Introduction
Settler Colonialism and Metropolitan Culture

> But the New World would also act upon the European communities themselves, modifying their occupations and ways of life, altering their industrial and economical character. Thus the expansion of England involves its transformation.
>
> J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England*

> How one goes about identifying the social and political reverberations between colony and metropole is a difficult task.
>
> Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda"

In 1893, the Victorian cultural and political firmament was agitated by Charles H. Pearson's *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, a work of speculative history that argued that global history was in essence a race war that Anglo-Saxons were destined to lose. Reviewers found it to be a "remarkable, though melancholy, book"; "hopelessly discouraging … [and] almost unmitigatedly grim and wretched"; and infused by a "fine tone of somber fatalism."[1] Gladstone recommended Pearson's work to visitors to Downing Street, while across the Atlantic, Theodore Roosevelt ranked it alongside Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890) for its geopolitical import.[2] Nothing could seem more quintessentially Victorian than this *fin de siècle* fever dream of racial decline, yet its distinctive approach and insights – its virulent racism, its fascination with population growth, and its interest in the future – were frequently attributed to its origins on the edge of the empire, and specifically in a settler colony. "The reader can indeed discern that Mr. Pearson's

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[1] Unsigned review of *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, by Charles H. Pearson, *The Edinburgh Review* 178, no. 366 (1893): 277; Unsigned review of *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, by Charles H. Pearson, *The Athenaeum*, no. 3410 (1893): 209; A. C. Lyall, review of *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, by Charles H. Pearson, *The Nineteenth Century* 33, no. 195 (1893): 893.

[2] Marilyn Lake, "The White Man under Siege: New Histories of Race in the Nineteenth Century and the Advent of White Australia," *History Workshop Journal* 58, no. 1 (2004): 41.

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point of view is not London or Paris, but Melbourne," *The Athenaeum* reflected: "In this forecast, in fact, Europe loses altogether the precedence it has enjoyed."[3] The Oxford-educated Pearson had been in his mid-thirties when he first traveled to Australia in 1864 for health reasons; by the 1870s, he had taken up residence in the colony of Victoria, becoming involved in politics, and eventually being appointed minister of education; he was still in Australia when he wrote *National Life and Character*. "Twenty years' residence under the Southern Cross," he argued in its opening chapter, "has forced me to consider a new side of this particular question: whether the capacity of European races to form new homes for themselves is not narrowly limited by climate."[4] Australia shaped Pearson's thoughts not only by convicting him of the truth of climatic determinism, but also by opening his eyes to the progressive nature of the colony's emerging political culture. Freedom from "the limitations of English tradition" had led to "political experiments … [that] deserve attention as an indication of what we may expect in the future."[5] In addition to providing ammunition for his claims, Pearson's colonial experience was manifested in his propensity for formal innovation. "[H]is history has divested itself of narrative," the *Athenaeum* remarked, "he … has, perhaps, invented a new variety of historical composition."[6] In its active transformation of metropolitan form, however, *National Life and Character* merely provided the most recent example of a long-standing tendency for Victorian conceptions of British political identity to be transformed as they were routed through the settler empire.

This book argues that the development of Victorian literature and political economy is part and parcel of the history of settler colonialism. Throughout the Victorian era, Britain and its settler empire were linked by flows of capital, population, material goods, and culture that were seen at the time to be qualitatively different from exchanges with other parts of the empire. "Transfers of things, thoughts, and people, lubricated by shared language and culture, were easier within them than from without," James Belich observes of this transnational British community: "Changes flowed

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[3] Rev. of Pearson, *Athenaeum*, 273. For an extensive account of the colonial background to, and international reception of, Pearson's work, see Marilyn Lake, "'The Day Will Come': Charles H. Pearson's *National Life and Character: A Forecast*," in *Ten Books That Shaped the British Empire: Creating an Imperial Commons*, ed. Antoinette M. Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

[4] Charles H. Pearson, *National Life and Character: A Forecast* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 16.

[5] Ibid., 17.   [6] Rev. of Pearson, *Athenaeum*, 273.

more easily within the system, and were received more readily."[7] Within this imperial system, the colonies of Australia and New Zealand – collectively termed Australasia – were regarded as archetypal expressions of the Victorian effort to replicate the entirety of their society around the globe.[8] "New Zealand is essentially a product of the Victorian era," observed its former premier, Julius Vogel, in the year *National Life and Character* was published: "It was during the present reign that its sovereignty was acquired, and that it was constituted into a British colony."[9] This privileged status was intensified by the symbolism of Australasia's antipodal relationship to Britain, its geopolitical isolation from other imperial competitors, climatic similarities and suitability for agricultural production, and fervently pro-imperial sentiments. "[O]f all the colonial provinces of the British crown," reflected the geologist Ferdinand von Hochstetter at mid-century, "New Zealand bears the most resemblance to the mother-country by virtue of its insular position, its climate, its soil, and the whole form and structure of the country."[10] In the "extreme case" offered by New Zealand, moreover, its vast distance from Britain was belied by the speed at which its ecosystems were overthrown and the indigenous Māori population was dispossessed.[11] In Australia, which had been the destination of transported convicts since the 1780s, a far more massive flow of "free" settlers was also a distinctive product of the Victorian era: more than 1,132,000 emigrants traveled voluntarily to the southern continent in the second half of the century.[12] This history of settlement recurs in H. G.

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[7] James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49.

[8] Although the term fell out of favor during the twentieth century, as distinct national identities coalesced in Australia and New Zealand, "Australasia" was used widely and flexibly in the nineteenth century to describe Britain's imperial possessions in the South Pacific, and the shared cultural and economic linkages between them. Thus James Belich describes "a series of trans-Tasman industries … in which the distinction between Australia and New Zealand was artificial" during the course of the nineteenth century. James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders, from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland: Penguin, 1996), 132. See also Donald Denoon, "Re-Membering Australasia: A Repressed Memory," *Australian Historical Studies* 34, no. 122 (2003); Philippa Mein Smith, Peter Hempenstall, and Shaun Goldfinch, *Remaking the Tasman World* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2008).

[9] Julius Vogel, *New Zealand: Its Past, Present and Future* (London: Waterlow and Sons, 1893), 3–4.

[10] Ferdinand von Hochstetter, *New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology and Natural History, with Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson*, trans. Edward Sauter (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1867), 44–45.

[11] John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 168.

[12] Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 162; P. J. Cain, "Economics and Empire: The Metropolitan Context," in *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter, The Oxford History of the British Empire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 47.

Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898), when the narrator attempts to put the ruthless Martian invasion in context: "The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years."[13] By the turn of the twentieth century, the indigenous population in Australia had plummeted some 70 percent – to perhaps 94,500 – and in New Zealand by 60 percent, to an estimated 42,000.[14] As Wells's passing reference indicates, the story of Victorian literature in the settler colonies is not just a tale of the colonial acclimatization of British writing. Within the common bounds of "shared language and culture," the evolving frenzy of exploitation and transformation in the settler colonies put pressure on metropolitan forms of the novel and political economy, and provided new conceptual vocabularies for understanding British society and subjectivity.

Our understanding of Victorian literature and culture – its global reach, pathways of development, and political significance – has been impoverished by a failure to find the terms and methodologies necessary to grapple with the impact of the Victorian settler empire. Yet to make such a claim is to immediately confront the fact that, barring a few brief mentions in a few exceptional texts – most famously, the scene-stealing portrayal of the convict Magwitch in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) – its literary traces seem at first glance barely discernible. Take, for example, a moment mid-way through Anthony Trollope's *Phineas Finn* (1869):

> General Effingham … and Lord Brentford had been the closest and dearest of friends. They had been young men in the same regiment, and through life each had confided in the other. When the General's only son, then a youth of seventeen, was killed in one of our grand New Zealand wars, the bereaved father and the Earl had been together for a month in their sorrow…. Now the General was dead, and Violet, the daughter of a second wife, was all that was left of the Effinghams. This second wife had been a Miss Plummer, a lady from the city with much money, whose sister had married Lord Baldock. Violet in this way had fallen to the care of the Baldock people, and not into the hands of her father's friends.[15]

The typicality of this moment lies equally in its brevity – nothing more will be heard of New Zealand in the novel – and in its function as mere

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[13] H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*, ed. Andy Sawyer (London: Penguin, 2005), 9.
[14] Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2008," Commonwealth of Australia; Statistics New Zealand, "Historical Population Estimates Tables," Statistics New Zealand.
[15] Anthony Trollope, *Phineas Finn* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 100–1.

background to the financial and genealogical plotting of metropolitan realism. Yet this fictional trace belies the prominence of the subject at the time: just five years before *Phineas Finn* was published, there were 12,000 imperial soldiers in the colony, "more than were available for the defence of England at the time," mobilized to fight approximately 4,000 of the indigenous Māori population in the largest of the century's "grand New Zealand wars."[16] Britain's subsequent decision to withdraw these troops produced "an acute crisis in Imperial relations" and prompted vigorous debate in the metropole and the settler colony.[17] The point is not that *Phineas Finn* should somehow have made more of New Zealand – the novel is, after all, preeminently concerned with another imperial zone, Ireland – or that Trollope was blind to colonial questions, for empire was more central to his thought than to most metropolitan writers of the period. Instead, the brief tale of the general's ill-fated son suggests that a paucity of direct literary references cannot necessarily be treated as indicative of the scale or nature of Britain's settler-colonial entanglements.

Yet given the scale of the settler empire, can our current critical tools help us discern the extent of its literary influence? After all, as J. R. Seeley put it, at the height of interest in what the Victorians came to call Greater Britain, "the expansion of England involves its transformation."[18] This poses something of a methodological dilemma for Victorian studies, because the procedures we have developed for recognizing empire's literary traces have left settler colonialism as something of a constitutive absence within our thinking, akin to the "absence of mind" about empire that Seeley famously attributed to his contemporaries.[19] The root of our current approach can be traced in large part to Edward Said's influential reading of *Mansfield Park* (1814), which dwells on the relationship between the richly imagined social milieu of the Bertrams' English estate, and their slave-owning sugar plantation in Antigua that bankrolls the family but is only alluded to in passing. Said's approach attends to a

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[16] James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland: Penguin, 1998), 125.

[17] Peter Burroughs, "Defence and Imperial Disunity," in *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter, The Oxford History of the British Empire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 329. See also J. A. Froude's comments on "the withdrawal of the troops" in James Anthony Froude, "England and Her Colonies," in *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1874), 156–58; James Anthony Froude, "The Colonies Once More," in *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1874), 287–88.

[18] John Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1921), 93.

[19] Ibid., 10.

"counterpoint between overt patterns in British writing about Britain and representations of the world beyond the British Isles. The inherent mode for this counterpoint is not temporal but spatial."[20] The key terms here are "representations" and "spatial": Said's analysis focuses on "overt" mentions of empire as indexical of its limited prominence in British thought, and as a consequence maintains that the geographic separation of metropole and colony is matched by their cultural and intellectual isolation from each other. Yet as Elaine Freedgood points out in response to Said, the invisibility of empire in the "enduring cultural monuments of the nineteenth century" (in her discussion, *Great Expectations*) is belied by its visibility in the periodical press, compromising the assumption that "many historicist critics, myself included, frequently disavow but endemically rely upon: the relationship … between the realist novel and social reality, or our critical ability to pry that reality from recalcitrant representations."[21] Put another way, the imperial content of the Victorian novel is in itself no clear indication of the degree of entanglement between the metropole and the settler colonies.

If not content, then form? The possibility that imperial insights might be gained from a new formalist criticism that "makes a continuum with new historicism," as Marjorie Levinson puts it, is exemplified by Garrett Stewart's contribution to *Modern Language Quarterly*'s iconic special issue, "Reading for Form," which argues that the influence of empire pervades the very grammar of metropolitan realism, playing out as "a structuring of consciousness rather than a conscious object."[22] Stewart zeroes in on Dickens's widespread use in *Dombey and Son* of sylleptic constructions: the grammatical linking of unlike things, literal and figurative, through a "predication [that] splays out in two different but syntactically absorbable senses."[23] These formations, he maintains, both enact and illuminate the metropolitan conceptual operations that could simultaneously avoid and mystify the realities of imperialism, "the tenuous ligatures of colonial interdependency … refigured as immaterial, distanced, disembodied, impersonal, abstracted to all that remains unseen to be believed, believed in as British fortitude rather than exploitation."[24] For all the startling suggestiveness of this analysis, however, its conception of the relationship

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[20] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 81.

[21] Elaine Freedgood, "Realism, Fetishism, and Genocide: 'Negro Head' Tobacco in and around *Great Expectations*," *Novel* 36, no. 1 (2002): 28, 31.

[22] Marjorie Levinson, "What Is New Formalism?," *PMLA* 122, no. 2 (2007): 559; Garrett Stewart, "The Foreign Offices of British Fiction," *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2000): 193.

[23] Stewart, "Foreign Offices of British Fiction," 186.   [24] Ibid., 204.

between culture and imperialism remains firmly circumscribed within metropolitan horizons. Most immediately, the forensic attention to "min-uscule syntactic wrinkles" that grounds Stewart's analysis contrasts with its rough-hewn sense of empire, which is figured in the most generalized of terms: "colonial armatures," the "myth of empire," "global transform-ation."[25] This comparative unevenness in turn highlights an underlying assumption that the primary impact of imperialism upon the metropolitan novel occurred at second hand, through its registering of the "cultural tensions" generated at home by those unsavory and invisible offshore activities.[26] I shall suggest instead that the formal traces of the Victorian settler empire can be brought to light more effectively through renovating a materialist tradition of formal analysis. "Every element of form has an active material basis," insists Raymond Williams; at the same time, he avers, "form is inevitably a relationship."[27] Britain's entangled histories with Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth century had significant implications, as much relational as material, for literary form. Both the unfolding local histories of Britain's settler projects and the shifting geo-political status of the settler empire as a whole, I shall argue, left formal traces upon metropolitan literature by way of specific networks of literary influence and exchange that emerged out of that distinct imperial framework.

British Identity, Literature, and the Victorian Settler Empire

When Karl Marx turned his excoriating gaze on Edward Gibbon Wake-field's influential theories of settler colonization, at the conclusion of his analysis of primitive accumulation in *Capital* (1867), he found their "great merit" lay in having "discovered, not something new *about* the colonies, but, *in* the colonies, the truth about capitalist relations in the mother country."[28] This book's central wager follows Marx in arguing that settler colonialism's most significant influence on Victorian literature was brought to bear through one of its most obvious yet least remarked structural features: the centrality of British identity to the attempt to replicate Victorian society on a global scale. The potential of Britishness as a collective political identity to underpin nation and empire building

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[25] Ibid., 187, 192, 194.   [26] Ibid., 200.
[27] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 187, 190.
[28] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Volume One*, ed. Ernest Mandel, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), 830, 932. See also Gabriel Piterberg and Lorenzo Veracini, "Wakefield, Marx, and the World Turned Inside Out," *Journal of Global History* 10, no. 3 (2015).

was crystallized in the eighteenth century, as Linda Colley has argued, when its capaciousness and flexibility as a concept provided a means of unifying England, Scotland, and Wales in response to the threat of European war.[29] Defined in opposition to other nationalities and ethnicities, the conviction of a shared British identity helped bolster a particularly potent form of the "deep, horizontal comradeship" that Benedict Anderson locates in all national identities, a shared identification that binds a dispersed and numerous population together despite a lack of personal connection or knowledge between its members, so that "in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[30] By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a rhetoric of Britishness that conflated racial and national identity was being mobilized to imagine a common political purpose across the settler empire, providing "a form of social cement connecting the scattered elements of the empire, and allowing it to be represented both as a natural outgrowth of England and as a cohesive whole."[31] Yet, to borrow the terms of Anderson's most influential formulation of national identity, Britishness proved at a global scale to be neither a "homogeneous" nor an "empty" concept. In the process of being transported from Britain and imposed violently and unevenly in Australia and New Zealand, key concepts underpinning British political identity were repeatedly challenged and reconfigured in the colonies as settlement took unexpected turns. It is through the torqueing of Victorian narrative forms in the colonial environment, I shall suggest, that we can best grasp the new claims made for British identity by settler populations independent of its ostensible metropolitan arbiters.

The persistence of Britishness as a unifying political identity within the Victorian settler empire throughout the century is a divergence from the path toward colonial nationalism that Benedict Anderson has taught us to expect. *Imagined Communities* points out that nationalist sentiment emerged in the Americas amongst creoles (European-descended but

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[29] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). For the political import of the relationship between conceptions of "Englishness" and "Britishness," see Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3–40.

[30] Benedict R. O'Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 6, 7.

[31] Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 119. On the historiographical questions for "British history" raised by the attempted "duplication of British nationality, politics and social structure under conditions of settlement," see J. G. A. Pocock, "The Neo-Britains and the Three Empires," in *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 187.

colonial-born) despite the existence of "a common language and a common descent" that ought to continue to bind it to the metropole.[32] The drivers of colonial separatism are located in their political and cultural marginalization by the metropole, whereby "the accident of birth in the Americas consigned him [i.e., the colonial functionary] to subordination – even though in terms of language, religion, ancestry, or manners he was largely indistinguishable from the Spain-born Spaniard."[33] In contrast to the revolutionary path taken by British settlers in North America in the eighteenth century, however, Britain's nineteenth-century settler colonies attained a significant degree of political independence (creole nationalism) yet chose to retain their imperial allegiance (imagined community). Imperial historian John Darwin describes this seemingly paradoxical state of affairs as "Britannic nationalism," whereby "national identity was asserted by rejecting subservience to the British *government*, but by affirming equality with Britain as 'British peoples' or 'nations.'"[34] James Belich goes further in proposing a process of "recolonization," or "metropolitan reintegration," whereby antiparallel economic and cultural flows surprisingly strengthened aging imperial bonds:

> Economic staples flowed one way, from newlands to old; cultural staples and manufactures flowed the other way. The relationship between oldland and new tightened, against the grain of expectations about the steady emergence of independence or parity. Collective identities shared by oldland and new strengthened along with economic re-integration, though the one did not necessarily determine the other.[35]

These broad-brush invocations of Britishness nevertheless remain unable to say anything very specific about the conceptions of identity that did gain purchase across the empire, how they might have altered in the process of their global transit, or the means by which a given narrative model might have become influential in colonial or metropolitan environments. Moreover, I wish to suggest that in this complex environment of shared and divergent political affiliations – racial, national, imperial – British identity comes into focus as something to be claimed, contested, and mobilized. At least, that is, by those who have a stake in it.

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[32] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7, 47.   [33] Ibid., 58.
[34] Darwin, *Empire Project*, 147, original emphasis.
[35] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 179. The phrase "metropolitan reintegration" is suggested by P. J. Cain, "The Economics and Ideologies of Anglo-American Settlerism, 1780–1939," *Victorian Studies* 53, no. 1 (2010): 106.

My thinking in the following pages about the formal work that litera-
ture performed within the Victorian settler empire both draws on and
diverges from imperial historians' use of world-systems approaches to
foreground the powerful economic and ethnic linkages between Britain
and its settler populations. A focus on networks is far from unique to this
body of work, for there is now a "consensus amongst many, if not all,
historians of empire," as Tony Ballantyne points out, "that reconstructing
the movement of plants and animals, people, capital, commodities, infor-
mation, and ideas is fundamental to understanding how the empire
developed and how it operated on a day to day basis."[36] World-systems
histories have largely focused on "people, capital, [and] commodities,"
seeking to highlight the settler empire's sheer scale by outlining the
globe-changing consequences of trade and migratory flows that derived
their effectiveness from the substrate of shared British culture.[37] The
potential that such frameworks offer for reconsidering the literary dimen-
sions of the settler empire lies equally in their transnational scope, the
importance they ascribe to identity, and their emphasis on the material
drivers of imperial culture. From another angle, however, "British World"
scholarship appears to offer a severely diminished horizon for criticism.
A general lack of interest in the nuances of cultural production is often
underpinned by a thoroughgoing suspicion of postcolonialism, both for its
privileging of textual representations and its apparent neglect of white
populations. These possibilities and pitfalls are equally on display in
Darwin's *The Empire Project* (2009), where a rejection of postcolonialism's
cultural turn is part and parcel of the historiographic claim to redress "the
place of the white dominions [that] has been all but ignored by two
generations of imperial historiography":

> Least of all will it help to fall back upon a crude stereotyping of conflicting
> "imaginaries," in which "British" conceptions of mastery are contrasted
> with the values of their indigenous subjects.... Most important of all,
> discerning the impact of "imaginings," "representations," or "colonial