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EVERYDAY IMPERIALISM:
THE LANDSCAPE OF EMPIRE,
LONDON, 1870-1939

by

Pamela J. Francis

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APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:

Helena Michie, Professor, Chair
Agnes Cullen Arnold Professor of Humanities
English

Terrence Doody, Professor
English

Paula A. Sanders, Professor
History

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ABSTRACT

Everyday Imperialism:
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While many historians of the British Empire have dismissed the presence of imperial motifs and themes in Britain in the early twentieth century, this dissertation identifies and analyzes two discourses of Empire that shaped the material and cultural landscape of London during that period. Chapter one establishes several contexts relating to this period, including New Imperialism, as outlined by Disraeli and later, Joseph Chamberlain. As Disraeli’s New Imperialism evolved, it incorporated the national efficiency movement as a way to make the Empire modern and relevant while maintaining traditional social and political hierarchies, resulting in a cultural milieu of “conservative modernity.”

While uncovering these ideas in the imperial spectacle of the first four decades of the twentieth century, I employ aspects of critical human geography to demonstrate how those ideas inscribed themselves onto the urban landscape of London.

Chapter two describes three royal Jubilees in terms of imperial spectacle. These events reflect an imperial ethos built on the concept of the Empire as modern, prosperous, healthy, and tasked by Providence with a civilizing mission. Once identified, I introduce seemingly opposite ways of talking about the Empire: discourses of exceptionalism, and discourses of degeneration and decline. I explain that these discourses manifest themselves
in numerous cultural practices as well as official programs and policies that are then
reflected in the urban landscape. A description of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley
in 1924-1925 focuses on public and private responses to the dominant narrative of empire.

Chapters three and four investigate exceptionalism and decline and provide
examples of “official” responses to these themes, as in the institution of new bureaucracies,
such as the Ministry of Health, as well as from “below,” as in the celebration of Empire Day.
A close look at both formal and informal responses to these discourses of exceptionalism
proves that patriotic imperialism was very much a part of the cultural and material
landscape of London until 1939, when German bombs erased the landscape of empire,
clearing the ground for the construction of a new landscape of nation.
Acknowledgements

There is simply no way to thank all those who have helped me in this very long process, and I’m certain that as soon as I submit this to the graduate office, I will think of someone without whose aid and support I simply could not have finished. Yet even with the knowledge that I am doomed to fail, I will attempt to thank those who have supported me throughout my graduate career.

It goes without saying that I owe thanks to my director, Dr. Helena Michie. Even if she had not provided guidance—though of course she did!—she earned my undying gratitude for simply not giving up on me. She’s not much for email, and I’m not much for the telephone; given that I live 250 miles from campus, this could have been a considerable challenge. Fortunately, we managed, and this project is the proof. Many thanks go as well to my classmates at Rice University, Jill Delsigne, Kevin Morrison, Victoria Ford Smith, Molly Slattery, Teresa Wei, and Ryan White. All of us had heard stories of the perils of graduate school and the possibilities of backbiting and sabotage by one’s own cohort, but I am happy to say that absolutely none of that applied to us. We experienced our share of life events, including the death of parents and the birth of children, and we supported each other unconditionally throughout our residencies.

I am fortunate to have had the constant support of my family, especially my mother, Dr. Ethel Haughton, and my sister, Lisa Francis Wangler. I have missed many family events in the past few years, and I know this was particularly frustrating for my sister; her continual encouragement is therefore doubly appreciated, and I look forward to jumping back into the river of happy chaos that is the Wangler family. And while my own (tiny) family has cheered me on, I would be remiss to not mention the large, boisterous crowd
that make up my husband’s family who, since the day they met me, have accepted me as one of their own.

Sadly, some of those to whom my success meant the most are not here to celebrate. I lost both my stepfather, Henry Haughton, and my father, Bobby Kelton Francis, during my first year of graduate school. If I have any inherent writing ability at all, it was inherited from my father, although I’ll confess that I never shared his love of automobile trivia, the subject of his own extensive writing. I miss him terribly, and I know that he was always very, very proud of me. Two years ago Greg and I lost my dear father-in-law, Ernest Granger, and my beautiful sister-in-law, Rebecca Granger Hall. They were both great Cajun dancers, and my biggest regret of this entire project is that I did not finish in time to provide them an opportunity to dance at a celebratory fais-do-do. And although they have been gone for decades, I must acknowledge my grandparents, Joe Will and Joanna Scrivner. No one has impacted my life more than those two: their love and support was absolutely unconditional, and I only wish that all little girls everywhere had the advantage of their encouragement.

I know this is not the first dissertation written with the distractions—and contributions—of social media, but I would be remiss if, in my thank-yous, I did not include my Facebook community, which includes hundreds of former students, classmates, and friends from all periods of my life. I find it amusing that while I sat at the oral defense, my husband sat in the stairwell posting updates; we were both simply overwhelmed by the number of well-wishers who responded when he finally posted that I had defended successfully! I am especially honored by the support of students at the (sadly) now defunct
Walden Prep in Dallas, Texas, and our fearless leader then and now, Pamala Ezell, as well as the students of Northwestern State University and the Louisiana Scholars’ College.

I also extend appreciation to those friends here at home, especially Holly Stave and Nahla Beier, who have fed me, read me, and listened to me for the past few years, even though I have had absolutely nothing to talk about but the landscape of empire. There are many more here in Natchitoches that I should thank, but I fear leaving out someone; I just hope you know who you are!

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 – The Landscape of Empire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Imperialism</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Modernity</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 – Making the Empire Visible: The Jubilee as Imperial Spectacle</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Golden Jubilee, 1887</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diamond Jubilee, 1897</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George V's Silver Jubilee, 1935</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 – Discourses of Exceptionalism</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Nation Set Apart</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providence and Protestants</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional Institutions</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Imperial Landscape, 1911</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4 – Discourses of Decline and Degeneration</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to Discourses of Decline and Degeneration</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The National Health Campaign, 1937</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5 – Conclusions: The Landscape of War, 1939</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One: The Landscape of Empire

Empire Day, May 24, 1932, promised to be a busy and exciting day for the people of London. Some of the events planned for the day included a trip to Guildhall for the schoolchildren of the City, a luncheon for the Prince of Wales given by the Nation’s Foods Exhibitions, the laying of a wreath at the Cenotaph on behalf of the children of Australia, and the grand event, sponsored by *the Daily Express*: community singing and a pageant of Empire in Hyde Park that evening. Other, more somber events included the dedication of the Lord Meath memorial window at St. Paul’s and a dinner given by the Royal Empire Society, featuring a speech by the Duke of Connaught. If one could not attend any of the activities, one could listen to the BBC broadcast of the Prime Minister’s Empire Day speech at 9:25, followed by a program called “The Common Wealth,” in which the listener was conducted on a “rapid tour round the Empire, ending at 10:25 in Hyde Park.” As early as January, a women’s committee formed by the Fellowship of the British Empire Exhibition had appealed to women all over the Empire to “use at their table solely the food products of home and Empire lands” on that special day in May. The Empire Marketing Board, along with other government ministries and chambers of commerce, had already pledged support for the ladies’ endeavor.

Yet Empire Day was not a national holiday in 1932, and had only received official recognition in 1916, twelve years after Reginald Brabazon, the 12th Earl of Meath, first

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1 As it turned out, even though the crowds were led in community singing, the pageant could not take place because of the immense crush of people. The *Daily Express* notes the next day: “It was their enthusiasm, their keenness to see and hear, which spoil the show and robbed them of the very things they wanted” (May 25, 1932, 2). While the paper praised the crowd for their “amazing good humor,” the event was never resumed.
suggested the celebration as a way to promote “imperial education and knowledge, particularly through schools, so that rising generations might be fully conscious of their Empire heritage, privileges and responsibilities.” Long concerned with a perceived moral and physical decline of the Empire’s youth, Meath had previously founded the Lads Drill Association and the Duty and Discipline Movement before turning his attention to the Empire Day Movement. The inherent militarism of these movements and the new EDM—based on a sense of wary competition with Germany—put off some prospective patrons, but after the Great War, the Movement garnered a great deal of generally uncritical support. Jim English and John MacKenzie have shown that the event was popular in working class neighborhoods as well as wealthier districts and was not relegated strictly to school functions, but incorporated the participation of dignitaries and a variety of civic organizations. Andrew Thompson, for instance, notes that the Women’s Institute was deeply involved in organizing Empire Day activities, and in fact, events were designed and coordinated entirely by volunteers. Even though a half-day was given over to its commemoration, school officials had no control over the content of the programs.

Although Empire Day was not a national holiday, it was given an astonishing amount of press; the Times, for example, published a special Empire Day supplement from 1909-1927, except during the war. The BBC, under the directorship of John Reith, gave extensive air time to Empire Day programming and sponsored Empire Day concerts conducted by Edward Elgar, Walford Davies and the like, constituting what John MacKenzie has called

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“an aural equivalent of an iconography, consisting of the patriotic and imperial music composed by a great range of composers in the period 1890 to 1920.”  

On Empire Day, participants were meant to synthesize and make sense of the many discourses of empire that constituted imperial identity: discourses of exceptionalism and prosperity, as well as more anxious discourses about the perceived moral, military, and mental shortcomings of the British nation and its people. Empire Day, then, was a collection of informal and civic practices, and as such, was very much a part of what I call the landscape of empire.

The landscape of empire is the subject of this dissertation. But it is important that before I define and describe “landscape” I clarify exactly what I mean when I refer to “empire.” It may be more helpful to define empire negatively, in other words, to describe what empire, as used here, is not. This project does not, for instance, discuss imperial policy as determined by the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, the Home Office, the War Office, and the India Office. Neither will I investigate the vagaries of imperial preference and protectionism, those economic policies that, while beneficial to the Empire and its possessions, ran counter to the longstanding British affinity for free trade. Imperial conquests and wars, such as the Battle of Omdurman or the Boer Wars, are only mentioned in reference to their subsequent reactions back “home” in Great Britain. And although “imperial” architecture—for instance, the New Colonial Offices constructed in the 1870’s-80’s—certainly plays a part in the material construction of London’s landscape of empire, these buildings, along with the numerous, if generally uninspired, monuments to the

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8 The history of these governmental bureaus is convoluted to say the least, and the names are not much help when attempting to determine their respective duties. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the War Office administered the Empire’s colonies. However, the Colonial Office of the late nineteenth century had no authority over many of the Empire’s protectorates, which were instead relegated to the Foreign Office.
servants of the Empire, are described here in the larger context of imperial practices rather than as symbols of imperial power.

This is an important distinction, both in terms of my use of empire and landscape. This project is not concerned with “the Empire”; it is, however, concerned with what I call “everyday imperialism,” that is, the practices of private citizens and unofficial and semi-official organizations that arose in response to government policies and public anxieties concerning the Empire. From the 1870’s until the eve of the Second World War, “New Imperialism” incorporated popular participation in the imperial project—in ways as varied as marching in an Empire Day parade and promoting motherhood among the middle class—into the imperial project. These kinds of practices made up the “everyday imperialism” that in its turn helped to construct the landscape of empire in London.

Putting aside the political and economic construction of the British Empire, I focus instead on how this landscape comes to mean; specifically, how did the urban landscape of London, the very economic, political, and spiritual heart of the British Empire, reflect and perpetuate the imperial project in the four decades leading up to World War II? How was the ideology of empire perceived, and then enacted within social spaces? To what extent did social spaces reflect or resist dominant ideologies? And, for that matter, how does one identify the “dominant” ideology? Empire Day, for example, reflects a very particular patriotic imperialism, one religious in nature (MacKenzie compares it to bushido, the Japanese sense of loyalty, patriotism, and sacrifice), but the patriotic imperialism displayed

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9 I will use “e/Empire” in two ways. “The Empire” or “Empire” will always refer to the British Empire specifically. The lower case “empire” will refer to empire as a system in this project, as perceived and practiced by most nations in the nineteenth-and early twentieth-centuries. So a British subject may be a loyal supporter of the British Empire, yet another may be ethically opposed to the notion of empire.
on Empire Day embodied the ideology of a private citizen, and could not in any way claim to be the “official” way to express one’s devotion to the Empire.\(^\text{10}\)

Addressing questions of how a landscape comes to mean necessarily incorporates a number of disciplinary contexts. My use of terms such as “landscape,” “space,” and “place” takes its significance from the use of these terms in critical human geography, and in fact, I have borrowed some critical methods from the field as well. Additionally, this project takes up a conversation in empire studies, as I deal with a paradigm of global empire, New Imperialism, as well as its particular instantiation in a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British context. As I will demonstrate, New Imperialism relied on a public investment in the imperial project, and one of the objectives of this dissertation is to investigate the degree of that investment. As I “read” the landscape of the Empire for indications of that investment, I trace the landscape’s construction back to voluntary or spontaneous cultural practices of the residents of London—as well as to the official policies enacted upon those citizens—and in that sense, then, employ some of the methods associated with the discipline of cultural studies. I have focused my investigation on the “heart” of the Empire, London, and thus address what Felix Driver and David Gilbert have identified and decried as “the strange neglect of the modern imperial city as an object of study.”\(^\text{11}\) As Driver and Gilbert have noted, the imperial city provides rich opportunities for study, as both an urban area, whose “identities . . . are formed and re-formed through networks of relationships across space and time,” and as the metropole in its imperial

\(^{10}\) MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire, 233.

relations. The docks, the Houses of Parliament, Guildhall, wealthy women in Mayfair, the Labour organizer in Spitalfields: London in all its places and in all its people reflected the landscape of empire.

Below, I will define some of the terms and concepts I employ in my investigation of how the Empire takes place on the urban landscape of London. This approach—that is, “reading” the landscape for its reflection of imperial motifs—is not a new approach by any means. Driver and Gilbert’s Imperial Cities, which identifies the “imperial” in several cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is over ten years old now. John MacKenzie’s Studies in Imperialism series is completing its third decade, and the numerous volumes in that series are likewise dedicated to uncovering the imperial in everyday life. However, this project diverges, or perhaps expands, on much of the work in this area.

One way I expand on the work of imperial landscapes is by identifying cultural practices and material construction as rooted in and nourished by the ideology of New Imperialism. I describe the characteristics and development of the mid to late nineteenth century development of New Imperialism, noting that as a global paradigm, the ideas behind New Imperialism emphasized colonial and territorial expansion and the development of strong military and naval forces to defend that expansion. Unlike the “old” imperialism, New Imperialism demanded a public emotional investment in the imperial project which, I demonstrate, periodically shifted its purpose and methods. A number of cultural historians, as well as literary historians such as A.T. Tolley and Bernard Bergonzi, have discounted the existence of imperial sentiment in early twentieth century Britain, especially after the Great War. As I will show, however, the tenets of New Imperialism, even

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12 Ibid., 5.
though they evolved through the decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, still influenced the cultural and patriotic views of Britons and was evident in the practices and policies that took place in the Metropole, from the era of Disraeli to the beginning of the Second World War. In the absence of any actual new imperial policies, even after the Great War, public sentiment and even the definition of the imperial project were still based on the assumption that the Empire was a reflection of the political, cultural, and economic superiority of Britain and the British people. Bernard Porter and others have ended the period of New Imperialism at the beginning of the Great War; I, however, make a case for its pervasive influence on the landscape of empire, all the way to the beginning of the Second World War.

The landscape of empire is my object of observation, but it is important to understand that landscape here is not a defined area of objects located within a designated space, or something to be looked at. I use landscape in two ways that may be unfamiliar. In the first way, landscape is the place where some things are, but also where things take place. In other words, actions, practices, rituals, and accidents both make the landscape and are determined by it. An example may demonstrate how practices and the built landscape are related: statues of individual heroes and regiments line the Victoria Embankment, and are peppered throughout the side streets and malls of Whitehall. However, the Cenotaph, Lutyens’ elegant memorial to the Glorious Dead of the Great War, is in the middle of the street in Whitehall. All official processions must pass it, and traditionally, all salute or otherwise acknowledge the monument. A few vignettes in H.V. Morton’s charming *The Heart of London* describes the respect given to it in the twenties: men on omnibuses took
off their hats, as did businessmen and even delivery boys, when passing. Unlike the memorials scattered throughout the rest of the City, this one commands respect: situated in the heart of Whitehall—the connection between the Crown and the Church where the work of the nation takes place—it cannot be forgotten or ignored. Here, practices are determined by the built landscape, but as I will show below, in this particular case, the construction of the permanent monument was itself a result of practices. Landscape, then, is not only the space itself, but also how that space is utilized and conversely, how it has determined practices.

The second way I have employed landscape is as a “way of seeing,” an idea first discussed by Denis Cosgrove, and one I have expanded to include not only spatial, but cultural (“everyday”) practices. Our past experiences shape how we interpret the present, and experiences are in turn interpreted by way of a cultural apparatus. The Empire provided this apparatus, so that common practices reflected the inherent rightness of the imperial project. Purchasing coffee from Kenya and tobacco from Rhodesia were ways to support the Empire, rather than to express overt approval of the exploitation of indigenous labor, just as colonial policies towards natives—such as the “protection” policies in Australia which enclosed aborigines in wastelands—were believed to “civilize” natives who the British assumed were undoubtedly grateful for the opportunity. The Empire Marketing Board, established in 1926 to promote the sale of imperial goods, occasionally included stylized natives harvesting tealeaves or tapping rubber trees in colorful posters, but omitted the white overseer or any other indication that the native worked for other than the sheer joy of labor. Anne McClintock, in her essay “Soft-soaping Empire: Commodity

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Racism and Imperial Advertising,” detailed the methods by which advertising—in this instance, a decidedly un-exotic product, soap—enforced an imperial trope, that of equating cleanliness with civilization. In this way, a “way of seeing” perpetuated by advertisers ensured that the civilizing project, and thus the larger imperial project, was justified. Similarly, the devotion of Queen Victoria's Indian servants, as well as Kipling's Gunga-Din and other “good” natives, instilled in many Britons the notion that the colonized welcomed the white overlord, instinctively knowing that the colonizing presence was for his own good. What these examples indicate is that these practices and incidents informed the way those at home viewed the city around them and the practices in which they participated.

As I will explain below, ways of seeing and responding to landscapes can be referred to as narratives that are either new ways of seeing, or are responses to other narratives. Either way they inscribe their stories and responses into the landscape. Here, I focus on those narratives and responses that have constructed the landscape of empire.

My approach, I believe, adds much to current trajectories in empire studies. By expanding the period of study here, rather than seeing peaks and valleys in popular imperial sentiment, I can focus on the continuities in practices and policies that stem from the ideology of New Imperialism. Furthermore, treating landscape as a way of seeing, rather than something seen, provides a fuller view of the imperial sentiment of British citizens and, even more importantly, demonstrates how difficult it is for any narrative to gain complete dominance. This, of course, complicates the idea of power as a binary operation: “official” narratives may be implemented by informal organizations, or, perhaps, rejected or subverted. The more narratives and responses we can trace on the landscape,

the more we will understand how narratives and responses are played out today on an ever-shrinking landscape.

Cutting across disciplinary borders, I employ a variety of methods and terms as a *chorological poetics*, that is, as a selection of socio-spatial practices that can help me “read” the variety of narratives inscribed on a landscape. I have used three terms in particular as contexts of this project in ways that cross disciplinary borders: New Imperialism, conservative modernity, and landscape. New Imperialism is a global politics, yet here I concentrate on Disraeli’s specifically British version of New Imperialism, as revealed—not on the high seas or in the carved up continent of Africa—but in the urban landscape of London. Contemporary social historian Alison Light has introduced the term conservative modernity to describe feminist responses to changing gender roles in early twentieth century families, but the term captures as well the tensions inherent in utilizing modern practices and ideas in the maintenance of traditional hierarchies. Finally, landscape, a concept central to the field of critical human geography, provides a way to talk about new imperialism and to describe how imperial sentiment was both conceived of and expressed in the practices of Londoners. In roughly seventy years—from the 1870’s to the Second World War—the imperial project, through official policies, private and public practices, and even acts of resistance to those very policies and practices, inscribed itself onto the civic life of London, presenting to the world a remarkable and seemingly immutable landscape of empire.

**New Imperialism**

While the celebration of Empire Day was an expression of the New Imperialism of the twentieth century, its ideology is rooted in the jingoistic New Imperialism of the
Victorian era. June 24, 1872 proved to be a defining moment of the earlier imperial project. According to a Unionist paper, *The Belfast Newsletter*, the National Union Conservative and Constitutional Association hosted its annual banquet that evening, and in the crowded room—about 1500 according to another paper—“enthusiasm prevailed throughout.”  The distinguished guest that evening was Benjamin Disraeli, leader of the Conservative opposition in Gladstone’s Liberal government, and the reporter exclaimed that the “lion” of the evening “was received as Conservatives know well how to greet their chief.” Apparently it took some time for the applause to subside, but Disraeli finally began the speech that his biographer Buckle describes as “the famous declaration from which the modern conception of the British Empire largely takes its rise.”  The Crystal Palace Speech (one Nationalist paper in Dublin wryly remarked that the Conservatives had “hired the biggest building in the world, and used it as a grand Conservative advertisement”) provides a very general foundation for what would later become known as New Imperialism in its peculiarly British form.

Much of the speech was devoted to attacks on Liberal government and, at times, Disraeli ventured that the Liberals, the party of cosmopolitan ideas—as opposed to the Conservative nationalism—had conspired to undermine traditional national values. Disraeli warned his audience that “the tone and tendency of Liberalism can no longer be concealed. It is an attack on the institutions of the country under the name of reform, and to make war on the manners and customs of the people of this country under the pretext of

18 The words “nation” and “empire” were synonymous to Disraeli. Imperialism was not in common usage until the late 1800’s; in Disraeli’s time it had a generally negative connotation and was frequently used against him.
progress.” Here Disraeli evoked the specter of cultural genocide in much the same way later imperialists will evoke the specter of racial decline. Yet he countered the image of cultural doom by emphasizing the Empire’s providential history and English notions of liberty as superior to the “liberal” ideas of cosmopolitanism, based, as they were, in “continental principles.” In fact, he said, the first object of the Tory party—what he called the “National” party—was to “maintain the institutions of the country,” those institutions which reflected the principles of the English community, the “principles of liberty, of order, and law, and of religion.” In this speech we also see the blueprint for what Eric Hobsbawm and others have called “the invention of tradition”; Disraeli listed those aspects of the nation that should not be subject to the whims of individuals or mobs, but “should be embodied in the form of permanence and power.” The Monarchy, he said, embodied the principles of law and order, while the Established Church invested the imperial project with “the providential government of the world and the responsibility of man.” “Power,” for Disraeli was no code for economic or cultural vitality; although the degree to which Disraeli had any sort of “theory” of imperialism is hotly debated, it is clear that from the mid 1870’s “upholding the institutions” of the nation meant military build up and the maintenance—and even expansion—of imperial possessions.

The second object of the Conservative agenda was, unequivocally, “to uphold the Empire of England.” Disraeli rues that the Liberals missed out on opportunities for “Imperial consolidation,” a system that would have established protective tariffs,

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19 “Disraeli at the Crystal Palace.”
20 C.C. Eldridge’s Disraeli and the Rise of a New Imperialism, University of Wales Press, 1996, nicely summarizes many of the positions on Disraeli’s imperialism, and posits Eldridge’s own view of Disraeli’s failure to produce—or even interest himself in—a unified theory of imperialism. Even Eldridge, however, acknowledges that Disraeli saw the Empire as a symbol of imperial power and prestige.
encouraged settlement in “unappropriated lands which belonged to the sovereign as their trustee,” developed a military code outlining precisely the responsibilities of imperial defense, and finally, organized a representative council which would facilitate communication between the colonies and the home government. Ultimately, these missed opportunities became the tenets of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperialism, commonly referred to as New Imperialism.

Although Eldridge assures us that Disraeli was “not much concerned with humanitarian and religious issues when British interests were at stake,” Disraeli was shrewd enough to know that his version of patriotic imperialism would never amount to much without the backing of the working class.\(^{22}\) By making the third objective of the Conservatives to “elevate the condition of the people,” Disraeli was able to incorporate popular sentiment into the imperial project.\(^{23}\) He waxed eloquent about the virtues of the working class of the Empire, appropriating their interests for the Conservative cause. As Disraeli put it:

> When I say Conservative I mean to say that the people of England and especially the working classes are proud of belonging to a great country, and wishing to maintain the greatness of that country; and they are proud of belonging to an Imperial country, and that they are resolved to maintain if they can the Empire of England.\(^{24}\)

Here Disraeli acknowledged the working class as the backbone of the Empire, both in the physical sense, that is, as imperial bodies employed in the maintenance of the Empire, as

\(^{22}\) Eldridge, *Disraeli and the Rise of a New Imperialism*, 56.

\(^{23}\) Kebbel, *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable the Earl of Beaconsfield, Vol. II*, 531.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 527-528.
well as in the phenomenological sense, that is, as the source and strength of a patriotic imperialism that often ventured into a general ruffianism. Disraeli’s strategy apparently worked, as he and his party, elected in 1874, made a long haul of six years, in which the working classes did, indeed, reap some reward for their jingoism in the form of health care and housing improvements.

Disraeli’s administration was never without controversy, and his ideological arguments with Gladstone effectively demonstrate the opposing attitudes towards the imperial project. Gladstone, representing the Liberal view, regarded empire as a burden to a nation and believed the government should work towards checking any expansion of the Empire’s current possessions. He also believed Free Trade was the only viable and fair system of commerce; finally, as he frequently pointed out, the very notion of an expansionist empire flew in the face of those liberties that Disraeli himself had proudly declared as inherent to the national character. Disraeli and the Conservatives, however, had effectively merged the notions of empire and patriotism in the civic consciousness, and support for the Empire found expression in popular media, such as juvenile literature, sensationalist journalism, and music hall entertainment.

The respective supporters of Free Trade and Tariff Reform generally fell along a Liberal/Conservative divide, but by the “Khaki Election” of 1900 pro-Empire Unionist Liberals, such as Joseph Chamberlain, along with Liberal imperialists such as Prime Minister Rosebery, had joined forces with the protectionist Conservatives against the Gladstonian, that is, the Free Trade wing of the Liberal party. Chamberlain never served as

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Prime Minister, but his position as Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1895-1903 allowed him to expand on existing support for New Imperialism, essentially updating Disraeli’s version, while smoothing out some of the rougher edges of its accompanying jingoism. Chamberlain’s version of social-imperialism, stemming from his Liberal roots, emphasized that the welfare of the working class depended on an imperial economy, and much of his considerable energy was spent convincing the working class to support tariff reform.

In contrast to Disraeli, who had spoken positively of the nation’s historic liberties and providential guidance, Chamberlain made dire predictions concerning the decline of the Empire’s prestige, as well as its economic and naval power. Harking back to Disraeli’s identification of Liberalism with cosmopolitanism and Conservatism with patriotic imperialism, he told one audience, in 1903, “I admit that I am not cosmopolitan enough to wish to see the happiness, success, or prosperity of American workmen secured by the starvation and misery and suffering of British workmen.”26 Chamberlain frequently reminded his working-class audiences that they had to choose between policies of Free Trade that would ultimately help foreigners, and policies such as his own plan of Tariff Reform that would protect the British worker while promoting imperial consolidation.

Ultimately, Free Trade Liberals won that round of debate, but as one historian, Martin Kitchen, put it, “The Liberals had no grand scheme for the empire; they simply hoped to muddle through as best they could.”27 The next few years of imperial “policy”

certainly proved a case for “muddling through”: the governance of India consisted in the
granting of small reforms on the heels of repressive responses to native demands, while
some imperial administrators in Africa experimented with “indirect rule,” which more
often than not fostered corruption among native leaders.

It appears, then, that official imperial policies were developed on an ad hoc basis in
the first few governments of the new century, and there seems to have been little to compel
public support for British imperialism. But the degree to which, in fact, the public invested
in the imperial project in the first few decades of the twentieth century is one of the more
contentious issues in Empire Studies. Many who have studied British culture in the early
decades of the twentieth century have made the case for a decided lack of imperial
enthusiasm, beginning with the fiascos of the Boer Wars, and intensifying after the First
World War. The issue has been complicated by a tendency of historians to separate British
history from imperial history, and it was only in the 1960’s and 1970’s, with the
burgeoning of cultural history and history from “below,” that the presence of imperial
sentiment came to be studied as an aspect of British history. It is from this point that we
begin to see different perspectives on the presence of the British Empire in the domestic
lives of Britons, although a complete understanding is still hampered by the tendency to
divide political from cultural history. Others have considered popular imperial sentiment
briefly, then dismissed the prevalence of patriotic imperialism. Denis Judd, for instance, in
his Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present, writes of events
affecting imperial governance, and briefly addresses domestic anti-imperialism, but does
not mention how the Empire figured in the everyday life of the British subject.28 Bernard

28 Denis Judd, Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present (London: Phoenix, 2001).
Porter, as well, refers to a decline in “imperial morale” around 1920 and adamantly asserts that the British soldiers who fought in the Great War did so out of a “narrower patriotism of ‘king and country’” rather than for any sort of imperial pride.\textsuperscript{29}

However, in 1978, Edward Said’s \textit{Orientalism} drew attention to the influence of imperialism on culture and cultural perceptions, and provided a new direction of inquiry for those interested in the broadly defined and emotionally charged concept of empire.\textsuperscript{30} In 1985, John M. MacKenzie embarked on an extensive inquiry into the cultural aspects of empire, when he founded the \textit{Studies in Imperialism} series through the University of Manchester Press. While the Subaltern Studies Group, among others, addressed questions of a postcolonial nature, MacKenzie’s project pursued a different trajectory. He noted that

\begin{quote}
  Few had written about the influence of imperialism upon Metropolitan cultures and societies, not only in terms of popular and ‘high’ culture, but also in respect of the development of scholarly disciplines, the growth of institutions like museums, societies and pressure groups, the churches and their attendant missionary societies and the role of empire in forming aspects of national character and public self-image in the period.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

The series addresses those very omissions, and has now published nearly one hundred volumes, providing a “cross-disciplinary forum for those who wished to illuminate the impact of imperialism on home societies, to examine the mutual inter-actions of imperialism.” Studies not associated with this particular series have addressed the

\textsuperscript{29} Bernard Porter, \textit{The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain} (Oxford: Oxford University Presss, 2004), 257.
concerns MacKenzie has listed as well: Wendy Webster’s *Englishness and Empire* (2005) and *At Home with the Empire*, edited by Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (2006) are two recent examples. My project intends to contribute to conversations in empire studies as well by asserting that the empire was very much a part of private and public life in the decades leading up to World War II, and that this was in part a public response to the lack of any new “official” imperial policies or any new sort of imperial vision. The image of global power, the moral imperative of the civilizing mission, the spread of liberal ideas of democracy—all of these images and ideals, which I assert are inscribed on the phenomenological and material landscape—sustained patriotic imperialism, even when official imperial policy did little to encourage it.

A closer look at patriotic imperialism reveals several ways of talking about empire and how they reflected and directed the experience of empire, but I will focus on only two. These two discourses—discourses of exceptionalism and discourses of decline and degeneration—are ways of thinking and talking about the British Empire, as well as ways in which the Empire was experienced by both the private individual and the civic body. I trace the origins of these discourses—prevalent throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century—back to the themes of New Imperialism as conceived of by Disraeli and developed by Joseph Chamberlain. Though the imperial policies of Chamberlain were never fully realized and, were in fact moribund by 1906, his brand of social imperialism, which tied the health of the Empire to the health of the worker and proposed protectionism for the nation’s industries, prompted a delayed and prolonged response among both traditional conservatives who, like Disraeli decades earlier, saw the Empire as the visible evidence of military and economic power, and the more liberal-minded who saw the
empire as the vehicle for the nation’s civilizing mission. Chapter two will more fully demonstrate the relationship between Chamberlain’s “True Conception of Empire,” that is, the ideology of New Imperialism, and its inscription on the urban center of the Empire, London.

**Conservative Modernity**

Throughout this project, I will remind the reader that the landscape of empire is best described as an example or demonstration of “conservative modernity.” This term is the invention of Alison Light, social historian and associate of Raphael Samuel in the History Workshop Project. In 1991, Light published *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* in which she argues that

the 1920s and ‘30s saw a move away from formerly heroic and officially masculine public rhetorics of national destiny and from a dynamic and missionary view of the Victorian and Edwardian middle classes in ‘Great Britain’ to an Englishness at once less imperial and more inward-looking, more domestic and more private—and, in terms of pre-war standards, more ‘feminine’.32

Light develops her thesis through a study of several women writers of the period, including Ivy Compton-Burnett and Jan Struther, author of the decidedy domestic *Mrs. Miniver*. Light suggests that the inter-war years in particular mark a point at which many women entered into “modernity,” and by doing so resisted earlier constructions of femininity. Additionally, she writes, this move “recast the imperial, as well as the national idea of Englishness”; the culture of privacy found in her subjects’ works produced a general conservatism, even

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while allowing for the modernization of women’s lives. In contrast, I find the cultural practices and built environment of London in the early twentieth century reflective of a robust public and private patriotic imperialism that retains strands of what Light has referred to as the “heroic and officially masculine public rhetorics of national destiny.”

Light’s work is much more narrowly focused than this project; she looks at a fairly small and thematically similar body of work. Yet I find her term, conservative modernity, a useful description for the period, practices, and policies of my own investigations. To use this term to describe the landscape of empire I necessarily have to adjust its scope. Light employs conservative modernity in relation to a small group of women writers who she believes reflected in their writing a move away from an imperial vision of national life towards a more domestic one. Ultimately, my usage of the term broadens the objects of study to include general attitudes of the period as reflected in social practices and organizations, not just those of writers or women. But more importantly, I see conservative modernity as easily applying to the aims of the imperial project, rather than a domestic one.

For instance, even the most liberal constructions of empire, such as the social imperialism of Joseph Chamberlain, conceived of the imperial project as a kind of safety valve, a vent for any sort of revolutionary pressure. Chamberlain insisted that the Empire was good for the worker, and that the worker’s prosperity depended on the protection of imperial trade, which would also protect British industry. And in both Disraeli’s “empire is power” vision and Chamberlain’s kinder, gentler version of empire, the Empire was figured as a long-standing British tradition, much like the monarchy, though, in both cases, public investment in the institutions was relatively recent. Empire, then, is figured as a time-
honored tradition, a national characteristic that, in the anti-Liberal construction of Disraeli and Chamberlain, was under fire from cosmopolitanism.

If the Empire was conservative in its desire to maintain the social and political status quo, it was quite modern in its methods. Article titles in The Times from 1911 through the 1930’s reveal the connection between empire and modernization: the import of fruits and vegetables from throughout the Empire, for instance, was “increasing in considerably greater ration than those from all other sources,” due to the “progress made in refrigeration,” and Venezuelan and other British-controlled oil fields saw increasing production after the institution of “modern production methods.”33,34 The royal docks of London (The Royal Albert, The Royal Victoria, and the King George V Docks), begun in 1855 and completed by 1921, combined to make the largest enclosed dock area in the world. At the same time, scientific methods were employed in the human sciences: colonial “theories,” such as the indirect rule espoused by Margery Perham, incorporated contemporary ideas of anthropology and efficiency, and her research methods—analyzing files, interrogating both officials and subjects, observing the daily lives of the colonized—exemplify modern techniques.

Conservative modernity, as a social and political component of New Imperialism, can best be illustrated through the notion of “national efficiency.” This cluster of loosely related ideas seems to have coalesced and arisen in response to the debacle of Black Week, a series of three substantial British defeats in the Boer Wars in 1899, and through Chamberlain’s advocacy of efficiency—he perceived himself as “the architect of an efficient

33 “Empire Fruit,” The Times, October 2, 1928, xix.
and modernized empire”—the concept became associated with New Imperialism.\textsuperscript{35} The history of this movement, for lack of a better word, is somewhat convoluted as played out between various political coalitions and class alliances, but in general we may define it, as Lord Rosebery did in 1902, as “a condition of national fitness equal to the demands of our Empire—administrative, parliamentary, commercial, educational, physical, moral, naval, and military fitness—so that we should make the best of our admirable raw material.”\textsuperscript{36}

The new vision of empire was one of possibility, figured in terms of “raw materials,” which looked at even the human element of the Empire as resources to be efficiently employed.

Although Disraeli had capitalized on a sense of exceptionalism and a longstanding certainty of the providential nature of the Empire’s institutions, a program of national efficiency instead addressed Chamberlain and others’ anxieties concerning the possible decline of imperial power and position. As Bernard Semmel has pointed out, “’Efficiency’ had many meanings: a sound industrial system, a united Empire, a vigorous people, a state of military and naval preparedness.”\textsuperscript{37} Clearly, efficiency would be an important component of New Imperialism.

G.S. Searle, in his history of the national efficiency movement, identifies additional motifs and characteristics of national efficiency, claiming for it a “cohering ideology” that appealed to a broad range of classes and professions.\textsuperscript{38} The “cult of the businessman” and the rise of the professional evoked a modern, businesslike approach to bureaucracy, and

\textsuperscript{36} Archibald Rosebery. The Policy of the Liberal League as Expressed in Lord Rosebery’s Speeches. Liberal League Publications, no. 37. London: The Liberal League, 1903
allowed for some recognition of merit while maintaining traditional hierarchies.\textsuperscript{39} There is little indication that the request for more professional mobility was radical in intention: landed aristocrats were in no danger of losing their inherited leadership, and many of the upper class embraced the movement towards efficiency, recognizing that their own class had often failed at anything more than muddling through. Searle remarks that even though a wide range of public figures such as Rosebery, a landed aristocrat, and Chamberlain, a self-made industrialist, made vigorous calls for the vast reorganization of bureaus and departments, “very few of them favoured changes which would reduce the power or the prestige of the existing ruling class.”\textsuperscript{40} So while advocates of national efficiency expressed a thoroughly modern “adulation of science, trained intelligence, and ‘expertise,’” the movement also wished to preserve the status quo of British socio-economic hierarchies.\textsuperscript{41} By this point in time, patriotic imperialism had become part and parcel of the status quo.

The language of efficiency found its way into many aspects of public and private lives in the decades leading up to World War II. Yet for all its emphasis on modern science and technology, as well as its employment of modern methods of data collection, education, and other recent advances, it was ultimately conservative in nature. The language and practices which accrued around the notion of national efficiency, then, stand as an example of my amended version of Alison Light’s “conservative modernity” and are one way to explain how modern and forward-thinking ideas and methods could be employed in the maintenance of traditionally conservative notions of empire.

\textbf{Landscape}

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., xvii.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., xxiv.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., xix.
The third term and context anchoring this project is that of “landscape.” By employing this term, I introduce another disciplinary context into the project: the field of critical human geography. Distinct from physical geography, human geography has as its purpose the investigation of the interrelationships between humans and their physical environment. By the late 1990’s, many in the field came to embrace some of the methods as well as the purposes and practices of what we may generically call critical theory, acknowledging that the term critical theory incorporates a variety of approaches, including postcolonialism, feminism, and environmentalism. Ultimately, the critical human geographer’s objective is to reveal the relations of power that produce space, place, and landscape, while acknowledging that the response or resistance to the dominant power’s intended “meaning” of those spaces is also imbricated in the construction of even the most hegemonically produced landscapes. The notion of dominant and alternative landscapes will be a useful framework for this project, providing a way to analyze both official and unofficial uses of place and space. Think, for instance, of Trafalgar Square, a dominant space meant to demonstrate the power and authority of the British government. Yet even as it was being built, it served as a space of resistance as well. In 1848, Chartist, incensed by a proposed income tax, clashed with police there, and it has served as a space of resistance ever since, although the regulation and licensing of “protests” have redefined the notion of resistance. In a similar fashion, a response to an official event may be unexpected. The Cenotaph in Whitehall was originally a temporary structure of wood and plaster, and was unveiled on July 19, 1919, during London’s peace parade. Yet for days after the event, the public continued to heap flowers and wreaths at its base, and by the end of July the
Cabinet agreed to erect a permanent memorial. Dedicated on November 11, 1920, the Cenotaph remains one of the most revered monuments in all of Great Britain.42

It is important to clarify—or, perhaps, complicate—terms such as “official” and “informal” and explain how they work in this investigation. As I observe London’s imperial landscape, I see that much of its geography is the result of official policies, that is, built by order of Parliament, or, perhaps, developed by a branch of the government. The most vibrant example—and perhaps the last “imprint” of imperialism on the cityscape—may be the checkerboard of ethnic neighborhoods that have developed across London as a result of massive immigration prompted by the British Nationality Act of 1948. For instance, the first Caribbean immigrants recruited by the government after World War II to fill positions in construction and nursing arrived at Tilbury Dock and were initially housed in an air raid shelter. As the nearest Labour Exchange was in Brixton, most of the Black community found housing there; today, over 25% of the population of the borough of Lambeth is of Caribbean or African descent. So in this instance, the Caribbean community’s response to the official policies of postwar reconstruction constructed its own landscape of empire. There are hundreds of landscapes of empire in London; collectively, they constitute a larger landscape.

Further complicating the distinction between official and informal acts is the difficulty of defining “official” in any strict sense. Consider, for example, the building of the Victoria Monument, dedicated in 1911: Parliament appointed a committee to come up with an idea for the memorial and allocated a large portion of the funding, thereby making it an “official” project. But as the project was extended to reach from Buckingham Palace to

Trafalgar Square, construction brought in metropolitan planners and budgets as well. Additionally, contributions from private individuals and civic organizations were solicited. The final product, the vista from the Palace to the Admiralty Arch, was the result of what M.H. Port describes as “a new co-operation between government, municipality, and the private citizen, both at home and overseas…” The new vista is also an example of the difficulty in distinguishing between official policies and private practices in any sort of absolute way. Furthermore, opposing “official” with either “informal” or “private” does not take into account sufficiently the role of civic organizations such as The Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress (the C.B.C.) or quasi-scientific groups such as the Eugenics Education Society, who often had significant influence in the making of official policies. One could use a different opposition, that of “above” and “below,” but this too, has its problems, not least that unofficial practices may include those instituted by royalty. Royalty had little part to play in the “official” running of the Empire, yet it seems hardly fitting to describe royal practice as arising from “below.” The only solution to the terminological quandary, it seems, is to be as specific as possible. I will generally use the term “official” when I want to describe those policies and practices that have some provenance in Parliament and have some power to enforce their implementation. I prefer to utilize “informal” for the unorganized, and sometimes spontaneous responses of individuals; we might think of a child’s half-penny contribution to the Victoria monument, or the decision by a young woman to volunteer to sew costumes for Lascelle’s great Pageant of London during the Festival of Empire of 1911. When practices or policies stem from the activism or influence of an organized group, they may be “unofficial.”

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tripartite division of the origin of practices and policies—official, unofficial, informal—like Lefebvre’s concept of the production of space explained below, allows that relationships of dominance are rarely limited to a simple top-down relationship. The landscape of empire, especially, was the product of “official” policies, but was shaped by the responses and occasional resistance to those dominant narratives by private individuals and civil society as well. Sometimes, unofficial narratives are more influential than official ones.

As Chapters Three and Four will show, both dominant and responsive practices take “place” in specific spaces. It may help us understand how landscapes are imprinted and shaped if we think first about the “production” of space as proposed by Marxist geographer Henri Lefebvre. In his view, and against the quantitative school of geography that held sway in the 1970s and ‘80s, space is not an empty box or container, a control for mathematical equations, but is instead a process: in short, space is produced through the interrelationships and geographies of types of spaces. Lefebvre identified three of these types of space: first, “spaces of representation,” which are abstract spaces as the dominant power wishes to construct them and desires them to be experienced. As we will see, this is imperial spectacle on the drawing board. A second space is “representational space”; this is the space as it is experienced, as symbols are interpreted, or, possibly, overlaid with resistance. “Spatial practices,” a third “space,” is that area in which relationships between the individual and the urban landscape are carried out: for instance, a commuter will time his departure from home in relation to train schedules, and coffee and donut shops will cluster around the station. Lefebvre’s triad of spatial categories intentionally problematizes the traditional above/below paradigm of power, and by doing so, has provided a more thorough analysis of the relationships that have collectively constructed the social spaces
of capitalism. I propose that much of the spectacle and many of the practices of Imperial London “produced” imperial space in London in much the same manner that capitalism, in Lefebvre’s plan, produced social space.

While space, in this view, is produced, it is, at the same time, experienced. So in contrast with critical human geographers—though not rejecting structuralist views—humanistic geographers, such as Yi-Fu Tuan and Denis Cosgrove, have focused their attention on the phenomenological aspects of space, that is, a sense of place. Place, then, is occasionally used as shorthand for the experience or meaning of space, both to the individual or corporate body. The space produced by dominant narratives and policies, which often reflect a sense of place, as well as the alternative experiences of those spaces, collectively constitute a landscape. In this project, the final product is “the landscape of empire,” and it is through an examination of the production of space, and how those spaces are experienced, that we will determine how this landscape comes to “mean.”

This question—how does landscape come to mean—is an important theme in the work of geographer Denis Cosgrove. Well attuned to the cultural processes that shape landscape, Cosgrove drew attention instead to the part played by landscape in shaping cultural processes and those who experience them. In an early and accessible essay, “Geography is Everywhere,” Cosgrove describes landscapes as either “dominant” or “alternative.” A dominant landscape, according to Cosgrove, is not an object to be seen or observed, but is rather a way of seeing. It reflects the dominant culture, relying on a system of familiar symbols and narratives to elicit a specific response or emotion. As we will see below, imperial spectacles such as jubilees and coronations followed specific narratives that were meant to emphasize certain themes; the presence in London of troops from
native regiments throughout the Empire, for instance, was consistently troped in the press as an indication of the diversity and unity of the “family” of Empire.

A dominant landscape may be experienced in ways not intended by the dominant culture. Alternative landscapes, then, do not reflect the way of seeing imposed by the dominant culture, but rather, reflect ways of experiencing the dominant landscape. These ways of experiencing may subvert the intended meaning of symbols, or experience the landscape from a different point of view than the intended audience; Jonathan Schneer, for example, in London 1900, imagines what the goods of the Empire, flooding the London docks daily as an indication of the wealth of the imperial enterprise, must have “meant” to the desperately poor—and often foreign—workers whose jobs it was to unload those riches.44 Within these informal experiences of the dominant landscape, Cosgrove identified three varieties of alternative landscapes. “Residual” landscapes may repurpose space, or may utilize space in a different way than originally intended. Huge swaths of twenty-first century London are residual landscapes: storefronts are now mosques or temples, and pubs may offer Indian dishes in addition to traditional fish and chips. “Emergent” landscapes, on the other hand, pose a challenge to the dominant culture. For example, in the 1980s, the London Punk scene reinscribed the landscape of Trafalgar Square so much that the emergent landscape was a greater spectacle than the monument itself; thirty years later, tourist shops still sell postcards of punks in Trafalgar Square. Last are “excluded” landscapes, spaces constructed parallel to or as a response to the dominant landscape. Hampstead Heath, for example, is a favorite green space, a place for Londoners to get out from the city and, quite likely, get away from human society, yet at night the landscape is a

different one altogether, constructed, as it were, by the practices of gay cruisers seeking the society of like-minded humans.

A dominant landscape, then, may be “officially” constructed. As we will see below, the imperial spectacle of the jubilees and coronations is replete with familiar national symbols, traditions and motifs. At the same time, private or “informal” responses to the Empire, such as attending an Empire Day Festival at Hyde Park or joining the Overseas Club, likewise contribute to the larger landscape. As Lefebvre has indicated, the relationships between these imperial practices are not “contained” or restricted to a subordinate or superior position. The example of Empire Day above, for example, illustrates how official policies, informal practices, and civic activities are necessarily interpolated and involved in the production of space. A collectivity of “spaces,” then, makes up a landscape, and the constituent spaces are “produced” through social relationships. But I want to take this analysis even further by deconstructing the social relationships that, in Lefebvre’s view, produced these spaces. What I have discovered is that the social relations and responses that produce space are often themselves directed by discourses that circulate both within and without the ideology of New Imperialism.

Discourses, as utilized in the chapters that follow, are ways of talking about something. Just as Cosgrove’s dominant landscape is a way of seeing, and requires a certain vocabulary and code to make sense to the viewer, discourses, here, are a loose collection of images, myths, and memories that may direct or effect an experience, or, perhaps, give rise to social or domestic practices. In contrast to Foucault’s insistence that discourse can be “governed by analyzable rules and transformations,” discourses here are more fluid,

more descriptive than prescriptive, and can subvert as well as support their dominant usage. Discourses of motherhood, for instance, began to circulate more energetically after the First World War, and ways of talking about motherhood at this time troped the production of good racial stock as a woman's patriotic duty. This particular trope could be found in parliamentary discussion, scientific conferences, even sermons. But as we will see in Chapter Four, motherhood as patriotic duty becomes a negative trope in some strands of the discourse; for instance, for Dr. Helen Hanson, it is the ultimate irony for women who have limited or no participation in the government that requires them to bring forth children. In this project, then, I use discourse to describe the way in which beliefs and concerns are discussed.

Specifically, I identify and analyze two seemingly paradoxical discourses—discourses of British exceptionalism and discourses of decline and degeneration—and show how they manifest in the many policies and practices of the era which, in turn, structure the social interrelationships that produce space. In recognizing the pervasiveness of these discourses, and their contribution to the production of spaces, we see that the landscape of empire is not one imposed on London and its denizens from “above,” but is rather jointly constructed by way of more reciprocal relationships. Identifying the spaces that make up the landscape of empire, and the discourses that run through those spaces, often connecting them with other spaces, is the first step in this investigation.

The most effective way to uncover and isolate strands of discourse is through “thick description,” a method of observation described in detail by Clifford Geertz in The Interpretation of Cultures, which not only describes an action or event, but provides contextual information, or what Geertz refers to as the “multiplicity of complex conceptual
structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another.”46 In the next chapter, “The Empire Made Visible,” I execute a “close reading” of three imperial spectacles, and in each, I identify contexts and symbols and their relationship to various participants in the spectacle. In this way I can explain what—and how—these spectacles “mean,” that is, how they are meant to represent the dominant landscape by portraying the Empire as modern, prosperous, physically and mentally fit, and charged by Providence with a universal civilizing mission.

The second section of this project moves away from the broad contexts shaping this project, and focuses on two constitutive and sometimes competing ways of talking about Empire. Both of these discourses are rooted in the ideals of New Imperialism and its correlative, the quest for national efficiency. In Chapter Three, “Discourses of Exceptionalism,” I investigate the ways that notions of British exceptionalism informed and influenced material and cultural practices. The chapter culminates in a description of the imperially spectacular summer of 1911, which included official activities, such as the coronation of King George V, as well as other imperially-themed events of an informal and unofficial nature, like the Festival of Empire and the first ever Empire Games. In describing both the imperial spectacle of 1911, as well as the public responses to these official exercises, I identify how the discourse of British exceptionalism has informed and directed these events.

Chapter Four turns to an equally important though seemingly contradictory discourse: that of degeneration. Images of decline and degeneration were very much a part of the underlying impetus of New Imperialism, and Chamberlain and others used the

impending “doom” of the Empire to compel support for the imperial project from the
general public. The responses to these images of degeneration include practices that focus
on the “fitness” of the imperial body politic, as well as the fitness of the imperial subject. A
final imperial spectacle, the “Year of Health,” shows off an Empire that has addressed many
of those declinist discourses and is now prepared to face the assault that will, ultimately, be
its demise.
Chapter Two: Making the Empire Visible: The Jubilee as Imperial Spectacle

Queen Elizabeth II’s Diamond Jubilee—the celebration of sixty years of her reign—in the summer of 2012 provided the entire world a spectacle on a scale not seen in London in its entire history. It was, as reporters enthused, four days of pomp and circumstance, as only the British could do! A million people, unthwarted by rain, thronged the streets on Jubilee Day; they witnessed a river parade of over 1000 vessels, the largest collection to sail in formation on the Thames in hundreds of years. The next day 10,000 music lovers gathered at Buckingham Palace for a concert of Britain’s—and the world’s—top singers, including music’s own royalty, Sir Paul McCartney. At the end of the concert, the Queen walked on stage and stood amongst rappers and musicians, most much younger than Sir Paul, the former iconoclast, who forty-seven years earlier the Queen had awarded a MBE.¹

On Tuesday, in activities more traditionally associated with Jubilees, the Queen attended a Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul’s and later rode in a 1902 open Landau to Buckingham; aerial views showed the precision and color of the procession to be every bit as grand—or even grander—than Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee procession. A brief glimpse of a “footwoman” reminded viewers that this was very much the twenty-first century; yet the Victorian pomp and circumstance seemed very much at home.

Only a few weeks later the Queen and London one-upped themselves in the opening ceremonies of the 2012 Summer Olympics. In a move absolutely unthinkable to her great-great grandmother, the Queen appeared in a video as an action hero, alongside the current

¹“The following day [after MBEs announced] the first of many awards by disgruntled previous recipients was returned to the Palace. Over the next few days the irate former recipients making their protest included Hector Dupuis, a former Canadian MP; anti-aircraft expert James Berg; ex-Naval officer, David Evans-Rees; another Canadian, Stanley Ellis; a Cyril Hearn; retired squadron leader Douglas Moffit - and a Colonel Frederick Wragg returned no less than 12 medals.” Bill Harry, “The Beatles and Royalty,” Mersey Beat, http://www.triumphpc.com/mersey-beat/beatles/royalty2.shtml.
James Bond, Daniel Craig. After a helicopter ride that featured London’s most famous landmarks, including the Olympic Rings on London Bridge, the Queen and James Bond “parachuted” into the purpose-built Olympic arena. The Queen then appeared (in real time) to officially open the Olympic games. Here, the two most unmistakably English “brands,” the Queen and James Bond, played on their own iconic images and welcomed the world to London.

It was a decidedly unroyal—yet extremely popular—bit of fun, and, although certainly a high point of the summer’s spectacles, it was not the last: the largest Paralympics Games in their seventy-five year history symbolically returned to Stoke Mandeville, the site of Britain’s first hospital built specifically for soldiers with spinal injuries.2 The Paralympics, held just two weeks after the Olympics, and using, for the first time, purpose built facilities, promised to give the Games a larger global audience than ever before, and they did just that. The opening ceremonies included a spectacular welcome by the Queen. Both opening and closing ceremonies of the Paralympics emphasized British themes: the opening theme of “Enlightenment” was loosely based on The Tempest, and the closing ceremonies featured the seasons and their associated English festivals.

The events were, by all accounts, a success. For an entire summer, city planners, choreographers, pageant masters, security workers, and thousands and thousands of volunteers, had given the world pomp and pageantry and a politically neutral example of tradition peacefully coexisting with modernity. Years of planning, and a fairly smooth execution of this season of civic spectacle, showed the world a London that was diverse and

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2 I use “symbolically” here, as the actual games and ceremonies were held in London.
democratic, traditional and safe, yet also modern and efficient—and, happily, did not take itself too seriously.  

Just as the pageant masters had a particular image of what they wanted the world to see when the global audience watched or experienced London that summer, Disraeli, one hundred and thirty years earlier, had a particular image of the British Empire that he wanted to present to the world. His challenge, much like the coordinators and choreographers of Queen Elizabeth II’s Diamond Jubilee and the 2012 Summer Olympics, was to inscribe that picture onto the cultural landscape of London and thereby, on the national imagination. Making Victoria Empress of India in 1876 set the tone exactly for the empire Disraeli imagined: a place of romantic tableaux and exhibitions of its own accruing powers.

C.C. Eldridge and others claim that Disraeli had no “imperial policy,” but whether or not his actions were guided by a cohesive theory of empire, or were motivated by the blind acquisition of territory, the fact is the Empire increased its holdings considerably during his ministry. The Transvaal, the Fiji Islands, and the Gold Coast were annexed, and Disraeli grabbed a considerable amount of power in Egypt when he bought out shares in the Suez Canal. Additionally, he returned from the Congress of Berlin with Cyprus, an important Mediterranean possession. By the time of Disraeli’s death in 1881, the Empire encompassed approximately a fourth of the world’s land mass and ruled about a fourth of the world’s population.

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Disraeli’s promotion of empire among the middle classes was aided by prominent journalists, such as Edward Dicey, editor at different times of the Spectator, the Daily Telegraph, the Daily News, the Observer, and finally of the Empire Review. Dicey engaged in a very public debate with William Gladstone, the anti-imperialist leader of the Liberal party, which lasted over twenty years. Dicey was “the literary spokesman of an Empire spirit which was illiberal and militant” and he railed against Gladstone and his adamant assertion that the Empire was not only problematic for the British notion of liberty, but was an economic burden as well. Disraeli and the Conservatives continued to portray their own party as the party of patriotism while associating Liberal ideology with continental principles. Especially in the 1870’s in the working class neighborhoods of London, “Jingoes” expressed a defensive racialism mixed with a conservative nationalism. While there were some attempts by Conservative leaders to disassociate the party from the rowdier elements, the party generally welcomed the support of these newly enfranchised voters. By the 1880’s, Jingoism had subsided somewhat, yet it was clear that the Empire had taken hold of the national imagination.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, many men—and some women—formed imperial “education” societies such as The Royal Empire Society, The British Empire League, or The Imperial Federation League. According to MacKenzie, the Primrose League, established in 1883 in an effort to capitalize on the grief and hero worship of Disraeli following his death, “did perhaps more than any other society to generate an

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5 The Victoria League, founded in 1901 was the only predominantly female imperial society, though in the early twentieth century, many of the organizations opened their rolls to women. The Victoria League was dedicated to the spread of information about the Dominions and was involved in settler schemes. During the First World War it dedicated its energy to the dissemination of pro-war propaganda. They also organized and provided materials for Empire Day events.
emotional and uncritical enthusiasm for Empire.” 6 Unlike many of the more middle- and upper- class organizations, the Primrose League welcomed members from all classes, and working class speakers joined with their middle class counterparts in events intended to sell the imperial project to any who remained unconvinced.

Any state-sponsored event is meant to mean. And although Disraeli knew that the Queen’s desire to add “Empress” to her titles would meet with resistance among many in the Liberal party, he knew as well the value of titles, romance, and riches in attracting popular support for Britain’s New Imperialism. Jan Morris attests to the power of his vision: “[Disraeli] saw the Empire as an Eastern pageantry, a perpetual durbar, summoning the British people away beyond the dour obsessions of Europe to a destiny that was spiced and gilded.” 7 Victoria delighted in the exotic allure of Empire as much as her subjects did, and as Morris and others have shown, Victoria’s Eastern tastes—in everything from china to shawls—were admired and copied by those who could afford to do so. While not always obvious to the casual observer, the Empire was beginning to appear more frequently in the cultural landscape of London.

At the same time, official, that is, parliamentary support for the Empire remained contentious and tenuous. Throughout the 1880’s, Gladstone had disagreed with the military on Egyptian policies, and newspapers were quick to blame the Prime Minister for the siege of Khartoum and the death of General Gordon in 1885. Victoria reprimanded Gladstone as well, in a telegram that was leaked to the public, and from the 1890’s forward, Conservative politics and its promotion of imperial patriotism dominated the administration.

6 John M. MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire, 149.
David Cannadine reminds us that "even if the text of a respected ritual like a
coronation remains unaltered over time, its ‘meaning’ may change profoundly, depending
on the nature of the context." In the following sections I look closely at three official
events—Victoria's Golden Jubilee, her Diamond Jubilee, and King George V’s Silver
Jubilee—and describe how the pageantry of the jubilees reveal the government’s
increasing investment in the Empire as a symbol of national and imperial unity, even as
that same government neglected to invest its energy and knowledge in an updated and
effective policy of imperial management.

**The Golden Jubilee—1887**

Although there is debate about the extent of her enthusiasm for a formal celebration
of her reign, Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee presented the nation—and Empire—with
more civic spectacle than any previous royal event ever staged in London. Having
foreclosed the idea of a Silver Jubilee, given the pall cast that year (1862) by the death of
her beloved Prince Albert, the Golden Jubilee indeed proved to be, as the *Times*
editorialized, “the reward she must prize beyond all else, the spontaneous expression of
national enthusiasm.”

Little of the Jubilee, however, was left to the vagaries of spontaneity; unlike the
series of half-hearted and ill-received royal ceremonies in the years preceding Victoria’s

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9 Chapman and Raben, in *Debrett's Queen Victoria's Jubilees, 1887 & 1897* (1977), maintain that “It was largely
due to the Prince . . . that she was infused with any enthusiasm for the Jubilee at all” (n.p.), and Thomas
Richards writes that “Victoria herself was so apprehensive it took several months for her inner circle to
convince her to participate in ceremonies.” (9). Countering that “apprehension,” William Kuhn (1987) posits
that “Queen Victoria . . . had no doubt that there would be some sort of commemoration of her 50 years’
reign” and that in the fall of 1886 “she appears to have taken the initiative” (108). See: Caroline Chapman and
Paul Raben, *Debrett's Queen Victoria's Jubilees, 1887 and 1897* (London: Debrett's Peerage Limited, 1977);
University Press, 1990), 9.
10 *The Times*, June 2, 1887.
reign, the Golden Jubilee was orchestrated by the Office of Works to assure that the celebrations flowed smoothly and grandly.\textsuperscript{11} Victoria’s own coronation had been marred by mistakes and bad behavior, and as David Cannadine has noted, ceremonies involving royalty before Victoria were decidedly uninspiring, offering “no vocabulary of pageantry, no syntax of spectacle, no ritualistic idiom.”\textsuperscript{12} George III’s Jubilee, the only previous occasion of this sort, did not even attempt to include the public, and consisted of dinners, balls, and other specifically court occasions. In vivid contrast, the crowd that gathered for Victoria’s event was part of the spectacle itself, and newspapers and magazines later made much of the masses and their respectful but jubilant demeanor.

There is reason to think that Victoria saw this event as a family affair, a validation of her position as the nation’s matriarch. Indeed, one of the favorite merchandising mottos of the event proclaimed “England our Home, Victoria our Queen.” Victoria herself paid what was upwards of £50,000 of her personal fortune to bring the crowned heads of Europe, many of them directly related to her, to London, although she refused to pay for any non-European royalty, presumably because they could not be related to her. In addition to the family theme, events also presented the nation, and, to a lesser degree, the Empire, to its subjects as progressive, peaceful, and prosperous. In short, the celebration of fifty years of Victoria’s reign was that of a happy middle-class family which allowed itself a few moments of unmitigated pomp and circumstance to celebrate its belief in honest labor and offer sincere appreciation of the special protection of Divine Providence.

\textsuperscript{11} Disraeli had died in 1881. Given his affinity for “Eastern Pageantry,” as well as his influence over Victoria, one can only wonder just how spectacular this event could have been.
The route taken to Westminster Abbey on Jubilee Day, where Victoria participated in a Thanksgiving Service, acknowledged the achievements and principles of her reign. The route was simple: it would leave Buckingham by way of Constitution Hill, turn east on Piccadilly and then south on Regent to Waterloo Place, passing by the relatively new Trafalgar Square to the even newer Victoria Embankment, and then turn west on Bridge Street to arrive at Westminster Abbey. There were other, more direct, routes, including leaving the Palace by way of the Mall, which had been redesigned specifically as a processional route in the 1820's. However, it is possible that the route of the procession down Piccadilly took into account other considerations, including the fact that the surrounding neighborhood—St. James—was one of concentrated wealth and a handsome example of national prosperity. A German visitor to London, writing in the 1850's, observed, “That part of Piccadilly which faces the Park is elegant, expensive, and aristocratic,” and the area between Piccadilly and Pall-Mall was “the land of clubs and royalty.”13 This is still the case, and a very long list of London's gentlemen’s clubs includes dozens located in the immediate vicinity, for instance, “the Oxford and Cambridge Club, the Army and Navy Club, the Carlton, the Reform, the Travellers’, and the Athenaeum.”14 If the nod to those wealthy merchants as the producers and bearers of wealth was missed, the turn of the procession down Regent Street provided a second opportunity for homage to the nation’s prosperity: Regent Street had been designed and built specifically for commercial purposes, and an 1885 Baedeker described it as “one of the finest streets in

14 Ibid., 115.
London, and containing a large number of the best shops”\textsuperscript{15} Although he deplored the rebuilding of the street in 1925, as late as 1951 H.V. Morton described Regent Street as the most handsome street in London, and its graceful curve, imposed on Nash by the difficulties of purchasing property, “one of the fine things about London.”\textsuperscript{16} Napoleon may have meant his description of the English as a “nation of shopkeepers” to be an insult, but the shops of Regent’s street refused to admit any embarrassment associated with their purpose.

References to the notion of the \textit{Pax Brittanica} and the nation’s military victories were less prevalent, and less self-assured. The royal procession drove through Waterloo Place, which took the Queen past the Crimean War Monument, honoring those who had lost their lives in the Empire’s most recent conflict. The human cost of the Crimean conflict had been high, and talk of mistakes by military commanders had cast a pall on what was ultimately a victory. Victoria herself had addressed this uneasiness by establishing the Victoria Cross, an honor significant in its precedence over all other orders or decorations, and one that did not take the recipient’s rank, time in service, or socio-economic class into consideration in its award. While there is no way to measure the effect of this new honor, it would not be difficult to read its establishment as indicative of the image of Victoria as mother to all her people, even those without title or rank.

From Waterloo Place, Pall Mall East, Cockspur Street and Northumberland Avenue, the Procession came to the Victoria Embankment. While Whitehall would have had its own significance as the place of government, the choice of the Embankment, intentionally or not,

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\textsuperscript{15} \textit{London and its Environs: Including Excursions to Brighton, the Isle of Wight, etc.: Handbook for Travellers, 5\textsuperscript{th} rev. ed. (Leipsic: Karl Baedeker, 1885), 211.}
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provided an opportunity to emphasize the dominant force of the Victorian era: that of a nation committed to progress in all of its endeavors. The notion of an embankment along the Thames first arose after the Great Fire of 1666, and Wren produced plans that may have been partially built, but by the 19th century nothing viable remained. Other schemes appeared from time to time, but it wasn’t until the introduction of sewage systems flushing waste into the Thames, resulting in the “Great Stink” of 1858, that an embankment project was connected to health issues and given enough impetus and importance to justify the expense of its construction.\textsuperscript{17} The resulting embankment provided enough new land to contain three tunnels, one of them a much needed sewer, another a conduit for gas, water, and telegraph lines, and yet another providing tracks for a line of the Metropolitan District Railway. Geographer Miles Ogborn has noted that projects such as the Thames embankments contributed to “the appropriate, and appropriately civilized, cityscape for a prosperous commercial society.”\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Lloyd’s Weekly}, on the occasion of the opening of the Embankment in July 1870, remarked that “it is the work that will mark most vividly the Victoria era in London,” even surpassing in importance the Holborn Viaduct and the new Westminster Bridge. Indeed, the 1885 \textit{Baedeker} describes the new Victoria Embankment in great detail and includes information about the actual construction. The entry tells the tourist that the gardens on the Embankment are “embellished” with statues of numerous dignitaries, who were generally associated with national rather than imperial projects, including William Tyndale, “the translator of the New Testament,” Robert Raikes, “the founder of Sunday schools,” and Isambard Brunel, the English civil engineer responsible for

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the first major British railway, the Great Western Railway, and the Thames Tunnel. While memorials to a few servants of the Empire, such as the monument to General Sir James Outram, “hero” of the Indian Mutiny, cropped up in the gardens from time to time, most of those memorialized were national heroes whose accomplishments reflected the progressive values associated with the Victorian era.¹⁹

The themes of prosperity, peace, and progress manifested in a number of other Jubilee-related events. One could argue, for instance, that the exclusion of criminals convicted of cruelty to animals in Victoria’s grant of amnesty to prisoners demonstrated a sensibility based on the “progressive” notion of protection of the weak. But all of these notions are subsumed within the context of the ubiquitous image of Victoria as mother. Even the arrangement of the procession itself lends support to the image. Ordered by reverse importance, the procession was headed by a contingent of “Indian Princes and Oriental notables” which, according to the Official Programme, seems to have consisted solely of “The Queen of Hawaii, and her attendants in gold cloth.” The “Orientals” were followed fifteen minutes later by a series of European notables, many directly related to Victoria. However, pride of place was given to the royal princes—her three sons, five sons-in-law, nine grandsons and grandsons-in-law—who immediately preceded the Queen’s landau, drawn by six cream-colored ponies.

Victoria’s contingent, which consisted of six carriages of her grown children and their spouses, reached Westminster at noon. While her family had pleaded with her to

¹⁹ Today there are a few more “imperial” monuments on the Embankment, including one dedicated to the Imperial Camel Corps, but by and large the monuments honor those reflecting in some way Victorian values or progress, such as W.T. Stead, who revolutionized the Victorian newspaper. The most interesting monument is one I could not find, that of General Gordon. His monument was moved—under protest from Winston Churchill—from Trafalgar Square to somewhere on the Embankment. The difficulty in finding Gordon’s statue seems to reflect the current British relationship with this problematic servant of empire.
dress up for the occasion, she had archly insisted on a subdued ensemble, having made one concession to her usual widow's weeds by wearing a dress and veil trimmed in white lace, and by donning all of her orders, including her Star of India, designed by her dear Albert. But rather than failing to dazzle, her dowdiness seems to have appealed to many in the crowd. One observer in the Abbey commented on “how right she was to come like that...she, a mother and mother-in-law and grandmother of all that regal company and there she was, a little old lady coming to church to thank God for the long years in which she had ruled her people.”

A Vanity Fair review of the week's events enlarged on this theme. Describing the service at Westminster, readers are told: “In the Abbey the most theatrical incident was provided by Nature, as a thin ray of sunlight, glancing past the Queen, fell directly on the effigies of past Sovereigns that lay peacefully behind her.”

She reinforced this maternal appeal at the end of the ceremony when, as the princes came to pay her homage before leaving the Abbey, she embraced them in a show of what can only be called “motherly” affection.

If, according to Vanity Fair, the procession to the Abbey “was too disjointed to be impressive,” the return to Buckingham made up for it. The commentator enthuses: “Coming down Piccadilly hill, it looked like a fine stream of gold, whilst here and there the glitter of the swords and decorations appeared like a refreshing spray from the waters.”

The return route turned in to Parliament Street, which becomes Whitehall, the center of government. Only fifteen years earlier the street had been widened and graced with a new set of classically styled government buildings that included the Colonial Office. While the

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21 Vanity Fair, June 25, 1887, quoted in Debrett’s Queen Victoria’s Jubilees, n.p.
22 Ibid., n.p.
procession down Parliament street and through Whitehall was likely meant to indicate appreciation for the hundreds of government administrators who worked there, procession planners may have specifically wished to have her pass Scott’s sculpture gracing the Colonial Office’s façade: it featured Victoria herself, dressed as a Roman empress flanked by the lion and the unicorn, traditional British symbols, along with figures representing Knowledge and Power. In pageantry that had focused on Victoria as mother of the nation, this short segment of the procession directed attention to the growing power of an Empress and her government over an expanding empire.

Indeed, the Jubilee paid tribute to Victoria’s position as the head of a great empire in a number of ways, yet overwhelmingly, the image of Victoria in the Golden Jubilee was that of a matron rather than an empress. One would certainly expect this image to predominate at the children’s treat held the next day at Hyde Park: the children presented her with a bouquet and an attached embroidered message reading “God bless our Queen, not Queen alone, but Mother, Queen and friend.”23 And as Thomas Richards has shown, even those souvenir and household items bearing Victoria’s image, which “may be purchased throughout the Empire” appeared to portray the Empire as “less a political coalition than a vast benign commissary dispensing the English way of life.”24 This English way of life, in the Jubilee year, was one presided over by a homely and thoroughly domestic matron, the angel of a national house.

The Diamond Jubilee—1897

The prevailing image of Victoria during the Golden Jubilee, then, was that of Mother of the English Way of Life, a construction based on the metaphor of the nation as family. Yet

only ten years later, Victoria, “our Queen, not Queen alone, but Mother,” had been transformed into the image of an Empress of a vast and powerful empire, an empire based on the highest ideals of a superior civilization. Victoria, the nation’s mother, had sent her sons and daughters out into the world to do good; now it was time to acknowledge Victoria as the ultimate benefactor of their substantial achievements. A close look at the Diamond Jubilee of 1897 will illustrate this important shift in the nation’s perception of the Queen, as well as a shift in the nation’s perception of itself as an empire.

International and national events, or rather the lack of them, had allowed the nation a little time for self-reflection and evaluation. The ten years between the jubilees had been a period of “splendid isolation” during which many statesmen, financiers, and religious leaders began to think through the imperial project and to develop a variety of justifications for its existence. While Sir Seeley may have been correct in 1883 when he said that the Empire was created in “a fit of absence of mind,” the years since had been spent, if not in single-minded, at least in mindful attention to the purposes and possibilities of empire.\(^{25}\) The cultural and physical landscape of the metropole responded to these developments, recording the changing perceptions of the home front towards its colonial possessions and imperial responsibilities.

Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain had posed to Victoria that her sixty years on the throne be celebrated as a festival of Empire.\(^{26}\) In a speech given at the Royal Colonial Institute in early 1897, Chamberlain outlined his own vision of the empire; unsurprisingly, the events and motifs of the Jubilee reflected these themes of Chamberlain’s imperial vision


\(^{26}\) Not to be confused with the Festival of Empire of 1911, in celebration of George V’s coronation, or the even grander British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924-25.
and shaped a public and popular discourse of Empire, one that was now, he said, “the expressed and determined will of the overwhelming majority of the British people.”

This evolving discourse was fueled by expansion, both geographic and administrative. In the ten years between jubilees the Empire had added Burma to its possessions, as well as more land in India, but most significantly, the Empire had acquired numerous territories on the continent of Africa. The acquired territories, manipulated by the traditional economic policies of laissez-faire, had led to increased profits for some segments of the British population. Meanwhile, expanded British rule provided increased opportunities to spread the Gospel and the inherently superior culture that most Britons believed separated their imperialism from the exploitative, even barbaric imperialism of other nations.

This expansion of imperial projects and responsibilities seems to have sparked a collective, if not unchallenged, displacement and replacement of familial loyalty to the nation, a concept by definition exclusivist, with a sense of inclusion by which the family metaphor was extended to the entire Empire. The new Family of Empire was expanded to include those former Britons who had settled colonies, like Australians, and, though perhaps a bit more warily, those darker subjects living in colonies of rule, such as Indians and Masai as well. Chamberlain proffered that “the sense of possession has given place to the sense of kinship. We think and speak of them as part of ourselves, as part of the British Empire, united to us, although they may be dispersed throughout the world.”

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28 Ibid.
included the “numerous population in tropical climes,” though he noted that, in their case, the sense of possession had evolved into a sense of obligation.

The obligation owed the tropically-climed subjects was nothing less than the “work of civilization,” and Chamberlain was certain that this work constituted the “national mission.” Furthermore, the national mission had been, in large part, successful, and he noted that the Pax Britannica had brought “greater security to life and property, and a material improvement in the condition of the bulk of the population.” Chamberlain explained and expanded the civilizing mission of the empire, while grounding it in the firm sense of providence inherent in the national psyche. “Great is the task,” he said, “great is the responsibility, but great is the honor; and I am convinced that the conscience and spirit of the country will rise to the height of its obligations, and that we shall have the strength to fulfill the mission which our history and our national character have imposed upon us.”

Chamberlain was also careful to acknowledge the sacrifices already made in the process of acquiring and expanding the Empire, and he warned that more sacrifices would be required. But he consistently reminded his audience that this was the cost of their pre-ordained civilizing mission, and asked them to “contrast the gain to humanity with the price which we are bound to pay for it.” Chamberlain was certain that the “peace and comparative prosperity” brought to distant lands was worth the bloodshed.

The three themes of this speech, the metaphor of empire as family, the civilizing mission, and the sacrifice required of this mission, determined many of the events and motifs of the Jubilee. The Queen had made it clear that she would not invite and entertain crowned heads of state (especially her grandson, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, who

29 “Mr. Chamberlain on the Colonies,” 10.
30 Ibid.
Victoria complained to her prime minister, was a “a hot-headed, conceited, and wrong-headed young man”), and this gave Chamberlain the ceremonial space to invite the prime ministers of the self-governing colonies, as well as military contingents from all over the Empire. In what amounted to a month of Jubilee celebrations, the Empire would be exhibited and celebrated by special military displays, such as the naval review at Spitfield and a tattoo of the Regular and Colonial Troops at Aldershot. The Empire was everywhere in the days leading up to and trailing after the Jubilee, and was reflected in print images, decorations, and even the especially composed music and poetry of the event. The Diamond Jubilee number of *Vanity Fair* features Britannia, the Amazonian female personification of the Empire, standing alongside the British Lion and a shield bearing the Union crosses.

While those symbols of power may remind readers of the Empire’s expanse, at least two examples of commissioned works for the Jubilee focus on the civilizing mission of the Empire. “The Jubilee Hymn,” written by the Bishop of Wakefield and set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, employs the image of Victoria as matron, but the third stanza references the civilizing mission: “Where England’s flag flies wide unfurl’d,/All tyrant wrongs repelling;/God make the world a better world for man’s brief earthly dwelling!” The last line of the hymn addresses the imperial project even more specifically: “Oh teach them first Thy Christ to know,/And magnify His glory.” Kipling’s “Recessional,” however, is a bit more

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32 Sullivan is best known as one half of Gilbert and Sullivan, the composers of very popular operettas of the late nineteenth century. But Sullivan was also the writer and composer of the imperial hymn, “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” as well as a pageant titled *Sons of Empire,* which premiered the year before the Jubilee and featured a tableau of colonial troops.
cautious. In one stanza, he warns against imperial pride: “Lo, all our pomp of yesterday/Is one with Nineveh and Tyre.” Further lines, such as, “If drunk with sight of power, we loose/Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,/Such boastings as the Gentiles use,/Or lesser breeds without the Law,” continue to employ one of the more prevalent motifs of Providentialism, that of the British as God’s chosen people, the new Israelites.

Chamberlain’s vision of the Empire is most clearly discerned in the Procession of Jubilee Day, especially when compared to the parade of Jubilee Day ten years earlier. While Victoria was most certainly the center of attention, and the homegrown military units escorting her were nothing short of dazzling, the real attraction was the Colonial Procession, which the visiting Mark Twain referred to as “the human race on exhibition.” And indeed he was right, as the sight of “native police from Hong Kong, wearing skull-caps and pigtails,” “Sikhs resplendent in blue, yellow, and gold turbans,” and “the little Dyaks from Borneo, and stalwart and smart native police from British Guiana” brought continual cheers from the crowds, so much so that the Daily News notes that “it was little wonder that after this the crowds had only admiring eyes and little voice left” for the troops heading the Queen’s Procession. The inclusion of colonial troops, however, was not meant for strictly visual appreciation (Twain’s description classified the colonial troops into skin colors—yellow, black, and brown—and then further distinguished them by shades of those colors), but as a very real demonstration of the expanse of the empire. Here the extended family was on parade.

33 Mark Twain, “Queen Victoria’s Jubilee,” in Mark Twain: A Tramp Abroad, Following the Equator, Other Travels, ed. Roy Blount, Jr. (New York: Library of America, 2010), 1050.
The encouraged inclusiveness of the new Empire was not limited to ethnic diversity, though, and the clergy waiting on the Queen’s arrival at St. Paul’s represented a cross section of the Empire’s religious life. Rather low-church herself—she was most comfortable at Scottish Presbyterian services—the Queen had instigated the Public Worship Bill of 1874, intended to purge high-church practices, and Established Church periodicals frequently broached Victoria’s disregard for the Church. But the service, conducted on the steps of the Cathedral in deference to Victoria’s frailty, was ecumenical, even bordering on secular: at the end of the service, the Archbishop of Canterbury spontaneously offered up three cheers for the Queen.

Yet no other actions or symbols or collections of people materially manifested Chamberlain’s Empire more effectively than the choice of St. Paul’s for the Jubilee Thanksgiving Service. Victoria had always found St. Paul’s a bit cold: in a letter to her secretary, written after a Thanksgiving service at the Cathedral, she wrote: “St Paul’s itself is a most dreary, dingy, melancholy & undevotional Church & the service except the last Hymn devoid of any elevating effect.”35 Yet for this moment, the cathedral steps provided a perfect stage: imperial, but not too pagan, and visible to hundreds of spectators. In fact, a warehouse had been demolished to make room for seating. The power of the venue, as evident in the tableau, was garnered from the church’s monuments of—and to—Empire, especially those scattered throughout the crypt. In the last century, St. Paul’s had buried or memorialized dozens of the Empire’s heroes. Many of the names are famous: The Duke of Wellington’s astounding monument in the nave contrasts vividly with his simple tomb of Cornish granite nestled in the crypt. But most of the memorials are dedicated to the lesser-

known servants of the empire, those who had made the civilizing mission possible, such as ambulance corps and police forces. One plaque, for instance, is dedicated to “special correspondents” who fell in the campaigns in the Soudan, 1883, 1884, and 1885. Another one, dated 1883, is “in memory of the three brave men (scholars and explorers),” who were “treacherously slain” in the Sinai desert while on public duty. The plaque further notes that the men were buried with their attendants, “the Syrian Khalil Atik and the Hebrew Bakhor Hassun.” The markers project a certain vision of the Empire: it required dangerous, often deadly work, as evidenced by the memorial for Arthur Blyford Thruston, who apparently was killed by the “mutinying Uganda Rifle’s [sic].” Yet there is a dignity in the brass plaques engraved with the names of exotic lands, an awareness of the sacrifices necessary for the noble work of civilization. One can almost hear Chamberlain’s voice, echoing in the crypt: “we may rest assured that for one life lost a hundred will be gained, and the cause of civilization and the prosperity of the people will in the long run be advanced.”

By rejecting Westminster, the final resting place of royalty, and moving the services to St. Paul’s, Jubilee organizers redirected the public’s previous familial attachment to the nation, which imaged the monarch as mother of the nation-family, towards the more expanded and expansive concept of the Empire as Family. The crypt, indeed the entire edifice, stood as a monument for the sacrifices made by this family in its God-ordained mission to bring light to the darkest corners of the earth, a sentiment visualized by William Holman Hunt’s *Light of the World*, permanently installed in the North Nave of the Cathedral in 1908, after a successful—and unusual—tour of the Dominions.

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36 Chamberlain, “The True Conception of Empire.”
George V’s Silver Jubilee—1935

It would be thirty-eight years before the British Empire celebrated another Jubilee, and the intervening years witnessed a deeper entrenchment of the imperial mindset and its imprint on the landscape. In those same years, colonial wars, domestic disturbances, and new nationalisms both caused by and resulting from the Great War prompted a nascent unease with the imperial project in some quarters. Nevertheless, the ideology and motifs of Disraeli and Chamberlain's patriotic imperialism appear to have maintained their hold on the civic imagination; as I explained earlier, the popularity of Empire Day and the activities of imperial organizations attest to the significance of the British imperial project in public life. The Jubilee planners were well aware that in 1935 very few monarchs were left in Europe at all, and that the British Empire was one of the few empires to have survived the First World War. The King himself acknowledged these facts as he addressed Parliament: “It is to me a source of pride and thankfulness that the perfect harmony of our Parliamentary system with our Constitutional Monarchy has survived the shocks that have in recent years destroyed other Empires and other liberties.” As we will see, modernity and modernization were important aspects of the imperial project. The Illustrated London News Silver Jubilee Record Number, 1910-1935, for instance, featured several color plates that attested to the modern spirit of the Empire: the photographs of the King and Queen were “natural-colour” rather than black and white, and two other plates featured “The Progress of Aviation During the 25 Years of King George’s Reign—Parts I and II.” But the issue provided plenty of tradition as well. Full pages in vibrant color were given over to the traditional symbols of the monarchy: the crowns and scepters, as well as the “historic” state
coach. As David Cannadine observes, “the ritual of the British monarchy ceased to be merely one aspect of widespread competitive inventiveness, and became instead a unique expression of continuity in a period of unprecedented change.”

The Empire was undeniably a model of progress and modernization, but its true character remained deeply rooted in a partially invented history and tradition.

The plans for George’s Silver Jubilee got off to a late start but gained momentum quickly. Although King George V was not as naturally disposed to royal ritual as his father had been, he appeared to anticipate the events with enthusiasm. *Time Magazine* wrote that the King "has been warmly surprised and pleased to find that public demand for a regular royal and extravagant celebration has leapingly outrun, week after week, all planned supply." George and Mary were popular royals, having experienced the war in much the same way as their subjects, and their family life was seen in many ways as the middle class writ royal. George's many visits to the Front during the Great War had emphasized his paternal nature, and he had lent a sympathetic ear to striking workers during the difficult years following the war. His decision to change the family name from the German Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to the much more English-sounding Windsor pleased his subjects, and his Durbar in India, along with the royal enthusiasm for the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924-1925, affirmed his investment in the imperial project.

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40 If the Empire’s forces looked to George as a father, his own children were less enthusiastic. George was stern, and Mary distant, by most accounts; according to Jeremy Paxman’s gossipy *On Royalty: A Very Polite Inquiry into Some Strangely Related Families* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), family dysfunction seems to be a family trait of the Hanovers, and, apparently, the Windsors.
41 The immediate impetus for the name change seems to have been the appearance of the Gotha aircraft in 1917, a German plane that was capable of crossing the Channel and bombing London. It quickly became a household name. George’s name change, as well as the stripping of titles for some of his German relatives, was a popular response.
The built landscape of London had evolved in the years since Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, most significantly in the Kingsway-Aldwych throughway, begun in 1905 during Edward VII’s reign and completed in 1920. The new avenue, lined with many beaux-arts and neo-classical buildings, ended at the Roman-style Bush House, headquarters of the BBC overseas. The project had instigated the clearance of over twenty-eight urban acres, including the notorious slum of Clare Market, and the displacement of 3700 inhabitants. Other projects intended to make London more “imperial” included the widening of the Mall at Buckingham Palace, the building of the Admiralty Arch at its far end, and the unveiling of the Victoria Memorial, which bore all the names of her colonies and possessions (except India), and had provided an imposing starting point for George V’s coronation procession in 1911.

By the Silver Jubilee in 1935, Londoners were generally satisfied with the city’s imperial grandeur, as the last few decades had witnessed the opening of vistas in what M.H. Port has called a developing imperial style. The Jubilee Procession provided a welcome opportunity to make spectacular use of these new vistas and show off London at its most imperial, and a *Times* editorial waxed sentimental over the city:

> There are capital cities which absorb comparatively little of the national life, and there are observers who think those nations happy whose capital cities loom less large in the national life than London. But for good or ill the influence of London, discernible clearly enough centuries ago, has been collecting force with an ever-increasing impetus. The whole nation now looks
to London, and is in the habit of coming to it and referring to it, in a manner which holds good of no other people in its relations with its capital city.\textsuperscript{42}

A photo in a special “Weldon’s Royal Number” shows Their Majesties circling around the still relatively new Victoria Monument in front of Buckingham, saluted by the Triple Guard of Honour. The caption notes that this is “the first time in history that a triple guard of honour has paraded at the Palace gates.”\textsuperscript{43} The newspapers spent a great deal of ink describing and praising the decorations for the event, and the crowd looked forward to the evening illuminations, which had improved tremendously since the Diamond Jubilee, when weak floodlights attempted to highlight the front of St. Paul’s.\textsuperscript{44}

The imperial motif was clearly visible in all the events and decorations, although the processions lacked the thousands of colorful troops from around the Empire that had processed with Victoria. One newspaper article remarked that, “the demand for Union flags has been overwhelming, and a strange feature of the rush to buy has been the refusal of customers generally to be content with the simple flag of St. George . . . which, as one flag-maker pointed out, every Englishman should be as proud to display as that of the Union.”\textsuperscript{45}

In a letter to the editor of the Times on Jubilee Day, one Londoner wrote that when he tried to procure some Union Jacks, the shopkeeper told him that he had tried “all the way down the road as far as Kingston’ without success.”\textsuperscript{46} He closed his letter by saying that this must surely be a unique event in the history of London, and “it shows, in a vivid way, what people are thinking, though such proofs are unnecessary.” The Whiggish historian G.M.

\textsuperscript{42} “King and People,” The Times, May 6, 1935, 13.
\textsuperscript{44} The Times, however, panned the decorations at Picadilly, not least because they used “the wrong yellow for the wrong blue.” “London Street Decorations,” The Times, May 6, 1935, 18.
\textsuperscript{46} C.M.B., letter to the editor, The Times, May 6, 1935, 13.
Trevelyan, in his cover article for the *Times Silver Jubilee Number* titled “The Crown and the People,” dealt only briefly with the King and his subjects and instead addressed how the Empire had been perceived during George’s reign. At the beginning of his reign and at the start of the war the Empire had stood for a liberal empire, ready to defeat the militarism of the Kaiser. After the war, the Empire was perceived by many European countries—and many of its own subjects—as “the one great conservative force left in the world.” But now, as fascist threats loomed large, the Empire was once again “the bulwark of freedom in evil days.” Trevelyan wrote that war and its “sufferings” and “the dangers that still abound” had bound the Empire in sentiment, even though the law had actually loosened the governmental bonds on some of its possessions. The Crown, he said, was the “sole legal and symbolic link of the whole British Empire.” Trevelyan had made the point that Cannadine would later discuss at length: as the “real” power of the King waned, and the Empire became more of an idea than an entity, the symbolic aspect of monarchy became more and more important in the civic imagination in general, and in the iconology of patriotic imperialism in particular.

Indeed, the imperial motifs of the Jubilee emphasized the inclusiveness of the imperial ideal, not only in grand theory, but also in real time. The enthusiastic *Times* editorial on Jubilee Day spoke of “the eyes of the world” which were focused on London, but also “less traditionally . . . the ears of the whole world.” The increased power of broadcasting, which both the *Times* editor and Trevelyan hailed as a major achievement of George’s reign, assured that “London will be present in every locality as never before in

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virtue of a spiritual concentration on it which broadcasting makes possible."\textsuperscript{49} The \textit{Times} devoted several columns to the broadcasting aspect of the event, both before and after the Jubilee, and published schedules of radio broadcasts and speeches. If one missed out on the speeches, or wished to keep a recording for posterity, the King’s message to the Empire, his speech in Westminster on May 9, and the Thanksgiving Service in St. Paul’s were quickly available (by May 24 at least) on “His Master’s Voice” records. Proceeds from the sales were to be donated to His Majesty’s chosen charities. This “power of participation in distant events” added glamour to the already dizzying images of faraway dominions.

Just as Victoria’s Golden and Diamond Jubilees had reflected and reproduced dominant themes of a particular moment in British imperialism, George V’s Silver Jubilee gave expression to the imperial discourses, anxieties, and practices residing in the civic body. This collection of language and images constructed an imperial identity that provided its own justification for the resources and energy required to sustain itself and its projects. There are several discourses at work in the civic spectacle of the Silver Jubilee.

Modernization, for instance, was evident in the emphasis on broadcasting. Certainly, the Empire was so large that the sun never set on it, but it was getting smaller each year through the development of better communication and faster transportation. Victoria had pushed a button the morning of her Diamond Jubilee to send a telegraphed message throughout the Empire. Thirty-eight years later, however, the King’s Jubilee message was broadcast, in his own voice, in real time, to all his subjects around the world. By this point in time royal broadcasts were not so novel; the King had given regular Christmas radio broadcasts since 1932. Still, the Jubilee provided ample opportunities for broadcasting. In

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
addition to the King’s message, sent across the wires on the evening of the Jubilee, and the tributes transmitted back from the various outposts of the Empire, the service at St. Paul’s was aired, complete with broadcaster commentary. A new form of communication, however, featured in the cinemas that very night: films of the Royal procession. A column in the *Times* noted that the films would be completed within a few hours of the procession, and would then be taken by aeroplane to different parts of the country. With only a few hours’ delay, Birmingham, Belfast, and Glasgow would get to experience the events transpiring in London; furthermore, arrangements had been made to ship copies to the Empire as soon as possible. While towns and villages throughout England had sponsored their own events for the Jubilee, modernization allowed them to take part in the London events as well.

Additionally, the idea of empire as commodity was evident in the enormous production and sale of Jubilee-themed souvenirs, including cups, scarves, medallions, and commemorative books and pamphlets; for instance, every town of significant size published its own edition of the souvenir booklet. One cigarette company sold cards featuring the flags of the various dominions and territories of the King’s Empire, and much of the advertising in the special Jubilee editions of the *Illustrated London News* was given over to invitations to visit the Empire. Ulster and Malta both promised golf and sightseeing.

However, I will highlight two counter but co-existent themes that informed the Jubilee events: exceptionalism and decline. The following two chapters examine more closely the aspects and implications of these two ways of talking about empire in unofficial and informal practices, but here I’d like to demonstrate how these discourses played out in “official” events. King George V’s Silver Jubilee—and the press’s reporting of it—
emphasized London as the very heart of the Empire, and as we have seen, the cityscape seemed to embody an unqualified belief in the imperial project, as well as the providential protection of the Empire. In short, the Jubilee emphasized the Empire’s exceptional nature, even if cohesiveness and power were not necessarily the realities of contemporary British imperialism. David Gilbert and Felix Driver assert that the cityscape of London in the 1920's and '30s reached an imperial apex, in which the numerous discourses that constructed an imperial identity were most deeply inscribed on the built environment and associated practices. It was a short-lived imperial moment, and one almost after the fact; after all, by George’s Jubilee, the settlement colonies were self-governing, though the Empire was still responsible for numerous colonies of rule, protectorates, and mandates, and some, like Palestine, had been acquired only recently. Still, until the catastrophe of the Blitz, the imperial landscape of London proclaimed to visitors and citizens alike a firm belief in the exceptional mission and responsibilities of the British Empire, while certain monuments, like the crypt at St. Paul’s, reminded them of the sacrifices required by the imperial project.

Yet the British sense of exceptionalism was more firmly grounded in words than images, and the Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul’s reminded the Empire and its leaders that although the twenty-five years of George’s reign had been difficult, Providence had seen them through. The sermons of the day before the Jubilee, including one by the Archbishop of Canterbury at a special service broadcast from London, referred to the special duties and blessings the nation had received. Evoking the King’s Christmas speech, in which the King asked to be regarded as the head of a “great and widespread family,” the Archbishop asked his listeners to pray that God’s merciful Providence would continue to protect and direct
the King. At the Thanksgiving Service the next day, in a grander, more imperial version of
the light that fell on the nation’s mother in Westminster nearly fifty years earlier, shafts of
light fell on the assembly from the impossibly high skylights as the Archbishop of
Canterbury had invoked continued blessings for “this dear land, and for the Empire which
has grown around it, that by God’s help they may uphold before the world the cause of
peace among all nations, the principles of liberty and justice, and the example of a
community wherein all the citizens are the willing servants of the common weal.”50 The
reminders of the sacrifice required by the servants of the common weal were all around
them; since Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee the Cathedral had garnered memorials for those
fallen in Africa and the Great War, including the Rev. E.H. Mosse, the Rector of St. Paul’s,
killed during an air raid, and the hero of Omdurman, the First Earl Kitchener. Yet it was
certain that the sacrifices were justified, made, as they were, in the cause of peace among
all the nations and the principles of liberty and justice. As the hymn “O God of Jacob, by
Whose hand Thy people still are fed,” affirmed, God had led their fathers through this
“weary pilgrimage,” and would continue to guide “their wandering footsteps” in the
civilizing mission.

While the celebrations of Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee had been tinged with an
overtone of sacrifice, the imperial rhetoric of George’s Jubilee occasionally acknowledged
tensions surrounding the Empire’s self-proclaimed position as moral and political leader of
the world. These anxieties often surfaced in growing concern over the perceived decline of
the mental and physical fortitude of those Britons who were to be sent out to civilize and
people the world. The Sunday following the Jubilee, many churches had special Jubilee

50 “Archbishop’s Address: ‘King and Father,’” The Times, May 7, 1935, 16.
Thanksgiving services. Dr. Barnes, the Bishop of Birmingham, led a service at St. Paul’s as guest preacher. His sermon asked the congregation to treat the Jubilee as “not merely an occasion for rejoicing and thanksgiving” but also as “an opportunity for sober reflection and wise resolve.” He had been reflecting on the possible courses of English life in the next quarter of a century, and clearly the reflection had caused some concern about the viability of the British race. He feared that the “worse stocks are more fertile than the better,” and bemoaned, “Only recently has research into the inheritance of mental defect been recognized as a national duty.” In a statement that surely raised some eyebrows, he decried the delayed approval of the Government for voluntary sterilization.

The clergy were certainly not the only ones concerned about the health of the nation; the Prince of Wales, a few weeks before the celebrations, inaugurated “King George’s Jubilee Trust.” The purpose of the organization was to facilitate previously existing programs that “provide these young people with healthy recreation, with worthwhile hobbies, and with practical vocational training, instilling in their minds a moral and cultural standard that will influence them throughout their lives.” One fund-raiser for the Trust was the sale of a volume titled *His Majesty’s Speeches: the Record of the Silver Jubilee*; an insert requests the reader to help the Trust further by “handing this sheet on to a friend,” drawing attention to the order form on the other side. That the King was genuinely dedicated to the improvement of Britain’s youth was evident. On Jubilee night in a broadcast sent across the Empire, he expressed his desire that the Trust named for him would help in body, mind, and character the many children who would soon become the citizens of a great Empire. Although he had no way of knowing this, both the King George

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52 *His Majesty’s Speeches*, 55.
Jubilee Trust and the memorial established to the King after his death by the Lord Mayor of London, the King George’s Playing Fields, substantially changed the landscape not only of London, but of the rest of England; both organizations assured that land was preserved for open spaces to be utilized by the public. The Duke of York (the future King George VI) dedicated one such space in conjunction with the Jubilee events, a sports ground for civil servants in Grove Park. According to the Times, the Duke had “rejoiced” that the grounds had been opened, and “hoped that at no distant date these grounds would form a ring round London.”53 Much concern over the physical and mental health of the British race had focused on the ill effects of overcrowding and London had added considerable green space during George’s reign. In 1925, the King and Queen opened Ken Wood in Hampstead Heath, and garden suburbs and garden estates had also opened up spaces.54 Ebenezer Howard, in his Garden Cities of To-morrow: Experiments in Urban Planning, began his great vision for urban life with a concentrated collection of quotes to quickly prove the necessity of a new approach to urban planning. He cites Frederic Farrar, the Dean of Canterbury: “If it be true that great cities tend more and more to become the graves of the physique of our race, can we wonder at it when we see the houses so foul, so squalid, so ill-drained, so vitiated by neglect and dirt?”55 The King’s support for open spaces is in keeping with his interest in health and medicine; following a precedent set by his father, George V stood as the Royal Patron of the Royal Society of Medicine and had lent support to several other medical associations and schools. One of the Jubilee events included the opening of the Post-

54 Today, Ken Wood is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, designated by Natural England. See http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/kenwood-house/garden/introduction/.
graduate Medical School, associated with the London County Council Hospital in Hammersmith. At the dedication ceremony, the King said he looked forward to the school “drawing students and teachers alike from all parts of our Empire, and, I trust, from regions even more widely spread.” Furthermore, he hoped that the school would “play an imperial role in the winning and dissemination of medical knowledge, in the relief of suffering among my peoples in this country and overseas, and in enabling the doctors of all lands to come together in a task where all must be allies and helpers.” The King clearly acknowledged and addressed some of the anxieties concerning the health of imperial bodies by emphasizing that the improvement of the health and wellbeing of all subjects throughout the Empire was an important charge of the Empire's civilizing mission.

A Jubilee provided the opportunity for an administration to clarify and advertise its ethic and ideology, most generally conceived as a civilizing mission, protected by the political and military power of the Empire. Yet by directing the spectacle to the figure of the monarch, who has little power or influence over policy, the official narrative of the Jubilee forecloses any criticism of the administration’s ethic or ideology.

The following chapters address two discourses that informed public and private ideas concerning the imperial project, and prompted official, unofficial, and informal responses to it as well. While the two discourses—exceptionalism and decline—seem to be at odds, they both factored in the development of—or resistance to—the pervasive imperial patriotism of early twentieth-century British society. The next chapter will examine more closely discourses of exceptionalism and how they manifested in the urban landscape of London.

Chapter Three: Discourses of Exceptionalism

Focusing on two seemingly paradoxical discourses that contributed to an imperial landscape in the first years of the twentieth century illuminates both the arrogance and anxiety that accompanied the imperial project. In the last chapter, I demonstrated that throughout King George’s 1935 Silver Jubilee, the sense of imperial exceptionalism coexisted with concerns over imperial decline. This chapter will refer back to 1911, the year of King George V’s coronation, in order to identify, define, and analyze several strands of the discourse of British exceptionalism and to explain how they influenced and impelled the imperial project.

Undoubtedly, every nation sees itself as “exceptional,” that is, having a unique history that has been guided by the power of race, economics, conquest, or Providence. However, British exceptionalism may make a bigger claim to an exceptional history because in comparison to the development of nations on the European continent, Britain’s national and imperial development was, in fact, unique. Of all the aspects and characteristics that make up British exceptionalism, the ones most evident to both Britons and foreigners alike are Britain’s sense of separateness from other nations (not separation, as there seems to be little desire for warmer relations with Europe on the part of Britain), its unique Providentialism, closely associated with its singular Protestantism, and finally, an inherent sense of liberty guaranteed to the Briton by way of the Empire’s superior institutions.¹ A look at some events, writings, and practices of the early decades of the twentieth century will show us how these strands of discourse propelled the nation along

¹ The limitations of this project do not allow for the investigation of many other aspects of British exceptionalism, for instance, Britain’s extraordinary maritime history.
what one historian calls, “a single progressive drama” that eventually came to justify the
Empire’s expansion into the outer world.²

**A Nation Set Apart**

Addressing the question, “Is Britain European?” Timothy Ash notes that Britain is
“in fact more different from continental European countries than they are from each
other.”³ Britain’s story, he says, is “a story of separateness, starting with the geographical
separation of the offshore island from the mainland,” and continuing into a “political
separation” at the end of the Hundred Years War. Certainly the “scept’r’d isle” was set apart
from the European Continent, and the English Channel seems to have provided evidence
for a “pre-ordained” polity. Even before The Act of Union in 1707, as Linda Colley has
noted, printed materials and food-ways crossed national borders, working in ways that
made a “patchwork in which uncertain areas of Welshness, Scottishness and Englishness
were cut across by strong regional attachments.”⁴⁵ Yet these regional attachments co-
existed with a sort of island-wide xenophobia. According to Peter Ackroyd in his anecdotal
*London: The Biography*, a French physician, visiting London in the mid-16ᵗʰ century,
complained that “the common people . . . hate all sorts of strangers” and “spit in our faces.”⁶
He also notes that foreigners were recurrent victims of attacks by apprentices. These
apprentices, the majority having come from villages outside of London, and even from the

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Colley insists on a localism that, because it relied on cultural constructs rather than political, did not
significantly hinder the unification of England, Wales, and Scotland into a singular “Britain.” The English in the
North, for instance, had more in common with Lowlander Scots, for instance, than they had for the English of
the South, or the Lowlanders had for their own Highlanders.

⁵ Ibid., 17.

north, were frequently violent, and took part in the “evil May-day” riots of 1517 by ransacking the houses of foreigners. This aggressive insularity was apparently not limited to apprentices; one Swiss medical student, Ackroyd tells us, described the city inhabitants as believing “that the world beyond England is boarded off.” For good or bad, those living on the island of Britain early on developed a sense of being apart or different from any European “others.”

Throughout the eighteenth century, wars on the continent and in the New World, and particularly wars between France and Britain, served to emphasize the vagaries of political boundaries and the benefit of Britain's naturally imposed defenses. In contrast to the ever-changing borders and alliances occurring in Europe, Britain could not help but feel a certain satisfaction in its God-given self-containment. During the Napoleonic Wars, for instance, British cartoons showed John Bull pulling faces and otherwise taunting Bonaparte from across the Channel.7

With twentieth century advances in flight, however, the island was no longer inviolate, and German bombing during the Great War changed forever the island’s strategies of defense. However, the belief in an inviolable Britain did not simply disappear. Rather, the trope of separateness simply evolved, substituting the geographic isolation of Britain, now mitigated by advances in military technology, with the increasing idealization of a very specific image of rural England: the village or cathedral town of southern and southeastern England, particularly in the counties of Kent, Devon and Dorset, or, to the west, in the Cotswold shires.

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7 Several cartoons featuring John Bull and a laughable Napoleon can be found at http://gcaptain.com/maritime-monday-may-thirteen-twentythirteen-john-bull/.
A great deal has been written on the image of rural England during the late
nineteenth and early twentieth century, when this romanticized version of the English
countryside came to represent the entire island. Disseminated by way of popular poetry,
especially the pastoral of the Georgians, a variety of “condition of England” essays, and
even colorful posters in Underground stations, this image prompted thousands of urban
and suburban dwellers to think of home in nostalgic terms, mourning the loss of a way of
life that many, maybe even most of them, had never experienced in the first place. This
mystification of rural England spread beyond urbanites longing for weekends in the
country, as this version of “home” accompanied many of those serving in far-off places. For
many of the servants of the Empire, “home” was pictured as a thatched-roof cottage on the
ing of small village, and those who could “returned” to it. For instance, Rudyard Kipling,
the Empire’s trumpet, although born in India and descended from a family in Yorkshire in
the north, chose to settle in Sussex in the south in 1902. He spent much of his time at home
in the South Country “simultaneously discovering rural England and celebrating its history
and survival in his work.” Collections such as Puck of Pook's Hill and Rewards and Fairies
are complex examples of his interest and a reiteration of what he saw as a palimpsest of
histories residing still in rural England. Kipling consistently proclaimed the will to

8 See, for example: Alun Howkins, “The Discovery of Rural England,” in Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-
1920, eds. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 62-88, as well as his “Rurality and
Howkins has also addressed the image of rural England in the 19th and 20th centuries in Reshaping Rural
Social History of the Countryside since 1900 (New York: Routledge, 2003); other work concerning rurality in
England includes David Matless, Landscape and Englishness, esp. Chap. 2, “Arts of Living: Landscape and
9 David Gilmour, The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling (New York: Farrar, Strauss and
Giroux, 2002), 168.
10 See Rudyard Kipling, Puck of Pook's Hill (London: Macmillan, 1906) and Rewards and Fairies (London:
Macmillan, 1910).
Empire, but did so while reminding the civil servants, soldiers, missionaries, and others employed in that noble service that its instigation and reward resided in the return to the thatched roof cottages dotting the rolling chalk hills of the southern counties.

Kipling was not the only imperial servant to find "home" in the region. T.E. Lawrence, “Lawrence of Arabia,” the son of an Irish lord and a Scottish governess, made a home in Dorset from 1928 until his death in May of 1935. He was a frequent visitor at Max Gate, where Thomas Hardy wrote novels that captured, in his nostalgic Wessex, that very England so many envisioned as home. London may have been the heart of the Empire, but its hearth was in the southern shires. This very specific vision came to represent the "home" that sent out its sons and daughters to spread the superior culture which, it was believed, was deeply rooted in that unique soil. As the Empire expanded and became more exotic, "home" was figured more and more narrowly.

The cozy English cottage contained within it an entire mythology of English identity, and the pioneers of British town planning invested in this concept early on. Both privately funded projects, such as the Hampstead Garden Suburb, and public programs, such as those sponsored by the London County Council and Lloyd George's postwar coalition government, employed the modified country cottage and associated traditions as a way to address a number of anxieties and discourses circulating in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Gathering momentum throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century, several different social concerns prompted the garden city movement which, in turn, strongly influenced housing practices until well into the 1930's.11 As I explain in the next

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11 From the 1930's onward, large housing units went upwards rather than outwards.
chapter, Victorian society had become increasingly apprehensive about the desperate poor of its cities, especially those who lived in the unsanitary and dangerous slums of London. While the fear of physical and mental decline drove much of the move for housing reform, Victorian politicos were likewise aware that vast inner-city mazes of poverty could as easily breed revolution as disease. Hygiene and social unrest worried some; still others looked to the disappearing rural landscape with uneasiness, sensing that as it disappeared, it took much national meaning with it. Ultimately the garden cottage motif evoked a tradition that these urban planners were, in fact, helping to create.

The town and suburb projects of Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin and the various firms associated with them featured a number of modern conveniences, yet evoked the rural England of the last century. But the small groupings of houses, gardens, and community halls were not just “quaint”; the arrangements were meant to reflect and inspire the perceived values of English village life. As Helen Meller points out, Unwin, in his Town Planning in Practice (1909) based his designs on a typical Cotswold village, and attempted to reproduce that life, including its hierarchical relationships. Henrietta Barnett, Unwin, Parker, and others, while incorporating the aesthetic principles of the Arts and Crafts movement, had been influenced by Victorian values of order, respectability, and paternalism as well, and had built those values into their designs.

In contrast to the blocks of flats once favored in Victorian housing schemes, the small groupings of houses with shared gardens at Hampstead Garden Suburb and other

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12 One of the modern aspects of Hampstead was the Crematorium near Golders Green. Built in 1902, it became the “necropolis of the North” and was popular among public figures, including actors, as well as Sir Edwin and Lady Lutyens, and, fittingly, Henrietta Barnett. See: Mervyn Miller, Hampstead Garden Suburb: Arts and Crafts Utopia? (West Sussex: Phillimore, 2006), 19-20.
cottage estates were meant to encourage a communal sense of responsibility, as well as ideas about personal responsibilities and moral behavior. For instance, ideas about tidiness were instilled in tenants by the placement of the scullery, which contained the hot water tap, therefore necessarily removing all dish and clothes washing towards the back of the house. More transparently, pubs and music halls were generally omitted from cottage suburbs, and clubhouses, while offering sports and other activities, also sponsored “improving” evening lectures that some residents found condescending.

Although the reproduction of hierarchical relationships appears to be a reactionary move, Raymond Unwin, Sir Ebenezer Howard, and others considered their ideas about town planning progressive, as they were intended to address the class conflict that many felt could only lead to revolution. For instance, Hampstead Garden Suburb, as envisioned by Henrietta Barnett, would “promote a better understanding between the members of the classes who form our nation.” She added, “Our object, therefore, is not merely to provide houses for the industrial classes. We propose that some of the beautiful sites round the Heath should be let to wealthy persons who can afford to pay a large sum for their land and to have extensive gardens.”¹⁴ In a process called “filtering up,” it was believed that mixing classes would provide the working class with ”the contagion of refinement,” while the rich would attain “the inspiration which knowledge of strenuous lives and patient endurance ever provokes.”¹⁵ All classes would have spacious homes with access to fresh air and green space, and would mingle while participating in neighborhood activities and more domestic duties such as shopping. Yet the socio-economic classes were separated, after all, as each of

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¹⁵ Miller, *Hampstead Garden Suburb: Arts and Crafts Utopia?*, 24. We may think of “filtering up” as the cultural version of “trickle down” economics.
the homes in a cul de sac or square of houses, although individual in design, was similar in cost. At one end of the estates were “houses of a larger type with good gardens,” while in the artisans’ quarter at the other end, “the charm of an old English village [was] being successfully recreated.” At a time when the large family estates with their accompanying villages were being dismantled at a frantic pace, the garden suburb harkened back to an era when each member of the village knew his or her place and responsibilities to those both above and below him or her.

Publicly funded projects, such as the Boundary Estate, were more homogenous in terms of economic class, but were likewise invested in the mythology of village life. The newly founded London County Council (1889) employed a host of young architects who, like Unwin and Parker, had been greatly influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. In a report he gave at a conference on working class dwellings at the Royal Institute of British Architects, LCC architect Owen Fleming described in detail the angles of sunlight available to each room in the Boundary Estates, and drew attention to the circular pattern of the estate: “Many of the rooms command an interesting outlook which, owing to the radiating arrangement of the roads, is often of considerable extent.” Looking inward instead, “the central circular garden is raised in terraced form, so that the eye is refreshed by a bank of trees and flowers at the end of each avenue.”16 After a detailed analysis of material costs and bureaucratic limitations, he attributes the high quality of the building to the fine workers and craftsmen who constructed the estate. The Boundary Estates were, in fact, a modest version of what H. Baillie Scott, another important Arts and Crafts architect and artist, had described in his contribution to the 1909 *Town Planning and Modern

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Architecture at the Hampstead Garden Suburb, as “The Englishman’s Home”: “a dwelling worthy to be ranked with the Englishman’s home of the past—modest, serviceable, and full of charm withal,” unlike the block tenements constructed by philanthropists in the Victorian era. To contribute to the cottage mythology, the buildings of the estate had been named for English villages, and the tree lined avenues led to a bandstand, constructed on the rubble of the old slum that Boundary had replaced.

In many ways these new housing projects were a success. For instance, moving workers to suburbs relieved the overcrowding of the cities, and designs that maximized sunlight and green space promoted physical well-being. Still, town planning and housing policies generally failed to alleviate, or really even to address, the condition of the desperate poor. While affordable for many skilled and unskilled workers, a cottage home in the suburb or in the Boundary Estate was not conceivable for the poorest, not least because of the limits and costs of public transportation. Furthermore, there seemed to be little evidence of the “filtering up” process; when the Old Nichol, the infamous slum of Bethnal Green, was razed, around 5,700 residents were displaced, yet only 11 of them moved into the Boundary Estate that replaced it. In fact, as Owen Fleming, the directing architect of the project had feared, the poor were often forced to move further away from the city, which in turn limited their opportunities for employment.

During the Great War, it became apparent that local governments throughout the Empire had more immediate worries than substandard housing for the poor, which involved where and how to house the 5 million servicemen and women returning from the war, and where to rehouse a similar number of munitions workers who had lived in special

17 Town Planning and Modern Architecture at the Hampstead Garden Suburb (London: Garden Suburb Company, 1909), 17
wartime housing. In order to make Britain “a nation fit for heroes” David Lloyd George’s coalition government enacted the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919, also known as the Addison Act for Dr. Christopher Addison, the government’s first Minister of Health. This act required local authorities to supply housing, with Parliament supplying subsidies when necessary. Ultimately, the “Homes Fit for Heroes” plan pledged a half million homes, and it was expected that once the initial postwar cost of construction went down, private investors would build as well. The majority of the working class housing schemes built as a result of this Act adopted the cottage model. By the early 1930’s three quarters of a million cottage style homes had been built, and even as late as the 1980’s, nearly 1 in every 20 families in Britain and Wales lived in one of these cottage homes.18 Meller describes the ubiquitous cottage estate as “built on a greenfield site [it] displayed new design features such as roundabouts, cul-de-sacs, wide grass verges, low-density and low-rise development with gardens and much public space for sports and recreation.”19 The “wholesale acceptance” of this very specific image had important results, not only material; it changed the “look” of the London conurbation but also the idea of “home.” In 1900, almost all but the very wealthy rented their accommodations, but by 1939, low investment costs had made home ownership affordable to all but the poorest, who continued to inhabit those high-density slums that survived the plans of the LCC and other boroughs.

Ultimately, the housing boom and, more importantly, the social ideas that accompanied both public and private housing concepts, achieved what Walter Creese has identified as “the English dual requirement, the seeking of new images through the

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18 Mark Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes: The Politics and Architecture of Early State Housing in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1981), 1. I’m aware that this old figure does not reflect the Thatcher era, which saw tremendous shake ups in housing policies and practices, including the sale of almost all council housing.
restoration of old values . . .”20 Like so many other aspects of the landscape of Empire, much of the planning and construction of housing in interwar Great Britain provide examples of conservative modernity at work. The new buildings, especially those constructed in the building boom of the 1930’s, included gas and electricity. The location of these new communities near train lines provided ease of transportation to both work and play, and in some ways contributed to the growth of London as an area of entertainment accessible to both the less wealthy and unaccompanied women. Yet, by imposing the image of a traditional society that was materially reflected in the domestic landscape of urban and suburban areas, early twentieth century ideas of city planning increasingly incorporated unskilled workers and the professional classes, thereby broadening the appeal and prevalence of middle class sensibilities. Ultimately conservative, these sensibilities included a respect for traditions—even those newly invented—and traditional hierarchies.

Although the domestic landscape of interwar London contrasted vividly with the imperial landscape of Whitehall, both reflected an understanding of the nation’s history as something unprecedented. The garden suburbs of Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker and the cottage estates of the architects of the LCC, in fact, embodied the British sense of exceptionalism in many ways. The inspiration for these new types of housing sprang from a Victorian, and ostensibly Protestant, sense of duty and responsibility to supply not only material needs for the working class, but also opportunities for social and cultural improvement. As more of the urban and suburban population moved into these new homes, ideas of home ownership elided with traditional British rights, so that by the Second World War, home ownership had become a cultural entitlement, if not a real one.

for much of the middle class. The cottage itself, or rather, its mythology, may be the strongest connection between a long-standing sense of national separateness and early twentieth century housing: the suburban cottage was, it seemed, a family’s very own piece of England’s “green and pleasant land,” and as such, the family shared in all its exceptional bounties and blessings.

**Providence and Protestants**

England’s unique break from the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century undoubtedly contributed to the sense of separateness manifested in the cottage estate of the early twentieth century. Although the view is contested, most historians mark England’s religious reformation as a nationally unifying event; but even if that specific event was not the singular “moment” of national identity, it yet accrued unifying currency in the centuries following Tudor rule.\(^1\) After all, John Gillis reminds us, “The core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity.”\(^2\) In this sense, then, the Reformation and its bloody aftermath became more significant as the actual events receded into a mystified past. For instance, John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, a recounting of the persecution of Protestants under Mary, continuously gained popularity, peaking at times of religious stress, and was periodically updated to include new examples of God’s Providence or, conversely, Catholic perfidy, such as the foiled Gunpowder Plot.\(^3\),\(^4\)

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\(^1\) In *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Krishan Kumar asserts that Reformation Protestantism was not one of the unifying sentiments of a supposed incipient sixteenth century nationalism In fact, Kumar counters that the English Reformation was neither unifying nor overwhelmingly popular.


As Linda Colley points out, even ostensibly secular almanacs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provided condensed national and European histories which gave events a Protestant and providential dressing. Some historic moments, such as Luther’s rebellion against the Pope, celebrated a large-scale fight against Catholicism, while other, local events, such as the saving of Irish Protestants by a woman who switched out an execution order from Queen Mary for a deck of cards, testify to God’s special dispensation for Protestants.

Spread by an ever-expanding press and music both popular and religious, the Protestantism that ultimately united Great Britain in the early nineteenth century perceived itself as an embattled force of liberty against the despotic, dirty, and generally poor Catholics on the continent. In both church and chapel, England’s people drew strength from their favorable contrast to the idolatrous Catholics residing on the other side of the English and Irish channels. While the nonconformist churches joined the mainstream of English and British culture and politics (indeed, Barker claims that the Parliamentary parties of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, the Tories and Whigs, are neatly aligned with the Established Church and Dissenting churches, respectively), Roman Catholics remained disenfranchised in many ways. In 1707 they were prohibited from ever occupying the throne, and they were not allowed to own or inherit property until 1780. It was not until the Parliament Catholic Relief Act of 1829 that Catholics could vote or hold office, and the coronation oath contained an anti-Popish diatribe until 1911. According to the Bill of Rights of 1689 and the Act of Succession of 1700, a new monarch was required “in the presence of

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24 Raphael Samuel refers to the Book of Martyrs as “the most remarkable example of iconographic longevity.” Little wonder; “The martyrs were pictured being scourged, burned, hanged and stretched on the rack. The horror of the scene was enhanced by the grim but matter-of-fact bearing of the executioners.” See: Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture (London: Verso, 1994), 34.
God” to deny transubstantiation, the adoration of Mary, and the idolatrous practices of the mass; as the editor of the 1912 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* observes, there is “much to the sense of studied insult conveyed by the whole formula.”25 The encyclopedist was not alone in this conviction; Edward VII had been embarrassed by his required recitation of the virulent “Royal Declaration Against Roman Catholicism,” and after his coronation, the House of Lords discussed rewording the Declaration, noting the inadvisability of insulting the 12 million Roman Catholic subjects throughout the Empire. The Declaration was absent from George V’s coronation oath, and replaced with the promise to uphold Protestantism.26

The Great War contributed further to the acceptance of Catholicism throughout the Empire, as numerous Catholics had bravely defended the Empire side by side with British Protestants. In addition to the removal of the anti-Catholic creed from the coronation oath, and the realization that many British citizens, like Edward Elgar, who contributed liberally to the patriotic music of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, were patriots despite their Papism, further attempts were made to include the Catholic community in the imperial project. For instance, the re-opening of St. Paul’s in 1930 prompted the *Times* to publish a special number titled *Church and Empire*, providing an opportunity for the Established Church leadership to speak of the Empire’s inclusive Christian community.

26 “I [monarch’s name] do solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God profess, testify and declare that I am a faithful Protestant, and that I will, according to the true intent of the enactments which secure the Protestant succession to the Throne of my Realm, uphold and maintain the said enactments to the best of my powers according to law.” http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/briefings/snpc-00435.pdf
The collected special edition of *Church and Empire* opens with an unsigned introduction that describes the re-opening of St. Paul’s as a good omen for “Christians of every school.” While St. Paul’s “proclaims over Central London the faith which has shaped English history,” it is clear that the history-shaping faith is that of the Established Church. Yet the language in the introduction remains fairly generic, referring to “organized Christianity” rather than the Anglican Church. After a mention of the upcoming Lambeth Conference, a gathering of Anglican bishops from all over the Empire, the editor returns to the religious diversity of the Empire, noting that, “nowhere, indeed, are relations between divided Churches so harmonious as in the mission-field.” He continues: “Theological differences have a way of seeming far less formidable in Central Africa than they appear in London, Edinburgh, or Rome.”

These comments stressed inter-denominational unity and commonness of purpose in the mission field. Yet the Prayer Book Controversy of 1927-1928 had proved that domestically, at least, Roman Catholics were still suspect. In suggesting revisions to the Book of Common Prayer, most Anglican bishops felt that the Church’s stance should be moderate, inclusive, and broadly Christian, but Nonconformists and Evangelical Anglicans decried any attempt to “Romanize” the Prayer Book. Although the nonconformist churches were not obliged to use the book, many Free Church leaders felt very keenly that as an instrument of the national church, the Book of Prayer must demonstrate an unapologetic...
and untainted Protestantism. Free-Church supporters in the House of Commons rejected proposed revisions in December 1927, and in June 1928, they were rejected again by an even larger margin. Ultimately, the Anglican Bishops declared a state of emergency, which allowed them to use the revised book until such time as the issue could be resolved. Eighty-five years later, the Church is still in this state of emergency, and a congregation has the choice of using the 1662 Prayer Book, or the unofficial one from 1928.

It appears that while domestically, especially within the Free Church community, Roman Catholicism still posed a threat to Britain's providential protection, throughout the rest of the Empire, British Catholics who participated in the civilizing mission could earn claim to the title of "God's Englishmen." One part of the *Times* special number, "The Empire Oversea," gave a full-page photograph and a chapter each to the Established Church, the Free Churches, the Church of Scotland, and, lastly, the Catholic Church. The review of Catholic activity was reluctant in tone, and the poverty of Catholic missions—and Catholics—was mentioned no less than three times. Still, the essay clarified the Colonial position on Catholic missions: Catholic missionaries, even those who were not British, were welcome in the Empire's territories, and two references to the good relations between Catholic missions and Imperial officials seemed to guarantee the statement's sincerity. Catholic sisterhoods were especially appreciated, as they cared for a great number of lepers and orphans in India, British Africa, and the Fiji Islands.31

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31 Although the official line of this essay intends to assure the educated citizen that British Christianity was capable of absorbing its long time nemesis, the subtext of this essay is passive-aggressively anti-Catholic: references to the "diversity of nationality" so typical of Catholic missionaries emphasizes the foreign nature of Catholicism, and "in hospital work the Catholic statistics are strong enough . . ." is followed with a list of shortcomings. But the fear of Rome is most evident in a paragraph criticizing the Catholic form of ecclesial education. The layman knows little about these methods, but the writer remarks that they "deserve study for
The necessity of shifting Britain’s historic Protestantism to a more generalized Christian mission required what Denis Cosgrove has called repurposing, in this case, a repurposing of the cultural landscape. Here, the older tropes of national identity have evolved and established themselves within the iconography of New Imperialism. The changing use of biblical images in mainstream sermons, as well as their adoption by what may be considered fringe groups, demonstrates the way the discourse of exceptionalism adapted to the increased presence and activity of Catholics in the previously Protestant mission of the Empire.

Colley has demonstrated that throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, both nonconformist church and high church sermons, as well as the music and poetry of the era, employed the vivid use of Old Testament typology and imagery in reference to Great Britain’s providential status. For instance, Isaac Watts frequently replaced “Israel” with “Great Britain” in his translations of the Psalms, and Handel’s oratorios featured the defenders of ancient Israel, by which he meant Great Britain. Colley notes that these images embody “an apocalyptic interpretation of history, in which Britain stood in for Israel and its opponents were represented as Satan’s accomplices.” As Adrian Hastings has also noted, using biblical narratives to establish a national identity is common; laity and clergy employ “the Bible as the mirror through which to imagine and create a New

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*the insight they give into the solid lines on which the Catholic advance is being laid* (61). Clearly, the defensive stance towards Catholicism had not been extinguished entirely. Yet the author of this piece appears to be a Catholic, the Right Reverend Monsignor Canon Ross! As of this writing, I have been unable to find a clergyman by this name. As Alice said, curiouser and curiouser.

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Israel.” The adoption of a biblical narrative then allows a nascent state to figure for itself a destiny:

Once a Christian history has been constructed for a nation from the baptism of a first king and on through great deliverances, a history of a people’s faith and divine providence, once the Bible is meditated upon in one’s own language with all the immediacy this could bring, once one’s own church is fully independent of any other and identified in extent with that of the nation, the more it seems easy to go the final step and claim to be a chosen people, a holy nation, with some special divine mission to fulfill.

British nationalism had indeed developed by the book, so to speak, and that book was the English Bible, through which the images of a besieged Israel and its defenders engraved themselves on the British imagination.

In an effort to distract his Puritan and Anglican courtiers from their doctrinal bickering, James I ordered them to compile a new English translation of the Bible. Three hundred years later, in the early twentieth century, that vast and vivid store of images still constituted much of the language of exceptionalism. For instance, Hilaire Belloc, in An Essay on the Nature of Contemporary England (1937) recognized the longstanding influence of the King James Bible on “Englishness”: “undoubtedly the most characteristic is the effect produced upon it by the vernacular translation of the ancient Hebrew Scriptures. The modern English were cast and set in the mould of the Old Testament.”

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34 Ibid., 196.
35 The categories of English and British and a distinction between them is a constant problem in studies of the British Empire; for instance, many, probably most, of the books that dealt with any sort of cultural or national identity in the first decades of the twentieth century (such as In Search of England, The Face of England, etc.)
imagery of the King James’ Bible had for several centuries provided forms and ideas by which the Englishman could frame and understand his world. Belloc writes that these biblical images had “led great masses—indeed the bulk of the nation—to consider themselves a Chosen People.” A decade earlier, Ernest Barker, in his 1926 *National Character*, describes this national sense of Divine Protection in terms of the biblical covenant, a form of contract between God and his chosen people. He wrote, “Yet it must be admitted that there has been a certain tendency in our thought, if not to claim God for our nation, at any rate to vindicate the claim of our nation to be regarded as belonging peculiarly to God.” He noted that the watchful eye of Providence required its due, and God expected great works from “God’s Englishman, on whom He calls for any work of special difficulty.” While the early days of the nation had witnessed battle against the Papist Other, the isolated island had emerged from its trials victorious, and now turned to that work of “special difficulty.” Through both official as well as informal channels, that work of “special difficulty” was figured as the civilizing mission of the British Empire. In the language of apocalypticism, the nation had come through its trials victorious, but the task at hand now was to set about the building of the New Jerusalem, that is, building the Kingdom of God here on earth.

The history of the musical setting and instant popularity of Hubert Parry’s arrangement of Blake’s “Jerusalem,” composed during the Great War, provides an interesting example of how Blake’s original vision—in opposition to the image of the

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37 Ibid., 60.
embattled Israel employed in much of the religious and national language of his own
time—is, in fact, the image of the Empire as Israel Victorious, charged with building the
New Jerusalem. To its early audiences, the anthem came to justify, even impel the moral
work of empire.39

Apocalyptic literature and imagery is usually the product of a community under
threat that, through the protection of Providence, will be ultimately victorious. In the
mythology of the British Empire, the nation had successfully defended itself from the
continental and Catholic threat; therefore, the iconography of New Imperialism necessarily
displayed the Empire as powerful and victorious, and engaged in the spread of peace,
liberty and civilization. Likewise, in William Blake’s post-apocalyptic vision, the victorious
Israel must now turn to building the New Jerusalem.

Blake wrote the short poem now referred to as “Jerusalem,” around 1804, as an
introduction to one of his long prophetic poems, Milton. After an opening essay that called a
New Age into being, one in which the Greek and Roman models of life would be overthrown
for “the Sublime of the Bible,” the poem, known until the twentieth century as “And did
those feet in ancient time,” rather abruptly brings the reader to a scenario neither Roman
nor biblical: a past and future England.40 Recalling the legend that Jesus had come to Britain
with Joseph of Arimithea, the poet asks, “And was Jerusalem builded here,/among these
dark Satanic Mills?” The answer, we must conclude is negative, as the poet calls for his
“Bow of burning gold” and his “Arrows of desire.” The weapons would imply battle and
conquest, but we must consider the “Chariot of fire” in its biblical context: the Chariot of

39 While Blake’s poem will be taken by its 20th c. interpreters to stand for the empire, we must keep in mind
that Blake’s green and pleasant land meant England specifically.
Fire sweeps Elijah up to heaven, that is, to the Kingdom of God. The poet, then, has been charged with establishing the Kingdom of God in England’s “green & pleasant Land.”

Relatively unknown throughout the nineteenth century, Blake’s poem made its debut outside of its original context when Stewart Headlam, the founder of the Guild of St. Matthew, an association of radical socialist clergy, put the last stanza on the masthead of his newspaper, Church Reformer, which ran from 1884 to 1895. From its first use as motto or anthem, then, it was employed in progressive causes, or what in religious terms is referred to as building of the Kingdom of God on earth. A dozen years later, during the Great War, Britain’s poet laureate and hymnodist, Robert Bridges, asked his fellow Etonian Sir Hubert Parry to set the poem to music for use by the Fight for Right Movement, an organization that sought “to instruct, steady, and encourage the national spirit.”41 This group supported the war effort, but only according to “the code of the gentleman and not the custom of the barbarian . . .,” and the group’s founder, Francis Younghusband, had called for the war to be waged for justice rather than for costly victories.42 Parry agreed to write the score, and by his friend Walford Davies’ account, was greatly pleased with the result. The song was introduced by Youngblood at the Fight for Right meeting; Mark Chapman’s summary of Youngblood’s introduction emphasizes that like the central message of the group, “Jerusalem” was a “spur to action to fight for a better world.”43

Certainly, the crescendo approaching the sustained dotted quarter note at “built” before the

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43 Ibid., 46.
majestic “Jerusalem” summons up the vision of the shining city on the hill, or, in A.C. Benson’s far less refined terms, a “land of hope and glory.”

The song was instantly popular, both within and without the group, but as the Fight for Right Movement became increasingly militaristic, Parry became increasingly uncomfortable with their use of his song. Parry’s politics were of the radical Liberal tradition (which, incidentally, had promoted Catholic Emancipation), and he had supported Chamberlain. Like many of his era, if not of his background—he was from the landed gentry—he was dedicated to evolutionism, and saw in it possibilities for progress. In 1917 Parry withdrew his song from the Fight for Right group and almost immediately handed it over to the Nation Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, and even conducted it in its debut by the group. When women were enfranchised and the suffrage societies disbanded, the song became even more popular. King George V reportedly preferred it to “God Save Our King.”

Parry died before he saw the wide-scale adaption of “Jerusalem,” and might have been dismayed if, indeed, he heard his song, a paean to progress, bellowed at sporting events, as it is so frequently today. Yet its call to build a New Jerusalem provided an inspiring motif for the civilizing mission of the British Empire. Football hooligans aside, the song—and the image of a New Jerusalem—has remained associated with progressive causes throughout the twentieth century: Atlee’s Labour government adopted the hymn for

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44 It was not until 2010, for instance, that the Summer Proms played anything of Parry’s other than “Jerusalem,” a last night standard. See for example: Simon Heffer, “BBC Proms: There’s So Much More to Hubert Parry than Jerusalem,” The Telegraph July 10, 2010. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/simonheffer/7882804/BBC-Proms-Theres-so-much-more-to-Hubert-Parry-than-Jerusalem.html

45 Though aesthetically jarring, the use of “Jerusalem” at sporting events is not so incongruous; after all, sports were an important and ubiquitous vehicle in the spread of patriotic imperialism throughout the Empire.
the 1945 election, alluding to the New Jerusalem of socialistic reforms, and more recently, the hymn has been adopted by environmental groups.

While the image of the Empire as Israel figured frequently in the dominant landscape, other Britons were less metaphorical when they spoke of Britain as Israel. During the Civil Wars of the seventeenth century, the image of an embattled Israel may have prompted the rise of British Israelism, the belief that the Anglo-Saxon race was the remnant of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Although there was no organized movement until the twentieth century, a related set of ideas connected those who saw themselves as British Israelites, including the rejection of the New Testament as a New Covenant superseding the Covenants of the Hebrew Scriptures. Throughout the nineteenth century, especially in the latter decades, supporters claimed that the royal family descended from the House of David, and that it was necessary to return to the Old Testament rules and covenants—but without rejecting Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer—in order that the British Empire would once again “become the nation state Bride and wife of Jehovah.”

“Evidence” of the connection of contemporary Britain to ancient Israel included the coronation ceremonies of British monarchs, “anointed in the same way as Zadok the Priest anointed the Kings of Israel.” Similarly, British common law, unlike the Roman Civil Law of the Europeans, was based on the laws of ancient Israel and had made its way into the Magna Carta and other British law via Greece. By the turn of the century, there were apparently a large number of “Kingdom Identity Groups” existing independently of each other, and in 1919 many of them joined together to form the British-Israel-World Federation.

46 “Our History,” the website of The British-Israel-World Federation; http://www.britishisrael.co.uk/history.php
The Federation was not a sect or cult, and was not tied to a single denomination or political party. But as in Blake’s vision, the British Israelites believed that the Kingdom of God was here on earth, although in the British Israelite version, the British Empire was the earthly manifestation of the Kingdom of God. A full-page piece by the British-Israel-World Foundation in the *Times* in May of 1930 explains:

> The fact is that God has established for Himself, and for the world, a national organization. This national organization is founded upon a system of Divine Law, which is given to us in the Bible and which is the basis of the Common Law of Britain. This national organization is under the direct administration of the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, in regard to all supreme matters affecting His Kingdom in the world—He allows us self-government in all minor affairs.47

God’s “national organization” was founded on one family, “the Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, and all the other branches of the people which go to the making of the Anglo-Saxon race so-called.” Furthermore, as emphasized in all capitals, “The Anglo-Saxon nation and company of nations, and the United States branch of the same people, constitute the national basis of the Kingdom of God in the earth.” The racially-specific nature of the Kingdom’s administration, however, had no bearing on the non-Anglo’s salvation: the Anglo-Saxon reference is only “to God’s administration, ensuring peace and prosperity for the nations.”

The heightened presence in the early decades of the twentieth century of the British-Israel-World Federation and other British Israelite associations offered an alternative—and exaggerated—version of British Providentialism, based in the belief of the literal descent of Britons from the Lost Tribes of Israel and the certitude that God’s

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Englishmen truly were the Chosen People. The New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God on earth, was always already present in the “Christian world of Britain, the British Commonwealth of Nations and the United States.” But as Denis Cosgrove observes, “It is in the nature of an emergent culture to offer a challenge to the existing dominant culture, a vision of alternative possible futures,” and British Israelism does just that. In times of perceived and real threats, such as the “present menace” of communism, decried in the Times advertisement of 1930 as a “miasma of Communistic anti-God doctrine,” the Anglo-Saxons of the New Jerusalem were called upon to “restore the faith and stability of our national institutions, bring the Commonwealth of Anglo-Saxon Nations back to God and His Law.” While never challenging the dominant landscape directly, British Israelism provided an alternative landscape in which the images employed in dominant civic and religious discourse were fully realized.

When God’s Englishmen took up the civilizing mission, they brought progress along with the Word of God to the dark places of the earth. The Times’ 1930 Church and Empire emphasizes several times the investment and leadership of the Church in ostensibly secular matters, reminding readers that, “in the establishment of industries on the most modern scientific lines, in medicine, natural history, anthropology, ethnology, and literature, the Church has been, and is still, a pioneer.” For many liberal middle class professionals unconvinced by the economic benefits of empire, the spread of Christianity, medical

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49 This rhetoric may sound familiar to Americans; the British Israelite movement has spawned a number of movements based on the Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism, including the Christian Identity Movement, who have in turn influenced a number of other movements based on the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. Unlike the British-Israel-World Federation, however, many of these groups are not content to live alongside contemporary society, but instead challenge the dominant landscape in the “excluded” landscapes of militia camps, skinhead concerts, and rallies, such as the Aryan Nation’s march in Washington in September 2012.
50 Church and Empire, 51.
missions, and education morally justified the imperial project. But by 1935, when the Archibishop asked for God’s help to uphold not only peace and progress among all nations, but also “the principles of liberty and justice,” some of the believers in the civilizing mission may have taken pause. Certainly Australia and Canada had established governments on those God-given precepts, but in many of the Empire’s possessions, those rights and privileges belonged to the British occupiers only. The paradox of a nation of free people ruling over people in foreign lands had been brought home frequently in the twenties and thirties: Amritsar was still fresh in some minds, and the post-War Mandates had brought with them numerous new responsibilities over quarrelsome peoples, such as Arabs and Jews in Palestine, who wanted those responsibilities for themselves. A Mau uprising in Samoa in 1929 and a rebellion in Burma the following year provided further evidence of the incompatibility of the ideals of liberty and justice with the civilizing mission of the British Empire.

This gnawing paradox is important in two ways. In the first, it prompted calls for decolonization in the years after the Second World War. In a second way, more relevant to this project, it illustrates just how important the ideas of freedom and liberty—granted through the extraordinary benefices of Britain’s superior institutions—were to any notions of national or imperial identity.

**Exceptional Institutions**

In his *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History*, first published in 1955, Hans Kohn used England as his example of the “first modern nation.” Kohn identified the Puritan movement as a galvanizing moment in British history, but not only for religion. He writes: “For the first time the authoritarian tradition on which the Church and the State rested was
challenged by the seventeenth century English Revolutions in the name of the liberty of man.”\textsuperscript{51} As Ernest Barker had done fifteen years earlier, Kohn credited Milton with the ability to explicate the political and personal liberties that accompanied the overthrow of the King and Church; as Kohn notes, “One may say that Milton was obsessed with the idea of liberty.”\textsuperscript{52} But there is little doubt that Milton’s obsession helped to recognize and order one of the defining moments in the discourse of British exceptionalism. Milton reminded the English that any authority to rule over them must be granted to them by themselves. He writes:

> It being thus manifest that the power of Kings and Magistrates is nothing else, but what is derivative, transferred and committed to them in trust from the People, to the Common good of the all, in whom the power yet remains fundamentally, and cannot be taken from them, without a violation of their natural birthright.\textsuperscript{53}

This long-standing emphasis on liberty against monarchs and bishops gained expression through a national, and later, empire-wide, pride in the institutions that protected these liberties. As Britons witnessed the continual fighting and religious persecutions raging on the continent, they became more aware of their own story, what Ash has called “a story of continuity . . . a story of the slow, steady organic growth of institutions, of Common Law, Parliament, and a unique concept of sovereignty, vested in the Crown in Parliament.”\textsuperscript{54} Ash maintains that what he calls an “exceptionalist vision,” based on the believed superiority of

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\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 84
\textsuperscript{54} Ash, “Is Britain European?” 6.
the nation’s institutions, remained evident in textbooks and practices as late as the 1950’s and 1960’s, and can still be found occasionally, especially among British travelers abroad.\footnote{55 A fictionalized example of this attitude can be found in the recent popular film, \textit{Best Exotic Marigold Hotel}. Two of the women, Jean Anslie and Muriel Donnelly, are appalled by the lack of Britishness (e.g., order and quality) they find in their accommodations in India; whereas Jean finds it hopeless and leaves, Muriel (played brilliantly by Maggie Smith) simply imposes good British order upon the chaos.}

In the early decades of the twentieth century, as dictatorships and revolutions waged around him, the British citizen assured himself that the British system of law making and justice protected him from tyranny and servitude, and that, furthermore, that system was worth protecting.

God’s Englishman is many things: he is separate and distinct from the European and Catholic Other, he is Christian, and he is \textit{free}: free to speak, to make contracts, to practice his religion, to trade. However, the ultimate guarantor of those freedoms was not the Crown or Parliament; rather, as Ernest Barker notes, “the greatest product of the English nation in the sphere of social organization” was the system of Common Law. The Whig historian G.M. Trevelyan shared this sentiment, and in his \textit{English Social History}, written in 1942, he reminded readers that, “above all, the victory of the Common Law over the Prerogative Courts preserved the mediaeval conception of the supremacy of law, as a thing that could not be brushed aside for the convenience of government, and could only be altered in full Parliament, not by the King alone.”\footnote{56 G.M. Trevelyan, \textit{English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries – Chaucer to Queen Victoria} (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1942), 245.} Ultimately, the law was the defining factor in the English notion of \textit{freedom}, and before it, class and caste ostensibly had no bearing. Barker, Trevelyan and others emphasized Common Law as the institution that contributed most to the national character.
Barker, while assigning pride of place to Common Law, provides a thoughtful analysis of the history of Parliament and attributes the development of important national characteristics to the “gladiatorial game of discussion” that was Parliament.\textsuperscript{57} Once the House of Commons had successfully challenged the Crown, the party system developed, which further decentralized power. This, Barker says, was a positive development, noting, “His Majesty’s Opposition is as integral a part of the constitution as His Majesty’s Government.” Indeed, these discussions between parties are both practical and procedural, and they have contributed three important characteristics to the Empire’s legal—and cultural—identity: a method of compromise, a spirit of moderation, and a dedication to the “difficult art of collective mental action.”\textsuperscript{58} These attributes—most admirable, especially when contrasted to the contentious political systems abroad—were absolutely dependent on opposition. The importance of His Majesty’s Opposition assured that the majority, though in the ascendency, would not be allowed to rule unopposed. In short, Parliament and its party system ensured that Britons would never need to fear a tyranny of the majority.

However, the nation’s long-standing admiration for the legislative process declined somewhat leading up to the Great War and the problematic years following. As early as 1913, a \textit{Times} editorial challenged the Prime Minister and the House of Commons to stand above party politics in the matter of an insider trading scandal, because “its own credit [was] at stake.”\textsuperscript{59} Furthermore, during the war, the Government was accused of secrecy, not

\textsuperscript{57} Barker, \textit{National Character and the Factors in its Formation}, 138.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 139
only to the general public, but also within the House itself. The Military Correspondent of the *Times* took serious issue with this obfuscation:

> The British Empire is in no temper to fight behind a veil of mystery. Public opinion at home, and the spirits of our Allies abroad, can only be fortified by clear proofs that the Government have measured the full gravity of the crisis, and have taken adequate measures to meet it. It is a novel, a remarkable, and a really extravagant theory that a great democracy like ours . . . should be asked to fight a war of existence without being told what the Government of the said democracy is about. 60

Clearly, there was dissatisfaction with the administration during the war, especially as the war dragged on long past the three months predicted by Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey.

Nor was there much improvement in public attitudes toward Parliament after the war. Lloyd George came under increasing attack for selling honors to businessmen and journalists, and Bonar Law, his successor, seems to have had little interest in social reform. Although some held great hope for Stanley Baldwin, as with Bonar Law, much of his success seems to have been simply that he maintained his government. Neither he nor his Conservative (or later, Unionist) government ever put forth a plan to deal with high unemployment or with the decline in industry, and they failed to implement educational reforms.

The downturn in the Government’s standing was countered by a rise in the popularity of the monarchy. In fact, except for a slight rise in republicanism during the

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disastrous Boer Wars, the monarchy had been in ascendancy since Victoria’s later years. In the previous chapter I showed how Disraeli had encouraged the Queen to invest in the image of Empress, as well as venture out from her self-imposed reclusiveness. The Jubilees only added to her popularity, while the length of her reign evoked notions of tradition and stability.

Victoria’s son Edward VII had also done much to increase popular support for royalty; while still Prince of Wales, he had instituted the custom of appearing at important events, such as the opening of the Thames Embankment. Unlike Victoria, who spent as much time away from Buckingham as possible, Edward lived in London and was, as Roger Fulford puts it, “a conspicuous monarch.”61 He leaned towards liberal causes, and apparently “interfered much more vigorously than had his mother over the reprieve of criminals. . . .” He loved pomp and ceremony in direct proportion to how much his mother hated it, but he did not “stand on it,” and was apparently very patient and responsive to soldiers and others he met during his extensive tours. And even though Edward was generally known to have had affairs (he was involved in a divorce case at one point), his wife, Queen Alexandra, was very popular and greatly admired for her beauty and charm.

At Edward’s death in 1910, his son and daughter-in-law ascended the thrones as King George V and Queen Mary. Their 25-year reign would cover some of the most tragic years ever experienced by Britannia and her Empire; their reign also witnessed rapid advancements in science, medicine, and transportation. Like Edward, King George and Queen Mary were highly visible, and as I demonstrated in the last chapter, their tours and support of the armed forces during the war had increased their popularity. The King’s

Christmas Day radio broadcasts, begun in 1932 (the first broadcast was written by Rudyard Kipling) were extremely popular, and he continued the broadcasts until his death. Indeed, these actions, as well as George’s “regular” qualities—he collected stamps and enjoyed hunting—endeared him to a nation, especially those citizens who felt disenfranchised by the increasing divisions in Parliament. The appeal of the monarchy was further enhanced in 1931, when the Statute of Westminster ended Parliament’s responsibility to the Dominions, thereby focusing the notion of Empire and Commonwealth on the unifying figure of the Monarch rather than divisive parliamentary politics.

This rise in popularity was not strictly spontaneous, but was aided by several highly orchestrated elements, including increased attention from the press, energetic and creative musical composition for special occasions by talented composers, and a move towards ritual in the Established Church, and more importantly, an increase in civic ritual. Capitalizing on what was already emerging, however, the orchestration of royal spectacles focused the Empire’s attention on its unifying figure, the King, conflating the grandeur and power of Imperial power with a father figure whose family was, in many respects, the essence of genteel middle class Englishness.

An Imperial Landscape, 1911

In this chapter, I have described some of the ways in which exceptionalism was both manifested and experienced at home in the British Empire. For instance, as a result of the rights and privileges established by Parliament, a citizen was free to vote as he liked, yet he might have chosen to “honor” those rights by demonstrations of devotion to a hereditary King. Similarly, the Established Church was the outward symbol of God’s Providence, yet some might express the belief in God’s special dispensation for the British through Roman
Catholic missions, or—more radically—through organizations such as the British-Israel-World Foundation. And, as I have shown, the mythology of the rural English village is an example of the attempt to hold on to a perceived Englishness far removed from the rest of Europe and its brewing catastrophes. The previous chapter ended with a description of King George’s V’s Silver Jubilee. But to close out this look at exceptionalism, I will go back to the beginning of his reign to observe an entire year of “official” imperial spectacle, both as it was played out on the landscape of empire and as it helped to construct that same landscape.

The year 1911 may have been the most “spectacular” year of the Empire’s entire history. In one year London added an imperial monument and vista to its urban landscape, a new King and Queen ascended the throne, two large exhibitions—one featuring a pageant with a cast of thousands—drew crowds from all over the Empire and Europe and, in a fitting close to a year of imperial splendor, George and Mary—the only monarchs to ever participate in their own durbar—were installed as Emperor and Empress in Delhi in ceremonies resplendent with jewels and ermine. A close look at a few of the events of 1911 will demonstrate how official events inscribe dominant narratives onto the landscape.

I have investigated the image of the humble English cottage and how it transformed housing policy, both public and private, from the 1880’s until the eve of the Second World War. In a contradiction that evokes the paradox of the discourses of exceptionalism and decline co-constructing the landscape of empire, many of the same citizens who had bought into the mythology of the English cottage demanded that the heart of their empire—that is, from Buckingham Palace, through Whitehall, and to St. Paul’s—reflect the power and glory inherent in the imperial project. Indeed, London had gained much imperial grandeur by the
early twentieth century. Nineteenth century architectural contests, such as the Foreign Office contest, had been particularly important in establishing a ‘government palace’ that extended throughout Whitehall, and the alterations to the winning design give a good indication of the desire by the Department of Public Works to produce an imperial complex in the classicist style. Just as Raymond Unwin “designed” an entire suburban lifestyle based on the idyll of the rural cottage, Aston Webb, in many ways, helped to define imperial London in the first few decades of the twentieth century. By 1911, he had completed two buildings in “Albertopolis” in South Kensington, and was finishing up a third there, the Royal School of Mines. The Admiralty Arch, however, was a much more transparent display of imperial grandeur than his work in Kensington, as it served as the culminating point of the Mall—also of his design—that linked Buckingham Palace to the rest of London and the rest of the Empire.

The entire vista, from Buckingham Palace to the Admiralty Arch, was planned as a memorial to Queen Victoria. Shortly after her death, a committee gathered to consider various ways to commemorate the dead queen. Members in an early planning committee meeting had been adamant that the memorial be a monument, rather than a philanthropic cause, as such schemes required “embarrassing questions” concerning the maintenance of funds and programs and was unlikely to “hand on through the centuries the memories we

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62 The architect awarded the design for the Foreign Office began with a Gothicized building, but finally, after given the choice to alter his design or resign his position, his Italianate version was approved and completed in 1870. According to Ellen K. Morris’s history of the Foreign Office Contest controversy, “Symbols of Empire: Architectural Style and the Government Offices Competition,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 32:2 (1978): 8-13, great importance was attached by Parliament and the profession alike as to whether the style for the Foreign Office might effectively allow the building to be seen in an appropriately imperial light; that is, as an image of the British nation in a dominant world position” (Ibid., 10). The Classic style, with its references to the Roman Empire, was clearly the only appropriate architecture.
wish to perpetuate.” Furthermore, the committee hoped the memorial would include “something more than a mere monument,” and their vision ultimately included a grand imperial vista as well. According to committee member Sir William Harcourt, the monument would add to the imperial landscape, which was sorely lacking in monuments; he notes, “Though this nation has not been poor in great characters it has not been distinguished in the manner in which it has commemorated them.” He emphasized the need for a monumental landscape, reminding his audience,

This we believe to be an age of progress, and I think there is nothing in which it is more necessary that we should progress than in our capacity for monumental commemorations. I hardly know of one even in this great metropolis—the greatest City of the world—which is deserving either of the greatness of the Empire or the greatness of this City.

Harcourt reminded his audience that the monument would be “right and fitting” for the “mighty City, which is the heart and centre not only of the kingdom, but of the Empire.” It was clear that this monument was to recall not only her person, but also Victoria’s expansion and rule of the Empire, and memorial committees throughout the Empire encouraged donations, proclaiming the desirability of smaller donations from a large number of subjects, rather than large donations from a select few. Indeed, donations came in from every colony and territory, with the exception of India, which remained determined to raise a separate monument in London.

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63 “National Memorial to Queen Victoria,” The Times, March 27, 1901, 8. Lord Balfour is quoted here.
64 Ibid.
65 Although Aston Webb was responsible for the setting and vista leading up to the monument, the actual monument to Victoria was designed by Thomas Brock.
King George and his cousin, Emperor William II of Germany, unveiled the Victoria Memorial on May 16, 1911, about a month before the coronation, in a ceremony attended by over 4000 imperial and domestic officials. Thousands of other spectators were spread throughout St. James Park, including numerous groups of Germans.\(^6\) Brightly uniformed regiments and troops, most associated in some way with the late Queen, stood around the monument as the King, Queen, Emperor and Empress mounted the dais. Lord Esher, the ubiquitous pageant director, opened the ceremony, and was followed by the King, who addressed the image of Victoria as the mother of the Empire’s children around the world, but the ruler of that empire as well. He hoped that the monument would “convey to our descendants the luster and fame which shine upon that happy age of British history, when a woman’s hand held for a period which almost equaled the allotted span of human life the scepter of the Empire and when the simple virtues of a Queen comforted the hearts of nations.” The Archbishop of Canterbury led a brief dedication ceremony. Then, as the ceremony ended and guests were leaving the dais, the King asked for a sword and knighted the surprised sculptor of the memorial, Thomas Brock. The King was not the only one who had been impressed by the monument: a *Times* editorial also praised Brock’s memorial, stating outright that it was “beyond comparison the most splendid that has ever been erected to a British sovereign.”\(^7\) In countering those who might have thought it too lavish, he noted that it “only means that London has till now been far behind other capitals in public monuments.” The editor went on to praise its “symbolic ideas which, without being commonplace, are yet such as the commonalty can understand,” and while some may object to the “colossal scale” of the monument, he found it “architecturally simple,

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\(^6\) “Queen Victoria Memorial. Unveiling by the King,” *The Times*, May 17, 1911, 11.

\(^7\) “The Memorial as a Work of Art,” *The Times*, May 17, 1911, 12.
harmonious, and right,” and a much needed addition to London’s statues which, other than those of Charles I and Charles “Chinese” Gordon, were “deplorable.”

The Coronation on June 22 made full use of Victoria’s memorial, as well as Webb’s widened Mall, and, at its far end, the new and magnificent Admiralty Arch. The twin emphases, on the Empire and on London as the heart of that empire, were not lost on the press who, in turn, explicated these themes to the public. The day after the Coronation, much of the coverage of the event lavished praise upon the “imposing” and “unrivalled” city, and remarked that anyone who failed to be impressed suffered from “feebleness of their own imagination.” Yet London’s attraction was not merely its architectural and monumental grandeur: “It is like a jewel set in a buckle, beautiful in itself, yet the mere adornment of something far greater, and the symbol of latent power and proud achievement.” The “something far greater” appeared to be the Empire held together, not by bonds of conquest or “assertive central authority,” but rather by “some force which none of us can properly name or define, impalpable and intangible as gravitation.” If the force itself was intangible, it seemed to manifest in the Crown.

The procession routes to Westminster were awash with color, and the Times described in detail the uniforms of the “peers and ambassadors, with hammercloths and harness of red, blue, or yellow” as well as those of the Chelsea Pensioners “blending with the patches of geranium blooms,” a contingent of Boy Scouts, “the youngest of our military institutions” and other civic, official, and military organizations. Clearly, the entire proceeding, especially along the improved procession route, was meant to dazzle; the Times enthused, “The route itself, for spaciousness, for natural beauty, for picturesqueness

69 Ibid.
of architectural grouping, and for wealth of historical associations, may challenge comparison with any in the world.” The final phrase assured readers that their Empire was grand on a global scale, as was effectively demonstrated by the hundreds of imperial and colonial troops lining the procession route and escorting the royal carriages. A summary of the week’s events noted that the “splendid spectacle” of the military parades “showed, not only to London, not only to the Empire, but to the whole world the potential strength and resources of the great British Empire unified in loyal devotion to the one Crown, to the one Emperor.” The color, the pageantry, the military were all gathered to honor the unifying symbol of that vast and varied Empire, the Crown.

The Coronation service itself was the “epitome of the great traditions which root the King’s great office in the past.” The antiquity of the ceremony—and the monarchy itself—was a recurrent theme in the coverage of the Coronation, as was the use of biblical imagery: one report reminded readers that “little has been changed for centuries,” and that parts of the ceremony hearken back “to the day of the Kings of Israel.” Indeed, as the British-Israel-World Federation informed us, the ceremony itself included a reference to Solomon’s anointing by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet, and it only follows that Handel’s “Zadok the Priest” served as the Coronation anthem.

The next day the King and Queen processed through London, even venturing across the Thames; as the Times noted, “their Majesties were not content merely to accept their

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70 Ibid.
71 “The King and His People,” The Times, June 24, 1911, 9.
72 Ibid.
74 “The Coronation of King George the Fifth and Queen Mary in Westminster Abbey,” The Musical Times 52 no. 821 (1911): 433-437. Handel’s piece, and a plain-song attributed to Palestrina, were the only non-British pieces performed in the three-hour service. The other works included music by Henry Purcell, Hubert Parry, and Frederick Bridges.
homage and acclamations in the more splendid neighbourhoods.”75 While the coronation ceremonies had been “solemn and splendid,” there was little reserve in the crowds as the entire reassembled Coronation Procession paraded through many of the less regal parts of the city. The crowds seemed especially pleased by the colorful Indian princes and “the magnificent body” forming the King’s Indian escort.

The many narratives inhering in the Coronation ceremonies collectively asserted the exceptional nature of the British Empire, and showed off London as living proof of the Empire’s vast material, cultural, and spiritual bounty. But the occasion for the spectacle was the coronation of the King, and the nature of the event gave at least one journalist cause for reflection. Unlike David Cannadine, who has clearly correlated the increasing popularity of the monarch with the decrease of real royal authority, the Times editor speaks to the more general appeal of the monarch, and can only hint at what Cannadine demonstrated a good seventy years later. He wrote that, “the troops which guard the person of the Sovereign are no longer a defence against the people or a menace to them, but form an expression like the kingly power itself, of the ordered and settled government by which the people find their liberties best developed.”76 While Common Law protected the common man, and Parliament passed the statutes and policies that improved his life, in a seeming paradox, the protector of all those rights and privileges that had accrued to the Englishman was the very office whose possibility for abuse had prompted the development of those institutions. The Crown, then, was the ultimate symbol of Britain’s singular civil liberties.

75 “The Royal Progress,” The Times, June 24, 1911, 9.
76 Ibid.
The Coronation had brought thousands of visitors to London from the vast reaches of the Empire, as well as from all parts of the United Kingdom. Crowds continued to come throughout the summer, though, to visit one or both of the great exhibitions in London. The Festival of Empire, the more serious-minded of the two, was held on the grounds of the Crystal Palace in Sydenham in south London, while the Coronation Exhibition ran at the White City in Shepherd’s Bush west of London. Both had similar objectives: to display the wealth of the Empire and encourage imperial commerce.\footnote{77 The concurrence of the Coronation Exhibition and The Festival of Empire was not exactly “coincidental” or a result of the postponement of the Festival due to Edward’s death. The White City, a huge complex of white plastered Oriental buildings and pavilions, had been built by Imre Kiralfy, an old hand at exhibitions, in 1907. Realizing that he had a ready-made audience in the summer of 1911, he launched the Coronation Exhibition, which opened a week after the Festival of Empire. The Coronation Exhibition seems to have appealed to more plebian tastes than the Festival of Empire: whereas the Festival of Empire featured Lascelles’ spectacular Pageant of London, the biggest attraction at the White City appears to have been the Flip-Flap, a structure that carried riders up 200 feet, where, it was said, they could see for miles.}

In a letter to the Times, The Duke of Teck and the Lords Northcote and Blyth, organizers of the Coronation Exhibition, noted that “a very large amount of orders at the present time go to foreign countries for goods which could be produced in as great or even greater perfection in some part of our own Dominions.”\footnote{78 The Duke of Teck, Lord Northcote, and Lord Blythe, letter to the Editor. The Times, March 3, 1911, 9.} They believed that the “effects of such national displays” as featured at the Coronation Exhibition could, in fact, extend commerce within the Empire.

Likewise, the Festival of Empire intended to demonstrate the sheer size and power of Britain’s vast holdings. The Festival had been planned for 1910, but with Edward VII’s death, the event was postponed to commemorate George V’s coronation instead. At a planning committee dinner, Frank Lascelles, the writer and director of the Festival’s Pageant of London, observed that “it was only within the last few years that the average citizen had taken any vital interest in the British Empire as a whole, or had realized its real
significance,” and he certainly meant to capitalize on the public’s interest.\textsuperscript{79} The “significance” of the Empire was largely economic, and the Festival planners intended for visitors to be impressed with the exotic products and resources from around the globe that were available to those here at “home.” Three-quarter size replicas of the Dominions’ government houses were constructed on the grounds of the Crystal Palace, and each displayed “collections of the products of the various countries represented . . . thus to afford to visitors an easy means of becoming acquainted with the material resources of the British Empire.”\textsuperscript{80} A week before the opening of the Festival, another \textit{Times} article assured the reader that these exhibits were “likely to be the most elaborate advertisement of the resources of the British Empire that has ever been devised.”\textsuperscript{81}

The visitor to the Festival was encouraged to take the All-Red Route, an electric train that took the visitor on a mile and a half ride through the “Empire,” that is, past tableaux that included a Malay village, “an Indian jungle with its tigers and elephants,” and Irish cottages.\textsuperscript{82} Guides commented on the histories and industries of the various dominions. Once having had the “Bird’s Eye View,” the visitor could walk through the grounds for a more thorough inspection of the exhibits housed in the replicas of the Parliament houses of the self-governing Dominions. The vast resources, both material and human, and the overwhelming possibilities of commerce, were figured as a source of pride, something unparalleled in the history of empires.

The pavilions and tableaux of the Festival featured the material bounty and economic benefits of the Empire, but the \textit{Pageant of London} assured spectators that the

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{The Times}. February 24, 1910.
\textsuperscript{80} “Festival of Empire. Crystal Palace Preparations.” \textit{The Times}, February 6, 1911, 6.
\textsuperscript{81} “The Festival of Empire. Plans for the Opening.” \textit{The Times}, May 5, 1911, 7.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
Empire’s past victories and present wealth were all due to the watchful and very British eye of Providence. Arranged by Frank Lascelles, “the man who staged the Empire,” the Pageant of London, employing a cast of 15,000, told the story of “London: Heart of the Empire” over a four day cycle. The pageant took place at an amphitheatre on the grounds at the Crystal Palace, and the “stage” included a small lake that stood in for various other bodies of water featured in the history of London—and the Empire. The production was immensely popular, so much so that the Earl of Plymouth, the Festival’s chief organizer, arranged for a shortened version of the Pageant to run for an additional month after the scheduled closing of the Festival.

The earlier sections of the pageant portrayed historical events, alternating between settings in London and imperial settings, such as Botany Bay in Australia or South Africa, but the finale, The Masque Imperial: An Allegory of the Advantages of Empire, transported viewers to an ancient Greek temple peopled with allegorical characters such as the Genius of the World, the Queen of Wisdom, the Damozels of Death, and the figure of Britannia, attended by the Spirits of Her Lakes and Streams, Mists and Skies, Cliffs and Mountains, and Ocean. The Genius of the World explains that “the pure task of empire” is a government based on law, progress, and equity.83 However, “when old Empires forgot/The virtue that established them,” they were doomed to fail. But it was time for a new empire, and so he calls out, “Come once again and inspire/The nation that rises anew, /To strive for the purer and higher, / The nobler and the more true.” The audience has been reminded of the purer

motives guiding the imperial project, such as equity, progress, and nobility, which set the British Empire apart from other European empires.

However, the audience did not meet Britannia until the Genius of the World, accompanied by seven queens (all awkwardly called Queen Need of Law, Queen Need of Knowledge, and so on) announces, “Anew a nation waits to prove/Her right to dominate and move/The peopled earth.” At this point Britannia appears with her attendant spirits, who remind the spectators of England’s unrivaled natural beauty. Britannia must pass a test, but before she is told of the test, the Queen of Wisdom reminds Britannia of the duties of empire, especially as a conquering empire: “When you conquer make your rule/As your war was, for the best/Of that nation’s interest;/Let them learn to love your school, /And to call your teachings best.” And, the Genius of the World reminds her, these victories, though noble, are not easily won:

First you shall see the pageant of the Pain
That Empire brings, the immolating toil,
The holocaust of body and of brain
That patriots suffer, in the wild turmoil
Of Nation-founding; when each foot of soil
Is bought with blood and dreams as ransom price.

There is, alas, no gain sans sacrifice!

Britannia’s trial is to break down the barriers of the Damozels of Death, which include the Death of Dreams and the Death of Belief, and lead the servants of empire, “who never ceased/Until they bought their motherland her peace/And honour at Fate’s fixed price” across the fallen barriers. Britannia is inspired by their sacrifice: “Show me again
your misery/Until with pity of your plight/I grow so strong in righteous might/that I must

gain the Victory” and breaks through. The Genius of the World congratulates her, and here

recouples two of the themes of the Festival, the civilizing mission and the economic

advantages of Empire: “Nobly, Britannia, have you proved your worth/To rank among the
glorious ones of earth,/And having metamorphosized its pain,/Behold, triumphant, the

Imperial Gain.” At this point representatives of the Dominions parade across the stage. But

as they disappear into the temple, we hear voices rising in the recitation of Psalm 24, an

example of the Old Testament call to do the Lord’s work: “Who shall ascend into the hill of

the Lord?/And who shall stand in His holy place?/He that hath clean hands, and a pure

heart;/Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,/And hath not sworn deceitfully,/He

shall receive a blessing from the Lord,/And righteousness from the God of his Salvation.” In

this grand finale, all the Dominions and all the servants of Empire gather on the temple

steps; God’s Englishmen—throughout the Empire—are figured as a Chosen People, under

the special protection of Providence, and assigned with the noble task of bringing progress
to the unenlightened.

While the Festival of Empire highlighted the progress and products issuing from the

imperial project, and the final scene of the Pageant of London emphasized the special care

afforded the British Empire by “the Genius of the World,” most of the Pageant concerned

itself with London as the home of the Empire, and it is apparent that this attention to the

metropole was one of the more important aims of the Festival. At a celebration of the

inauguration of the Festival, according to the Times, “they [the organizers] all rejoiced to

think that this great festival would bring into true relationship the influence which London

had upon the Empire and influence which the Empire exerted upon London” and raised
their glasses to “London, the Heart of the Empire.” Another notable raised a toast, saying, “the pageant would not be a mere glorification of London, but would signify the unity of our great Empire under an honored King.” The Festival of Empire, in fact, had incorporated all the imperial themes of the summer of 1911: the benefits and bounty of the Empire, the reflection of that wealth and power in the urban landscape of London, and, finally, the Crown as the symbol of the inherent rights and privileges of the British citizen.

By utilizing the motifs and images of the language of exceptionalism, the many “official” events of the summer of 1911 inscribed a dominant imperial narrative on the urban landscape of London. The Victoria Monument and the new imperial vista it inspired provided an urban stage on which several “roles” were played out. The Coronation, in focusing on the long-standing traditions of the Crown, reminded the British citizen that the lack of real power residing in that Crown was due to those time-honored institutions that protected the citizen from other forms of tyranny as well. The Festival of Empire, and, to a lesser degree, the Coronation Exhibition, were intended to display the bounty of the Empire and teach the Empire’s singular history to its visitors. And, finally, Lascelles’ Pageant of London reminded the thousands who came to see it that, as Britons, they were a chosen people, under the special care of Providence, who, as a nation, “waits to prove/Her right to dominate and move/The peopled earth.” However, as I argue in the next chapter, this imperial arrogance coexisted with a whole host of anxieties concerning the possible, maybe even impending decline of this exceptional empire.

84 “The Festival of Empire.” The Times, February 24, 1910, 6.
85 Lomas, Festival of Empire, 150.
Chapter Four: Discourses of Decline and Degeneration

“...if the Empire is to be equal to its task the men and women who make it up must be equal to it.”

---David Lloyd George, Sept 13, 1918

The summer of 1911 marked a high point of spectacle in the imperial landscape. In May and June, London hosted the Festival of Empire, witnessed the unveiling of the decidedly imperial Victoria monument, welcomed colonial premiers—figured by one participant as “John Bull & Sons”—to the first Imperial Conference to discuss “proposals for improving the co-operation and co-relation between the branches and the chief establishment,” and re-inscribed its sacred geography through the pageantry of George V’s coronation.1 It is no wonder, then, that in August of that year Lord Desborough, the man responsible for bringing the Olympics to London in 1908, detected a lack of enthusiasm for the Inter-Empire Championships, which had been his own contribution to the festivities. These games had featured athletes from Great Britain, Canada, and Australasia, and the Empire Trophy, donated by Lord Lonsdale, another sports enthusiast, was awarded to Canada. But Desborough’s awards speech noted that the “Londoner, owing to a surfeit of amusement, was apathetic, and did not take the interest in these sports which their importance required.” Still, he was clear as to the importance of those games. As the Times reports, while awarding the trophy to the Canadian athletes, “he emphasized the value of athletics as an Imperial bond of union.”2

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1 John G. Findlay, The Imperial Conference of 1911 from Within (London: Constable & Co., 1912), 5. Earlier conferences were referred to as Colonial Conferences.
2 “Royal Female Orphan Asylum,” The Times, August 2, 1911, 13.
The Inter-Empire Championships failed to generate the enthusiasm Lord Desborough had hoped for, and his attribution of apathy to the low turnout contributes to prevailing discourses of decline and degeneration that had run through middle and professional class communities since reports and books such as Mrs. Watt Smyth’s 1904 *Physical Deterioration, its Causes and the Cure* had pointed out the “startling number” of soldiers recruited for the Boer Wars who were “physically unfit to carry a rifle.” Declinist language and images, paradoxically, seem to have partially constituted or perhaps even compelled the patriotic fervor of New Imperialism that took a variety of forms. Below, I look at how some of these discourses of degeneration, and the responses they elicited, shaped the social and cultural responses to New Imperialism that in turn inscribed the material and phenomenological landscapes of London until the eve of the Second World War.

According to David Cannadine, Joseph Chamberlain was the first government official to employ declinist discourse in his own political agenda. The 1886 Report of the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry noted Britain’s industrial decline, and the Scramble for Africa proved that Germany was clearly gaining economic strength and, even more ominously, military power.

While Chamberlain focused on the decline of economic strength as the real danger to the Empire, a large portion of the British people were more concerned with the perceived threat of racial degeneration. I will examine this phenomenon in its British context, noting, however, that anxieties concerning racial degeneration were fairly widespread throughout the European continent, and gathered intensity in the late

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nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Defining and describing “degeneration” can be tricky, and Daniel Pick, in his *Faces of Degeneration*, a study of European discourses of decline, notes that

degeneration was never successfully reduced to a fixed axiom or theory in the nineteenth century despite the expressed desire to resolve the conceptual questions once and for all in definitive texts. Rather it was a shifting term produced, inflected, refined, and re-constituted in the movement between human sciences, fictional narratives and socio-political commentaries. It is not possible to trace it to one ideological conclusion, or to locate its identification with a single political message.5

Certainly the British were taken in by the catholic nature and murky origins of the concept of degeneration as well, and the language and images of degeneration were employed for everything from Prohibition tracts (“the plague of drink exists and thrives in all the elements of degeneration and defeat”) to calls for the reorganization of government (“it will be agreed that the existence of such a governing body is conclusive evidence of a generally unsatisfactory level of intelligence”).6, 7

A look through the popular press and academic literature over the course of the four decades leading up to World War II reveals that the concerns over the degeneration of the body politic, that is, the imperial British race, concentrated on assigning causes to the perceived racial degeneration. Three of these causes became important motifs in the

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7 R. Austin Freeman, with an introduction by Havelock Ellis, *Social Decay and Regeneration* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), 30.
discourses of degeneration. One motif was the general lack of physical fitness in all classes associated with urban life and overcrowding, and a second was the “dysgenic” birth rates, meaning high birth rates among the lower classes and low rates among the sturdier middle classes. Finally, a third motif featured the existence of what one prominent eugenist identified as a “race of sub-normal people, not to any extent recruited from the normal population, nor sensibly diminished by the agencies for social or individual improvement.”

As Stedman Jones and others have pointed out, these expressions of racial anxieties were by no means marginal, and in fact constituted a great deal of mainstream cultural narrative. The established papers, such as the Times and the Observer, and academic and medical journals such as the Eugenics Review and the British Medical Journal, exhibited a robust public exchange concerning the causes and effects of racial decline. Additionally, the authors of the “condition of England” essay, popular middle-class reading material, contributed a variety of perspectives and varying degrees of optimism concerning the future of the British race.

The widespread interest in imperial bodies and their control was in large part promoted by the ideology of National Efficiency. The efficiency movement, both in government and civil society, shared an interest in the general health of the nation as one way to stave off the much-feared decline of the British Empire’s super power status. G.C. Searle, historian of the efficiency movement, describes how imperial bodies were seen as something to be managed: “In the view of the ‘efficiency group,’ men and women formed the basic raw material out of which national greatness was constructed: hence, they argued, the statesman had a duty to see that these priceless resources were not

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squared through indifference and slackness.”9 In short, the individual body, and the liberty English history had bestowed upon it, could and may very well be overridden by the needs of the Empire.

Efficiency implied modernization as well, and the latest “scientific” and modern methods, such as surveys and statistical analyses (even punch cards for soldiers!) were enlisted in the fight to organize the Empire.10 Many in the movement believed that the Empire’s administration was best left up to “experts,” a concept that met with varying degrees of support, especially as the definition of “expert” was often unclear. In 1929, for instance, the Rev. J.C. Pringle took great exception to the new Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee which recommended removing the responsibility for the care of the “social problem” group from the Poor Law Guardians and Poor Law Officers, who had been “carrying out all these processes for the enormous majority of the persons requiring them; for a hundred years, under present statues, on this island” and handing it over to “an entirely new personnel who will have had the great advantage of attending certain courses of lectures.”11 Clearly, the business model that the efficiency movement held so dear was not to everyone’s liking.

Even during the 1920’s, when the efficiency movement lost its momentum and influence in Whitehall, declinist discourses and the responding discourses of health used language reflective of the ideology of efficiency, and as late as the mid-1930’s, “efficiency” was employed to justify the proposal of extreme social measures, such as the sterilization

11 J.C. Pringle, “The Poor Law and the Control of Mental Disease,” The Eugenics Review 21, no. 3 (October, 1929): 179.
of the feeble-minded. For instance, in 1934 a private member’s bill proposed the legalization and supervision of voluntary sterilization (this is not the same bill that will be proposed by the Eugenics Society), and even though he is careful to say that expense, “great as that burden is,” is not the “foremost” consideration in asking for the passage of the bill, he is sure to list the cost of mental deficiency services in past years, implying, of course, that these costs would be substantially reduced if voluntary sterilization was legalized.\footnote{12} It is safe to say that in the first four decades of the twentieth century, the ideology of national efficiency attempted to address anxieties over decline and degeneration by regarding imperial bodies as imperial resources, to be organized and utilized in the most efficient way for the overall benefit of the Empire.

Generally, the efficiency crowd employed three different approaches to the management of imperial bodies. One approach imagined the Empire as “the body politic,” and expressed concern over the national body’s health and fitness—or, conversely, its unfitness. A second way of talking about racial decline called for the actual control of bodies, both physically, through segregation, sterilization and incarceration, as well as conceptually, as demonstrated, for example, by the grading system that labeled a shocking percentage of Great War conscripts an unusable Grade IV. A more modern or “efficient” angle of discussion concentrated on collecting information about imperial bodies; Booth’s Poverty Map is an early example, while the Mass Observation project collected the minutiae of Britons’ lives from 1937 until the early 1950’s!\footnote{13}

\footnote{12} “Voluntary Sterilization: Private Member’s Resolution,” The Eugenics Review 26, no. 1 (April 1934): 50.
As the fiascos of the Boer Wars had been the impetus for the call for efficiency, and as the physical condition of so many recruits had been woefully subpar, some of the earliest calls for efficiency directed significant attention toward the fitness and health of the imperial body. Indeed, Arnold White, the jingoistic journalist and one of the earliest and most vocal advocates for “efficiency,” affirmed in his 1901 Efficiency and Empire that “the first element of efficiency is health.” White’s reference to the present British administration as a “prosperous man in advanced middle age, who eats and drinks to repletion, takes no exercise, and is content to enjoy life while he may” implies a complacency and lack of vigor of the national body that appeared again and again in various media throughout the decades, even as the nation’s actual fitness and health steadily improved.

While the poor health of Boer War soldiers had been severely distressing to those who saw a direct correlation between the health of imperial bodies and the health of the imperial body, the figures for Great War soldiers were not considerably better. Using Arthur Keith’s standard of physical fitness, it was found that soldiers were 18.4 percent below the figure required by the army “on the widest possible basis.” In a British Medical Association lecture in 1920, Dr. James Galloway, Senior Physician at Charing Cross Hospital, remarked, “I need hardly draw attention to the serious state of affairs disclosed

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15 Ibid., 24.
16 Sir Arthur Keith (1866-1955) was an anthropologist and medical doctor, most known now for two things: his advocacy and possible involvement in Piltdown Man, ultimately determined a hoax, and his ideas of evolution, which attributed cultural and political achievements to racial attributes. His theories may have inspired his participation and/or belief in Piltdown Man (he was instrumental in the placing of a memorial in Sussex where Piltdown Man was “found”), as he denied the possibility of the Australasian or African origins of humankind, claiming European origins instead. Unsurprisingly, his work serves as the intellectual basis for at least a few white nationalist groups (see http://www.whitenationalism.com/ and http://greatwhitedesert.org/).
by these figures, nor need I comment on the fact that the results are by no means comforting or flattering to our national complacency.”\textsuperscript{18} Although colonial surgeon R. Austin Freeman had a plan to revitalize British racial stock in his 1921 take on the “condition of England” essay, \textit{Social Decay and Regeneration}, he reminded readers that racial regeneration would be a difficult task given what there was to work with. He described modern man as a “physiological failure,” a specimen who had devolved due to the “increasing disuse of human muscles and the replacement of their functions by mechanical substitutes.”\textsuperscript{19} This particular class, the contemporary urban dweller, tended to be “small and stunted in growth, to have unusually bad teeth, to suffer from digestive and pulmonary troubles and to be flat-chested and physically ‘poor.’”\textsuperscript{20} And, he said, contrary to what novelists would have us believe, “muscular feebleness is not the correlative of intellectual brilliancy . . . but quite the reverse.” In case his descriptions were not convincing enough, he volunteered a list of death rates that generally affirmed his negative evaluation of the nation’s fitness.

As the health and fitness of the Empire’s bodies metonymically reflected the health of the imperial state, corporate health was occasionally figured as a single physical body, the incarnation of national fitness. Arthur Mee, for instance, in his \textit{Children’s Encyclopedia}, published in the 1920’s, demonstrated the great truth that “a Nation is like a Living Body.”\textsuperscript{21} He told his young readers that there are many phrases and images that “express the idea that, in a sense, a nation is like a great living creature. We call it the body politic, or

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\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Freeman, \textit{Social Decay and Regeneration}, 3.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 4.
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the social organism.” One of those images, he noted, is the figure of Britannia. In a section called “The Life of the Body and the Life of the Nation,” Mee compared the different functions of the body to different jobs and classes existing within the body politic. For instance, white cells, “which kill microbes,” are compared to soldiers and doctors who protect the social organism “from enemies inside and outside.” Mee was also careful to emphasize the necessity of a proper “division of labour,” as well as the fixed nature of that division. He wrote, “A nerve-cell cannot do the work of a red blood-cell, nor a red blood-cell that of a nerve-cell”; like Henrietta Barnett’s Hampstead Garden Suburb, the proper hierarchical order of assorted parts assured the proper working of the larger body, and provided yet another example of National Efficiency at work in the “conservative modernity” that characterized New Imperialism.

However, the body politic was more often imagined as unfit and unprepared for the challenges of imperial competition. Rev. Inge, for instance, the “gloomy dean” of St. Paul’s from 1911-1934, employed body imagery throughout his “condition of England” book, *England*, published in 1926.22 “The dysgenic tendency of modern civilization is an undeniable and an exceedingly serious fact,” he wrote.23 Applied eugenics could possibly “remedy the evil,” but in a typically pessimistic observation, he sincerely doubted such an outcome, as “a race that is deteriorating biologically is most unlikely to take far-sighted views about its own future.” In unapologetic condemnation, Inge identified socialism, in its contemporary forms, the Labour party, and Trade Unions, as the “grave disease of the body politic, a disease which may even prove fatal.” Any writer attempting to “diagnose” or

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22 William Ralph Inge, *England*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1926). Although theologically he was very much a part of the liberal camp, his politics were almost reactionary. His lectures and sermons were notoriously pessimistic.

23 Ibid., 213.
describe the “condition” of England and identify the cause of the “malady” must cast aside his “feelings of disgust at the patient’s symptoms.” He closed the admonition with his bafflement over the origin of this “social disease.” It [the workers’ proclivity towards socialism] was every bit as obscure as the causes of cancer.24 In the epilogue, where Inge allowed himself to express a strongly tempered optimism, he reminded the reader that the nation is a body that must be strong enough to fight off disease: “But just as a healthy body generates anti-toxins to combat any virulent infection, so our nation may be vigorous enough to neutralize the poisons which now threaten our civilization with death.”25 After a litany of social ills, including the “love of reading about vice, crime and fatal accidents”—surely, he said, “proof of a morbid state of mind”—and “the universal passion for betting and gambling,” he finally and cautiously concluded that the young people of England “[were] not really degenerate.”26

Inge had little doubt that poverty created the “submerged tenth,” or the “social problem group,” but, remarkably in a man of the cloth, he seemed to see the condition as a permanent one that would always be the source of “intellectual inferiority,” as “the children of the upper and middle classes are intrinsically far better endowed than the children of unskilled labourers.”27 Inge here saw the poor—and their handlers, the “trade union officials and political agitators who are usually very undesirable citizens”—as an unhealthy appendage on an otherwise thriving body. This image of disease to be contained justified their physical “management” by “experts.” But other bodies, particularly those of middle

24 Ibid., 262.
25 Ibid., 275.
26 Ibid., 287.
27 Ibid., 213.
class women and future colonials, were to some degree managed, or at least considered for
management by state forces, as well. A close look at a meeting of the Sociology section of
the British Medical Association in 1910 reveals a willingness to believe, or, indeed, even
assume that bodies should be managed for the benefit of the race and the Empire. As one
contributor noted, “The proud scope of our sociology is to be Imperial; have we not met
under the aegis of the Imperial Institute?”28 A look at the proceedings of this discussion
reveals the relatively unquestioned assumption of this group of professionals, that the state
was justified in appropriating and controlling bodies, if such action was in the best interest
of the state.

The topic of the British Medical Association discussion was “The Social Aspects of
the Falling Birth-Rate.” The panel opened with four papers, then the floor was opened to
more general comments. In the course of the discussion suggestions were made to sterilize
or segregate “the feeble-minded and . . . the able-bodied pauper,” thereby eliminating “two
large factors in degeneration of the race.”29 A Dr. Howat of Middlesbrough noted “that the
higher social strata were characterized by the smallest families, and the lowest strata by
the largest families”; furthermore, “this relationship had doubled in intensity in the last
fifty.” Such conditions, he said, “do not make for an efficient population.”30 Using a common
trope of this discourse, he pointed out that the “fit” paid for the “unfit”: “that is, the more
valuable and less valuable (as regards national efficiency).” Were the “evil chain broken” it
would certainly result in a rise of national efficiency and, to this end, the physician believed
that legislation should be enacted easily enough. The legislation he envisioned was the

28 J. W. Ballantyne, “Discussion on the Social Aspects of the Falling Birth Rate,” The British Medical Journal 2,
no. 2590 (August 20, 1910): 453.
29 Ibid., 452
30 Ibid., 455.
sterilization of every man and woman convicted of drunkenness for a given number of
times. One of the benefits of this treatment was that it did not involve incarceration; it was
also simple and effective and, apparently importantly, “it would not deprive the subjects of
the benefits of internal secretions.” Others were less specific in their suggestions for
stemming the tide of the degenerate and, in fact, one Dr. Benjamin Moore saw the general
decline in the birth rate of the middle class as a sign of progress and pointed out that “out
of the half born in the lower ranks in any given generation a great number passed upward
to a better rank in the succeeding generation, so that the relative proportions did not
greatly change, and there was, in addition, an exceedingly heavy death-rate in the lower
strata.” But Dr. Moore was generally alone in this view; others did not believe that the low
birth-rate in the middle class was a crisis, but they did not share Moore’s optimism
regarding the renewal of the race through upward class mobility.

But as the discussion “problem” was specifically “the falling birth-rate,” the object to
be managed was the middle-class, child-bearing body. The discussants agreed that the male
of the family “must be attracted to the desire for larger families,” and Balantyne and
Fremantle referred to the prevalent “love of personal ease and material comforts and
luxury” and “an ever-increasing standard [of living] of which the parents, for the sake of
their reputation, friendships, or prospects, dare not fall short” as an important factor in the
decline of the “issue of good stock.”31 But the majority of discussion, both in reference to
the papers and in the general discussion afterwards, objectified the non-productive female
body, chastising it for its past lack of reproduction, then subjecting it to a set of
prescriptives intended to counter the educational and vocational trends that left girls

31 Ibid., 450-451.
“whetted for distraction” and “wholly unprepared to look at the married life as the centre of their aim”; in short, “unfit . . . for domestic duties.”  

Especially in the first two papers of the conference, women’s bodies are simply that, and, in a manner that reflects an “efficient” approach to a low birth-rate, are the objects of hypothetical problem solving. Both Ballantyne and Fremantle attributed the education of women, as well as the economic competition of women with men, as direct causes of the low birth-rate, and Ballantyne was fairly certain that “the encouragement of athletics among girls” contributed to the problem. Fremantle blamed the girls’ public schools, because they “boast of the strong, determined well-equipped young women they turn out prepared to face the battles of life. This,” he said, “is their mistake.” These schools encouraged political power, and he noted that, “woman suffrage in any kind or form is . . . profoundly inimical to the birth-rate.” But in addition to the woman who was wholly unsuited for marriage, and therefore out of the pool of good “stock,” women who were married but had limited their reproduction were also objects of chastisement. This was particularly irksome and, it seemed, unnatural. Indeed, both Ballantyne and Fremantle called attention to the need to study the effects of non-reproductive sex on women. Dr. Ballantyne mused that “it will be strange if bodily and mental well-being in women are found to be compatible with the frequent production of the sexual orgasm unaccompanied by its reproductive consequences, namely, pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation.”

Dr. Fremantle seconded this call for a look into “the effect of unseasonable sexual intercourse” and its complicity in throwing “the generative machinery

32 Ibid., 451.
33 Ballantyne presents his case, saying “I have certainly noticed a lack of capacity among athletic women to suckle their babies.” However, later, when challenged by Dr. Elizabeth Bentham, he admitted that “a woman hockey player had informed him that all her fellow players had the experience of being incapable of suckling their infants.” Ibid., 457.
34 Ibid., 450.
out of gear.” It was clear to these two men, at least, that women’s bodies on their own were possibly dangerous, or at least inefficient, and it was to the benefit of society to allow experts to bring these errant bodies back into the ordered fold.

Not all attendees agreed, however, and in the discussion, a Dr. Grace Cadell tried to suggest that, “it was against reason to expect a woman to bear a child every year.” No one followed up that trajectory, though, and it was left to Dr. Helen Hanson to counter the prevailing talk of women as reproductive machines, arguing that women took up sports not because they wanted to emulate man, but because “women wanted to live the lives of human beings.” She also justified the “cases where for selfish reasons women refused to have children” by pointing out that it was “unreasonable to expect a woman to consider the good of the State when at every election time we emphasize the fact that it is no concern of her.” In rhetoric that is all too familiar in current conversations over women’s bodies, she pointed out that the State penalized marriage and the bearing of children, especially among the poor, by preventing married women from working. The resulting high infant mortality rate was not because Nature “necessarily approved of these women working but because she did very strongly disapprove of their children starving.” It was no wonder, then, that women emulated their early Christian sisters, by hesitating to “bring daughters into a world that treats them so harshly.” All it would take is for women to be allowed “a natural development as a human being” and this whole talk of race suicide would disappear.

Other discussants were less focused, and tossed out a number of mostly undeveloped suggestions for encouraging the reproduction of good racial stock, and

35 Ibid., 452.
36 Ibid., 455.
37 Ibid., 456.
thereby stemming the tide of decline. One attendee said that “the Church should do something,” while another participant pointed out that the “existence of the nation depended on the existence of the army,” and as “many of the best officers were the sons of old officers,” it was necessary to increase the birth-rate of officers’ families.\textsuperscript{38} The simple solution, he noted, was to bring these facts to the attention of the officers; most certainly “their patriotism would rise to the occasion.”\textsuperscript{39} One attendee ventured to suggest that the medical community needed to prove the inheritability of undesirable traits before any drastic measures were taken, but no one seriously questioned the fundamental conviction that degeneration was increasingly present in the fecund lower classes, where “poverty, drunkenness, and absence of thrift are associated with high infant mortality and high birth-rate.”\textsuperscript{40} Fremantle, for instance, said, “As prosperity is in general the result of ability, and as heredity of character and ability is beyond dispute, the nation is degenerating in the quality as well as in the quantity of its birth-rate.” Like Rev. Inge, he did not question the assumption that degeneration was heritable; and though none in the discussion demanded complete abrogation of the rights of the imperial body to the needs of the state, the moral right of organized, if not necessarily official, experts to manage imperial bodies was asserted.

Another way in which the state controlled imperial bodies was through the collection, collation, and analysis of enormous amounts of information. From the 1904 \textit{Report of the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration} to the 1935 “Survey of the number of examinations made by the appropriate authorities of Raw and Designated

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 456.\\\textsuperscript{39} I have no way of knowing if his pun was intentional or not; no laughter—or groans—were recorded in the proceedings.\\\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 451.}
Milks for the presence of the Tubercle Bacillus,” sponsored by the People’s League of Health, the Empire was obsessed with collecting data. The Education Bill of 1907, for instance, provides a fruitful example of the perceived need for large-scale surveys. The act, in a double-pronged effort to promote fitness, established recreational centers for school children to use while on holiday but, in a much more far-reaching provision, established the “medical inspection of children before or at the time of their admission to a public elementary school, and on such other occasions as the Board of Education direct.…”41 The medical profession favored the bill, as did several educational organizations; the British Medical Journal used an inspection carried out in the borough of Leith to point out the necessity of such examinations, as a summary on that report’s statistics showed “that the percentage of really robust and healthy children is comparatively small,” yet if “every child will be examined before entering school,” the examiners could then single out those who required special care, not only to benefit the individual student, but to prevent the spread of infectious disease or other illnesses.42 A Medical Department in the Board of Education would collect and collate the information gathered in these inspections, and as a Times editorial noted, these reports would not only have immediate relevance for those children inspected, but would provide “a trustworthy means of taking stock of the actual health conditions of the coming race.”43 The conditions of the “coming race” were not to be predicted by health statistics alone. The compulsion to compile statistics included collecting other, less objective, more personal information as well, and this data was often employed indiscriminately and exploitatively in public and political discourse.

41 “Medical Inspection of School Children,” The British Medical Journal 1, no. 2409 (March 2, 1907): 109.
42 “Pulmonary Tuberculosis in School Children,” The British Medical Journal 1, no. 2408 (February 23, 1907): 459-460.
43 “The Medical Inspection of School Children,” The Times, June 18, 1907, 14.
For instance, in 1919, in a discussion of “Eugenics and Imperial Development” among prominent members of the Eugenics Education Society, several participants, including the newly re-elected Chairman of the Society, Leonard Darwin, called for the collection of more information concerning racial characteristics. Darwin specifically demanded “a thorough scientific study of the mental and physical characteristics of mixed races, and of the laws of human inheritance governing their reproduction,” and in a scheme that eerily foreshadows Aldous Huxley’s 1931 *Brave New World*, he questioned whether it would be entirely ethical to “breed human beasts of burden” if indeed mixed races turned out to be “suitable for certain kinds of inferior labour.”

The greater problem currently, though, was that the “diverse people . . . now being brought together and mixed within the boundaries of our Empire” were doing so “with a careless ignorance of the facts.” He closed his introduction to the discussion with a plea to educate the public “to recognize the importance of looking to . . . the actual inborn qualities of a race” which should be collected and neatly collated for use in imperial policies.

Darwin’s interest in collecting information seems to hint at the management of workers, even, possibly, the development of “human beasts of burden,” but it would be misleading to think that every organization that sponsored or collected information used that information for eugenic or political outcomes. Certainly much of the mania for surveys and registries had constructive ends. In the British Medical Association meeting discussed above, one doctor suggested that a registry of still-births could provide information that may help prevent their occurrence, and milk surveys kept frequent, if not completely effective, tabs on the quality of milk that had been supplied to all the nation’s school

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children since 1934.

But as Edward Said demonstrated in *Orientalism*, “knowing” and naming an Other is a form of constructing and ultimately controlling that other. So while it’s evident that much of the energy and expertise expended in collecting information was meant to improve the health and conditions of many imperial subjects, the collection, and more significantly, analysis of information was frequently employed politically and socially to control that class variably known as “the submerged tenth” or the “social problem” group, described by the *Times* as “a definite race of chronic paupers, a race parasitic upon the community, breeding in and through successive generations.”45 Through the course of a number of surveys and descriptions, this class, originally identified as an economic class, became associated with many social ills as well. The conflation of economic class with mental and criminological characteristics in so much of the discourse prompted the construction of a population that was assumed to pose a political, cultural, and hygienic threat to the health of the body politic.

The conflation of poverty with mental and physical degeneration can be traced to the publication of Charles Booth’s *Inquiry into Life and Labour in London*, an extensive sociological survey of London, published from 1886 to 1903. Booth’s survey included a series of “Poverty Maps” compiled from extensive interviews and economic information. The collated economic information was then mapped onto the cityscape, and assigned an economically identified category. However, the accompanying descriptions were more prescriptive than descriptive, and the neighborhoods of the poorest urban poor were

colored black and described as “lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal.” Booth wrote, consisted “of some occasional labourers, street sellers, loafers, criminals and semi-criminals. Their life is the life of savages, with vicissitudes of extreme hardship and their only luxury is drink.” Booth’s painstaking detail—block by city block—mapped socio-economic class onto the landscape, but by assigning moral characteristics to economic categories, he reinforced an already present belief in and fear of urban degeneracy. And while Booth’s motives were reformist, the conflation of poverty with degeneration, so visibly evident in Booth’s black blotches across the face of London, established the conceptual framework for a variety of responses. In just one example of the appropriation of Booth’s work, Francis Galton, at the Huxley Lecture of 1901, used Booth’s map to assign “civic worth” to the city’s population, thus reifying the superfluity of this “residuum” of society.

This class then, ostensibly an economic category, came to acquire moral characteristics, as a surfeit of popular, political, and academic discourse frequently failed to distinguish between the lack of opportunity and the lack of capability. The slippage between economic and non-economic distinctions allowed for the “submerged tenth” to serve as a receptacle for a number of other societal problems as well, and eventually they came to be interchangeable: poverty led to mental deficiency, which led to loose morals, which led to a higher birth rate of more mentally deficient children. Certainly, some of the responses to the discourses of degeneration and decline countered this assumption with

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46 See: “Booth Poverty Map and Modern Map,” Charles Booth Online Archive http://booth.lse.ac.uk/cgi-bin/do.pl?sub=view_booth_and_barth&args=531000,180400,6,large,5
47 Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London* (London: MacMillan, 1902), 88. However, not all of those in the lower classes drink; those in class D often struggle to make ends meet. He writes, “but they are, as a body, decent steady men, paying their way and bringing up their children respectably.” Ibid., 50.
programs of “nurture” that might overcome the ill effects of a damaged “nature,” but the political and academic communities, prompted by energetic eugenists, were more inclined to believe that damage to the “germ-plasm” was permanent. In this crude but widespread understanding of heredity, the human possessed “body-plasm” (the body) and the germ-plasm, in essence an early understanding of DNA. Lamarckism, the generally accepted view of inheritance in the early twentieth century, purported that acquired problems, such as physical and mental disease, could damage the germ-plasm and therefore be passed on to one’s progeny. Indeed, not a few civic leaders felt that money spent on rehabilitation or training for those who were defective was squandered; for instance, Dean Inge, in a lecture titled “National Decay and Regeneration,” accused the state of increasing the “evil” of the feeble-minded by “throwing on the industrious the whole burden of maintaining these waste products of the social machine, whose disappearance would augment the prosperity of the country.” Clearly, this population had to be managed in some way before it infected the rest of the corporate body.

The Report of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, published in 1908, had affirmed links between poverty and feeble-mindedness, between feeble-mindedness and sexual promiscuity, and all of these with heredity, and studies throughout the era seemed to support those findings. The 1929 Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee (the Wood Report), made the further distinction between the “low-grade defective,” that is, the imbecile (found throughout the general population), and the “higher-grade feeble-minded” who was generally located in the poorest neighborhoods and collectively constituted what the Report called the “social problem group.” While

48 It was not until the 1930’s that Mendelianism gained ascendance in the study of inheritance.
49 “National Decay: Dean Inge on Regeneration,” The Times, February 16, 1925, 9.
“scientific” studies collected ostensibly objective information, another popular form of information-gathering consisted of collecting genealogies. Professor R.J.A. Berry, Director of Medical Services at Stoke Park Colony—the first institution certified as a home for mental defectives under the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913—collected family histories from his patients, and then noted that “the 165 cases divided themselves quite naturally into three groups,” depending on the mental capacity of the patients’ parents. Indeed, classifying and naming were the natural end to data collection, and as we have seen, provided neat categories that often disguised the generic confusion within.

In this way poverty became associated with “feeble-mindedness,” and mental deficiency with sexual promiscuity, and it was the abnormally high birthrate of this social problem group that would be responsible, ultimately, for the decline of good middle class English stock. Several scientists “verified” this public fear; for instance, Havelock Ellis, early sexologist and one-time Vice-President of the Eugenics Education Society, in his books *The Task of Social Hygiene* (1912) and 1917’s *Essays in Wartime*, convinced his audience that feeble-mindedness was indeed inherited to a degree much higher than expected. Worse, the “social problem group” tended

> to have a larger number of children than normal people. That indeed, we might expect ... The feeble-minded have no forethought and no self-restraint. They are not adequately capable of resisting their own impulses or the solicitations of others, and they are unable to understand adequately the motives which guide the conduct of ordinary people.  

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These associations remained potent, and twenty years later, E.J. Lidbetter echoed Havelock, perhaps more harshly, when he described the “social problem” group as “insensible to either public or personal responsibility”; therefore “their birth rate is higher than that of the normal members of the community.” Although the figures Lidbetter and others used were inconclusive—or, more often, nonexistent—it was apparent to most educated Britons that these bodies posed a threat to the health of the Empire, and therefore, like barren middle-class bodies, could—and should—be controlled.

Much of the manner of speaking about decline and degeneration stemmed from the national efficiency movement’s reconstruction of the liberal body as an imperial body, by which it was transformed into a resource for the Empire. The description, categorization, and control of imperial bodies—as evident in public, political, and academic discourses of degeneration—provided modern ways to justify maintaining or recovering conservative and traditional conceptions of the British race, both in character and racial makeup. In the next section I will investigate both official and informal responses to these discourses of degeneration, and how they helped construct the landscape of Empire.

While tapping into the strands of exceptionalist discourse long embedded in British identity, New Imperialism added to and further defined British exceptionalism. Disraeli’s expansionist policies and insistence on parading the power of the British Navy, for instance, emphasized the superiority of the British Empire, and both Disraeli and Joseph

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52 While Ellis’ earlier book calls for a use of negative eugenics, that is, the segregation and voluntary sterilization of the mentally deficient, his later book imagines a more “positive” approach, by which reproduction of certain stock was actively encouraged. Racial selection in the future, he writes, “will be carried out far more effectively by conscious and deliberate selection, exercised not merely before birth, but before conception and even before mating.” He concludes, “the leadership in civilization belongs not to the nation with the highest birth-rate but to the nation which has thus learnt to produce the finest men and women.” See: Essays in Wartime, 282-283.

Chamberlain assured the working class that they would benefit from imperial commerce. And, as recounted in Chapter One, Chamberlain overlaid the entire imperial project with a moral purpose when he reminded Britons that the “sense of possession” must give over to a “sense of obligation.” Defined by a sense of superiority and an ancient if newly revised exceptionalism, New Imperialism would seem to pre-empt any concerns over the decline of imperial power or the degeneration of the Empire’s population. Yet widespread concerns over both imperial decline and racial degeneration, especially on the part of the professional middle classes, coexisted with the rhetoric of patriotic imperialism and exceptionalism. Discourses of exceptionalism required a certain amount of pro-activeness: for instance, the celebration of civic rituals such as the Coronation, and the construction of permanent vistas for those rituals. But the ubiquitous images of decline and racial disaster necessarily prompted a variety of responses. Below, I will investigate a few of those, including the government’s “official” response, the “unofficial” but powerful influence of “the cult of experts,” and finally, some of the informal responses intended to stem the tide of imperial decline and racial degeneration.

Responses to Discourses of Decline and Degeneration

The Sunday after King George’s Jubilee, most churches and chapels held their own Thanksgiving services, but St. Paul’s, having hosted the King’s service the previous Monday, returned to its regular worship schedule. The guest speaker, the Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. Ernest Barnes, took the opportunity to reflect on some of the themes of the Jubilee celebrations. Certainly, the “momentary forgetfulness of, and therefore relief from, the

54 Chamberlain. “The True Conception of Empire.”
ever-present anxiety of war” was welcome, but there were problems ahead.55 A Christianity comprised of “thoughtful and well-educated people” could save civilization, “provided,” he added, “the quality of our racial stocks does not deteriorate.” Employing a well-used trope, he reminded the congregation that the “worse stocks are more fertile than the better,” and that “feeblemindedness is disastrously widespread.” He rued that “only recently has research into the inheritance of mental defect been recognized as a national duty,” and he expressed dismay that the Brock Report, recommending voluntary sterilization for the unfit, was hung up in Government. Much like his contemporary, Rev. Inge, this man of the Church saw no moral conflict in acting on individual bodies for the betterment of the “great races” who share “a common intellectual and emotional outlook in which Christian standards are authoritative.”

The implications of Dr. Barnes’ comments are twofold. In one sense, they acknowledge an active role for the Church of England in social policies outside the traditional realm of spirituality. This is not to say that the Church had not involved itself in government before; given its very beginnings, it was by nature political, and served as both a motive and a vehicle for the imperial project. But both Barnes and Inge’s lectures and sermons are indicative of the degree to which the Church was involved in the development of social policy and practices. Barnes and Inge’s embrace of eugenic ideology demonstrates a robust response to the prevailing discourses of decline, which the Church of the Empire had felt quite keenly. The “muscular Christianity” of the Victorians had gone soft, and much of the Church leadership of the 1920s and 30’s was invested in recovering that moral and physical fitness. Interestingly, this recovery often involved a rather shocking lack of

consideration for the people generally entrusted to the Church’s care. Rev. Inge, in 1925, complained to a lecture audience that “the State did all in its power to increase the evil” of the lowest classes by making the better off pay for “the whole burden of maintaining these waste products of the social machine, whose disappearance would augment the prosperity of the country.”\textsuperscript{56} Christian charity, it seems, was not a solution nor even an option.

While Dr. Barnes’ comments provide some insight into the involvement of the Church in national affairs, they also highlight the activities of an “unofficial” but highly organized actor, the Eugenics Education Society.\textsuperscript{57} Indeed, contrary to Barnes’ assertion, the Society had championed research on the inheritance of mental defect for some time, and had channeled its own sense of national duty into a dedication to the recovery and improvement of the race. The society’s activism, particularly in the sterilization campaign of the mid-1930’s, provides an excellent example of an “unofficial” response to the discourses of degeneration, and demonstrates the scientific, cultural, and political influence of certain organizations stemming from the “cult of the expert.”

Our current sensibilities, imprinted with the knowledge of Nazi horrors, are offended by the wide-spread popularity and adoption of eugenic principles by the professional classes of Edwardian and inter-bellum Britain. But the ideology of eugenics in its British form appeared frequently in mainstream social thought, touted by its supporters as a modern solution to a number of social problems, or as Donald Mackenzie put it, as “a set of tools deployed for social purposes.”\textsuperscript{58} In addition to the Eugenics Education Society itself, founded in November 1907, a variety of other reform-minded leaders and

\textsuperscript{56} “National Decay,” 9.

\textsuperscript{57} The Eugenics Education Society was founded in 1907, but members changed its name to The Eugenics Society in 1926. In this text, the Society will be referred to as EES and ES, respectively.

organizations promoted the principles of eugenics. The Fabians, for instance, socialist in ideology, and like the EES, largely comprised of the professional middle class, adopted many eugenic principles, and many of their tracts, such as Sidney Webb’s “The Decline in the Birth-Rate” (1907), “The Endowment of Motherhood” (Henry Harben, 1910), and “The Case for School Clinics” (L. Haden Guest, 1911) echo themes discussed more thoroughly—and “scientifically”—in the Eugenics Review. Eugenic ideas found favor with numerous politicians as well, most notably A.J. Balfour and Winston Churchill, who both held positions as Vice-Presidents at the International Eugenics Congress of 1912.\(^5\) And, as we have seen, several prominent church leaders supported eugenic principles as well.

The political and cultural influence of the ideology of eugenics is evident early on in the Society’s campaign for legislation that resulted in the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913. As early as 1910, members of the Society had met with thirty to forty members of Parliament to discuss the issues of mental deficiency, and in January 1912, those same Society members, as well as members of the National Association for the Care of the Feeble-Minded, met again with members of Parliament. Prominent EES member Dr. Alfred Tredgold summarized the “Feeble-Minded Control Bill” that the two groups had prepared, opening with the most difficult issue, that of defining “feeble-mindedness” and identifying those so afflicted. He never actually defined the term, but rather defended the case for identifying them, remarking that “the contention that, because there are borderland cases, we should therefore refrain from any attempt to deal with those which are so pronounced, seems to me hardly to merit discussion.”\(^6\) Though “feeble-minded” had yet to be defined,

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5\(^{9}\) Ibid., 518.
he anticipated "*no difficulty of diagnosis whatever*" (italics in original). His presentation prompted the formation of a committee of some of the MPs to “watch the interests of the Bill.” A Conservative member then introduced the EES bill, which granted authority to magistrates to segregate, that is, institutionalize, a subject upon the advice of two doctors.

Controversy over the power of “experts” over liberal bodies prompted a Liberal proposal, the Mental Deficiency Act. Although, as Larson has noted, the proponents of both bills attempted to downplay the involvement of the EES, both bills employed the alarming results of the 1908 report by the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded. An opponent to both bills, Josiah Wedgwood, observed that it deferred to “the horrible Eugenic Society which is setting out to breed up the working classes as though they were cattle.”61 The EES bill died in committee, but the Liberal version was debated and amended for two years before it was finally enacted in April of 1914. Wedgwood had kept up his defense of liberal bodies, expressing a deep distrust in “government by specialists.” But other opponents were satisfied by a more detailed definition of mental deficiency and the removal of problematic clauses that allowed for the segregation of mentally deficient persons “in the interests of the community”; ultimately, even the EES could “heartily welcome the Bill” that was now before Parliament.62

By the time the bill had passed, the Empire’s attention was turned elsewhere, and limited resources were rarely given over to building the institutions mandated by the Mental Deficiency Act. But beyond its non-implementation, the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913 had not satisfied the Society’s desire to manage social policy along eugenic principles.

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What the act had accomplished, though, was the identification of and drawing attention to the frighteningly high rate of mental deficiency in certain portions of the population, and the Eugenics Society intended to capitalize on these anxieties.

This heightened awareness of the problem of increasing mental deficiency was, in fact, the successful accomplishment of the first of three stages MacNicol has identified in the ESS agenda. The first was to establish a need to solve the problem of mental deficiency (and racial decline), the second to legalize and legislate a system of voluntary sterilization of mental defectives, and the third, to enact compulsory sterilization. The Mental Deficiency Act of 1913, and its revision in 1927, even if not successful, had shown the public, to an extent never seen before, that the problem was severe, and, more significantly, that it was important enough to warrant official response. Clearly, the Society had achieved its first objective.

The second stage of what the *Eugenics Review* often referred to as “practical policies” (or “practical politics” as L. Darwin referred to them) intended to impose eugenic principles onto social legislation. The EES strategy was to spread their influence mainly through the vast network of the EES’s own members’ overlapping memberships in other mental health-related organizations. Several Society members were appointed to the Mental Deficiency Committee of 1924, which had been appointed initially to implement the moribund Mental Deficiency Act of 1913. Instead, the committee, chaired by Sir Arthur Wood, gathered vast amounts of data and collected numerous testimonies concerning possible responses to the social problems associated with mental defectives, and in the final analysis, the Wood Report of 1929, made three significant claims. The first was that the incidence of mental deficiency was increasing; the second that it was prevalent in that
class of paupers Lidbetter had identified as the “social problem” group. Finally, the Report called for a robust response to this serious social issue.

Meanwhile, the ES had formed its own committee, the Committee for Legalizing Eugenic Sterilization, and in 1928 Eugenics Review published the first draft of their own sterilization bill. It was presented as a Private Member’s bill in 1931 by Major A.G. Church, a member of the ES Committee, but the bill was soundly shot down with a vote of 167 to 89. Still, the ES and other supporters of voluntary sterilization refused to let this discourage them, and interest was sufficient to warrant the formation of a Parliamentary Sterilization Committee, which requested that the Ministry of Health form a royal commission. Having attained Parliamentary support, the ES, once more through the organizational affiliations of its members, persuaded other organizations such as the Central Association for Mental Welfare and the National Council for Mental Hygiene, to pressure the Ministry of Health into supporting sterilization legislation. While the ES had hoped the Minister would appoint a royal commission, the Minister of Health, Sir Hilton Young, responded by forming yet another committee, this one under the directorship of Sir Laurence Brock. A departmental committee did not demand the strict balance of opinion required of a royal commission, and so while the ES was originally disappointed, the departmental committee option allowed them to “stack” the committee: of the eight members, one, R.A. Fisher, was a current member of the ES, and another, Dr. A.F. Tredgold, had been a member in the 1920’s. Laurence Brock, the chairman of the Committee, was also Chairman of the Board of Control which oversaw the treatment of the feeble-minded. His multi-pronged approach to the care of mental defectives included support for voluntary sterilization. Ruth Darwin, Commissioner of the Board of Control for Lunacy and Mental Deficiency, had served as
secretary for the Cambridge Association for the Care of the Feeble-Minded, whose membership overlapped that of the Eugenics Society. Wilfred Trotter, the King's surgeon, was of great interest to the ES (though there is no evidence to indicate that the interest was mutual), as he had done important work on the idea of the “instinct of the herd,” a frequent topic in *The Eugenics Review*. Other members of the committee included members of the Board of Control and the Board of Education; all were familiar with eugenic ideas, but more importantly, all were convinced that the health of the Empire warranted physical action on unfit, and possibly dangerous, bodies.

The vigorous work of the committee produced the “Report of the Departmental Committee on Sterilisation,” more widely known as the “Brock Report.” In his analysis of the Report, Leonard Darwin commends the committee members, noting—without irony—that the members “were obviously chosen with the object of obtaining valuable practical results.” In the course of 36 meetings, and interviewing 60 witnesses (school teachers, local doctors, Poor Law workers and the like), the Committee compiled statistics, family histories, anecdotes and research. Unsurprisingly, the final analysis emphasized the hereditary nature of feeble-mindedness and noted that, “although . . . a proportion of cases of mental deficiency is due entirely to environmental factors, this proportion is comparatively small.” Furthermore, the Report confirmed that they could find no evidence that slum conditions “though plainly disadvantageous in a general way to physical and mental health,” actually caused mental deficiency. Ultimately, the Report recommended voluntary sterilization, and advised procedures and safeguards for its implementation.

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document, well-organized and succinct, is certainly, as King and Hansen put it, “the most coherent case presented by British state actors in favour of eugenic sterilization.”\(^{65}\)

But this efficiently run campaign, with its patriotic themes, failed in its objective, the institution of voluntary sterilization of the unfit. The failure of the ES legislation offers some insight into the evolving cultural landscape of New Imperialism, as the human resources of the Empire had to determine if they were imperial bodies—or liberal ones. While the eugenics movement and its aims enjoyed the support of the professional class, as well as the support of a number of social reformers, it failed to garner popular support from those outside its professional and scientific circles.

Additionally, the House of Commons was particularly hostile to the eugenics movement, especially within the Labour party, and the Ministry of Health became increasingly distant as it developed its own plan of management of the Empire’s human resources. Outside Whitehall, the Catholic Church had voiced loud opposition as early as 1912, when the Reverend Father Day, in a lecture at the Mount Carmel Catholic Institute in Manchester, pointed out that one method employed in negative eugenics was “mutilative surgery” which Catholic theology “undoubtedly opposed.”\(^{66}\) The Church asserted the same position two decades later, when in a county council meeting in Carlisle, a Father Clayton declared “that he looked upon sterilisation as an unjustifiable attempt to correct a defect of nature, and whether it was voluntary or not the considered it to be immoral.”\(^{67}\) Meanwhile, Labour leaders, such as Mr. J.H. MacDonnell, warned that if sterilization became policy,

“they would start with the poor, and it would be the poor who were experimented on.”

The lower classes were well aware they were the intended target of eugenic policies, and if Labour leaders and priests had not told them so, a brief look through the correspondence of the *Eugenics Review* would have confirmed their fears. In one letter, Norman Thompson accused the Society of “moral cowardice” for refusing to publicly support compulsory sterilization, while his friend, C. Wicksteed Armstrong, railed against “the dysgenic effects of modern “humanitarian” legislation,” which “allow[ed] the rot to spread far and wide.”

Eugenic policies and practices, however, would not only stop the rot of the Empire from within, but would fortify it from without as well. In his letter “Eugenics and the Colonial Question” Armstrong quoted extensively from his own book, *Survival of the Unfittest*, reminding readers that “all bolstering up of degenerate peoples is working against Nature, against Evolution, and therefore against the Deity.”

Strong racial stock (he uses the term Aryan) was justified in taking fallow or underutilized fertile land if it was inhabited by “hybrid races . . . the most unstable, backward and physically degenerate of all.” In short: “A1 nations will have to be given room at the expense of C3.” A1 nations had the right to expand, but the more immediate problem was assuring an A1 population.

As we have seen, eugenic ideals, as promulgated by the Eugenics Society, required a view of the Empire’s citizens as a type of economic resource—or, as in the case of the mentally deficient, an economic liability. This view, a fundamental of National Efficiency, justified state action upon imperial bodies: after all, Arnold White had early on complained

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72 Ibid., 292.
that “preventable ill-health is honoured under the sacred principle of individual freedom.” The ES clearly perceived themselves as possessing the appropriate expertise to oversee these actions.

The ultimate failure, however, of eugenically inspired legislation, was most likely due to the increasingly worrisome reports—many of them appearing in *The Eugenics Review*—on Germany’s eugenic policies. When the ES sponsored speakers such as Dr. Frederick Grundy, who proclaimed that the only thing to do with imbeciles was “to exterminate them as they arose,” even the least sophisticated readers of the *Times* were led to wonder just who would be given these powers of identification, as well as just how these authorities would go about identifying the luckless imbecile. Efficient imperial bodies were certainly desired, but given the numerous unsolved issues concerning who determined who was deficient and how the condition was to be diagnosed, it is possible that much of the population—and not just the constituents of Josiah Wedgwood—began to question the ethics of a government so blatantly influenced by non-elected activists.

As is already evident in the example of the proposed sterilization legislation, the distinction between unofficial and official policy-making was a blurry one. And, as noted earlier, the members of the Eugenics Society frequently responded to the looming specter of degeneration through other official, unofficial, and informal associations loosely related by their promotion of eugenic principles. The highly organized yet unofficial Eugenics Society responded to the threat of degeneration with plans to control or contain the “submerged tenth,” as the general conflation of poverty with disease and deficiency had focused the blame for impending racial degeneration specifically on that population.

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73 Arnold White, *Efficiency and Empire*, 97.

“Dysgenic” birth-rates were likewise perceived as a threat to racial vitality, but oddly, voluntary sterilization seemed to be a less controversial measure than offering contraception to certain populations. In fact, it took a great deal of concentrated action from individuals outside of the policy-making apparatus to make birth control a weapon in the war against dysgenic birth-rates, and these activists had only limited success in making birth control an option for the lower classes who were presumably more fertile and therefore, more of a risk to the low-producing middle classes. But to say that these responses were strictly “informal” is misleading, as ultimately they led to an organized approach that affected official policies.

Numerous private individuals took it upon themselves to address the concerns over physical and moral degeneration by way of organizing what one might call public morals societies. Sir James Marchant was particularly active in the public morals society business in an eclectic and ecumenical way. After a period of unbelief in his youth, he converted to what was called “a fertile if not very closely defined advocacy of the Christian position.”

He was a lecturer of Christian apologetics for the Christian Evidence Society, an oblate in the Anglo-Benedictine order, the minister of one Congregational Church and two Presbyterian ones; he also had an association with the Baptist Church and, his obituarist notes, maintained friendships among the clergy of the Established and Roman Churches as well. But he was better known for his philanthropic work with “various bodies connected with questions of public morals.” Although the article points out that Marchant was secretary of the National Birth-Rate Commission appointed in 1913, it fails to mention that he and other members of the National Council of Public Morals (formerly the National Council of Public Morals)

Social Purity Crusade) appointed the Commission themselves from amongst themselves; this was true of the NCPM’s other subcommittees as well, including the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases and the National Council for the promotion of Physical and Moral Re-generation. At any given time, the membership of the National Council of Public Morals and its subcommittees included a dozen Lords, several Bishops, a few M.P.s, Fabians, Professors, wives, novelists, Free Church clergy, and at least one Rabbi. In other words, the Council was constituted by mostly middle to upper class professionals or philanthropists who thought of themselves as modern, even progressive, but who were yet invested in the maintenance of existing social structures. Racial re-generation was the special task of the middle-class, exactly the class among whom, according to some alarmists, the birth-rate had fallen dangerously low.

The interests of this large eugenics community dominated the reform and scientific narratives of the era, so much so that there seems to have been a shared assumption that the community would wield a strong influence over population policies in the proposed Ministry of Health; for instance, one of the issues to be discussed at a “Reconstruction Inquiry” held in May of 1918 by the “reconstituted National Birth-Rate Commission,” was “The constitution and uses of the coming Ministry of Health as an instrument of racial reconstruction.” A few months later, the Bishop of Birmingham, writing on behalf of the National Council of Public Morals, called for the hasty adoption of the Ministry of Health bill, noting that the decentralization of the past had prevented “the nation’s experts” from

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76 The National Social Purity Crusade changed its name to the National Council of Public Morals in 1911, when they asked the new King to become their patron. He did, and the Council adopted as its motto George V’s statement, “The foundations of national glory are set in the homes of the people. They will only remain unshaken while the family life of our nations is strong, simple, and pure.”
contributing to reform; presumably, under a centralized bureau, the Eugenics Education Society and its affiliated organizations would be allowed to provide “expert” advice.

Just as eugenic ideology dominated much discourse among professionals, the declining birth-rate dominated much of the conversation on eugenics. Contraception, more frequently referred to by the newly coined “birth control,” became a hot topic for those concerned about the decline in both the quantity and quality of the British race. The perception that the poor and deficient reproduced more frequently than the wealthy determined much of the direction of these conversations, even when it was proven that there was no differential birth-rate, but that a rise in economic status generally led to more choices and, ultimately, the wealthier classes tended to choose to limit the size of their families.77 Even as late as 1937, at a discussion on population problems at a Conservative Party Conference, a Mrs. Stevens from Leeds supported a proposed resolution to encourage couples to have children; however, through her work at a Mental Health Ward, she had found “that our lowest types were increasing out of all proportion to our highest types.”78 Control of those bodies was necessary. She was reported as saying that “things would be made worse, not better, unless we saw to it that our better strains were encouraged to produce more population, and unless at the same time our worse strains were discouraged.” She added an illustrative analogy from the garden: one “could not plant dandelion seeds and expect to raise gladioli.” Lady Limerick took up the point, drawing attention to the injustice done to both parents and the nation by encouraging procreation among those unfit for parenting.

While many connected with the eugenics movement limited themselves to positive eugenics, that is, encouraging “good” families to have children, there were still a great many who fell into what Caleb Saleeby, a positive eugenist himself, called the “better dead” camp. These included Leonard Darwin, who, in a meeting of the National Birth-rate Commission, said he “was inclined to think that they would be driven to some form of sterilization” as the only possible way to deal with the question of what Marie Stopes, at the same meeting, had called “hopelessly bad cases due to inherent disease, drunkenness, or character.” As evident in many of the articles and correspondence in the *Eugenics Review*, the *British Medical Journal*, “manifestoes” on public morals, and letters in the *Times*, a large, or at least vocal contingent of the professional classes saw little hope or justification for rehabilitation, and suggested segregation or sterilization for the worst cases. Meanwhile, natural selection should be allowed to control those poor who were not deficient enough to warrant state intervention. Leonard Darwin claimed that any state “expenditure intended to improve hygienic conditions often also tends to promote fertility” and as a result society must “either refuse to give assistance to those continuing to live degraded lives, or we must promote enduring racial harm.” Given this view, one might think that Darwin would be inclined to promote contraception, at least among the poor, but he, along with many other eugenists, had serious reservations about its use. David Barker has noted some of the reasons the eugenists eschewed contraception: it was unpatriotic for the middle and upper classes to prevent the conception of other middle and upper class citizens, it encouraged

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80 Ibid.
immorality and turned wives into sex objects, and it encouraged women’s independence.\(^\text{81}\)

Darwin added his own concerns. In the middle and upper classes where it was used presently, he feared a rise in infertility, due to the “inherited” habit of smaller families and, echoing a common motif in birth-rate and birth-control discussions, he doubted the lower classes would use contraception unless coerced.

It may not be surprising that the discussions on birth control in the *Eugenics Review* and the *British Medical Journal* view birth control as a racial and national issue, not as a women’s issue; as I have shown, most of the eugenists were invested in the traditional family, and viewed women’s independence or even political participation as a threat to the eugenic health of the Empire. In one discussion, recorded in the *Eugenics Review*, Dr. Alice Drysdale Vickery addressed the injustice of “poor people, poor women especially” being deliberately deprived of knowledge of and access to birth control, resulting in the continued birth and survival of the “unfit.” Even though Vickery was a dedicated activist for accessible contraception, she still couched her support in terms of national and racial interests. “The nation needs an A.1. population,” she said, and with the regulation of contraception, women would be able to “give the nation what it needs.”\(^\text{82}\)

Even the less scientifically strident “public morals” groups marginalized women’s investment in this issue. As noted, most of these societies shared memberships, and many were at least loosely associated with eugenic policies. James Marchant seems to have taken on the task of collating the various papers written by members or presented at various conferences, including the annual Conference of the Commission on the Birth-rate. A look


through some of these collections elicits a variety of viewpoints on the use of birth control, but it is possible to isolate some of the more characteristic positions, and from these to identify the dominant responses to discourses of degeneration.

Unlike the “better dead” eugenists such as Darwin and Inge (who contributed several essays), most of the essayists worked in positive eugenics, using psychological, religious, and national reasons to encourage middle class fecundity. The British Medical Journal review of Medical Views of Birth Control (1926), a collection of essays by many of the familiar names in eugenics, such as Mary Scharlieb, Leonard Hill, and Crichton Miller, provides a general summary of the public morals groups’ narrative. The reviewer notes that while the contributors understood that there were medical reasons for conception, generally, they felt “it is at least extremely doubtful whether a more general practice of control can be justified on any grounds, whether national, social, ethical, psychological, physiological, or any other.”

Dr. Mary Scharlieb, throughout the conferences and commissions, had consistently averred that women were not worn out by multiple births, and in The Control of Parenthood (1921) had said that limiting family size was “not really in the interest of over-burdened mothers.” But there were other considerations as well: the reproductive urge was “too potent a biological force to be lightly thwarted” and “such thwarting leads to dire results.” Even more dangerous was the “over-development of the sexual side of the characters of both men and women.” The reviewer in the BMJ paraphrased the argument this way: “Freedom for sex relations without fear of undesired

85 Qtd. in L.D., review of The Control of Parenthood, by James Marchant, ed. The Eugenics Review 12, no.4 (January 1921): 300.
consequences, like some other so-called freedoms, leads directly to a loosening of moral behaviour, not only in the married but in the unmarried."  Generally, then, contraception was seen as dysgenic, possibly unhealthy, and morally dangerous.

Another characteristic of this strain of eugenic thought was a general belief that the government should offer incentives for having children, and should provide better housing, which was known to improve physical health. Reviews of Problems of Population (the second report of the National Birth-Rate Commission, 1920), The Control of Parenthood (1921), and The Coming Generation (1923) emphasize that the most popular solution for combating degeneration was “doles” to the poor to improve their living conditions. Here reviewers clashed with the “better dead” group, as is evident in Darwin’s insistence that any sort of dole interfered with the disease and crime that served as a natural form of population control for the poor. Ernest MacBride, one of the most adamant of the “better dead” group and one of the last scientists to hold onto the Larmorckian view of evolution, took great exception to this view, and in a scathing review of Problems of Population, another volume of public morals essays edited by James Marchant, he pointed out that birth control could easily be taught to the poor, but since that appeared to be a non-issue with the group, it was apparent to him that “sooner or later society will be driven to adopt measures of compulsory sterilization.”

Clearly, there was a wide variety of opinions concerning the eugenic qualities of contraception. The “dominant” group, that is the public morals group, seemed to accept its

86 “Reviews: Birth Control,” 476.
growing popularity, which did not prevent them doing everything in their power to
discourage its use among the class that employed it the most, including the dissemination
of unverifiable medical “evidence.” They seem to have written themselves into a corner, as
to promote birth control amongst the poor would appear to show the morals community’s
approbation of birth control, thus possibly increasing its adoption among the better classes.
The “better dead” group also shows a variety in opinions: Darwin would prefer to let
nature take its course, and allow the poor to continue to multiply freely and die freely,
though he, MacBride, and dozens of others who supported the Eugenics Society’s platform,
were all for sterilization of those who were the worst eugenic troublemakers. Except for
Darwin, most of the “better dead” group seems to have supported contraception for the
poor, though generally assumed that the poor could not be made to learn about birth
control or, if armed with the knowledge, would not actually use it.

As a supporter of sterilization, Marie Stopes could be seen as a part of the “better
dead” group. However, her own response to the threat of racial degeneration varied from
the rather prudish views on sex and procreation that were common in the medical and
science community, especially among the eugenists, and introduced the idea that sex—
within marriage—could and should be a wholesome but not necessarily a procreative act.\(^{88}\)
This was scarcely possible in “overcrowded” situations that not only included slum housing
but a woman’s womb. Unlike many of her fellow eugenists who saw the limitation of
middle class families as dysgenic (although Havelock Ellis also believed birth control could

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\(^{88}\) Alfred E. Seller, apparently a doctor, closed a letter to the British Medical Journal condemning any form of
birth control other than continence by affirming that “a man who uses his wife for sexual intercourse other
than for the purpose of propagation of his species is prostituting his own body and that of his wife to uses for
which they were never intended, and is immoral to that extent.” The correspondence in the BMJ and the Eugenics Review feature a great deal of conversation on the benefits or detriments of “continence.” Alfred E. Seller, “Correspondence,” The British Medical Journal (August 13, 1921): 262.
be “race-saving”), Stopes believed limiting birth in all classes would be a benefit to the entire race, as the bitterness of unwanted children was “poisoning human relations.”

But it is important to understand that the benefits extended to women through birth control was not, for Stopes, a matter of the right of women to control their own bodies. Instead, family limitation was seen as a method of racial regeneration. For instance, she asked the reader to observe “how different the racial value [was] of desired and beloved children!” If, she said, we were to ever achieve a true Utopia, it would come about “by creating only minds and bodies desired and beloved from the first moment of their inception.”

Contraception would be one way to achieve a racial Utopia:

> Translated into terms of everyday practice, I maintain that the only hope for the race is the conscious elimination of all diseased and over-crowded lives before their conception, by planning only to conceive those for whom adequate provision of material necessities and a loving welcome are reasonably to be anticipated.

However, she knew that one could not count on contraception alone; thus she continued to call for the sterilization of “the inferior, the depraved, and feeble-minded, to whom reason means nothing and can mean nothing, who are thriftless and unmanageable yet appallingly prolific.” Birth control, then, including the extreme measure of sterilization, was not ultimately a women’s issue for Stopes at all, but a eugenic measure calculated not only to stall the degeneration of the race, but to move it towards some vague eugenic future, a

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89 F.B., review of *The Control of Parenthood*, 445.
91 Ibid., 221.
92 Ibid.
“leap forward,” where humanity will exist of “only fine and beautiful young people, all of whom have been conceived, carried, and born in true homes by conscious, powerful, and voluntary mothers.”94 Women, in Stopes’ mind, are still the vessels of the future race, rather than masters of their own bodies.

However, a closer look at Stopes’ birth control clinics reveals a different aspect of Stopes’ work, and we find that rather than reflecting the eugenic ideals that dominated the discourses of degeneration, these clinics were more correctly seen as an excluded landscape, one that manifested the excluded narratives of women and their bodies. There is little reason to doubt that Stopes’ work with poor women was meant to improve the race, but it also evoked a message of empowerment and feminism as well, even if this was not Stopes’ intention. Deborah Cohen’s thorough study of Stopes’ clinics describes her careful consideration of the comfort of women. Mid-wives were hired rather than physicians, and Stopes preferred to hire women who were themselves mothers to encourage a closer identification between the patient and the mid-wife. Furthermore, it appears that most of the nurses and mid-wives Stopes hired were birth-control advocates and activists, rather than eugenists, and her own ideas on family size and pregnancy seem to have evolved during her work in the clinics. Cohen relates an incident in which Stopes came to realize that “it isn’t the number of the children; it is what the woman has endured in her motherhood” that should determine the number of children a woman chose to have. Even though the slogan for the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress was “Babies in the Right Places,” Cohen found significant evidence to show that a woman’s choice or needs often trumped eugenic principles, as when one white woman, married to a

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94 Ibid., 252.
black man, asked for help conceiving, and one patient with several physical impairments—clearly not racially “fit”—also received fertility treatment from the clinic. And in what might appear to fellow eugenists as treason, several middle class women were fitted for contraception as well.95 While ostensibly manifesting the dominant responses to the discourses of degeneration, as proclaimed by the Eugenics Society and the numerous public morals organizations of the era, Stopes’ views and practices provided an alternative response and harbored it in an excluded landscape.

The Eugenics Society responded to what they saw as the greatest cause of racial degeneration—the increasing population of the desperate, feeble-minded, and usually criminal poor—with an aggressive activism that shaped much social and health policy in the era, especially the Mental Deficiency Bills of 1913 and 1927, and the ultimately unsuccessful campaign for sterilization legislation. Eugenic ideals were widespread throughout the era, although concentrated in the middle and professional classes, and while the “science” of eugenics was viewed as a modern and progressive strategy in the address of societal ills, this narrative was significantly invested in maintaining a rigid class structure. Eugenists were not concerned with eliminating the lower classes, but rather with ensuring that the lower classes did not threaten their positions. The public morals groups, in their discussions of birth control and parenthood, were also concerned about maintaining class structure (though they were often taken to task by more hard-line eugenists for concentrating on the encouragement of middle class families without addressing the need to control the lower classes). Marie Stopes, through her birth control clinics, offered an alternative to the eugenist socio-economic narrative, but ultimately,

shared the majority eugenic view concerning the necessity of limiting the lower classes in order to protect the racial health—and wealth—of the ruling establishment.

The Ministry of Health, established in 1919, and welcomed heartily by reformers, eugenists, and medical personnel alike, was in its creation itself a response to the mounting concerns over the prospect of racial degeneration. After Dr. Christopher Addison introduced the ministry to the Commons, Lord Willoughby de Broke proposed to the House of Lords a ministry of health on July 17, 1918, telling his colleagues they must face the problem of “the lowest birth-rate of our own record, and the fact that venereal disease and tuberculosis were greatly on the increase,” as well as the fact that a million children in the elementary schools were either mentally or physically defective. Given the losses of the war, any military recruitment now would necessarily result in a weaker force. Viscount Haldane recommended a ministry as a way to consolidate the six departments that presently dealt with public health. Furthermore, a national ministry would provide oversight for local councils. Lord Sydenham recommended that a committee of three draft a bill. Numerous medical organizations formed committees to advise proposed medical policies of the Ministry.

The proposed ministry was ambitious in its coverage. The British Medical Journal, in an editorial in anticipation of its enactment, listed the responsibilities that the ministry was expected to cover:

The ideal set up is that the Minister of Health shall be empowered to take all possible steps to secure the effective carrying out and coordination of measures conducive to the health of the people, including the prevention and cure of diseases, the treatment of physical and mental defects, the collection
and preparation of information and statistics relating thereto, and the
training of persons engaged in health services.\textsuperscript{96}

The mission of the Ministry of Health included the inspection of school children, the
supplying of milk to mothers and infants, and, as described above, providing “homes fit for
heroes.” In only four years, improvements were seen in many areas: 154,000 homes were
already erected, and tuberculosis deaths were down. Particularly significant was the drop
in the infant death rate, attributable to greater availability of midwives and greater access
to maternity and infant welfare centers.\textsuperscript{97} By 1936, the Ministry was so successful that the
editor of the \textit{British Medical Journal} noted, “The progress in national health has been so
rapid, the combating of many diseases so conclusive, that impatience is now expressed if
further improvements do not become apparent with the same dramatic suddenness.”\textsuperscript{98} The
ministry had addressed housing, women’s health, and infectious diseases.

Lord Willoughby de Bare employed eugenic motifs when he introduced the idea to
the House of Lords and, in fact, some in the Ministry of Health were supporters of eugenic
ideals: Arthur Robinson, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, had contemplated the
possibility of sterilization policies, and Sir Hilton Young, the Minister of Health from 1931-
1935, had appointed the departmental commission that produced the Brock Report. Young
knew it recommended sterilization, and wanted to support it, but he was also aware of the
political dangers in such policies. The Labour Party and the Catholic Church had already
made their views on sterilization policies well known, and it would have been disastrous on
the part of government to enact such a law that the poor well knew was meant to cull their

\textsuperscript{97} These centers did not offer birth control, although in 1930 the Ministry of Health allowed health workers
to prescribe contraception if the mother’s health was in danger.
numbers. Furthermore, the British Medical Association had refused to endorse the Brock Report; it’s likely Young saw that it was not prudent for the Minister of Health to contradict the nation’s medical experts.

In fact, two of the main concerns of eugenists—the threat of a mentally and physically diseased underclass, and the dysgenic birth-rate—did not seem to concern the Ministry of Health, at least not in those terms. David Lloyd George had demanded an A1 empire, and rather than engineering a new nation through sterilization and subsidies, the Ministry of Health looked to train the old one, to make it “fit.”

Health and fitness were real concerns of the era, and not just among overcrowded urbanites. Even with significant improvements, in the late 1930’s, infectious diseases like diphtheria and scarlet fever were still killing thousands each year: in 1937, around 28,000 people died of tuberculosis alone. Eugenist fixation with racial health and population had detracted from preventative and corrective medicine, and some hardliners, like Leonard Darwin, believed infectious diseases were necessary to cull the poverty-infested herd. And of course, the appalling physical condition of soldiers in the Great War had prompted David Lloyd George’s warning, “you cannot maintain an A1 Empire with a C3 population” in the first place. ⁹⁹ In the language of national efficiency, the nation’s population was viewed as a national resource, and most physicians, social workers, and other professionals believed that resource had been used prodigally.

But David Lloyd George and Dr. Christopher Addison’s vision for the Ministry of Health, did not include the granting of privilege to the middle—or any—class. Lloyd George closed his speech on the nation’s health with the insistence that “all classes must be invited

⁹⁹ “The War and After. Mr. Lloyd George’s Review,” The Times, September 13, 1918, 8.
to assist, to cooperate, to devise, to work out the problems,” even though, after a brief history of the Bolshevik revolution, he clarified that “we want neither reaction nor revolution . . .”  

While it’s true that the housing programs of the Ministry of Health as well as the Ministry’s hesitance to deal with matters of contraception reflected and enforced a middle-class vision of citizenship, the language of the Ministry avoided the class-based view of the Empire that had propelled much of the Eugenics Society and the public morals societies’ activism.

Given the dominance of eugenic language and ideals among such a large proportion of educated imperial society, the challenge presented to those discourses by the Ministry’s apparently class-neutral narrative of fitness and health indicates an emergent narrative at work. The Chief Medical Officer of the ministry of Health and of the Board of Education, Sir George Newman, at a Public Health Congress and Exhibition in 1928, described this narrative of public health and fitness:

... in its early history the purpose was to prevent the repletion of certain pestilence due to insufficiency or unsuitability of food and to the flooding of land. Then it aimed to improve health by the provision of sewers and cleanliness of the streets; then came the period when it was recognized that the circumstances of man’s life had to be amended, and now the two fundamental purposes were improvement in the environment of man and the care of his personal bodily health.  

The annual reports of the Ministry reveal an energetic response to many areas of public health, and the Ministry was responsible for much social and health legislation between the

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100 Ibid.
101 “Public Health Congress. Mr. Chamberlain’s Address,” The Times, November 20, 1928, 11.
wars, including the 1936 Midwives Act, which established midwifery as a salaried and pensioned profession. Housing acts mandated a program of building, and in 1930, the Greenwood act, named for the current Minister of Health, provided housing subsidies, but more importantly, required administrations to re-house families dislocated by slum clearance. In 1921 a Public Health act required all local governments to develop a plan for housing tuberculosis patients and, in 1930, the Mental Health Treatment Act allowed for voluntary treatment in what were no longer called asylums, but mental hospitals. In this legislation one identifies a certain sensitivity towards the less fortunate, as well as a holistic view: the imperial body, to be controlled and acted upon, had been replaced by the liberal body which voluntarily relinquished some rights for the greater good, but did not live in fear of sterilization or being evicted from his home with no place to go.

From the very beginning of the Ministry, there was concern that citizens would not take advantage of the services offered, and from its inception, the Ministry was charged with “the collection, preparation, publication, and dissemination of information and statistics” related to its duty “to secure the preparation, effective carrying out and co-ordination of measures conducive to the health of the people.” In the area of what is now called “awareness,” the Ministry had not been aggressive and, in fact, seems to have abdicated that duty to local administrations; even in the schools, health materials were not given directly to students, but rather to teachers to incorporate into their lesson plans.

This makes the National Health Campaign of 1937 particularly interesting, not only because of the breadth of its appeal, but also because it provides a last glimpse of the landscape of empire.

**The National Health Campaign, 1937**

1935 had been a year of triumph. The nation had celebrated 25 years of King George V and Queen Mary’s reign in a spectacle that assured the Empire of its special relationship with Providence, and the kaleidoscope of multi-colored uniforms, horse-drawn carriages, archbishops, bunting, and flags seemed to project confidence in the imperial project. But the King died the following January, and the Prince of Wales became King Edward VII, although he was never officially crowned. His abdication in December scandalized Britons throughout the Empire, not least his mother, Queen Mary, whose message the day after Edward’s abdication spoke of “the distress which fills a mother’s heart when I think that my dear son has deemed it to be his duty to lay down his charge.” ¹⁰⁴ The nation’s clergy were disproving, though one wonders if the Archbishop of Canterbury may have overreacted somewhat when he told the *Times*, “No such tragedy, of a pathos so profound, has ever been enacted on the state of our national history—I wonder whether in all history any renunciation has ever been made comparable with that which has been announced in the gracious message we have just received.” ¹⁰⁵ In a BBC address the Sunday following the abdication, he was less grief-stricken and more censorious: “From God he had received a high and sacred trust. Yet by his own will he has abdicated—he has surrendered the trust.” ¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, he had “sought his happiness in a manner inconsistent with the

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¹⁰⁴ “Queen Mary’s Message. A Mother’s Heart,” *The Times*, December 12, 1936, 14.
Christian principles of marriage” and with a social circle whose “standards and ways of life are alien to all the best instincts and traditions of his people.” The Bishop of Gloucester voiced his strong disapproval of Edward’s abdication, not only because Edward had preferred private affection to public duty, but also because “that very affection was unlawful.” Edward had been very popular throughout the Empire, both as the Prince of Wales and as the new King, and had embraced causes that increased his popularity with the working class. Church and government leadership were well aware that the monarchy had enjoyed great popularity in the last several decades, and that this was a significant blow to the prestige of the institution. Additionally, it may have been disconcerting for government ministers to see a very popular monarch replaced with his less popular and much less confident younger brother, whom the Archbishop of Canterbury felt compelled to defend by announcing on the BBC that George VI had brought his stuttering “into full control, and to those who hear it need cause no sort of embarrassment.” The Bishop of Chelmsford, however, focused on the family life of the new king, and felt that “the new King and Queen are going to return to those habits which in the days of King George V and our beloved Queen Mary endeared the Royal Family to the nation,” and he thanked God that “there is to be family life again in the Royal Family.” The Times remarked that, although there were a few crowds milling around Whitehall, London was generally quiet during the few days of the crisis, although shopkeepers bemoaned the drop in Christmas spirit, or rather, Christmas gift buying. But generally, the Empire carried on. The Dean of Exeter felt reassured, as he believed that throughout Britain and the Dominions, “a lofty ideal for

107 “Cause of Failure. Dr. Headlam on a Wrong Decision,” The Times, December 14, 1936, 19.
108 “Churches and the Crisis.” 19.
marriage and attachment to the Throne as a centre of spiritual unity enabled the people to withstand the shock” they had received.\textsuperscript{110} Another clergyman noted with reproof that the “let him do what he liked” attitude of many youth portended a “kind of spiritual anarchy,” though a glance at the \textit{Times} show little support for Edward, other than regret over the entire event. Yet it’s worth noting that popular opinion, as opposed to the \textit{Times} and other newspapers which had admittedly hushed up much of the abdication crisis until the actual event, appears to have been much more divided on Edward’s position: the Mass Observation project that collected a vast amount of material on George VI’s coronation the next May showed a great deal of support for Edward, though many of the Mass Observers commented that by the end of Coronation Day, most of their pro-Edward neighbors had come round to the George camp.

The summer Olympics of 1936 had been a trial as well. The \textit{Times} updates on Great Britain’s performances were almost pathetic, with headlines reading “Bad Day for Great Britain,” and “Disappointments in Berlin,” and summaries of events that included observations such as “The semi-finals of the 400 metres scarcely encouraged any British spectator who was not governed by his patriotic emotion.”\textsuperscript{111,112} There was much recrimination after the Games, and the Special Correspondent in Berlin reflected, “It has to be admitted that Great Britain and the Dominions have cut rather a sorry figure . . .”\textsuperscript{113} Two themes seem to emerge from the letters to the editor concerning the Olympics. The first was the poor showing of the nation’s athletes, though several pointed out with dismay

\textsuperscript{110} “End of a Scandal,” \textit{The Times}, December 14, 1936, 19.
\textsuperscript{111} The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland competed as Great Britain; however, news articles usually included the achievements of the Dominions as well.
\textsuperscript{113} “Olympic Games: Reflections after Berlin,” \textit{The Times}, August 18, 1936, 6.
the increasing professionalization of athletes in some countries that put British amateur athletes at a distinct disadvantage. The President of the Scottish Hockey Association believed that one redress of the poor showing was to increase the number of facilities available for training. He called for “a properly laid out track in every large town, with adequate facilities for, and solely devoted to, the practice of athletics,” such as has been carried out in other European nations. But most of the letters and editorials in reference to the Games made a point to refer to the vast, well-organized spectacle Germany presented to the world. Before the Games had begun, the Berlin Correspondent of the Times noted that “between the outside world’s curiosity in Hitler’s country and the Nazis’ eagerness to gratify it, the Games promise[d] to be the biggest sporting festival ever staged.” The same writer described the new stadium and noted that “it is likely to be the chief scene in future of the mass demonstrations which go by the name of politics in Germany.” The attitudes of the letters and articles are rarely as candid as that one, and it is difficult to know just how to read comments and observations like this: “I left Berlin with the impression that a new race of energetic, virile young people had sprung up in Germany. They appeared to be ready to go anywhere under the orders of the Führer—a nation full armed, equipped with the best of war material, and an air force second to none.” Clearly, there was a bit of envy on the part of the Britons towards the Germans, “with their powers of organization and sense of the dramatic . . .” References to the military and physical fitness of Germany, on the other hand, may have hinted at concern over the Empire’s lack of military preparedness.

Edward VIII’s coronation had been planned for May 12 of 1937, and planners decided to keep the date for George’s coronation. The commemorative wares trade had already begun its production of Edward-related products and had to switch over. The industry seemed not to have been too bothered by the switch, as early on collectors and other tradesmen recognized the value of souvenirs that commemorated a coronation that never happened. It would be hard to say if there was more or less spectacle than the last royal celebration, George V’s Silver Jubilee. The Coronation on May 12th was the first collective Mass Observation project, and the reactions were mixed; those in London seemed unable to escape the events, while outside of the city, it was easy enough to miss. One Mass Observer in Lancashire only remembers being lifted by a co-worker experiencing a moment of elation which resulted in the Observer being wounded by a pencil and put in an ill humor for the rest of the day.\footnote{Humphrey Jennings and Charles Madge, eds. \textit{May the 12th, Mass Observation Day Surveys-1937}. (London: Faber and Faber), 1937. Kindle location 4862 of 9438.} Certainly there were decorations, and 25,000 troops lined the streets. The Colonial troops were out in full force, and one Observer recorded that the Indian and Australian troops received the most applause.\footnote{Ibid., location 2039 of 9438.} The procession impressed most of the observers, and they described beautiful black horses and listed the visiting royals. The princesses, Margaret and her sister the future Queen Elizabeth II, were favorites, not least because of the children’s own excitement over the spectacle. According to the \textit{Daily Telegraph}, George VI’s was the most expensive coronation to date, though a good portion of that expenditure paid for work on Westminster Abbey and the increased cost of erecting stands on the streets.\footnote{The \textit{Daily Telegraph}, (Mar. 4, 1937).} The Thanksgiving service after the Coronation was held on the following Empire Day, May 24. Although, as the \textit{Times} noted, the Thanksgiving
Services after Edward VII and George V's coronations had no imperial significance, having the service on Empire Day this time allowed “the representatives of the British Dominions and Colonies” to “join in prayer for their Majesties.” Yet no Durbar was celebrated in India, with or without the monarchs present, as the expense would have been borne by India and nationalist feelings there were already high. Still, there is no reason to think that this Coronation was any less spectacular than those previous: even with the loss of Iraq, Egypt, and the Irish Free State, the Empire still ruled a huge portion of the globe, and Providence had once again guided the British people through a crisis. The abdication crisis had layered the imperial faith in the Crown with just a shadow of apprehension, but even that apprehension seems to have only proved the resilience and effectiveness of British institutions. The Empire was still exceptional.

At the same time it was clear that the bad show at Berlin had bothered many Britons. Just before the abdication crisis, in October of 1936, Neville Chamberlain, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, outlined a program for rearmament in light of the mounting militarism occurring on the continent. This included a call to “raise the general standard of physical fitness and development.” He referred to the “splendid condition of the German youth” at the Olympics, and saw “no reason why we should not be equally successful in our results,” though he was careful to note that British methods would be different, in accordance with “national character and traditions.” He reminded his audience that the nation’s declining population was a real problem, but did not refer to any class distinctions, only emphasizing that “we ought surely to do all we can to raise the quality for those who are in future to carry on the race.” As Chamberlain noted, the Board of Education had

121 “Empire Day Service. The King and Queen to Attend,” The Times, April 7, 1937, 13.
already prepared a circular on physical education, which called attention to the need for more facilities. Throughout the following year, alongside the Coronation activities, Parliament discussed various schemes to move toward some sort of high-profile publicity campaign.

While the Ministry of Health wanted to emphasize the health services offered, the constant reminder of Germany’s nationalistic physical culture, along with uncomfortable information such as the fact that 70 percent of 14-18 year old boys received no physical training at all, had heightened the appeal of fitness programs. But there was a cautious air to the emphasis on fitness, as organizers wanted to assure citizens that there was no compulsion or militarism attached to the program. Lord Aberdare, appointed as Chair of the National Advisory Council to oversee the National Fitness Council, which in its turn had been established and funded by the Department of Education, assured citizens that the fitness campaign, whose motto was “Leisure for Pleasure,” intended to help citizens “appreciate the advantages of good health,” but that this required “individual training.” He could not see any value in mass physical culture.

There were many who disagreed with Lord Aberdare on the last point, and the interwar period saw the foundation of new physical culture organizations or the expansion of old ones. Dr. Saleeby, gradually separating himself from the negative eugenics crowd, established the Sunlight League in 1924 which, as its name implies, emphasized the healthful qualities of sunlight and fresh air. Women were involved in these organized but unofficial calls to fitness as well. The Women’s League of Health and Beauty was founded in 1930, and unlike most of the organizations of its era, is still extant, though now known as

123 “Lord Aberdare on Physical Fitness Campaign,” The Times, March 16, 1936, 14.
the Fitness League. As Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska has found in her extensive work on fitness leagues of the interwar era, many of these leagues connected physical culture and the imperial project; for instance, the Health and Strength League, founded before the Great War, and operative until at least 1960, claimed that its original purpose was “to bind together in a bond of robust brotherhood all Physical Culturalists throughout the British Empire.” Others, such as Oswald Mosely, certainly did want to emulate the German model, despite Chamberlain and Aberdare’s assumptions that good Britons would inherently reject the German model. Yet the Festival of Youth in July of 1937 appeared to be just the sort of event they warned against. The British Sports and Games Association had planned this spectacle of youthful fitness for George V as a fundraiser for the King George V Jubilee Trust, but George V died before the event could be staged. The Sports and Games Association, in conjunction with the Central Council for Recreational Physical Training, agreed to organize and present the event at Empire Stadium at Wembley in July. The Royal Family attended, and were treated to a display of 11,000 young people belonging to around forty fitness-related organizations, such as the Royal Life-saving Society and the Greek Dancing Association. An opening parade represented the variety of sports and hobbies that helped one keep fit; this was followed by team demonstrations of physical training, closing with a tableau representing “The Playing Field of the Future.” The 30 ft. statue of “Youth,” overlooking the field was a scantily clad youth holding a torch. In short, if one had been looking for a German-style display of physical fitness, this would likely have fit the bill.

Chamberlain had reminded Parliament that to be fit, one had to be healthy and, to

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this end, a volunteer organization, the Central Council for Health Education, had presented a plan to the Ministry of Health, just shortly after Chamberlain had brought up the idea for a health campaign. The CCHE’s plan was approved, and this organization took over from the Ministry of Health, though the Ministry was represented on the Council. While monies came from the national government, most publicity was delegated to local administrators. The Board of Education-sponsored fitness campaign was originally planned as a separate event, but by coincidence the head of the Board was present at a CCHE planning meeting and was invited to join in the project. In exchange for the Board of Education’s publicity monies, CCHE would add the fitness campaign to the events and awareness projects in the works for the health campaign. As in so many other aspects, the health practices and policies that inscribed the landscape were the result of responses that could not always be neatly identified as official, or informal. Here an event proposed by an official government ministry was overseen by a voluntary organization that distributed the information to local councils, who then decided, likely with the input of local citizens, how those plans would be implemented.

There seems to be little evidence of a centralized campaign; the only “brand” seems to be the “Leisure with Pleasure” slogan, which doesn’t necessarily evoke physical fitness, and the “keynote,” which is even less inspiring: “use your health services.”\footnote{Sir Kingsley Wood, “The March to Health. A National Campaign and its Objects,” \textit{The Times, National Health Number}, September 30, 1937, iv.} But the \textit{Times} compiled an extraordinary special edition that appeared to cover every aspect of health and fitness imaginable, proffering “A General Survey” of public health services before moving on to full-page essays on particular aspects of health and hygiene or summaries of the fitness plans used in the military or in schools. One page is devoted to physical culture
“In Other Lands,” and unsurprisingly, it opens with reference to “developments in physical culture” in Germany and Italy. The paragraph notes that “whole nations are being made to regard physical fitness as a patriotic responsibility,” but lest the reader find that notion too attractive, the sentiment is followed by acknowledging that in these countries—specifically, Germany—“Government departments coordinate[s] the athletic life of the community at all ages and in both sexes in a way that is quite unfamiliar to Great Britain.” The implication is that regardless how attractive a well-trained corps of youthful citizens might be to a nation, the Government would never impose compulsory training.

“Progress” is one of the keynotes as well, and throughout the Times special issue there is emphasis on just how much health services had accomplished. The opening article, “The Will to Health,” explained that the collected essays were written by “men and women of acknowledge distinction in their various fields,” thereby assuring readers that experts were at work here, and that documents such as this assured “an enlightened public opinion.” The editor says that a “will to fitness” is the necessary foundation of national strength, but does so without any reference to compulsory legislation or appeals to nationalism. “Sound Citizenship” refers to a holistic approach to education—taking into account children’s emotional and social development in addition to their physical development—rather than a single image of a national body. This is not to say that the essayists did not tie health and fitness to patriotism, because they did. Sir Kingsley Wood, the Minister of Health, certainly meant for health and fitness to be a national characteristic. He wrote, “It behooves the good citizen, then not only so far as he can to keep himself and

his family fit and try to make them fitter, but to take a practical interest in the health of the community.”129 There was no hint of compulsion, though, or even anxiety. All of the essays presented a positive outlook, and if there were opportunities to report statistics of improvement, they were reported. Only one essay employs the eugenic language that had become so familiar in the last thirty years: one Sir Farquhar Buzzard from Oxford opened with reference to the “grave problems of national physique and physical efficiency,” and closed with the observation that until “human breeding” was given serious attention, the nation had no hope of becoming an A1 population. However, the other articles were more progressive in tone, covering recent discoveries about nutrition, the new mental and physical training programs used in the military, milk programs (with a harsh criticism of parents who were “indifferent” to the programs), public dental services, the advantages of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides (penned by Sir Baden-Powell), and even an article on pubs which notes that “properly conducted, the publichouse may be a valuable centre of refreshment and decent recreation for all classes of the community.”130 An ad below the article shows a half-dozen men, participating in work and sport, with the caption, “For Fitter Britons, beer is best.” Sir Lawrence Chubb wrote on the King George’s Playing Fields Foundation which, perhaps more than the building of hospitals, clinics, and surgeries, changed the physical landscape of London and the rest of Britain by securing green spaces for parks and playing fields. The last page is titled, “Dancing for Joy,” and features photographs of “traditional” activities such as women dancing around the May-pole and

men, wearing stags’ heads, skipping in a circle.\textsuperscript{131}

On first consideration, there appears to be very little of the “imperial” about a health campaign, beyond the assumption that the Dominions still needed good healthy British stock to people their large “empty” spaces. But this decidedly unspectacular response to the fairly widespread anxieties concerning racial degeneration is indicative of yet another manifestation of the New Imperialism of Disraeli and the Prime Minister’s father, Joseph Chamberlain. Now the value of the Empire resided not in the benefit it provided for workers or commercial trade, but in its population; a healthy, fit population would be more advantageous nationally than favorable trade balances. In any case, preventative medicine cost less than epidemics did, and if the population was indeed in decline, healthier mothers and babies were a matter of imperial importance.

After the failure of their sterilization bill, the Eugenics Society was less vocal and visible in public discourse. Discoveries in genetics were ultimately fatal to eugenic ideals, and the news from Germany was becoming more and more unsettling. Although it had dominated the discourses of degeneration for at least two decades, the eugenic narrative and its accompanying landscape of segregation and sterilization of the mostly poor and unfit had now become the excluded landscape, rejected by the more practical and humane “official” narrative of the Ministry of Health and its numerous associations. The speeches and articles associated with the National Health Campaign emphasized that these services were intended for use by all British citizens, regardless of socio-economic class. The imperial landscape was expanded a great deal by this universal approach to public health policy, and while here it constitutes the landscape of the newest New Imperialism, it will

also help construct the post-colonial landscape when the Empire “comes home” after 1948. For instance, many nurses came to the UK in the 1950s, and Indian doctors were recruited in the 1960s. In addition to changing the assumptions and racial attitudes of many skeptical patients, these immigrants, through informal responses to the London landscape, have altered the urban landscape as well. We can learn to “read” the residual landscapes of the city; after all, landscape is a way of seeing.

The health campaign was not, however, just a response to anxieties over the threat of degeneration. It was, as well, an example of the exceptionalism exhibited in civic spectacles like coronations and jubilees. The *Times* special campaign edition had repeatedly reminded readers that British health services were the best of any in the world, and were an example of the efficacy of British institutions. The Ministry of Health, as an arm of the Government, had been charged with a special task, and was determined to carry out its appointed mission.

These two events, the Coronation and the National Health Campaign, like other events in the first few decades of the twentieth century, are indications of the conservative modernity that characterized much of the cultural landscape of the era. Most citizens were willing to embrace modern science and medicine, and certainly better conditions for workers and the poor; but throughout the twenties and thirties, Bolshevism and Unionism threatened the security of the garden cottage in the suburb. The pageantry of royal occasions was certainly expensive, but those splendid rituals spoke to citizens of tradition and power, and therefore, security.

While some cultural historians have downplayed the effects of the imperial project on life at home in the Metropole, I see evidence for a great deal of imperial patriotism, even
if it was often without direction. In the nineteenth century, Disraeli saw that the idea of
global power captured the imaginations of many, and patriotic fervor could, indeed,
sublimate revolutionary tendencies. Well aware that imperial aggression was suspect in
many Britons’ opinions, Joseph Chamberlain invested the imperial project with moral
justifications. After the Great War, the expanded Empire demanded even more respect;
Colonial troops had gone far beyond the call of duty during the War, and those at home
knew it and appreciated it.

Since the day that Disraeli elevated Victoria from Queen to Empress, the responses
of Monarchs and commoners alike to discourses of British exceptionalism and anxieties of
degeneration collectively constructed London’s landscape of Empire. Dominant narratives,
such as the identification of Britishness with Protestantism, engraved their stories onto the
landscape—in this case, visibly, through the architecture of the Established Church and its
cathedrals. But a dominant narrative such as Protestantism might be challenged or
accommodated, as when Protestant missions cooperated with Catholic missions in the
mission field. That challenge left its mark on the landscape as well, for instance, in the
reworded Coronation Oath. A dominant discourse of degeneration, such as that
promulgated by the eugenists, could prompt an emergent narrative—and landscape—like
the Ministry of Health’s public health services, or even an excluded one, as in Marie Stopes’
birth control clinics. The landscape of empire was a palimpsest of discourses and
narratives and the responses to those discourses and narratives. Some doubted that the
British Empire would last throughout the twentieth century. Little did they know, as they
listened to the Prime Minister inaugurate the National Health Campaign, that in three years
to the month, the landscape of Empire would disappear under a hail of German bombs.
Conclusions: The Landscape of War, 1939

In the opening pages of this dissertation, I set out a few questions that I then used to guide my research and analysis of the landscape of empire. Generally, I set out to find how a landscape comes to mean. In other words, how does a landscape come to be a landscape of empire, or, as the urban landscape of London suddenly became on September 30, 1939, a landscape of war? In short, I asked how the urban landscape of London, the very heart of the British Empire, embodied the imperial project and perpetuated imperial ideology.

When I began this project, I expected to focus on monumental, spectacular, and clearly identifiable aspects of empire, such as statues and architecture, royal processions, Established Church services, and speeches; in short, what one could “see” that reflected the ideals and purposes of the imperial project. But it became apparent early on that simply identifying an imperial monument and its context failed to say anything about “empire” or its affective meaning, particularly to those to whom these events were meant to “mean.”

As I read about these officially sponsored spectacles, I ran across Empire-related events such as Empire Day and organizations such as the variety of imperial societies that sprang up at the turn of the century, and I began to be more interested in these unofficial and informal responses and their accompanying practices than I was in the more obvious symbols of the Empire. After investigating events such as the pageants performed at the imperial exhibitions and the intellectual and scientific conversations of the era, I then observed how seemingly non-imperial practices, such as the construction of garden suburbs, reflected specific mythologies and narratives that were not solely the provenance of government policy makers. It became apparent to me that the landscape of empire was not only the landscape as presented in official spectacles, but also the private and public
practices that arose around and in response to those official spectacles. Nigel Thrift has defined space as produced by the “the continuous and largely involuntary process of encounter.” Indeed, the landscape of empire is the encounter of these numerous discourses, narratives, and responses with each other. To parallel the question as posed in my introduction, the urban landscape of London reflected the imperial project through a variety of practices and events—on official, unofficial, and informal levels—that were in turn responses to the imperial themes and motifs that pervaded British society from the 1870’s until the Luftwaffe began its nightly attacks on London in 1939.

Having concluded that these discourses, narratives, and responses reflected and perpetuated the imperial project, I was impelled to look further into how the discourses and narratives of empire were perceived by various facets of British society. Necessarily, I had to know “what” these practices were responding to. I first read Disraeli’s speeches to familiarize myself with the history of British imperialism, but found instead that the tenets of Disraeli’s imperial vision—later modified by Joseph Chamberlain—were the same motivating ideals of patriotic imperialism found in the urban landscape of London in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Unlike eighteenth and early nineteenth century permutations of the British Empire that involved British commercial interests rather than political or philanthropic concerns, New Imperialism required the public’s emotional investment in its projects. This investment was necessary for two reasons: to justify the territorial competition that had sprung up in the late nineteenth century amongst European nations, and to provide an emotional safety valve for the occasionally restive working class.

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This overarching narrative of New Imperialism employed a number of discourses—that is, common vocabularies, images, and motifs used in talking about empire—that reflected both the arrogance and anxiety associated with the imperial project. In my investigation I discovered a number of these ways of talking about empire. Sometimes, the Empire was figured as a commodity; this is evident in the number of programs and campaigns that “sold” the Empire. The Empire Marketing Board, established in 1926 to promote the sale and use of produce and goods imported from imperial possessions is the most obvious example, but the trope of empire as commodity was evident in other less direct ways as well: the massive construction project resulting in the Royal Group of Docks in east London is an example, as well as the presentation and sale of imperial goods in exhibitions such as the Festival of Empire of 1911 and, more spectacularly, the British Empire Exhibition of 1924-25. I also observed that modernization featured in much of the talk of empire. This discourse coexisted peacefully with the seemingly paradoxical discourse of tradition, and often supported other ways of talking about the imperial project: for instance, modernity was very much a supporting narrative in the larger discourse of decline and degeneration. Several times in this project I have drawn attention to how modern methods or ideas were employed to maintain traditional social hierarchies; I referred to this phenomenon as “conservative modernity,” a term first used by Alison Light, but that I found to be perfectly applicable to many social, cultural, and even scientific situations and events throughout the period.

In the interest of focus, I chose to jettison a close examination of the Empire as commodity, as well as an analysis of narratives of modernization. Instead, in an effort to emphasize the arrogance and anxiety inherent in New Imperialism, I focused on two
contrasting ways of talking about the Empire: discourses of exceptionalism, as well as their obverse, discourses of decline and degeneration. Certainly the motifs and tropes used in one bleed into the other. The trope of motherhood, for example, appears frequently in discourses of decline and degeneration, but also appears in discourses of exceptionalism, and in both employs discourses of modernization. For instance, newspaper advertisements appealed to the notion of “modern” (and efficient) motherhood and promoted “schools” for mothers, which one newspaper editor credited with having lowered the infant mortality rate. At the same time, the high birthrate and high infant mortality rate of indigent mothers was addressed by way of modern methods of birth control, as well as, more sinisterly, new methods of sterilization.

The variety of these discourses would seem to imply the existence of a dominant narrative, to which these discourses respond. And, indeed, two of the questions I posed in the first chapter asked if indeed there existed a “dominant” narrative of empire, and, if so, how one would identify this narrative. As I note in that section, many social and literary historians—Bernard Porter is an example of the first, and Bernard Bergonzi an example of the second—have claimed that, because of the lack of overt displays of patriotic imperialism (the popularity of Empire Day between the world wars seems to have escaped their notice), support for the imperial project had become insignificant. Their reliance on visible, even jingoistic displays of support, however, failed to take into account the quotidian empire, the everyday practices that had developed in response to the dominant imperial narrative, that of New Imperialism.

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However, I have also observed that while New Imperialism was indeed a dominant ideology, it was not, as I had supposed, a primarily “official” one, as it necessarily required an emotional investment that could not be legislated. In fact, the dominant narratives here are actually from the middle, so to speak, in that they were not enjoined from above, that is, from the government, or, to a lesser extent, the throne, nor did they come from “below,” as in popular and unorganized displays of support from the lower classes. Instead, imperial sentiment appears to have been most firmly rooted in the middle classes, as attested by the membership rolls of imperial societies such as the British Empire Club and the so-called morals societies like the National Council for Public Morals.

Furthermore, I’ve found that few spaces belong exclusively to either dominant or alternative narratives. The women who were members of the Eugenics Society and who participated in eugenic conferences and publishing projects are evidence of the inability of any narrative to gain complete dominance. In this example, for instance, women were invested in and promoted a project that unapologetically defined them strictly in terms of their reproductive ability, and even though they proffered an alternative narrative, they yet continued to contribute to the dominant eugenic narrative. This common language reflects a sort of “leveling” of narratives; what I mean here is that while the landscape bears the evidence of a dominant narrative, alternative narratives coexisted with the dominant one and did not necessarily challenge its dominance.

Although I have not significantly altered or redirected the course of empire studies, I believe that I have contributed to the study of imperial sentiment at “home.” As I mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, John MacKenzie and the work published

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3 However, as I noted earlier in this document, the displays of jingoism typical of early responses to Disraeli’s conflation of imperialism with patriotism were generally relegated to the working classes.
in the Studies in Imperialism series out of Manchester University have drawn attention to the impact of imperialism on metropolitan (here, specifically, London) culture. This dissertation certainly adds to that body of work, which stands in direct contrast to body of historians who have failed to recognize what I have called the landscape of empire. By employing the term “landscape,” I have drawn attention to the pervasiveness of imperial sentiment: the ideals that motivated the imperial project were not relegated to a few symbols located within the urban landscape, such as plaques, statues, or the occasional parade. Instead, the landscape itself was constructed through a variety of narratives that utilized a variety of tropes and images; these often prompted practices that in turn generated other narratives, responses, and practices. The point here is that the landscape of empire, superimposed upon the urban landscape of London, was not always distinct; it was, however, pervasive.
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