radical scenario in which the Empire could be preserved if it were reorganized in a more egalitarian and decentralized way (583–93). See also Oliver M. Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution* (New York, 1963).

² Between 1774 and 1800 British exports to the (incipient) United States tripled. Calculated from Ralph Davis, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade* (Leicester, 1976), 88–109; Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Wealth, Power and Resources of the British Empire* [1815] (New York, 1965), 29–47; B. R. Mitchell, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), 310–11.

³ Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society* (London, 1969).

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had not disappeared. On the contrary, during this period a “second” British Empire had arisen that was more extensive, farther-flung, and in many ways more coercive than the one that it replaced. Indeed, by 1860, the new Empire of free trade encompassed at least 175 million people, on 2.7 million square miles, spread over every continent on the globe.⁴

This Empire may not have been created in a fit of absence of mind, but it did suffer from an absence of obvious legitimation. The disparity between the ideal of freedom and a reality of coercive imperial expansion posed serious moral, cultural, and political problems for Britons throughout the nineteenth century. Under the old mercantilist Empire such problems could scarcely have arisen, since coercion had been assumed as the norm. Freedom (like every other good) had been held as a privileged possession under this order, to be monopolized on the basis of birth, law, or power. It was only with the collapse of this system of monopoly and privilege that the problem of explaining coercion and inequality became acute.⁵ How could political inequality be justified? How was imperial expansion to be rationalized in liberal terms? Why should the Empire be extended to some places, but not to others? How far should the benefits of freedom that were supposed to operate in the metropolis be extended to the periphery, and to which peripheral groups? How far, and how fast, should free labor replace slavery in the surviving plantation colonies? When was coercion justified, and when should it be removed?⁶

While there were no hard and fast answers to any of these questions, this book argues that they could be managed, and sometimes provisionally

⁴ The best study of the consolidation of the second British Empire is Christopher Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (London, 1989). See also Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century* (London, 1976); P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires* (Oxford, 2005); P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion: 1688–1914* (London, 1993); and the relevant chapters in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, III, *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999). Figures calculated from Henry Morris, *The History of Colonization*, II (New York, 1908), 85, and Mitchell, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, 6–7.

⁵ For example, Christopher Brown’s recent *Moral Capital* (Chapel Hill, 2006) shows that the American Revolution weakened metropolitan political support for slavery by diminishing the power of this nastiest part of the old coercive mercantilist Empire. The result was a new political climate in which liberal abolitionism could thrive.

⁶ The last few years have occasioned a vigorous debate on the question of just how far consciousness of the Empire pervaded domestic culture within Britain. Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (Oxford, 2004), argues that the Empire’s domestic impact has been greatly exaggerated by recent practitioners of the “new imperial (cultural) history.” C. Hall and S. Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge, 2006), make the contrary case, with Richard Price, “One Big Thing: Britain, its Empire, and their Imperial Culture,” *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), 602–27, offering a *via media*. My own view is that Porter defines “Empire” too narrowly, but that his questions need to be asked, since the only way to understand something is to recognize its limits. For example, my focus on “liberal imperialism” in this book was motivated by a desire to understand how liberalism

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resolved, by discourses about history. The central discourse here was derived from the enlightenment idea of progress. By the end of the eighteenth century this had been refined in the form of a four-stage model of social, economic, cultural, and political development (also first formulated by Adam Smith) in which societies were ranged from “savage” (those based on hunting and gathering) to “barbarian” (generally applied to pastoralists and part-time horticulturalists) and “agricultural” (traditional feudal or absolutist states), and to commercial (modernizing capitalist societies). Under conditions of uneven development, it was widely believed that more advanced societies would dominate those at lower stages of development, and that a liberal, commercial capitalist society like Britain had a right (perhaps even a duty) to exercise formal or informal control over various far-flung primitives, either for their own benefit, to spread market freedom, or to save them from being exploited by some other powerful, autocratic state.⁷

Stated so emphatically, however, this hardly made a plausible case. Radical Liberals like Richard Cobden, for example, argued that socio-economic advancement provided no warrant for empire building, and he attributed Britain’s massive Empire to less honorable motives.⁸ So far from betokening the triumph of liberal capitalism, it reflected the enduring power of a landed aristocracy that still dominated the British political system, and which played the game of geo-politics in an essentially mercantilist way. While there was much to be said for this explanation, the aristocracy alone could not have sustained the new Empire. Much of it had been acquired during or after the Great War against Napoleon and the French Revolution (1791–1815), which was played out not just in Europe, but on a global stage. Thus forged in the crucible of war, amid a great wave of patriotism that permeated parts of every social

played out in an imperial context, and how imperialism was transformed by those who wanted to turn it into a liberal project. Purist liberals and ardent imperialists might insist that these were two quite separate things. I think that history proves them wrong.

⁷ J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress* (New York, 1932); Frank Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962); Karen O’Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1997); Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1978); Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* [1768] (Cambridge, 1995); John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* [1771] (Bristol, 1990); Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge, 1976).

⁸ John Morley, *The Life of Richard Cobden* (London, 1881); Bernard Semmel, *The Liberal Ideal and the Demons of Empire: Theories of Imperialism from Adam Smith to Lenin* (Baltimore, 1993), 1–56; G. R. Searle, *Entrepreneurial Politics in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1993), 51–201; A. J. P. Taylor, *The Troublemakers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792–1939* (London, 1957), 11–94. Throughout this book I observe a distinction between “Liberals” (upper case), who were in some sense members of the Liberal Party, and “liberals” (lower case), who conformed to the broad definition that I offer in the first paragraph of this introduction.

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class, the new Empire became a national project, although there were always dissenters, and support wavered over time and was often lacking in depth.⁹ Though aristocrats benefited disproportionately as soldiers and colonial administrators, many motives drew in sectors of the middle class: the desire to spread Christianity, to redeem the suffering slaves, to save aborigines (or to settle their lands), to protect existing possessions, and to cure the evils that the first Empire had left behind all inspired the second Empire in different ways. In each case the call to action was built on a particular reading of history that drew out the progress narrative in a particular way.¹⁰ This book then is a history of the progress narrative, as it was deployed over the course of the nineteenth century to explain and justify Britain's imperial activity within a liberal framework.

1 Historiography and methodology

Until quite recently the phenomenon of liberal imperialism has been relatively neglected. With a few exceptions, liberalism was generally assumed to be a British phenomenon, while imperialism was something that happened on the periphery.¹¹ However, in the last decade, scholars have begun to bring the two together, following the salutary injunction that metropole and colony must be understood in a common frame. Here, the breakthrough book has been Uday Singh Mehta's *Liberalism and Empire*, published in 1999.¹² As a political theorist, Mehta writes at a high level

⁹ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, 1992).

¹⁰ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, New York, 1975); Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London, 1988), 1–160; Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford, 1999); Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth Century South Africa and Britain* (London, 2001); Brown, *Moral Capital*. On aristocracy and empire see David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire* (Oxford, 2001). For a recent analysis of the way in which imperial “progress” played out spatially in the metropolitan imagination see John Marriott, *The Other Empire: Metropolis, India and Progress in the Colonial Imagination* (Manchester, 2003).

¹¹ The major exception was John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson's path-breaking “Imperialism of Free Trade” [1953], which elicited a few rebuttals and elaborations; all these essays reprinted in A. G. L. Shaw (ed.), *Great Britain and the Colonies* (London, 1970). See also the authors' *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism* (Garden City, 1961). Even today, the full implications of the Robinson–Gallagher thesis have not been worked out. Other early classics are W. K. Hancock, *Empire in the Changing World* (New York, 1943); Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Cambridge, 1959); and Thomas Metcalfe, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1994).

¹² Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire* (Chicago, 1999). For seminal formulations of the injunction that metropole and colony need to be treated in a unified frame see Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*

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of abstraction, focusing on a handful of canonic liberal thinkers (most notably James Mill and John Stuart Mill and John Locke) who engaged with the phenomenon of Empire in a significant way. His core argument is that when liberalism encounters the “strangeness” of Empire, all of its fundamental propositions are reversed. The presumptive universalism of abstract liberal principles is compromised when these principles encounter the actuality of the colonial other. Because this other appears strange to the “universal” western philosopher, (s)he is deemed deficient in normative rationality, and thus unworthy of the political rights and civic inclusions which liberalism in theory offers up. By looking at liberalism from a peripheral perspective, Mehta has identified fresh paradoxes in a series of classic texts that were previously regarded as well understood. In the nineteenth century, he reminds us, whole classes of the community were excluded from political participation even in the imperial center: women and workers, as well as children, criminals, and “idiots.” On the periphery, entire societies were blanketed and rejected in a comparable manner, because they were built upon customs, institutions, and cultures that western liberals deemed to be irrational, effeminate, infantile, criminal, or idiotic.

Mehta’s powerful critique of the exclusionary potential in liberal theory is a major breakthrough, and it stands as a necessary corrective to those who assume the opposite – that some emancipatory potential is inherent in liberalism from the start. Yet his abstract, categorical reversal is also limiting in ways that are not acknowledged in his book. Indeed his argument does not hold equally well for other canonic liberals, most notably Jeremy Bentham and Adam Smith himself, as Jennifer Pitts has shown.¹³ More fundamentally, Mehta’s account of liberal imperialism neglects the question of how the ideas of great thinkers played out on the ground.

In 2002, this problem was taken up by Catherine Hall’s *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867*. This magisterial social history provides an important counterweight to Mehta, moving discussion from the rarefied heights of theory to the more messy, contested terrain of liberalism as it played out on two imperial grounds. Although Hall never explicitly uses the term, hers is, in fact, the first real study of liberal imperialism as a hegemonic project. She builds her analysis around the insight that the Baptist missionaries who traveled to the Caribbean during the last decade of slavery were among

(Berkeley, 1997), 1–40; and Antoinette Burton, “Who Needs the Nation? Interrogating ‘British’ History,” in Catherine Hall (ed.), *Cultures of Empire: A Reader* (New York, 2000), 137–53.

¹³ *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, 2005), 23–58, 103–22. For a further critique of Mehta see Andrew Sartori, “The British Empire and its Liberal Mission,” *Journal of Modern History*, 78/3 (2006), 623–42.

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the most important shock-troops of liberal imperialism, translating the ideas of the great secular and religious liberal thinkers into a pragmatic reforming program for Britain's colonial order. Arriving at a critical moment, when slavery was being de-legitimized, they successfully distinguished themselves from the planters in the eyes of the black population, many of whose members they converted not just to Christianity, but also to a new emancipatory conception of the Empire.¹⁴

As Hall shows, this liberal imperial alliance remained strong through the 1830s and early 1840s. From the late 1840s, however, it began to unravel as the Jamaican freedmen developed their own ideas about the meaning of "British" freedom, and the various metropolitan actors became gradually disillusioned with the results of liberal colonial reform. Casting a wide net through both Birmingham and Jamaica, Hall shows just how variegated were the patterns of differing responses to this crisis of liberal imperialism. Many of the freedmen were exercised about betrayed promises, whereas many white Britons in both locations were alarmed by this spirit of black independence, disturbed by black violations of separate-spheres domesticity, or panicked at rumors of impending revolt. Still others were troubled by the collapse of the plantation economy, or by challenges to Britain's export industries. Some were convinced by new exclusionary theories of race, while yet others clung proudly to the old liberal imperial ideals.¹⁵

One way to find patterns in this diversity might be seek a level midway between the sweeping macro-theory of Mehta and the meticulous micro-history of Hall. It is on this middle ground that I have tried to situate my "narratives of progress," which are all variants of Mehta's grand liberal theory, but which have assumed the form of concrete discourses, articulated by actual people, with specific motives, operating in circumscribed historical contexts. To this end, I have focused each of my chapters on the work of a small group of related individuals, each of whom contributed *both* to historical writing *and* to the project of reconstructing the nineteenth-century British Empire along liberal lines. Using published writings, personal

¹⁴ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago, 2002), 1–139.

¹⁵ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 140–441. Some of the most innovative recent scholarship emphasizes decentralized imperial networks and inter-colonial linkages; see Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy (eds.), *Decentering Empire: Britain, India and the Transcolonial World* (New Delhi, 2005). Nevertheless, Hall's work demonstrates the enduring significance of the metropole-periphery polarity in what was, almost by definition, a power asymmetry between the two. Perhaps it is worth noting that the most idealistic advocates of what I call "liberal imperialism," from Grattan to Gokhale, wanted to de-center the Empire into a federation of self-governing states. So long as the Empire lasted, this effort failed. When it succeeded, the Empire was transformed into something else.

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correspondence, and other biographical materials, I triangulate between the lives these men and women led, the history they were writing, and the new imperial initiatives that they either rationalized or directly made. Texts are closely interrogated, but always in the context of their authors' agendas and imperial roles. The variants of the progress narrative that my subjects applied in colonial settings are thus aligned with the sagas they believed about themselves. The family lives that they personally experienced are juxtaposed against the family metaphors employed in their works. These individuals were neither the greatest minds, nor the grandest proconsuls of their era, but they either commanded large readerships, participated in policy-making, or attempted some combination of the two.¹⁶

It is no accident that most of the writers and actors treated in this volume began their lives as British outsiders. From their personal anxieties about (and aspirations toward) British inclusion, they constructed their larger visions of what trans-imperial liberalism should mean. For this reason, the narratives of progress they constructed could always be divided into two distinct parts: (1) the progress already achieved, which had opened the way for *their* inclusion; and (2) the progress not yet achieved, but impending in the future, that would enable excluded others to join the advance. In the first half of the nineteenth century, when liberal imperialism was expanding, Progress 1 was often quite limited – and tended to be circumscribed by metaphors of “union,” as we shall soon see. The great optimism about the prospects for Progress 2 rested on confidence (a) that economic growth would be rapid and relatively seamless, (b) that cultural differences could be easily transcended, and (c) that the remnants of traditional society could be disposed of without the perils of a rotting corpse. When these three conditions appeared fulfilled, it was relatively easy to turn the progress narrative into a romance. But romances are easily punctured simply by looking at their components from a more skeptical or jaundiced point of view.

Here, I think, lies the great value of my focus on history as a medium for liberal imperial ideals. For history can be told in multiple ways. It thus provided a pliable vehicle for different people to interpret a common set of facts in differing terms. This is particularly important in approaching the second half of the nineteenth century, when it became clear that

¹⁶ A biographical approach to imperial history, long out of fashion, is now re-emerging in post-modern dress, as a way of reintroducing human experience, agency, and contingency into processes that are too easily depicted in impersonal, structural terms. In addition to Hall's *Civilising Subjects*, see Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of Empire: India and the Colonial Encounter in Late Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, 1998); and David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds.), *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careerings in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2006).

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(a) economic growth was no longer automatic, (b) large cultural differences were not easily bridged between distant peoples of differing languages, religions, and races, and (c) metropolitan elites were coming to believe that traditional society should be kept on life-support on the colonial periphery. As we shall see, different people responded to this situation in different ways, and wrote different histories of progress that would either keep it *to* themselves, demand it *for* themselves, or establish more stringent conditions on which it might be slowly granted to colonial others who differed from the metropolitan self.

A further challenge lies in the inherently dynamic character of this British Empire, especially for those who conceived it in “progressive” terms. National and imperial identities were intertwined with one another in ways that we are only now just beginning to understand.¹⁷ The political Union(s) that formed (and transformed) the British state were closely connected to corresponding bouts of imperial expansion through which domestic Union was secured and sustained. Conversely, developments on multiple proliferating peripheries had implications for identities of Britishness in the center. Although the phrase “Greater Britain” was coined only in the Victorian era, it had been evident from the start that Britain had no choice but to become greater, if she wished to remain great.¹⁸ The original Union of England and Wales with Scotland (1707) already exhibited some imperial overtones, inasmuch as it entailed the integration of Scottish Highlanders, who were deemed to be barbarians in need of improvement by metropolitan elites. These overtones were further amplified by the Union with Ireland (1800), when the dictates of “progress” entailed integrating an entire nation – different in religion,

¹⁷ Colley, *Britons* is the classic work, especially pp. 101–48, which link the reconstruction of Britishness with late eighteenth-century crises of Empire. Yet Colley conspicuously leaves Ireland out of her story, thereby neglecting the ways in which it would complicate her central dichotomy between the Protestant British self and a Catholic French other. For more explicit treatments of the relationship between Britishness and imperial expansion see Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain* (London, 1977); Keith Robbins, *Great Britain: Identities, Institutions and the Idea of Britishness* (London, 1998), especially 206–33; Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003); T. M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire, 1600–1815* (London, 2004); and Allan Macinnes, *Union and Empire: The Making of the United Kingdom in 1707* (Cambridge, 2007), to mention only a few of the most important recent works.

¹⁸ As we shall see (Chapter 5), the phrase was coined, in 1868, by Charles Dilke. Yet as early as 1828, William Huskisson, the Colonial Secretary, observed that “England cannot afford to be little. She must be what she is, or nothing” (quoted in John S. Galbraith, “Myths of the ‘Little England’ Era,” in Shaw (ed.), *Great Britain and the Colonies*, 29; see also page 30 for similar quotes from Cobden). To avoid the danger of anachronism, I introduce the phrase in connection with Rammohun Roy and the Macaulays, who clearly exhibited that enlarged, ultimately universalistic, sense of global Britishness which Dilke articulated a few decades later in comparable terms.

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culture, language, and socio-economic structure – that now had to be made one with the metropolitan polity. By incorporating Ireland directly into the British state, under a more or less common set of institutions and laws, the government of William Pitt sought to reincarnate one critical part of the old Empire in a presumptively liberal structure. This Act of Union therefore constitutes the starting point for my book.

2 Plan of the chapters

The analysis begins, in Chapter 1, “Imagining Great Britain,” by focusing on the novels of Maria Edgeworth. Written just before and after the Act of Union, these influential works applied the progress narrative to the case of Ireland in elemental form: through the British connection, Irish landlords, like Edgeworth’s father, would bring enlightenment to a backward, benighted peasantry, promoting economic prosperity through education, thus training the people to become citizens of a modern capitalist polity. These didactic, optimistic tales of improvement were haunted, however, by an unacknowledged history of colonial violence, which belied the happy ending that Edgeworth (usually) supplied. By contrast, Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan) wrote a very different set of novels, on the premise that the consummation of the Anglo-Irish Union (both literal and figurative) required a painful reckoning with the oppressions and expropriations of Irish history. As former agents of foreign domination, who were now re-making themselves into authentic national leaders, Anglo-Irish landlords had to take responsibility for the crimes of their ancestors, and embrace (symbolically betroth) the Gaelic traditions of the Irish masses, before they could hope to lead Ireland into the British modernizing age.

Neither Edgeworth’s nor Owenson’s novels provided satisfactory romances of Union, since neither could plausibly resolve the contradictions of dominance through an effective reckoning with history. Such a resolution was provided a decade later, however, by the historical novels of Walter Scott. In Scott’s tales, the contradictions of Anglo-Scotland were successfully projected back to a bygone age of conflict, division, and imperial arrogance, which the forces of progress had now successfully transcended. Because these historical struggles could be depicted as having been overcome, they could be recounted in celebratory romances of reconciliation and reunion, in which victors and vanquished alike could turn the lost cause into an object of pleasing nostalgia, which would enable both to move on together to the more prosaic (but inescapable) future of modernity.

Although imperial themes are not directly at the center of the Waverley novels, Scott’s romance foreshadowed and influenced future discourse

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on the subject in four significant ways. (1) The novels themselves were enormously popular, and remained so throughout the nineteenth century, not only in Britain but also elsewhere, including all the British colonies. Although Scott was not a conventional historian, there is a good deal of evidence to indicate that he had a greater impact on the historical imagination of the public than any historian during his lifetime. Indeed, among Scott's most attentive fans were historians of the next generation (for example, Macaulay) who drew on the novelist in plotting their multi-volume national and constitutional narratives. (2) Although Scott's romances are "liberal" in the sense that they acknowledge the advantages of market capitalism, Scott himself was a political Tory who sought to redeem tradition by de-fanging its threatening aspects, thus rendering it compatible with modernity. From this point onward even conservatives would discover that they had to accept key elements of the progress narrative if they wished to be taken seriously. (3) By exploring the history of Union through the medium of fiction, Scott (like Edgeworth and Owenson before him) was able to capture the resonances of "union" in all its marital, familial, class, and gender manifestations. In this manner Scott (and those who followed him) could play with the idea of "union," imagining possible variants that could not (yet) solidify into realistic political form. Normative notions of British masculinity and femininity could be set up as standards by which colonial others would be judged. Their union(s) with the metropole might be depicted as happy, dysfunctional, barren, or deranged. Colonial children could be figured as obedient, obstreperous, incorrigible, dying out, or even disowned. Through such metaphors, colonial strangeness could be domesticated, cultural difference could be naturalized, and history could be revised in a variety of ways.¹⁹ (4) Scott showed how two different and asymmetric cultures could be melded into a single imagined community. Here, however, we will see the atypicality of the Anglo-Scottish case. England and Scotland were physically contiguous, being connected by a common Protestantism, strong linguistic and ethnic ties, and a long record of political collaboration. In

¹⁹ Some of the most interesting work here is being done by literary scholars and feminist historians, e.g. Mary Jean Corbett, *Allegories of Union* (Cambridge, 2000), Philippa Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford, 2004), and other references in Chapter 1. Throughout this book, I have observed the (somewhat awkward) convention of reserving upper-case "Union" to refer to specific political amalgamations that produced actual or projected multi-national states, e.g. the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707, the British-Irish Union of 1800, or the abortive proposals for imperial federation in the later nineteenth century. Lower-case "union" has been employed for other, more metaphorical uses of the term.