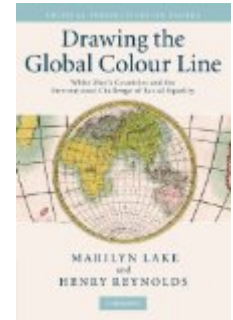


Marilyn Lake, Henry Reynolds. *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality.* Critical Perspectives on Empire Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Illustrations. x + 371 pp. \$29.99, paper, ISBN 978-0-521-70752-7.



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Cambridge University Press's new series, *Critical Perspectives on Empire*, marks an important development in historical studies of imperialism, colonialism, and postcolonialism. Seeking to move on from the binary split between supposed "new" and "old" imperial histories--the former often associated with postcolonial "theoretical" approaches to empire, the latter with more resolutely "empirical" approaches--the series positions itself explicitly within what its editors term "the emerging field of critical imperial studies." In the first title of this series, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds significantly develop this approach with a focus on the histories of whiteness and empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The authors introduce their argument by positioning W. E. B. Du Bois's famous assertion that the problem of the twentieth century would be "the problem of the colour line" alongside his 1910 article on "The Souls of White Folk." They explain that their book aims to chart "the spread of 'whiteness' as a transnational form of racial iden-

tification," and, in doing so, they explicitly critique the national frame which they see as having limited previous work on whiteness (p. 3). Instead, they aim to examine how transnational racial identifications significantly shaped both personal identities and global politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The book is divided into five parts. Part 1, "Modern Mobilities," consists of one chapter examining the migration of Chinese peoples (mostly men) to the goldfields of Australia and America from the second half of the nineteenth century. It asserts the central place of the movement of peoples in the history of "modernity," but crucially qualifies this with an examination of anti-Chinese protests and immigration restrictions passed in an effort to exclude the Chinese on racial grounds. Immigration restrictions in the Australian state of Victoria, they demonstrate, were modeled in part on anti-Chinese protest in California, and were couched in the rhetoric of race and masculinity which constituted the long process of framing Australia as a "white man's country." In the

process, the authors highlight the inherent contradiction within the history of political liberalism that their entire book gestures toward: “Individual liberty and freedom of movement were heralded as universal rights, but only Europeans could exercise them” (p. 26).

Part 2, “Discursive Frameworks,” offers four chapters on individuals whose actions and writings served to outline and contest the boundaries of the transnational community of “white men’s countries.” It begins with a discussion of James Bryce and his three-volume study *The American Commonwealth*, first published in 1888. This is followed by a chapter on Charles Pearson and the “disturbing prophecy” made in his *National Life and Character* (1893) of the coming decline of the world of the white man. Attention then turns to Theodore Roosevelt, highlighting the importance of Pearson’s book to Roosevelt’s own developing understandings of race and global politics. The final chapter looks at Mohandas Gandhi’s movements between India, South Africa, and Britain. The focus across these chapters on the writing, circulation, and reception of texts is particularly revealing of the ways in which discourses of whiteness and masculinity were framed transnationally, and also highlights the extent to which politicians and activists in Australia, the United States, and South Africa drew on a set of ideas that were being articulated across national boundaries in this period in order to render those same national boundaries racially exclusive.

Part 3, “Transnational Solidarities,” moves beyond this focus on specific texts and individuals to examine how South Africa, the United States, Australia, and Canada implemented policies designed to establish themselves as “white men’s countries,” often in tension with the Colonial Office in Britain, which saw race-based immigration restrictions as a threat to the imperial principle of equality for all British subjects. Such policies, while threatening the empire by opening space for independent policymaking in the Dominions,

are also shown to be a “logical development” of the binary racial thinking that dominated British imperialism at this stage (p. 144). This section offers a history of the transnational development of literacy and education tests, passports, and other technologies employed to formalize the boundaries of the developing “white men’s countries.” It also introduces the significant role of Japan in defining these transnational racial policies. Following its unexpected 1905 military victory over Russia, Japan and its people were increasingly feared by politicians in the “white men’s countries,” especially in Australia which felt particularly threatened due to its close proximity. In response to this, Lake and Reynolds position the 1908 tour of the U.S. fleet around the Pacific as an exercise in reasserting the military strength of “the white man.”

Part 4, “Challenge and Consolidation,” addresses explicitly some of the challenges to this transnational community of whiteness. The focus here falls first on the Universal Races Congress, held in London in 1911, which Lake and Reynolds say has previously been treated in too Eurocentric a manner. In seeking to redress this, the authors focus their attention on the contributions of non-European delegates at this event. Next, they shift to a focus on Japanese feelings of alienation and insult provoked by immigration restrictions which they saw as an affront to their own status as imperial power in the early twentieth century. Such challenges to the authority of the “white man’s rule” are then set as one background against which the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 ought to be read. Japan was given “great power” status at this conference, and subsequently called for the insertion of a racial equality clause in the final pronouncements. Simultaneously, Du Bois held a Pan-African Congress in Paris in 1919, which also challenged the diplomats to have racial equality as an outcome of their discussions. Lake and Reynolds demonstrate forcibly how such proposals were undermined by the efforts of British, Australian, and American delegates who

attempted, in a somewhat disjointed fashion, to enshrine the status of whiteness by refusing to insert any clause on racial equality. The final chapter of this section then charts the subsequent expansion of the project of the “white man’s country” in the 1920s, when Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and South Africa, in particular, introduced new legislation to exclude the “non-white” races.

The closing chapter of the book forms part 5, “Towards Universal Human Rights.” It begins with the significance of Japanese military victories in 1941-42 in reasserting that nation’s claim for international respect. Postwar calls for racial equality caused particularly obvious difficulties for states based explicitly on policies of segregation, such as Jan Smuts’s South Africa. Crucially, however, Lake and Reynolds explain that these tensions “reached far beyond Smuts and South Africa. The western powers had rallied the world to war with declarations about democracy, equality and human rights. But they all found calls for racial equality troubling” (p. 346). Yet their stubborn efforts were no longer strong enough to uphold the doctrine of the “white man’s country.” The chapter catalogues the repeal of race-based legislation across these countries during the 1940s, and suggests that “even in South Africa ... the ruling binary divide between white and not-white gave way to a recognition of a multitude of racial groupings” (p. 354).

Drawing the Global Colour Line offers a critical revision of nationally bounded histories of race and immigration policy. By tracing how a global politics of whiteness developed transnationally in this period, Lake and Reynolds offer an alternate historical geography of race and empire, one that is conscious of the importance of extra-imperial sites, events, and networks to policies, ideas, and actions within the British Empire. Thus, we get a clearer sense of the roles of both the United States and Japan in the framing of race and immigration questions across different sites

in the empire. We also gain a deeper understanding of the history of post-Second World War challenges to binary understandings of racial identity and the consequent development of the language of “human rights.” By bringing such a diverse array of contexts into the same analytic frame, Lake and Reynolds certainly achieve the aim set by the editors of the *Critical Perspectives on Empire* series as announced in the publisher’s blurb “to explore the connections, exchanges and mediations at the heart of national and global histories.”

Yet there remains a question mark over the analytic usefulness of the phrase “global color line.” In selecting their case studies as they have, Lake and Reynolds have focused on a very specific incarnation of the “global” color line, and of whiteness itself. Except for the briefest description of Kenya as “white man’s country,” the development and significance of whiteness in non-settler colonies within the British Empire, as well as the resistance therein, goes undiscussed. Resistance to colonial rule, grounded in part in a challenge to the dominance of the “white man,” in West Africa in the first half of the twentieth century also disappears from view as the African continent is reduced primarily to South Africa; likewise, events in the West Indies are given little attention. In other words, the authors study the drawing of the color line as it was performed in and between those countries with the power to draw that line—the “white men’s countries”—but in the process the implications for the rest of the British Empire are underplayed. Likewise, we get no sense of whether these issues mattered equally for other empires at the same time. This is a transnational history of the color line, rather than a history of the *global* color line, and this difference matters.

Despite this, *Drawing the Global Colour Line* forces us to reconceptualize the discursive and institutional development of whiteness as simultaneously nationally grounded and globally mobile. Scholars striving to extend the study of the ge-

ographies of empire, race, and whiteness, in particular, should find considerable inspiration in the approach marshaled so successfully herein.

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