GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

We live in an age in which advertising is part of the fabric of our lives. It comes at us from radio, television, newspapers, journals, billboards, footballers' jerseys, and a host of other places. To grab our attention, it has to be mildly dangerous, near an edge. Boring or restrained advertising is ineffective advertising, at least so the practitioners tell us. Because of this need to shock or amuse, to irritate or titillate, advertising often operates at the edge of acceptability, which is why advertising standards have become a feature of the modern age. But advertising also demarcates areas of acceptability, the margins of consensus, the limits of received ideas.

Advertising in its modern form largely has its origins in the later nineteenth century. Therefore, in common with a number of academic disciplines and influential cultural forms, its development was coterminous with the age of high imperialism. Inevitably, perhaps, it utilised, and fed off, many of the characteristics of the expansion of imperial power – military activities, explorers, politicians, technology, and of course race. In my *Propaganda and Empire* (1984), I noted the role of advertising in bringing aspects of imperialism to the cultural foreground in the consciousness of the British. But now Anandi Ramamurthy has examined these issues in far greater depth.

Images are often analysed 'cold', as it were, floating free from their essential contexts. The great strength of this book is that it places advertising images in historical contexts. By focusing on the advertising of specific products, like soap, cocoa, tea, and tobacco, all inseparably bound up with the imperial economy – and therefore also with its politics and its ideologies – advertisements with a racial content can be placed firmly at the intersection of capitalism and culture. These products sought to sell themselves on the basis of their exotic origins. They were used to illustrate the importance of empire to the British. And the depictions of other races were designed to produce a *frisson* of recognition, of difference, of power, and of that dangerous edge through which advertising secures its influence. Too many scholars have concentrated on high culture in the examination of representations of the Other. With advertising, we have a field in which the intention was to influence everyone, and to which all supposedly had access. It was also a field in which specific companies developed distinctive styles, setting out to associate their products with an imperial enterprise which not only had a high 'newsworthy' profile, but which was also perceived to be an acceptable one to their consumers.

It gives me particular pleasure to introduce Anandi Ramamurthy's important work. The first version was compiled as a PhD thesis under my supervision, and this significant research always needed to reach a wider audience. Dr Ramamurthy brings a remarkable range of expertise to bear upon this field. As a former curator in the museum and gallery world, as a historian,

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and as a practising academic in the realm of media studies, she is uniquely qualified to interpret images of other races in this key period in the development of advertising. Moreover, she recognises the extraordinary longevity of this kind of material. We are familiar with the concept of neo-colonialism in the economic sphere, as we are with notions of 'decolonising the mind'. Advertising neatly represents the manner in which various forms of racial images continued into the supposedly post-colonial world. This important conclusion is not the least of the many highly significant insights to be found in this book.

John M. MacKenzie