

National Crimes and Southern Horrors: Trans-Atlantic Conversations about Race, Empire
and Civilization, 1880-1900

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

National Crimes and Southern Horrors examines the contested meanings of the terms civilization, race, and empire in trans-Atlantic conversations during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. It argues that understanding these dialogues requires us to understand the interplay between regional and transnational definitions of these terms. It further explains both white Southern opposition to empire at the end of the nineteenth century as well as white Southern acceptance of their region as similar to European empires and imperial mission described in Rudyard Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden." Reading newspaper US and British articles and editorials, international periodicals, personal papers of activists and politicians in both the US South and Britain, it uncovers the dynamic definitions of race, empire, and civilization at play in the work of constructing the US South as both a part of and distinct from the imperial world. It reads conversations about Irish home rule, the gold standard, international bimetallism, British interactions with white and black Southerners, the disfranchisement of black men in the US South, the construction of Jim Crow, lynching in the US South, Turkish atrocities in Armenia, the Philippine American War, and the Boer War. In so doing, I argue that to understand the transnational development of white supremacy in imperial sites in Africa, Asia, the West Indies, and the US South requires to look not only at the ways whites within each site defined their right to rule but also in the ways they looked to each other. It also argues that regional concerns structured and limited how people in Britain and the US South saw each other. Through comparison and conflict, the US South was an essential part in constructing global color lines, and imperial ideologies worked to prop up white Southern defenses for segregation and Jim Crow.

Dedication:

For Molly Westerman and Noah Weiser

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Introduction: Newspapers, the New South, and Britain in Transnational History, 1880-1900

During the 1880s and 1890s, the US South was a contested space as the region rebuilt from the devastation of the Civil War and tested white Southerners' willingness to accept black men as citizens. While the South witnessed struggles on a local level, the region was also a part of transnational narratives about the connections between race and empire. In these years, white and black Southerners constructed a place for themselves in an imperial world through discussion about European empires, most prominently the British. White Southerners defined their own region not only in opposition with the US North but with the British Empire as well. As the largest and most powerful empire of the age and the one with the strongest economic connection to Southern cotton farmers, the British Empire was the one the white Southerners most strongly condemned. While white Southerners attacked imperialism as uncivilized, black Southerners (and their British allies) called upon definitions of civilization to challenge white Southerners to make the region less violent. During this time, too, Britons looked to the South to see how the region navigated the changes brought about by Reconstruction and its aftermath. British politicians, intellectuals, and activists looked to the US South as a model for building white supremacist regimes across the world, a blight on the name of Anglo-Saxon civilization, or both. By examining various, and often overlapping, points of contact and commentary in these discussions, this dissertation argues that we can reconceptualize the U.S. South as yet another site of imperial engagement during the height of the Age of Empire.

In looking to discussions about the US South that crossed national and regional boundaries, I engage newspaper editorials, articles, correspondence, and other materials. Newspapers connected local issues with international events, and newspapers allowed Southern and British elites to translate international news into local contexts. In addition, politicians' and activists' speeches and correspondence reveal a deep engagement with international affairs as white and black Southerners sought allies abroad. When white Southern politicians and journalists spoke in support of Irish home rule, they not only attempted to change the manner in which the British government ruled its imperial possessions, but also connected the Irish movement to their own attempts to rebuild white supremacy in their region. Black Southerners saw their own participation in the construction of an American Empire in the Philippines as a way of challenging white Southern attempts to deny them full citizenship. In both these cases and others, white and black Southerners drew on both US and European imperial discourses to influence their lives in the United States. In all of these discourses, "the civilized world" was a contested discursive space that Britons and US Southerners called upon to define themselves and the world around them.

The pages that follow examine a short period (1880 to 1900) to explore the overlapping conversations that Americans and Britons had within the contexts of race, empire, and civilization. This period provides a wealth of international controversies precisely because Southerners, white and black, did not agree on how the US South was a part of the world outside of it. During the 1880s, white and black Southerners struggled with the aftermath of Reconstruction, the need to industrialize a region devastated by war, the emergence of a debt peonage system of cotton farming, economic shocks, the

rise of white supremacist governments and Jim Crow restrictions on black political expression and social equality, the growth and decline of fusionist politics and tentative cross-racial alliances, and the power and influence of a British Empire that provided British mills with inexpensive cotton that competed with that grown in the South. Through all of this, white and black Southerners worked to define the future of the South as it changed and as its relationship to the world outside of it changed as well. By the end of the century, these controversies had not ended, but white supremacy was established in sites all over the South, and both US Northerners and Britons had largely accepted white Southern constructions of both Reconstruction and the need to separate white and black in the region.

By the end of the 1890s, too, both the United States and Britain were fighting guerilla campaigns at the edges of their empires—the Philippine-American War and the Boer War. The period between 1880 and 1900 marks a particular moment in the histories of the US South, the British Empire, Anglo-American relations, US foreign relations, and African American history in which ideas of empire and civilization—and their connections to constructions of race—played key roles in the articulation of and opposition to white supremacy in London, Washington, Raleigh, Atlanta, New Orleans, and elsewhere.¹ Though initially opposed to empire, by the decade's end white

¹ For the economic conditions and development of New South ideology, see Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of a New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). For the development of white supremacy and race relations in the South, see Janette Thomas Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy: The Black and White 'Better Classes' in Charlotte, 1850-1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Stephen David Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill:

Southerners were claiming the white man's burden as their own.² This dissertation documents the competing, overlapping, and often contradictory narratives that these British and American men and women called upon to legitimate and challenge constructions of white supremacy in the US South and the British Empire.

It builds on the transnational turn in recent US historiography that has complicated old narratives which often placed internal developments ahead of international ones.³ Scholars such as Paul Kramer, Daniel Rodgers, Emily Rosenberg,

University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of White Supremacy in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997); and Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003).

For Anglo-American history during this time see Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914* (New York: Atheneum, 1968); Edward Crapol, *America for Americans: Economic Nationalism and Anglophobia in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973); Stuart Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981); Paul A. Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (Mar., 2002), 1315-1353. For race and American foreign relations during this period see Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of US Imperialism, 1915-1940*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Eric T.L. Love, *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

² White Southern opposition to empire was relatively recent and based on their self-perception of the region as a colonized space. Earlier in the century, white Southerners were involved in filibustering expeditions to Latin America. See Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and Robert Walter Johannsen and Sam W. Haynes, and Christopher Morris, eds., *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1997).

³ For more on transnational histories of the United States, see the chapters in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire; Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); and

and Thomas Bender have asked us to reconsider American history through new lenses. Rarely has the US South and its relationships to imperial constructions of race and civilization been a part of these discussion. These scholars and others have detailed the ways in which the United States was connected to movements and peoples in other nations, but they have not incorporated the different meanings that these transnational concepts have had within the United States. By looking at the US South and white Southerners relationship to the ideologies of empire, we can understand how the South as a region too came to be constructed and influenced by transnational exchanges.⁴ I argue that white Southerners worked to define their region in opposition to empire and that simultaneously race relations in the US South had a decisive impact on imperial ideologies.

Of particular importance to historians who have looked at the rapprochement between the US and Britain during this period is the growth and dissemination of Anglo-Saxonist ideologies. In looking to white Southern discussions of Britain and its Empire, I

Thomas Schoonover, *Uncle Sam's War Of 1898 And The Origins Of Globalization* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1998).

⁴ There have been two scholarly accounts of the US South and American foreign relations. See Joseph A. Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); and Tennant S. McWilliams, *The New South Faces the World: Foreign Affairs and the Southern Sense of Self, 1877-1950* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988). Yet, both focus on American foreign relations from the perspective of Washington rather than drawing from US Southern discourses about the world, as I am doing here. Erin McClune has examined the growing population of white immigrants on the South at this time and their effect on labor and race relations, see Erin Elizabeth McClune, "Black Workers, White Immigrants, and the Postemancipation Problem of Labor: the New South in a Global Perspective," in Susan Delfino and Michelle Gillespie, eds., *Global Perspectives on Industrial Transformation in the American South* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 199-228.

maintain that constructions of civilization (and their connections to ideologies of whiteness) played a greater role in US Southern discussions of Britain than did Anglo-Saxonism. It not that Anglo-Saxonism did not play a role in Southern discourses of race and empire at this time, but rather that Anglo-Saxonism did not have equal relevance in US Southern notions of empire than did constructions of civilization. As Kramer and Stuart Anderson have noted, Anglo-Saxonism was a contingent and dynamic ideology that men and women on both sides of the Atlantic were able to deploy in varied situations. In the South, though, the effectiveness of Anglo-Saxonism to sway white Southern thinkers was contingent on their understanding of race and empire and their region's relationship to both.

In their conversations with and about each other, US Southerners and Imperial Britons called upon what they took to be a shared definition of "civilization." Each chapter presented below features Britons, white Southerners, or black Southerners articulating some idea of civilization when talking of or about each other. Yet, they rarely understood "civilization" in the same ways. In linking these discussions, civilization is both a touchstone (a concept that US Southerners and Britons thought that they shared) and weapon (in that calling a people uncivilized was a mark against them), and articulating a coherent definition of "civilization" through these conversations is impossible. "Civilization" in these discussions was a concept had the power to build up and challenge the social order in ways that Anglo-Saxonism could not, as Gail Bederman demonstrated in her study of this period. "Civilization" held more meaning than cross-

Atlantic racial alliances and worked to upset or construct those alliances.⁵ By engaging these competing visions of “civilization,” we can see men and women in the US South and Britain participating in powerful cultural confrontations that worked to make the empire acceptable to the South and the South acceptable to empire.

The anti-lynching campaigns of Ida B. Wells and her British allies in 1894 demonstrates the power of civilization as a discourse to embarrass white Southern constructions of a New South and the ways in which black activists like Wells attempted to use these ideas to improve their lives. My initial research for this project began when I examined British newspaper coverage of Wells’s 1894 anti-lynching campaign. The title of the dissertation itself references Wells’s accounts of lynching in the South. Her first pamphlet on lynching (based on reports for the *New York Age*) was entitled *Southern Horrors*. In that pamphlet she claimed that lynchings were a “national crime” that sullied the reputation of the entire United States. Her opponents too picked up on this language, and Georgia Governor William Northen charged that Britons were so “tainted by their national crimes,” committed for the sake of their empire that they had no standing to criticize white Southern civilization.⁶ The national crimes and southern horrors that white Southerners and Britons disputed were a part of broader narratives as men and women on both sides of the Atlantic grappled with the meaning of race relations in the US South and the connections between race, empire, and civilization.

Though this project began with the work of Wells, it has grown to incorporate other voices because Wells’s campaigns were only a part of these larger issues at play.

⁵ Kramer, “Empires and Exceptions,” p. 1319; Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, pp. 23-24.

⁶ “Governor Northen is Aroused,” *The New York Times*, September 11, 1894.

Most of the historiography on Wells's campaigns effectively places them within debates within the US on lynching and violence in the South, but these stories tend to do two things. First, because they center on Wells, they do not incorporate the competing narratives that white Southerners were constructing about empire and race at this time. Secondly, they end prematurely. Rather than focus on the conversation as it continued between Wells's supporters and white Southerners, they follow Wells as she shifted her activism to work among Chicago women.

In so doing, these works have effectively documented Wells's missions but have overlooked the transnational dynamics at play in them. Gail Bederman, in her work on the connections between gender and civilization during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, demonstrated the ways that Wells effectively deployed the language of civilization to make her case against lynching. My own work opens these narratives to include constructions of empire and Britain as well as the place of the US South within the imperial system. Like Bederman, I argue that white responses to Wells were based on her explicit challenges to the dominant constructions of race and gender at the time, but I also demonstrate that Wells and her allies participated in transnational constructions of race and gender as well. It was not only American discussions of civilization that played a role in white responses to her campaigns, but also the particular sites of her missions. White Southerners reacted with hostility as much to the British as they did to Wells herself. In looking at the longer arc of these conversations, I maintain that Wells tapped

into powerful concepts that should be understood within a transnational frame that incorporates not only Wells and her allies but her opponents as well.⁷

When US Southerners and Britons discussed one another through these references to “civilization” they were often discussing violence either in the US South or in the British Empire, as in the dialogues Wells instigated on lynching. Yet, few of the historical actors in this account participated in or witnessed the violent acts themselves.⁸

⁷ Scholarly work on Ida B. Wells has been growing in recent years. For more information on her life and activism see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: a Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Linda O. McMurtry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: the Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Patricia Ann Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Sarah Lynn Silkey, *Evolving Morality in a Transatlantic Society: Ida B. Wells, Anti-Lynching Activism, and British Interference in American Race Relations, 1877-1914*, Phd Dissertation, University of East Anglia, 2006; James West Davidson, *‘They Say’: Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2007); Paula Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Amistad, 2008); Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010). For Wells’s own account of her British campaigns see Ida B. Wells, Alfreda M. Duster. ed. *Crusade For Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

Silkey has examined the reception that Wells received in Britain, but only points to a part of the larger conversations that this dissertation engages. Silkey compellingly argues that Wells changed the ways that Britons discussed the US South and race relations there. Specifically, she demonstrates that amongst her supporters, Wells was able to shift British opinion about lynching in the US South from one which accepted white Southern excuses for the practice to attempting to stop it. My own narrative however acknowledges that Wells was only able to influence certain members of the British press. For people like James Bryce and W. Laird Clowes, who had traveled to the South and never met Wells, white Southerners continued to have the final say over lynching.

⁸ The most glaring exception to this relationship to violence is South Carolina Ben Tillman whose relationship to mob violence is difficult to categorize simply. Tillman himself participated in white supremacist gun clubs, violently worked to keep black men from voting in his state, and famously declared that he would lynch a black man if he was sure that he had raped a white woman. But, Tillman never followed through on this boast,

During this period, the US South was a particularly violent place, but while the violence was widespread, there were parts of the South that had fewer lynchings than other parts. Excepting the accounts of lynchings that appear below, there is no evidence to suggest that any of the white Southern men and women quoted in this text lynched anyone. Indeed, most were vocal in their denunciation of lynching as a practice because they saw it as hampering their efforts to portray the South as a region that had left behind the racial antagonisms of the past.⁹ Tellingly, the Southern blacks discussed in this dissertation had more direct connections to violence than did any white men or women addressed here. Wells's friends were lynched in Memphis and her own press was destroyed at the hands of a white mob. In Richmond, Virginia, *Richmond Planet* editor John Mitchell, Jr. was

and he was known to have called out the South Carolina Militia to protect black prisoners on occasion. See Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*.

So too (though less so) with the violence that Britons committed in pursuit of empire. Only Henry Morton Stanley (who appears briefly in Chapter 4) actively participated in the imperial project outside of Britain. Indeed, many of British commentators presented below were uncomfortable with the practice of empire. The men and women who made up BALC, for instance, included several who challenged British policymakers to work to end the violence associated with the imperial project and make it into a civilizing mission. Of course, there are vocal proponents of empire in this text as well. James Bryce, William Gladstone, Arthur Balfour and others worked to set up imperial systems and the contrasts between white settler regimes and the more direct imperialism over colored populations in Africa and Asia. They were not actively engaged in the violence however. Violence then, mob or state, were abstracts from the lived experience of the white conversants on both sides of the Atlantic.

⁹ For more on the differing numbers of lynchings within parts of the South and the white Southern culture of lynching see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993). It is possible that I am overstating my case here, but I have found no evidence to suggest that any of the editors of the white Southern papers that I have examined participated in or witnessed a lynching. As stated above, most of the white Southern editors and politicians that appear in this text were vocal in their denunciation of the practice—at least when they were not defending their region against what they saw Wells's slanderous campaign. Some of the men and women who wrote to white Southern papers at this time could have participated in lynching.

often threatened with violence, though no one acted on these threats. While black activists knew violence in the South as a direct threat against them and their friends, the white Southern elite journalists and editors in this dissertation saw it through second-hand accounts and understood lynching itself as something that was not practiced by them. These different experiences of violence influence the ways that white and black Southerners talked about mob ‘justice’ in the South.

Far more important to those white Southerners was the place of the South in the world and the promotion of a New South, and speaking of lynching in abstract terms and attacking the British Empire were both strategies that white Southerners used in promoting their region. During this period, the US South was a poor region with a primarily agricultural economy, and New South boosters actively sought to shape the views of the South for the world in order to industrialize the South.¹⁰ Southern whites constructed and disseminated abstract concepts as a means of distracting outside observers from the violence associated with the reconstruction of white supremacy. When white Southerners compared their own calls for Home Rule to that of the Irish, they were able to talk about white supremacy in the South without mentioning race. When they blamed British banks for keeping the US on a gold standard, they were attributing economic troubles in the South to a far off and foreign culprit. In observing these strategies of denial, we can see white Southern elites interpreting the world and the British Empire in ways that suited their interests.

¹⁰ One thread of research that I did not write up for this dissertation but which is relevant here is the *Atlanta Constitution*'s push for greater immigration to the South. Throughout the 1890s, the Atlanta paper repeatedly predicted that new immigrants would be rushing to the South though no such influx appeared.

Looking to the South and British opinions of the South reveals that transnational constructions of empire, race, and civilization involved a complicated interplay of local, regional, national, and international concerns. It is not enough to say that whites in the US South had a different relationship to these transnational concepts than the rest of the country. They constructed the US South as a part of the United States separate from yet intimately connected to British imperialism. Concepts such as empire and civilization mattered to white Southerners precisely because of their concerns for their region and their ideological commitments to white supremacy. In interpreting the world, they defined themselves.

Because of their interest in and commentary on international news, newspapers in the US South and Britain provide an ideal forum for approaching the ways in which “civilization” traveled during this period. US Southerners and Britons spoke the same language and read some of the same publications, and white Southerners sought to ensure that these publications printed stories that supported their narratives about the South. Newspapers thus connected people across the world from each other. They routinely covered local, national, and international news on the same page. Newspapers in both the US and Britain printed stories and editorials from other newspapers around the world. Often local editorials appeared next to editorials about international events. To cite just one example among thousands, the editorial page of the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* on January 11, 1896 contained pieces about wealthy people in New York and their affinity for British titles, the lowered tensions between the US and Britain over a boundary dispute in Venezuela, the number of lynchings in the South in 1895 (as compiled by the

Chicago Tribune), and the situation in the Transvaal.¹¹ This one editorial page featured a white Southern editor, Eliza Jane Nicholson,¹² commenting upon three events chronicled in this dissertation. In this way, newspapers in both the US and Britain created a common forum that each would engage when speaking to and about the other.¹³

¹¹ *The Daily Picayune*, January 11, 1896.

¹² While women journalists and editors were not unheard of in this era, Nicholson is the only woman editor of a major Southern or British daily in this project. She died not long after this editorial page appeared on February 15, 1896 of influenza. Wells herself edited a newspaper in Memphis before her press was destroyed by a white mob, and Catherine Impey in Britain edited the journal *Anti-Caste*.

¹³ Finding these conversations has become easier in the last few years. Over the last decade, especially the last five years since this project was first conceived, vast amounts of data have become available for researchers examining newspapers. While earlier historians have had to plow through reel after reel of microfilm or collected bound copies of newspapers, modern databases allow for easy access to scores of newspapers. This project could not have been completed without this access. The *Nineteenth Century British Newspapers* database provides a telling example. Before it came out in 2007, a researcher looking into British newspaper coverage of any issue would have two choices. The first was to acquire, through interlibrary loan, microfilm copies of the newspapers stored on that database or journey to the British Library at Colindale, which holds an almost complete collection of newspapers produced in Britain and Ireland from 1840. While technically possible, such trips put a large financial and temporal burden on the researcher. The new database provides searchable access to forty-nine newspapers published in the nineteenth century across Britain and Ireland.

In addition to British newspapers, American newspapers and periodicals have their own databases as well. While these databases have not made available more data and quicker access for the researcher, they have also provided problems that any researcher must account for when embarking on a research project. For instance, databases offer easy searching for articles about any topic in the researcher's imagination. This easy access however can also provide limits that prejudice historical research. For instance, databases, especially from this era, do not provide an easy means of sorting editorials from news coverage. Many them do not allow for easy access to the entire newspaper from which they draw an article. These limits are not insurmountable. I have tried when possible to cast my net widely in database searches. That is, I have not simply searched for information from a particular month or date and have instead tried to capture an ongoing discussion rather than a snapshot that does not incorporate larger issues. In this way, it is possible to read an extended conversation between papers or to highlight the development of a newspaper or region's debate over an issue.

As Benedict Anderson famously noted, print media could create an ‘imagined community’ of readers connected through their access to print culture. Anderson linked this imagined community to nationalist movements, but I argue here that national lines were not alone in determining the shape of an ‘imagined community.’¹⁴ The communities that the activists, politicians, and intellectuals documented in this dissertation crossed national boundaries. Anti-lynching activists in Britain, like Charles Aked and Florence Ballgarnie, imagined a ‘civilized world’ in which they could directly criticize white Southerners for not living up to their part in this world. White Southerners on the other hand worked to imagine a different community. They saw themselves as linked to a different kind of civilized world in which empire was illegitimate, they were akin to the Irish in oppression from a centralized authority, and analogous not to Britain but to India through their trading relationships with British textile manufacturers. Through these competing definitions, though, each of these groups saw themselves as part of a larger community that spanned across the globe.

At the time, newspaper editors held a respected position in Southern society. Thomas D. Clark, in his study of white Southern country editors argued, “In every other field of human endeavor the country editor was an influence.”¹⁵ According to Clark, the Southern editor spoke to and for his reader about national, international, and local events.

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

¹⁵ Thomas D. Clark, *The Southern Country Editor* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1948) p. 34. Clark’s work is interesting for what it says about the country press and for its Dunning School interpretation of the post-Reconstruction South. Ida Wells briefly appears in Clark’s work. In one paragraph, he claims that the Southern country editors nearly started another Revolutionary War over what he took to be the fanciful claims of her supporters in Britain. He offers no other analysis of her work. See p. 201.

The editor set newspaper policy and advocated for Democratic positions. Newspapers were often a good investment, and educated Southerners could gain notoriety and wealth through their paper. While the newspapers in this project were of a larger circulation than those Clark studied, his argument holds for these larger papers as well. The men and women who led these papers considered themselves both a part of the South and able to comment on it. The larger circulation papers featured below also framed the issues for smaller papers in the region because smaller white Southern papers drew from the newspapers studied here when compiling news items. The *Atlanta Constitution*, the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, and the *Charlotte Observer* (all of which feature prominently in my analysis) influenced how smaller papers covered national and international news.¹⁶ In so doing, they connected peoples all

¹⁶ For this project, I have consulted Nineteenth Century British Newspapers, Nineteenth Century US Newspapers, and America's Historical Newspapers, The Historical Atlanta Constitution, the Historical New York Times, the Historical Times of London, and The Historical Manchester Guardian, American Periodical Series Online, 19th Century American Periodicals, British Periodicals, and 19th Century British Periodicals. They have allowed me to track conversations across months and years and see newspapers conversing with each other. While I have explained the limits of these databases, they have also provided data that would have been difficult if not impossible to locate without them. For instance, British newspapers noticed that white Southern papers had grown concerned with supposed British designs on a Nicaraguan Canal in 1895. These British newspapers commented that they had no idea what these white Southerners were talking about. However, a researcher looking at these newspapers would have had a difficult time finding these reactions. Generally, a newspaper would include perhaps one or two articles on the trouble for all of that year. They were also brief editorials and often did not have a headline that drew attention to them. While these editorial comments do much to describe the international conversation that included both British and US Southern newspapers, they would have been extremely difficult to recognize without the assistance of database software. For a detailed account of these articles, see Chapter 2.

Though they offer a broad range of newspapers from the nineteenth century and incorporate newspapers printed all over Britain and the United States, these databases only provide limited access to the printed material of this era. For instance, these

over the South and participated in a regional conversation that defined the South as in conflict or trade with various sites all over the world.

For the white Southern papers studied here, the editors' worked mainly to the benefit of the Democratic Party. By the 1890s, the US South had become largely a one-party region and the white editors of large daily newspapers reflected the political makeup of the region. Often white Southern newspaper editors were politicians themselves or entered into politics during their time as editor. E.J. Hale of the *Fayetteville Observer* was a diplomat in England during the 1880s. Clark Howell of the *Atlanta Constitution* was a Georgia State Representative and served as speaker of that body. Hoke Smith, owner of the competing *Atlanta Journal* was a member of Cleveland's cabinet and eventually became governor of Georgia in the early twentieth century. Henry Watterson of the Louisville *Courier Journal* was well-connected with the national Democratic Party and helped write the Party's 1892 platform. Newspapers in the South were not only engaged with constructing the US South as a coherent region but in the governing of the region as well.

In Britain, newspapers too were linked to political parties. The *Times* and a few other papers defended the Conservative Party and its positions, but much of the press, especially outside of London, was controlled by Liberal Party supporters.¹⁷ Liberal

databases provide little access to black newspapers and favor larger circulation newspapers from the period.

¹⁷ According to J. O. Bolen, the Conservatives were late to realize the benefits of having vocal support in the press—especially given the increase in male enfranchisement after 1884. During this period, they moved to have more presses, but most of the papers consulted for this project were Liberal-minded. See J. O. Baylen, "The British Press, 1861-1918." *The Encyclopedia of the British Press, 1422-1992* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 33-46.

papers did not exhibit as much agreement as the Democratic-dominated white Southern press. During this period, there were major disagreements within the British Liberal Party over Irish Home Rule and other issues. These papers were also divided in how they viewed American race relations. The British Anti-Lynching Committee (BALC), formed by allies of Wells in Britain, was made up of several members of the Liberal press, most prominently CP Scott of the *Manchester Guardian* and the Claydens of London's *The Daily News*, but other papers like *The Leeds Mercury*, *The Birmingham Daily Post*, and the *Bristol Mercury* criticized BALC for their explicit attacks of white Southern civilization. These Liberal papers agreed with the aims of BALC but could not stomach their methods. Rather than documenting a break from a widespread criticism of imperialism, as I do with white Southern newspapers, I instead chart a time when British Liberalism was itself divided and demonstrated that division in their coverage of race relations in America.¹⁸

The British Conservative papers in this account agreed more readily than their Liberal counterparts. Both were based in London, and each paper supported white Southern accounts of race relations. The London *Times* commissioned W. Laird Clowes' study of the US South and printed his ten-part series in 1891, which would end by supporting a scheme to "repatriate" American blacks to Africa. The paper also supported black disfranchisement in South Carolina and white Southern attacks on Ida B. Wells. In

¹⁸ The British Liberal Party split in 1886 following the failure of Prime Minister William Gladstone's first Irish Home Rule Bill. Liberal opponents of the bill formed the Liberal Unionist Party and joined the Conservatives in a coalition government. Liberal newspapers in Britain reflected the splintering of the party and some supported Irish Home Rule while others did not. For more on the split of the Liberal Party, see Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

so doing, the *Times* provides a counterpoint to Liberal papers critiques of the region. Similarly, *The Pall Mall Gazette* too allied itself with the white South. This paper also demonstrates the importance of editors in the leanings of particular newspapers at this time. Originally a Conservative paper, the *Gazette* became Liberal from 1880 to 1892, edited for much of this time by W.T. Stead. The *Gazette* switched sides again in 1892 when it was purchased by William Astor and edited by Henry Cust. In Britain and in the United States, editors exerted control over their newspapers politics and actively participated in the political campaigns of the day.

This dissertation then follows four interconnected and overlapping narratives. The first four chapters each examine the period from roughly the mid-1880s through 1895. Taking a different perspective, the chapters read conversations that Britons and white and black Southerners had about and with each other during this period. Linking all the chapters are discussions of race and empire that crossed national boundaries. The first two establish white Southern views on Britain and the British Empire. The third chapter examines white Britons who came to the South and largely understood the South through their understanding of the British Empire. These British men also supported white Southern constructions of black inferiority and while they were not enthusiastically supportive of lynching, they accepted white Southern excuses for it. The fourth chapter examines Ida B. Wells's anti-lynching campaigns and the formation of BALC. It explains how Wells and her allies shifted the discussion of the white South away from white Southern difficulties with inferior blacks and instead focused on the violence that whites committed in the name of civilization. Finally, the fifth chapter reads British discussions

of the American race problem and Booker T. Washington's opinions on it in 1899 as well as white Southern discussions of the lead up to the Boer War. This last chapter describes a changing conversation in which white violence was minimized and some white Southern papers began to see Britons as allies rather than opponents. This project marks the changing constructions of the South and empire during this period and the attempts of various people on both sides of the Atlantic to affect these conversations.

Through all of these chapters, I have tried to focus on the ways in which Britons and US Southerners worked to frame and re-frame the contingent and ever-shifting meanings of race, empire, and civilization. If we are going to understand the US South as a site of imperial engagement, as a place that mattered toward the transnational construction of these concepts, we must keep in mind the dynamic shifts that occurred both about the understandings of these concepts on both sides of the Atlantic and their interaction with developments within these specific places. In looking to how Southerners understood that place, based that understanding on their own interpretations of and interaction with international events, we must keep in mind that their own culture structured the ways in which they came to view the world. So too did the British Empire, the conflicts over its performance, and the peoples who looked to the South matter in how they related to white Southerners and recognized and criticized its culture. In speaking to the 'civilized world,' Ida B. Wells may not have had an impartial audience, but engaging the ways in which that audience was constructed and construed, we can place the US South into the Age of Empire.

1. “The Demands of the Nineteenth Century”: Defining Civilization in Debates over Irish Home Rule and the New Orleans Lynching

In the early 1880s, the editor of the Raleigh *News and Observer* began to pose the Irish Home Rule movement as more than a notable political protest on the other side of the Atlantic. Allied with the Democratic party in the South, the *News and Observer* advocated for ‘home rule’ in the South at this time. Buried in an argument about how the Irish movement was unlikely to yield immediate results, the North Carolina paper noted far more broadly, “The demands of the nineteenth century are free government, home rule, and the abolition of an oppressive land tenure.”¹ In calling home rule a demand of the century and in imagining the Irish movement as part of something larger, the *News and Observer* was not alone. Throughout the South, white journalists gave generous coverage to the suffering of the Irish and to the movement on their behalf as Irish activists and their allies in Parliament repeatedly brought the plight of Irish tenants before the imperial government. More than any other ongoing foreign news story, Irish home rule dominated white Southern editorials.² By the end of the century, white Southern coverage of Ireland would increasingly declare that the movement was one of worldwide importance and that it was on a path to wiping out centralized government control in both the United States and European empires.

¹ “The Catholics at the North...” *The News and Observer*, February 8, 1881.

² Even more locally-oriented papers like the *Richmond Dispatch* devoted significant space to Irish home rule. During the first half of the 1890s, the Irish movement was the only foreign news story that made it onto the front page. Most commonly, the front page was devoted to classified advertisements and local notices, as was standard at the time.

This chapter reads white Southern support for the Irish Home Rule movement as part of broader discussions of race, civilization, and empire in the late nineteenth century. At once local and transnational, white Southern support for home rule as a concept drew from their philosophical justifications for white supremacy at home combined with a critique of centralized imperial authority. My account places this conversation within the context of Southern politics and their supposed relationship to the federal government. I then turn to international coverage of the lynching of eleven Italian men in New Orleans, Responding to the lynching, black journalist John Mitchell, Jr. hoped that the international aspects of the case would reveal to peoples outside of the US South, the brutal treatment that blacks there received at the hands of white mobs. Both of these cases opened up a discursive space for white Southern elites and black Southern activists to construct themselves as allies of civilization. By imagining their own situation as reflective of broader, worldwide trends, they constructed a place for themselves that both set them apart and located them within an imperial world.

Becoming the “Spirit of the Age”: The White South as a Part of a Worldwide Push for Local Democracy

White Southern support for and identification with both the Irish depended on their own self-identification as a colonized people. To white Southern journalists and politicians, the relationship between the North and South was one in which Northern business lorded over a colonized South. This chapter builds on work by Tennant McWilliams and Joseph Fry, who have both examined how this supposedly imperial

relationship framed white Southern attitudes toward American foreign relations during this period. While their accounts focus on the Southern critique of the federal government, the conversations of Southerners about non-US colonized regions drive my argument. Both Fry and McWilliams convincingly demonstrate that white Southerners' belief in their region's colonized status influenced their opposition to American imperialism in the late nineteenth century and to Hawaiian annexation before that;³ this chapter maintains that in looking to Southern reactions to events outside the United States we can see Irish home rule playing a central role in white Southern articulations of anti-imperialism. Unlike Hawaiian annexation, for example, which could have caused problems for Southern sugar producers competing against tariff-free Hawaiian sugar, there was no economic benefit to them if the Irish were granted home rule status. Instead, we can see white Southerners calling on their own supposed place within the Union and the world to articulate a worldwide vision of anti-colonialism and confront issues of race, gender, and civilization. Through these discussions of Ireland, white Southerners critiqued the power that imperial states wielded over their peoples and began to imagine a world where empires were replaced by local democracies, starting with their own region and explicitly excluding the African Americans with whom they shared the South. Home rule was a demand that the nineteenth century made for some people but not all.

³See Joseph A. Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000) and Tennant S. McWilliams, *The New South Faces the World: Foreign Affairs and the Southern Sense of Self, 1877-1950* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

Before it became a “demand of the late nineteenth century,” home rule in the US South was a call to return to the way the South had been before the Civil War. White Democrats used the term to refer to the removal of federal troops from the region. Seeing ex-slaves vote, hold elective offices, and rule over them was too much for some Southern whites. Seeing the federal government protect the rights of these ex-slaves heightened white Southerners’ sense of loss after the Civil War and allowed home rule as a concept to flourish in white Southern newspapers. An 1872 editorial from Macon, Georgia illustrates the role of home rule in white Southern discourse. According to the paper, continuing to let ex-slaves vote meant that the white Southerners would “surrender home rule and free government; give up your property to legislative robbery and tax confiscation; despair of your business; abandon your civilization, and submit to political slavery, moral blight and material destruction of Radical despotism.”⁴ With the end of federal Reconstruction in 1876, white Southerners cheered the return of home rule and set about reconstructing white supremacy in the region.

Simultaneous with the reconstruction of home rule in the South, the Irish home rule movement began to receive significant international attention. Irish leaders debated what kind of home rule they were fighting for. While many in the United

⁴ “White and Colored Population of the United States,” *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Journal & Messenger*, November 7, 1876.(Macon). A less racist editorial on the subject appeared in the *New-Orleans Times*. The New Orleans editors suggested that in the event of ‘home rule’ returning to the South, white supremacists and militant African Americans would both leave and allow decent black and white folks to work together to rule themselves properly. See, “Home Rule in Louisiana,” *The New-Orleans Times*, August 9, 1874. A month later, the paper more explicitly linked home rule to white supremacy, see “Political Rights and Wrongs,” *The New-Orleans Times*, September 5, 1874.

States accepted that the Irish had as much right to home rule as the Canadians did, the Irish situation was quite different from that in Canada or any other part of the Empire. For instance, the Irish held elected seats in the British Parliament. The problem (from the Irish perspective) was that those seats were dwarfed by those of Britain; the Irish then had little control over the policies enacted by the Parliament even when they were nominally represented. Irish MPs helped lead the charge for home rule, and they used their seats in Britain's Parliament to make their case to that country's leaders and the world. By the 1880s they had gained the support of Britain's leading Liberal politician, William Gladstone; from then until his retirement in 1894, he led the British drive to grant some form of home rule to Ireland. Gladstone supported Irish Home Rule because he believed that Irish people shared a national unity and should be trusted with governing themselves.⁵

In 1886, Gladstone presented Parliament with the first of two Home Rule Bills that he would bring. Unfortunately for him, members of his own Party deserted him on this issue, and it was voted down. Within Britain, many Liberals saw the Irish Home Rule movement as separatist and regarded Gladstone's support for home rule as a strike against the union of the Ireland and Britain.⁶ This failure led to the

⁵ In this, Gladstone differed from many within his own Liberal Party, and the Irish Home Rule question would end Liberal dominance of British politics when the party split over the question. For more on the development of Gladstone's thoughts on the Irish question, see H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone, 1809-1898* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 468-470; Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 296; and D.W. Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 290-291.

⁶ They also distrusted the Irish peasantry, thought that they had spent considerable effort to help Ireland, and saw Gladstone's support for the Irish as a betrayal of

formation of a Conservative-Liberal-Unionist government that attempted to put down the Irish movement. This new government's efforts failed and home rule again dominated the British Parliament in 1893, during Gladstone's return to the Premiership. As in 1886, however, home rule did not survive. While Gladstone had convinced enough members of his Party to go along with him and the Irish nationalists, and the Bill passed the House of Commons, the House of Lords overwhelmingly rejected Gladstone's home rule scheme. Following this vote, the Prime Minister resigned in favor of his Party's second-in-command, the Earl of Roseberry. Roseberry did not attempt to bring Home Rule to the Commons again, and there would not be another serious attempt by a British politician to grant Ireland home rule for more than a decade. White Southern newspapers covered the ups and downs of the Irish Home Rule movement with interest. They regularly commented upon the workings of the British government, though they largely ignored the Liberal Party split and Gladstone's reputation in Britain. White Southern journalists and politicians instead concentrated on the calls of Irish supporters for a recognition of Irish democratic rights in a supposedly centralized empire.

Tellingly white Southerners rarely relied on the race of the Irish when discussing their claims for home rule. For a people as deeply immersed in racial politics as white Southerners during this era, the lack of race in discussions of the Irish is particularly striking. This is especially the case when home rule in the South

Liberal governing principles. After the 1886 bill, many of his previous supporters left the Liberal Party to found the Liberal Unionist Party which would caucus with Conservatives. They also came to see Gladstone himself as irrational and unreliable for his support of the Irish. See Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government*, pp. 305-306.

was intimately connected to the reconstruction of white supremacy in the region. By this time, the Irish in the North and South had largely been incorporated as “white,” but white Southerners never called upon Irish whiteness as a justification for home rule. By not invoking their common whiteness as a justification, white Southerners could use Irish Home Rule to speak of self-government as an abstraction rather than a part of their efforts to put down black political expression.⁷

White Southerners knew Irish Americans personally. Many Irish immigrants had come to the South before the Civil War (though not in the same numbers that had moved to Northern cities).⁸ Many Irish Southerners fought for the Confederacy and by the end of the nineteenth century had been incorporated into Southern society, especially in larger urban areas. New Orleans hosted the largest Irish immigrant community and the city’s *Daily Picayune*’s coverage of Irish activists campaigning in the South reflected the city’s, and the region’s, acceptance of the Irish.⁹ In 1882, the

⁷ For more on how the Irish came to be considered white, see David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991). For an account of the Irish assimilation into US Southern communities in the years before and after the Civil War, see David T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South, 1815-1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). For Southern constructions of whiteness, see Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998). By the early twentieth century, the Irish were so assimilated into Southern life that the heroine of Margaret Mitchell’s novel *Gone With the Wind* was the daughter of an Irish immigrant.

⁸ Gleeson argues that the lower proportion of Irish immigrants to native Southerners helped the immigrants assimilate easier into Southern cities than to Northern ones. There were enough of them to join with Southern whites but not so many as to be overwhelming or threatening. See Gleeson, *The Irish in the South*, pp. 192-193

⁹ According to Gleeson, Irish immigrants made up nearly ten percent of the white population of Louisiana in 1860, see *The Irish in the South*, p. 26. Gleeson further points out that the Irish never dominated Southern cities as they did in parts of the North, and they never faced the same kind of response from native Southerners as

Daily Picayune gave significant coverage to Father Eugene Sheehy's mission on "behalf of his suffering people," words that would be echoed more than a decade later when black anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells went to the other side of the Atlantic looking for allies.¹⁰ The Southern paper hoped that Sheehy and his allies would be successful in their work towards home rule.¹¹

Though they greeted Irish visitors and immigrants warmly, white Southerners only directly connected their home rule with that of the Irish in response to Northern newspaper coverage of Irish Home Rule. White Southern journalists used the notion of the South as a colony to challenge Northern papers to support their work toward home rule as those same newspapers had the Irish. Confronting the *New York Herald*,

they had in the North. Their whiteness (and acceptance of white US Southern racial prejudices) too helped them receive a warm reception. They fought for the South in the Civil War and supported white supremacist movements after. Gleeson explains, "the Irish helped soothe native fears of servile insurrection without becoming a larger threat themselves," p. 193.

¹⁰ "Father Sheehy," *The Daily Picayune*, February 25, 1882. New Orleans also held an outpost of the Irish National League, an American organization that argued for Ireland's rights. See "Irish National League," *The Daily Picayune*, May 1, 1887.

¹¹ "Home Rule in Ireland," *The Daily Picayune*, March 1, 1882. In 1888 and 1890, another Irish visitor spoke on the Irish situation and received favorable coverage from the *Picayune*. Sir Thomas Grattan Esmonde came to New Orleans at the invitation of the city's Irish National League chapter after having visited Nashville as well. He not only drew friendly crowds in New Orleans, but he also commented on the help that the American side of the movement would give Irish activists "Ireland's Envoys," *The Daily Picayune*, December 1, 1887. The paper suggested that some of the city's wealthy Irish inhabitants could tempt the Irish representative to the city. A couple weeks later the same paper commented upon Esmonde's "exalted personality." See "The Cause of Ireland Abroad," *The Daily Picayune*, December 16, 1887. An 1893 editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution* urged "lovers of liberty" to give money to Irish activists whom they noted were often poor. "An Appeal to Irish-Americans," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 6, 1893. A similar appeal appeared in a letter to *The Clarion* of Jackson, Mississippi. The writer (identified as "An Irishman" asked that Mississippians help the Irish in the hour of need and suggested that the Irish were their supporters when they needed them, though it did not detail how they had done this. See An Irishman, "Help for Ireland!" *The Clarion*, March 17, 1886.

an editorial in the *Daily Arkansas Gazette* asked, “Does not the south occupy precisely the same position toward the American government that Ireland does toward the English, and yet the *Herald*, which asks home rule for the Irish, would deny it to the people of the south?”¹² Here, white Southern elites staked their moral case for white supremacy on the oppression that they faced from a supposedly powerful centralized authority just as the Irish people faced from their imperial government. African Americans, rather than counting as Southerners exercising their rights in local democracy, were instead tools of a federal government that would not allow white Southern Democrats to rule as they once had. In this and other editorials, Southern white papers equated empire with the increasingly powerful federal government. In so doing, they allied themselves with other movements against centralized control over local affairs. The realities of the Irish movement were not as important as what they signified to Southern editors.

Northern journalists did not easily accept the Southern view of their colonized status within the United States, and white Southern journalists continued to challenge Northern papers to see white not black Southerners as akin to the Irish. In 1879 the *New York Tribune* editorialized about the sad conditions of Irish farmers and their relationship to African American tenant farmers in the South. The *Tribune*, a liberal Republican paper, had supported abolition before the Civil War. Under the ownership of Whitelaw Reid (who assumed control of the paper after the death of its founder Horace Greeley in 1872), the paper continued to promote Republican causes. In the 1879 editorial, the *Tribune* noted that the situation in Ireland was strikingly similar to

¹² “The New York Herald can...” *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, November 8, 1872

that in the Southern States. The paper wrote, “The negro tenant in the ‘The Black Belt’ of Alabama, or the negro laborer in Mississippi, is in the identical position of the Irish tenant in Castlebar or Conuemara.” For the *Tribune*, the people in the South who deserved sympathy were laborers and tenant-farmers being taken advantage of by Southern elites, and African Americans shared far more with the Irish than white Southerners. Southern papers tried to dispel this argument by claiming that Southern whites did not take advantage of black workers. According to the New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, “Those colored men who try to earn and own homesteads are encouraged by their white neighbors.” The Louisiana paper tried to construct a less violent impression of race relations in the South that challenged Northern attempts to link blacks in the South and the Irish.

The question in each of these cases is what home rule meant and who was entitled to it. For Northern papers like the *Tribune* it was labor status that connected African Americans to the Irish. According to their understanding of the situations in the South and Ireland, both black Southerners and the Irish were taken advantage of by powerful landowners who used their bodies and did not want them to have any political power. In contrast, white Southerners argued that their political status was like that of the Irish because they were disfranchised on a federal level. When black men in the South elected Republican officials and voted for Republicans on a federal level, Southern white Democrats argued, they placed power in the hands of the federal government over the concerns of local white residents. Similarly, the Irish held seats in the British Parliament but were overwhelmed by representatives from

England.¹³ Rather than see black voting as legitimate expressions of local democracy, they painted black voters as witless fools who simply voted for the party who had given them freedom. In speaking for the rights of the Irish, white Southerners were also defining their relationship to the federal government.

While Irish leaders were certainly happy to have the support of Southern whites in their struggle for home rule, they did not see their positions as analogous. Irish leaders never made comparisons between themselves and the white South; indeed, they spoke of themselves more as slaves of British landlords like African Americans had been before the war. At a meeting gathered to agitate for home rule (and one for which Parnell would be prosecuted), MP T. P. O'Connor protested the violent treatment of Irish tenants by their landlords and explicitly compared it to the suffering of African slaves in the American South. O'Connor asked, "Had not the landlords of the county of Galway inflicted labour upon them? Had they not inflicted lashes on the Irish tenants as sore as were inflicted by the South Carolina planter upon the slaves under his control?"¹⁴ The question received a warm response from the sympathetic crowd and coverage in British newspapers. Neither Southern whites nor the Irish denied that Irish tenants suffered under the imperial system; they each sought to link themselves to a suffering people. For Southern whites, they saw the Irish as white brethren held back by the authority of an unjust, distant master. The Irish, on the other hand, portrayed their situation as slavery to local masters exerting

¹³ "A Faulty Comparison," *The Daily Picayune*, August 7, 1879. Interestingly, an editorial on the same page notes how well Canada is doing as a self-governing colony and how it would not want to join the US system in any way.

¹⁴ "Land Agitation," *The Times* (London), October 25, 1880.

control over their bodies and labor, rather than pointing to the more abstract notion of federal authority.¹⁵

At least one Southern newspaper noticed and commented upon O'Connor's questioning. The *News and Observer* (which mistook the comments to be Parnell's) explicitly linked the Irish movement with that of white Southerners. Unlike the *Arkansas Daily Gazette* in 1872, this 1880 editorial argued that the South was in danger of becoming Ireland rather than already having that status. If then-presidential-candidate Garfield succeeded in further centralizing the authority in Washington then the South would be little more than a colony: "Let us not make it possible for the North to so oppress the South as to convert us into an Ireland, filling our sunny homes with a thousand woes."¹⁶ In the years since the establishment of

¹⁵ Of course, white Southerners also ignored the parallel between their monopoly on state and mob violence in the South and British authority in Ireland. Southern blacks could also see the merits of comparing their situation to that of the Irish. When Southern whites attacked Wells for her work in England, John Mitchell, Jr, a prominent Richmond journalist and editor defended her by comparing her mission to that of Charles Stewart Parnell, the then-recently-deceased leader of the home rule cause. See "The Afro-American Editors Meet," *Richmond Planet*, September 15, 1894. For more on Southern violence see Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), and W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1993). Bederman also talks about Wells and her own use of civilization as a tool against white Southern violence against African Americans. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹⁶ "While Americans are to-day thinking..." *The News and Observer*, October 27, 1880. (Raleigh). O'Connor would journey to America the next year to gather money and support for the Irish cause, see "Ireland," *The Times* (London), October 19, 1881. John Buchanan, Democratic nominee for Tennessee Governor in 1890 also claimed that the South was only a potential Ireland and accused Republicans of attempting to turn the people of the South into tenants like the people of Ireland. See "A Muzzled Candidate," *The Knoxville Journal*, September 19, 1890. Buchanan, an Alliance candidate, won election that year.

‘home rule’ in the US South, Ireland had become a symbol for what the federal government could do the South.

While these conversations drove white Southerners to connect their claims for local white democracy to Ireland’s movement because of its popularity in the US, it was events in Britain that inspired Southern whites to articulate home rule as a movement with a future. To white Southern observers, there appeared to be a promising moment for Irish Home Rule in 1886. Early in the year, Gladstone was founding a new government and had explicitly set about the task of granting some form of home rule to Irish. The issue did not seem to be whether the Irish would have home rule but what sort it would take. However, white Southern papers, which covered the movement in Ireland closely, noted the difficulties that still faced the movement. Gladstone had to appease many different factions if he was to succeed.¹⁷

Ultimately, these difficulties proved to great even for a politician of Gladstone's skill. In explaining the failure of the 1886 bill, white Southerners imagined a grand future for the movement. After the downfall of Gladstone’s government, white Southern journalists were quick to declare that home rule would eventually reach Ireland because they simply saw it as a movement that would inevitably succeed. The *News and Observer* suggested that Gladstone was merely ahead of his time and his people. In the near future, home rule would come to Ireland because “it is too much in keeping with the spirit of the age and this spirit is growing

¹⁷ “Mr. Gladstone’s new position...,” *News and Observer*, February 5, 1886.

too rapidly.”¹⁸ Later that summer, they would echo that theme in another item about the defeat of Gladstone: “The growing sentiment of the world is in favor of but one vote for one man, and this sentiment will inevitably prevail in Britain as elsewhere.”¹⁹ For this US Southern paper, the world was moving in the direction of the Irish, and that people had only to wait for Britain to catch up.

Not only did white Southerners portray Irish home rule as inevitable, they also sought to influence the workings of the British Parliament. Residents of New Orleans were quick to organize a mass gathering in support of the Irish. The Jackson, Mississippi, *Clarion* suggested that Mississippians organize a mass meeting at the State Capital.²⁰ Though he could not attend the meeting, Mississippi’s Lieutenant Governor released a statement of support for the Irish cause. In it he explained that “no political movement on the world’s great stage, since I attained my majority so enlists my sympathy” as the Irish cause. He also claimed that the world’s sympathies were with Ireland and that the movement would eventually succeed.²¹

Though the Irish occupied center stage in forming white Southern attitudes about home rule, after the failed efforts of the mid-1880s, white Southerners were

¹⁸ “Mr Gladstone’s chief difficulty...” *The News and Observer*, June 9, 1886. When it looked like he would be defeated earlier in the year, the *News and Observer* predicted that the loss would end up strengthening Gladstone because support for it “is to firmly fixed in the public opinion of Great Britain to down at the the bidding of any man or order of men.” See “‘The Thunderer,’ that is...,” *The News and Observer*, April 10, 1886.

¹⁹ “One explanation of the defeat...” *The News and Observer*, August 1, 1886.

²⁰ “A public expression of the people...” *The Clarion*, June 2, 1886.

²¹ The paper also noted that the people of Louisiana had already cabled sympathies to Parnell and Gladstone. “Lieut.-Governor Shands on Irish Home Rule,” *The Clarion*, June 2, 1886. Two years later, the Mississippi legislature jointly passed a resolution supporting the Irish in their struggle for home rule. See “Mississippi: Jackson,” *The Daily Picayune*, February 26, 1888.

moving beyond a vision that only included the small island. It was domestic concerns as well that brought home rule into a broader light. As white Southerners constructed home rule's future, they fought to maintain it at home. When the Federal Elections Bill came up for debate in 1890, the movement for home rule in Ireland became entwined with Southern opposition to the proposed law. The bill, also known as the Lodge Elections Bill (after its sponsor Henry Cabot Lodge) and the Force Bill, would have allowed the Federal government to intervene to defend voters' rights. If enforced, it would have meant allowing federal troops to keep Southern whites from violently stopping African Americans from voting.²² In celebrating a Democratic debate against the Force Bill, the *Daily Picayune* not only compared the fight against the force bill to a gladiatorial contest but also the struggle for Irish home rule.²³ The possibility of federal troops again invading the South became the possibility of again placing the white South in a colonial relationship to the federal government. In these debates, white Southerners defined 'civilization' to support their desires. In the Irish case, they named England as uncivilized for not letting the Irish rule themselves, and in the white Southern push for home rule for the South, they labeled the federal government uncivilized for wanting to make white Southerners accept African Americans' right to vote.

²² See Mark W. Summers, *Party Games: Getting, Keeping, and Using Power in Gilded Age Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 255. Kantrowitz also speaks to the connections between the Force Bill and the reconstruction of white supremacy. See Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*.

²³ "The Force Bill Fight and Senator Eustis," *The Daily Picayune*, February 3, 1891.

At least one British paper accepted the Southern white view that they were more like the Irish than blacks were. In 1890, the *Birmingham Daily Post* reflected on recent debates about the Force Bill in the United States. The Birmingham paper was allied with the Liberal Party in Britain, and the *Daily Post*'s editors supported Irish Home Rule in theory but had opposed the particular bill that Gladstone had presented in 1886. In their editorial about the Force Bill in the US, the *Daily Post* argued that, in the US South, the federal government faced problems similar to those the British faced in Ireland. Calling the problem of race in the US South, "of an even more difficult and complicated character" than that of the Irish problem, the *Daily Post* decried white Southern violence against blacks, but it claimed to understand the difficulty that they faced. Accepting the testimony of British travelers who had returned from the South, the newspaper placed the blame for white Southern violence on Northerners who had allowed Reconstruction governments to be corrupt and place inferior black men in charge of whites. Segregation was not the answer either; rather, this British observer hoped for the development among Southern whites a willingness "to accept the negroes as fellow-citizens." Without explaining how it would come about, they predicted that segregation would foster "a war of races."²⁴ Though they did not accept the results of white Southern racism (violence), or provide a means of overcoming that policy (a vague gesture to whites forgetting their racism), this British observer placed white over black in the US South.

²⁴ "News of the Day," *Birmingham Daily Post* Mon, December 29, 1890. For more on the *Birmingham Daily Post* and race relations in the US South, see chapter 4.

In white Southern conversations about the Force Bill and home rule, white Southern newspapers confronted the connections between Southern whiteness and empire. As one editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution* put, even if the Force bill passed, “the southern people will not allow their states to be stolen or Africanized.”²⁵ It is an interesting term to use. Though they are talking about white supremacy and keeping African Americans from exercising their rights as citizens, this era was also a time of increasing European dominance of Africa. In evoking home rule and Africanization, the white journalists declared that they would not again be colonized by the North. And, at a time when European rule was being extended over black Africa, this terminology evoked a consensus that Africans did not merit self-rule, let alone equality with white men. For white Southerners, home rule was not only a marker of local government, but also an explicit acknowledgement of social equality.

Even with this racialized view of home rule, some white Southern newspapers opened home rule to more peoples, though this attitude was never without question in discussions of empire and democracy. In an editorial that connected British disputes with the Portuguese over African colonies, Irish home rule, and the power of the British empire, *The Atlanta Constitution* compared Britain to the Ancient Romans, and argued, “When she [England] wants anything it is her custom to reach out and help herself...[The English] are determined to overrun the globe....The British theory...is to make the world produce as did the colonies of the Romans for the benefit of the dominating race.” The editorial argued that Britain would not be able to sustain its power much longer. “New republics” will take the place of their colonies

²⁵ “If the Worst Comes,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 18, 1890.

in Ireland, Canada, Australia, and India.²⁶ In the end, some Southern whites saw empire as giving way to home rule even in places like India.²⁷

Just as the failure of home rule in 1886 had led white Southern journalists to articulate home rule as a movement with a future, Parnell's disgrace and death prompted them to see the movement as more than its leaders.²⁸ The *Atlanta Constitution* was quick to point out that the movement was bigger than one man. The editorial noted that the "cause of liberty was greater than Washington." Though home rule may be set back, "the justice that lies behind it will sustain it to the end."²⁹ The Republican *Knoxville Journal* became disgusted by the infighting that Parnell's disgrace revealed about the Irish leadership itself. Calling the cause of home rule "sacred," the paper predicted that the incident would remove the world's sympathy from the Irish.³⁰ A few months later, the *Journal* positively reported that the Irish had

²⁶ "England's Policy of Force," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 25, 1890.

²⁷ Others, like the *Fayetteville Observer* supported the British position there because of the "high oriental civilization." Calling the Indians unfit for total self-government, the *Observer* argued that the distance between India and Britain created a de facto federal system because the British were not close enough to affect policy directly. "The Checks and Balances," *The Fayetteville Observer*, October 27, 1892. Part of what white Southern disagreement here about India (at least implicitly) was the racial categorization of South Asians. As the originators of the "Aryan race," some considered some South Asians to be "more white" than other people of color. This sentiment was not universal, however. For more on the ongoing construction of racial categories, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

²⁸ Parnell lost favor with Gladstone and others in the Irish Home Rule movement after he was named in the 1889 divorce petition of Katherine O'Shea and her husband. Though it had been rumored that Parnell was the father to her three children, the divorce petition was a tacit admission of the affair, and it did not help matters when Parnell married her in 1891. Parnell suffered a heart attack and died a few months after the wedding.

²⁹ "The Irish Situation," *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 27, 1890.

³⁰ "The Irish Cause," *The Knoxville Journal*, February 27, 1891.

patched up their differences (with Parnell away in disgrace) and that the cause of Irish home rule seemed bright. Though they noted that the House of Lords would be a problem should the Commons manage to pass a home rule bill, they predicted that it would be the upper house's death. They stated that the reforms of 1832 had made the death of the Lords inevitable because it had held back the will of the people. According to this Southern paper, democracy would make the Lords untenable.³¹ Irish Home Rule would be the mechanism by which democracy would come to Britain.

When Parnell died in 1891, South Carolina's *State* portrayed his death as another great service that he had done for Ireland. He had still been fighting to regain his leadership of the movement and according to the Southern paper; he had not done all the evil that he could do as yet. However, because he died before the election of a new Parliament, there was time for Ireland's factions to repair the damage done by his affairs. After his death, his followers would join together with their former comrades and "make common cause for liberty and local self-government."³² Other white Southern papers too saw benefits for the Irish movement in Parnell's death. The *Daily Picayune* celebrated his life and his cause. In their obituary for Parnell, the Louisiana paper also noted that the movement was sure to continue after his death. As the editorial explained, "No one will be foolish enough to believe that the fate of so just a cause can be made to depend upon any individual, no matter how highly

³¹ "The Situation of Ireland," *The Knoxville Journal*, September 13, 1891.

³² "Parnell," *The State*, October 8, 1891.

placed.”³³ The loss of one of Ireland’s leaders through disgrace and then death led white Southerners to reflect on the greater significance of the Irish movement.

The next year white Southern papers celebrated Gladstone’s return to power as the possible realization of Ireland’s cause.³⁴ Because Gladstone led a government made up of Liberals and Irish home rule factions and had explicitly campaigned on a home rule platform, he brought another home rule bill before the Commons in 1893.³⁵ As with the 1886 attempt, Gladstone wrote the bill in private without input from either Irish leaders or his own Party. He then released his plan to the public in late 1892. In it, Ireland would be divided into four districts like the American states and would have its own legislature. A governor would be appointed by the Crown, and Ireland would keep its representatives in Parliament. White Southerners saw the new plan as a triumph for both Gladstone and the Irish people. In detailing the plan, the *News and Observer* observed the Gladstone had lost none of his intellectual powers in his advanced age.³⁶ The *Daily Picayune* argued that the success of the bill “would prove the most glorious achievement of his long career.”³⁷ As the bill was poised to pass the Commons, the *News and Observer* praised the Irish people for their fortitude and the lack of violence which it took for them to gain their liberty. An editorial called home rule, “truly one of these victories of peace which are more renowned

³³ “The Death of Mr. Parnell,” *The Daily Picayune*, October 8, 1891.

³⁴ “Every lover of human liberty...,” *The State*, July 5, 1892.

³⁵ “Mr. Gladstone’s Fate,” *The Knoxville Journal*, July 17, 1892.

³⁶ “Gladstone has sought...,” *The News and Observer*, December 1, 1892. Gladstone was in his early eighties at the time.

³⁷ “The Home Rule Contest,” *The Daily Picayune*, February 5, 1893. *The State* also anticipated passage after having read Gladstone’s proposal. See “Mr. Gladstone’s Irish Proposal...,” *The State*, January 29, 1893.

than those won at the cannon's mouth."³⁸ In seeing an Irish victory, white Southerners continued to pose it as a peaceful movement and a marker of progress.

Because of their recent experiences in the Civil War and their desire to demonstrate loyalty to the federal government white Southerners regularly defined both their own and the Irish home rule movement as a peaceful one. To do so, white Southerners anxiously condemned any attempt by the Irish to win their fight through violence. In response to a letter from the United Irish Societies, Georgia Governor Northen called the attempt to pass home rule, "a peaceful revolution."³⁹ Whenever it looked like violence may threaten the cause of Irish home rule, white Southern newspapers urged that the movement remain a peaceful revolution.

At times, white Southerners explicitly set the Irish home rule movement against the backdrop of their own recent history. According to them violence in Ireland would be like that of the Civil War, the Irish would suffer mightily as the South had. Through the early 1880s, white Southern journalists regularly predicted that the Irish fight for home rule might end in brutal civil war, but they did not see violence as the path to success. Instead, violence would only serve to harm everyone. According to the *Macon Telegraph*, a war in Ireland would "be one of the bitterest and most destructive civil wars on record, and likely to offer very serious interruption to the tranquility of the world and the course of trade."⁴⁰ When real violence erupted

³⁸ "Gladstone attended the reception..." *The News and Observer*, May 19, 1893. See also "Home Rule for Ireland," *The State*, April 22, 1893.

³⁹ William Northen to Thomas Addis Emmet, March 21, 1893. William Northen Papers.

⁴⁰ "The Irish Fight in Parliament," *The Macon Telegraph and Messenger*, February 5, 1881.

in 1886, the *News and Observer* argued that it might set the movement back. As home rule first came to a vote, violence flared in Ulster amongst Catholics and Protestants. According to the North Carolina paper, “dynamite bomb business would set back” Gladstone’s cause.⁴¹ Violence in Ireland not only threatened the Irish movement but the ways that white Southerners had constructed it.

A few years later, when the Protestants of Ulster threatened to revolt if the Irish were given home rule, one white Southern paper framed the violence in a slightly different way. Instead of being like white Southerners during the Civil War, violent Irish rebels were like the Northerners who came to rebuild the South. South Carolina’s *The State* argued that the potential rebels were “descendants of carpet baggers, and they behave very much as those worthies in our own country did when it was proposed to withdraw Federal troops from the South. They have had their time of domination, and if they shall suffer from Home Rule it will be because of their bitter and persistent antagonism to their fellow-Irishmen...Coercion for the pleasure of the minority has lasted long enough.”⁴² Instead of posing the home rule movement as peaceful, this argument continued white Southern constructions of their region as a colonized space. Reconstruction was a massive effort at empire-building in this reading, and carpetbaggers only wanted Federal troops to remain in the South so that they could go on dominating and taking from the Southern people. Notably too this argument maintained the Southern white construction of home rule as an issue to be

⁴¹ “The Continued Troubles...,” *The News and Observer*, June 15, 1886. The next year, the *News and Observer* continued to urge Irish supporters to show respect for Britain’s laws. See “The Rioting in London will...,” *The News and Observer*, November 18, 1887.

⁴² “The Ulsterman may...,” *The State*, March 11, 1893.

decided amongst whites—white Southerners versus white Northerners in Washington or as carpetbaggers.

White Southerners also hoped that the Irish home rule movement could change the British government. When the *Daily Picayune* celebrated the final passage of the bill, it noted that the Lords would probably reject it, but claimed that the hard work had been done. The paper argued that the Bill would simply be passed by subsequent Parliaments until it ultimately succeeded. In so doing, they argued that the British government would no longer be controlled by the undemocratic House of Lords⁴³ *The Daily Charlotte Observer* even pushed for the complete removal of that house. Owned by Charlotte industrialist Daniel Tompkins, the *Observer* spent much of this time promoting the notion of a New South. In this editorial, Tompkins argued that it made no sense to have a medieval remnant with so much control over a nation like Britain. According to the editorial, “A body of hereditary legislators—aristocrats, gentry, so-called nobility—with no sympathy for the great quivering, suffering heart of the common people, cannot stand.”⁴⁴ As a proponent of Southern industrialization, Tompkins was not speaking only of British gentry but also taking on the Southern planter class. The failure of home rule not only spoke to the relationship between North and South but to relationships between Southern whites as well.

⁴³ “The Passage of the Home Rule Bill,” *The Daily Picayune*, August 31, 1893. When the Lords acted as expected, the *Picayune* repeated that the bill would eventually pass. See “The Home Rule Bill Rejected in the House of Lords,” *The Daily Picayune*, September 9, 1893. The *News and Observer* also believed that the Lords would reject it but that it would eventually become law, see “The most important events of the past week...,” *The News and Observer*, September 3, 1893.

⁴⁴ “Popular Opposition to the Peers,” *Daily Charlotte Observer*, February 15, 1894

Southern hopes for the dismissal of the House of Lords and the success of Irish home rule would not come to pass. Gladstone's retirement a few months after the Lords rejected his second Home Rule Bill led to pessimism for Ireland's Southern supporters rather than the optimism that had marked early reactions to the failure of the bill.⁴⁵ As they did in 1886, white Southerners looked to a setback for Irish home rule to reflect upon the state of home rule as a democratic movement. *The State* urged supporters of Irish home rule to remain loyal to Britain while simultaneously continuing their struggle. The paper noted that the movement was just but that it would not succeed if its supporters merely gave in or participated in a violent uprising. Staying the course would ensure success.⁴⁶ In early 1894, *The Daily Picayune* argued that the Irish movement would have long-ranging effects on the British system and noted the growing home rule movements in Scotland and Wales.⁴⁷ However, with the election of a Tory ministry the next year, Irish home rule faded from Southern newspapers.

Throughout these debates over Irish home rule white Southern journalists portrayed the concept of home rule as a portable issue, just, inevitable, and universal. As the *Atlanta Constitution* declared in 1890, "Disappointment and delays may retard the progress of self-government, but it is a winning idea, destined finally to

⁴⁵ "Resignation of Gladstone," *The News and Observer*, March 4, 1894.

⁴⁶ "Between Two Fires," *The State*, September 12, 1893. The *Knoxville Journal* also assured its readers that the Irish would eventually be successful. See "Gladstone and Home Rule," *The Knoxville Journal*, October 1, 1893.

⁴⁷ "The Growth of Home Rule," *The Daily Picayune*, April 22, 1894. See also "The Decentralizing Tendency in Great Britain," *The Daily Picayune*, March 31, 1895.

culminate gloriously in the climax of triumphant democracy.”⁴⁸ It was in this portability that white Southerners had the most disagreement and used the most slippery language. As the above discussion of home rule in India suggests, at times, it seemed that any people would be capable of enjoying the benefits of home rule, while at others there were races that were simply incapable of managing it. This messiness continued throughout the period of Irish home rule activism and into the twentieth century.⁴⁹ Though home rule never succeeded in the manner that Gladstone or Parnell had in mind, the debates over home rule in the white Southern press reveal a South deeply interested in the imperial world as they sought to understand their place both in the nation and the world outside of it. In that world, white Southern journalists saw their own movement for local control to have lasting significance beyond the borders of the United States.

While it would no longer hold the position that it did as an active movement in Ireland, home rule would continue to color Southern perceptions of the growing power of the United States in the world. After the Filipinos had begun an armed resistance to American rule in the wake of the Spanish-American War, the *Atlanta Constitution* argued that the archipelago should be granted home rule. Noting that

⁴⁸ “A Great Cause and Its Leaders,” *Atlanta Constitution*, December 21, 1890.

⁴⁹ In the mid-1880s, white Southerners witnessed home rule moving across the Atlantic. The *Columbus Daily-Enquirer* suggested that Gladstone’s attempts to bring home rule to Ireland inspired Cuban revolutionaries to work for the same rights. According to the paper, Cuban dissidents in the summer of 1886 put forth their own home rule bill to the Spanish Cortes. It did not go well for them (the Cortes declared that no government would ever grant this right to Cuba), but for Southerners it not only marked the problems that Spain was having with its North American colony but also that Home Rule as a movement was catching on around the globe “The Cuban Home Rulers,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, June 26, 1886.

most of the peoples who made up the islands were peace-loving, “civilized[,] and Christianized”—with the exception of a few small tribes—the editorial argued that they deserved to be governed by their own representatives rather than continue as part of an empire. Rather than declaring the Filipinos to be racially inferior, the Atlanta paper concluded that they were deserving of being called “civilized.” The *Constitution* further argued that Democratic leaders in the US had always pushed for local government, they wanted the US to grant that privilege to peaceful Filipinos as well and to make a clear declaration of home rule as part of US policy toward the islands. To them, it was Republicans who want to be colonizers against the more democratic Democrats.⁵⁰

As white Southerners critiqued an American empire, they had already spent three decades developing a critique of imperialism and constructing a counter in the concept of home rule. Though the connection between home rule and race was always a troubled one, this connection did allow white Southerners a means of seeing empire as a fleeting and unjust moment in history that would be swept aside by local democracies in regions outside the South. Though in the South, it was inextricably connected to the reconstruction and maintenance of white supremacy, outside the South it could be used against centralized authority in Washington and London in ways that challenged imperial constructions of a colonized other. When they confronted an American empire, they could justifiably argue that they had opposed imperialism from much earlier than Republicans supported it. In their conversations

⁵⁰ “The Philippine Question,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 19, 1899.

about home rule they developed theories of the relationship of colony and metropole, though they would not have used those terms.

The Italian Lynching of 1891: John Mitchell, Jr. Seeks an International Ally against Lynching

For black Southerners, the lynching of eleven Italian citizens in New Orleans in 1891 meant that perhaps they had found an international ally in their campaign against mob violence. Black activists, like John Mitchell, Jr., hoped that the attention of the world would lead white Southerners to curtail their reliance on mob violence and bring the civilized world to criticize violence within the South.⁵¹ For Mitchell, editor of the *Richmond Planet* and influential voice within the black press, the lynching of these foreign men created an opportunity for African Americans to challenge the widespread lynching of their people by white Southerners. In so doing, he, like white Southerners had in the debates over home rule, attempted to define the South to the world. Unlike white Southerners, Mitchell hoped that the world would see the South and race relations there as uncivilized.

Though African Americans were far more likely to suffer at the hands of white mobs than any other ethnic group in the South, Southerners, white and, very occasionally black, also lynched poor whites, Jews, and, in a case that drew headlines all over the country and across the Atlantic, eleven Italians. In 1890, ethnic tensions rose to a fever pitch in New Orleans, Louisiana. The Chief of Police David Hennessy

⁵¹ For more on Mitchell see Ann Field Alexander, *Race Man: The Rise and Fall of the "Fighting Editor," John Mitchell, Jr.* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002)

charged that the Mafia, an Italian import, was disrupting the labor of Italian immigrants in the city and vowed to stop them. Hennessy's campaign against the Mafia brought him many enemies in that city's Italian community, and he was assassinated later that year. As he was dying from his wounds, Hennessy claimed that Italians were the ones who had gunned him down.⁵² Hennessy's murder drew headlines across the world because of his anti-Mafia crusade and the brutality of his killing—he was shot multiple times in the middle of a public street. New Orleans police arrested nineteen Italian men in the aftermath of the crime and charged them in his murder. In a trial marked by dodgy witnesses, questionable evidence, and charges of jury tampering, nine of the men were found not guilty or a mistrial was declared.

In the days after the trial, a group of the city's prominent white citizens gathered together and organized a mob to deliver the justice that they believed a jury could not. Five days after the trial, they came to the courthouse and removed eleven of the men held in connection with the crime. They shot some of the victims in their cells while they took others from jail and executed them outside. Some of the mob's victims appear to have been connected to organized crime within the city while others

⁵² It is impossible to say who actually shot Hennessy. It is undeniable that organized crime within the city had motive to attack him, but the tensions within the city and the quickness of the authorities to round up Italian men (some of whom had alibis for the time of the crime) makes any attempt to discover the culprits entirely speculative. The only identification given by Hennessy himself was that "Dagoes" shot him. Contemporary journals too were convinced that the Mafia was responsible and all news stories from the era reflected that conviction. See Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 56-62. See also Richard Gambino, *Vendetta: A True Story of the Worst Lynching in America* (New York: Doubleday, 1977) and Sheryl L. Postman and Marco Rimanelli, *The 1891 New Orleans Lynching and U.S. Italian Relations: A Look Back* (New York: P. Lang, 1992).

were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. The brutality of their execution, its extralegal means, the victims' supposed links to organized crime, and the fact that some of the victims were still Italian citizens brought the act headlines all over the world. For some commentators, the Mafia brought this on themselves due to their willingness to tamper with the jury and witnesses while other decried the uncivilized nature of mob 'justice.' Additionally, these violent acts drew diplomats from the United States and Italy into discussions of mob violence and elicited rumors of a possible war. Because the victims were Italian, their home country sought punishment on behalf of the men's relatives still living in Italy. The Harrison administration found themselves in the midst of an international incident perpetrated by the citizens of New Orleans. The administration negotiated reparations for families of the victims, and the Italian government backed down from its push for prosecution of the mob's leaders.

At this time, newspapers, white and black, placed local concerns next to global news. In a small weekly paper like the *Richmond Planet*, this placement was often literal as Mitchell did not treat the *Planet* as merely a local paper. It was not uncommon for the editorial page to concern itself with city-wide issues, as well as national news, and international incidents. Mitchell had become editor in 1884, and, throughout his four plus decades in that role, used the paper as a platform to challenge white supremacy and build a black community over the whole of the South. Twice in the 1890s, Mitchell would head the Afro-American Press Association. In the years leading up to Ida B. Wells's British anti-lynching campaigns, the *Planet* would speak out against the uncivilized nature of mob violence and what it revealed about white Southern claims of civilization. Mitchell was a staunch Republican and his

correspondents covered both national and international affairs. While the bulk of the paper was devoted to Virginia and Richmond, Mitchell regularly commented upon conversations in Washington, Haiti, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Regular readers could place the oppression of African Americans in the South with that of Jews in Russia, natives of Hawaii, or Africans in the British Empire.⁵³

The New Orleans lynching provided Mitchell with an effective means of connecting international and regional affairs. Before the lynching, Mitchell was one of the most outspoken opponents of mob violence in the South. Under his guidance the *Planet* promoted anti-lynching measures and the Force Bill while bringing news of lynchings from all over the South to its readers. Mitchell accused Southerners of violating the rules of civilized societies by taking the law into their own hands, and he saw how international affairs could be used to prop up arguments against lynching. In 1891, when the Italian men were lynched in New Orleans, Mitchell ended an editorial about the incident with the question, “Is the white South civilized?”⁵⁴ A couple weeks later, another editorial noted, “We shall watch with interest the negotiations between

⁵³ While Mitchell and his writers often claimed common cause with many of the oppressed, not all of the comparisons were favorable. In 1891, a story appeared about a new pamphlet critical of Henry Morton Stanley’s affairs in Africa on behalf of the British Empire. While the article criticized Stanley and his relationships with African peoples, it also treated the African tribes that Stanley encountered as extremely gullible. In one case, the article claimed, a white man would use a lens to light a cigar and explain to African villagers that his relationship to the sun would allow him to burn their whole village with a simple request. Using tricks such as these, the white man was able to subdue whole African villages for the empire. In their portrayal of Africans, Mitchell and the pamphlet’s author, who was also black, accepted images of African backwardness while still criticizing the practice of empire. A proponent of empire, Stanley traveled widely in Africa, was infamous at the time for his treatment of native peoples, and wrote of his experiences there. See “A Colored Critic of Stanley,” *Richmond Planet*, April 18, 1891.

⁵⁴ “Are They Civilized?” *Richmond Planet*, March 14, 1891.

the two powers believing that the international aspect of the situation will result in some good to our suffering people and demonstrate that lynch-law must go.”⁵⁵ In this case, as with the Wells a few years later, an African American leader hoped that pressure from abroad could help stop (or at least lessen) violence in the South.

Newspapers across the country and across the Atlantic carried news of the lynching to their readers. This was not the first time that readers would have been alerted to mob violence in the South. Indeed, it was quite common for newspapers in the States and England to carry short notices of a lynching every few weeks. Though they often condemned the violence of the acts, many Northern and British newspapers were sympathetic to Southern whites’ claims that lynching was necessary to protect white women. Similarly, Northern papers supported the arguments of Louisiana elites who pointed to the Mafia connections of the victims. A *New York Times* editorial was typical. The paper declared that the mob “was directed against murderous wretches who had succeeded in defeating the execution upon themselves of justice according to the law.”⁵⁶ To many Northerners, Southern whites had helped keep their city safe from an international criminal organization.

White Southern newspapers were divided in their commentary on the lynching. The *Macon Telegraph* claimed that it was the Mafia specifically that the mob had targeted and that the people of the South had no prejudice against Italians: “The hatred was for the men who have imported from Italy a species of crime which

⁵⁵ “New Orleans Lynching,” *Richmond Planet*, March 28, 1891.

⁵⁶ “The Italians and the Mafia,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 1891.

is particularly dangerous to a society constituted as ours is.”⁵⁷ For the Macon paper, neither the South nor the United States had anything to fear from Italy. The national government was not responsible for the actions of a mob, and the Italian government would spend little effort to seek reparations for men who were connected to organized crime. The *Columbus Enquirer-Sun* agreed that Italy had no case in this matter. The Columbus paper argued that the Italian societies were stirring up trouble to their own detriment. In a preview to the coverage of Wells’s British anti-lynching campaigns, the *Enquirer-Sun* portrayed Italian-Americans who protested the violence against their fellows as “only calculated to stir up a feeling not friendly or cordial to them as a race.”⁵⁸ Yet, not all Southern whites thought that the New Orleans’s mob had behaved responsibly. The *Atlanta Constitution* declared, “such lawlessness cannot be justified. We must stand by the law, the courts and the verdicts of juries.”⁵⁹ For elite Southern whites like those in Atlanta, it hampered their efforts to portray their region as welcoming to immigration.⁶⁰ To them, the Italian lynching was not so easily dismissed and could hurt the international image of the region.

In Richmond, Mitchell agreed. To him, the lynching shed a harsh (international) light on the treatment of African Americans in the South. For Mitchell, the violence committed with the consent of the elite whites of New Orleans spoke more about their nature than that of the lynched men. In an editorial right after the

⁵⁷ “The New Orleans Tragedy,” *The Macon Telegraph*, March 17, 1891.

⁵⁸ “Italy Has No Case,” *The Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, March 19, 1891.

⁵⁹ “New Orleans and the Mafia,” *Atlanta Constitution*, March 15, 1891.

⁶⁰ An editorial three days later would build on this argument. Though still critical of the lynching the *Constitution* argued that the South lynched criminals while Northerners attacked immigrants. See “Foreigners North and South,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 18, 1891.

executions, Mitchell argued that it was unlikely that the Mafia could have tampered with a jury of white Southern men so that the jury would have acquitted the Italians if the evidence against them had been overwhelming, and that “in the mob’s blind fury, we have no doubt that the innocent perished with the guilty.”⁶¹ For Mitchell and his allies, the Italian lynching provided a means for attacking the white South’s claims to civilization, and he would not let up the pressure for weeks.

In early April, Mitchell published a series of editorials about the lynching. In them, he called the Italian lynching, “a God-send for the Afro-American. It has called the attention of the civilized world to the horrors of American lynch-law, and behind it all lurks the shadows of fifty thousand bleeding negroes who have been its victims.”⁶² For a man so intimately acquainted with the power and ferocity of a white Southern mob, Mitchell understood better than many observers outside the South that the kind of people lynched in the South often had challenged the social order in ways unacceptable to white Southerners rather than acted as part of a criminal conspiracy. Mitchell’s experience in these matters also led him to doubt the justifications of the perpetrators. This same analysis of lynching figured prominently in Wells’s anti-lynching campaigns. She and Mitchell repeatedly demonstrated that white Southerners did not only lynch those accused of rape. As they told the world, lynching was a tool of white supremacy, not an unfortunate response to black barbarism.

⁶¹ “Are They Civilized?” *The Richmond Planet*, March 14, 1891.

⁶² “Mr. Massey on Lynch Law,” *Richmond Planet*, April 4, 1891.

As Wells would later for making the same argument, Mitchell faced threats of violence for challenging white accounts of lynching. Within the set of editorials about the Italian lynching, he addressed a letter from Yazoo County in Mississippi. This letter illustrates the difficulties African Americans faced when they challenged Southern white narratives about race relations there. According the *Planet*, the letter writer (who refused to identify himself) “expresses his desire to kill the editor of this journal as he would a dog and announces that a Negro in Yazoo Co, Miss. has no more show than a dog.” Mitchell’s response illustrates the delicate intersection of race and gender at play in African Americans’ responses to white threats of violence and white defenses of their privilege during this period. Mitchell invited the letter writer to Virginia where “our repeating rifle speaks only sixteen times, and our revolver sings a song with five musical notes... The result might be death, but we stand ready to face the consequences.”⁶³ In the pages of his Richmond paper, Mitchell confidently met threats with some of his own.

After dealing with this threat, Mitchell, like Wells would in speeches in the US North and in Britain, argued that white Southerners created false narratives to support their lynching habit. In this case, the Virginia editor maintained that the Mafia was a red herring used to stir up sympathy with Northern whites. According to Mitchell, “We do not believe in the Mafia.” For him, white Southerners saw every organization which might challenge their hold on power as some sort of criminal conspiracy. He contrasted the behavior of Southern whites to those in Chicago after

⁶³ “Editor Mitchell Threatened,” *Richmond Planet*, April 4, 1891.

the recent Haymarket bombing.⁶⁴ In Mitchell's account the Chicago authorities faced an Anarchic society not unlike what Southerners described as the Mafia. In Chicago, the perpetrators faced a jury and were hanged. In the South, the jury failed and it was the anarchic mob that took over. And, the mob was composed of the city's leaders. Thus, "New Orleans has thoroughly advertised itself as being a locality where lawlessness is practiced by those citizens who should be foremost in upholding it."⁶⁵ Even if the Mafia were real, the North had more civilized ways of dealing with secret societies.

In speaking of the Mafia as if it were real—Mitchell was not consistent in his opinion on the group's existence—the Richmond editor argued that it was not the first such organization to use violence and assassination in the South. He linked the Mafia with the Klan and other white groups who attacked African Americans in the South: "The Regulators, White Liners, and the Ku Klux Klan were no better than the Italian Mafia." For him, the Mafia came from the same tradition: "New Orleans in general and Louisiana in particular are but reaping the result of years of assassination and crime."⁶⁶ In an editorial in March, Mitchell pointed out that the Ku Klux Klan had been responsible for the assassination of black officeholders during the past twenty years and that no one had seen fit to attack that violent organization as they were attacking the Mafia. Yet, he hoped that the international nature of this event could

⁶⁴ Given the lack of evidence against those hanged in Chicago, this comment may have been made ironically. For more on the Haymarket bombing, its causes and consequences, see Carl S. Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: the Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁶⁵ "The lynching of eleven Italian men..." *Richmond Planet*, April 4, 1891.

⁶⁶ "A Dangerous Attitude," *The Richmond Planet*, May 2, 1891.

spur the US government to take action against all such groups. As he suggested, “the international aspect of the situation will result in some good to our suffering people and demonstrate that lynch law must go.”⁶⁷ Perhaps, Mitchell thought, pressure from outside the United States would bring some relief when African Americans could find few friends within their own country.

Mitchell did not stop bringing up the international aspects of the case even when his editorials turned to other issues. After briefly discussing members of the Afro-American Press Association, Mitchell quoted from Secretary of State James Blaine’s comments on the Italian situation. Then, tucked between two longer editorials on national Republican politics, Mitchell declared: “We knew that lynch-law was a dangerous practice, now southerners have gotten the entire country into trouble by practices which should have been suppressed long ago.” A little further down in the same column, another brief editorial noted, “Colored men are in constant fear of being lynched in the South. They have no protection on earth.”⁶⁸ Mitchell was not alone in highlighting the lawlessness of Southern lynchings and hoping that the international incident would bring renewed interest to stopping lynching in the South. The *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, a weekly publication of black Methodists in New Orleans, also accused white Southerners of being uncivilized. Their first editorial about the Italian lynching noted, “The circumstances attending the whole

⁶⁷ “New Orleans Lynching,” *The Richmond Planet*, March 28, 1891.

⁶⁸ See “Italy is said...” and “Colored Men have no...” *Richmond Planet*, April 18, 1891.

case... will be deplored wherever justice and humanity exist.”⁶⁹ Like Mitchell, they hoped that the incident would bring Southern blacks allies, and they argued that the white South was not capable of ruling themselves if they allowed such violence to exist.⁷⁰

Yet, while Mitchell hoped that international opinion could sway white Southerners, British coverage of the event often supported the actions of white residents of New Orleans. The *Observer*, a weekly newspaper out of London which was allied with the Liberal Party on everything but Irish home rule,⁷¹ used the Italian lynching in conjunction with another that had happened near the same time to reflect on what the rash of lynchings in the US South meant about the region and about the United States as a nation. To the paper, the two lynchings illustrated the differing amounts of civilization that existed in the US South. The second lynching, which they explained was more typical, occurred in Southern Kentucky on the Tennessee border. A black man named Hunter had been charged with robbing folks in Tennessee and fled North to Kentucky where police officials captured him. On their way to return him to his native state an armed group of sixty men arrived and proceeded to hang him and then shoot the body. The *Observer* described the men as “anxious to make an example of a ‘nigger’” and not associated with the crimes he was supposed to have committed in Tennessee. Like the lynching of the Italian men, this murder was

⁶⁹ “The Hennessy Murder Trial and Its Dreadful Aftermath,” *The Southwestern Christian Advocate*, March 19, 1891.

⁷⁰ “The Italian Imbroglia,” *The Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 9, 1891.

⁷¹ In this the *Observer* was not unlike many British Liberals. The debates over Irish Home Rule split the Party into two factions—the Liberals and the Liberal Unionists (who opposed home rule for Ireland), see Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*.

associated with organized crime for the lynchers claimed that they had been having trouble with a band of African American lawbreakers. The British paper argued that the backwoods of Kentucky and Tennessee had not really been civilized and the lynching occurred in the absence of civilized institutions of law. The Italian lynching on the other hand took place in a relatively civilized place, “on a par Naples or Madrid,” where citizens had lost faith with those institutions. Notably, the British paper linked the US Southern city to Southern Europe rather than London in terms of civilization. In this construction, the editors of the *Observer* implicitly argued that the US South had not reached the height of Anglo-Saxon civilization.

Even as they critiqued both places for their violent conduct, the *Observer* did not outright condemn the actions of the lynchers in either case and indeed allied itself with Southern whites over African Americans. The paper explained why such actions were necessary in explicitly racial terms: “the black rowdies of the South are a standing danger to all the white inhabitants.” After pointing out that Southern whites should not feel safe in the presence of so many African Americans, the editorial complained that Northerners did not think about this enough when considering the South. In this case, a British paper argued that men and women in the North did not understand the dangers faced by white Southerners because of the descendants of Africans in their midst. In their apology for Southern lynching however, the British paper touched on the real cause of lynching more explicitly than white Southerners generally would. The editorial explained that lynching “is only a particular illustration

of the general belief in the necessity of constantly reminding the negro to keep his place,” which the *Observer* thought was reasoned justification for lynching.⁷²

Further reflection on the matter did not change the British paper’s support for lynching in this case and it connected the situation in the South to the ongoing debate over Irish home rule. Blaming the Mafia, the next issue of the *Observer* declared, “No reasonable doubt can be entertained that the Italians lynched by the mob at New Orleans richly deserved their fate.” In terms of a federal response to the actions of a mob in New Orleans, the *Observer* argued that there was little Washington could do but pay the Italian government reparations and not punish anyone in New Orleans. For the *Observer*, the US South had home rule, and the situation between the Italian and American governments demonstrated the problems that such a system created. The editor explained that advocates of Irish home rule should understand the implications of home rule as practiced in the US and the difficulties that the Empire would face if it enacted the system in Ireland. For the paper, it was difficult to reconcile “Imperial obligations” with “Independence.” That is, violence on the edge of empire had implications for the centralized authority.⁷³ As early as 1890, this British paper looked across the Atlantic and understood violence in the South speaking to not only race relations in the United States but also to understanding the relationship between empire and the periphery.

In the same vein, the London *Times* connected the Italian case and Irish home rule. For the London paper, the American government and its loose connection to the

⁷² “The lynching at New Orleans...” *The Observer*, March 29, 1891.

⁷³ “It takes two to make a quarrel...” *The Observer*, April 5, 1891.

government of its various states, created perilous situations in which local behavior could instigate international incidents. The London paper went so far as to connect the Mafia to the Irish Land Leagues who were fighting for independence from British rule—seeing the Land Leagues not as freedom fighters but as an organized crime syndicate—“Both the Mafia and the Land League used murder to enforce robbery.” In this telling, “the lynchers, however irregular their procedures, were, at all events, re-establishing the authority of the Decalogue by the only means at their command.” In this editorial, the *Times* noted that the distance between the US and Italy made it unlikely that Italy would be able to mount anything other than a diplomatic campaign against the lynchers. However, they concluded, “if this country were to adopt the federal institutions dreamed of by our Separatists, it needs little imagination to conceive of similar complications, involving far greater perils”—presumably because Britain was so much more powerful than the US.⁷⁴ For British observers, the South became an example of the perils of home rule even as white Southerners championed that cause at home.

Yet, not all British observers took the lynching in New Orleans as a condemnation of home rule. While the *Observer* and the *Times* used the Italian lynching to advocate against home rule, another London paper, the *Daily News*—whose owners supported home rule and Wells later—framed the issue not in terms of federalism but of civilization instead. The *Daily News* editorialized that “the whole civilized world” shared “the most intense indignation” with the Italian government.

⁷⁴ “The lynching of eleven Italians in New Orleans...” *The Times* (London), March 18, 1891.

After the paper noted that not all of the lynched men were guilty of Hennessy's murder, the editorial declared, "Their unintelligible cries were not all for mercy; they were cries for justice." Not only was the lynching a moral failure for the people of New Orleans, but, according to the London journalists, a stain on the American justice system. If the people of New Orleans did not trust a jury then they needed to do more to reform that system rather than take the law into their own hands.⁷⁵ James Bryce argued that the situation in New Orleans demonstrated how civilized British colonists were. He noted that the imperial government largely left the "self-governing colonies" to themselves and that nothing of this sort had occurred in those regions. According to Bryce, "Nothing but the law-abiding spirit which our colonists have usually shown, and the cautious prudence which the sense of danger has forced upon the home government during the last twenty or thirty years, could have averted serious complications."⁷⁶ By this construction, British colonists were more civilized

⁷⁵ "Lynch Law in New Orleans," *The Daily News*, March 16, 1891.

⁷⁶ James Bryce, "Legal and Constitutional Aspects of the Lynching at New Orleans," *Littell's Living Age*, June 6, 1891, p. 584. Bryce reflected on the place of violence in Southern life but focused instead on the constitutional questions raised by Italy's protest to the US government. According to Bryce, the Italian government did not have a legal case because of the relationship between the federal and state governments within the United States. What is significant for understanding how the Italian lynching did little to become more of a debate about lynching and violence in the South is how much of the debate in the North, South, and Britain focused on abstractions such as these. Rather than concentrate on the violence of the lynching itself, Bryce and others instead avoided these questions by attending to theories about governance and home rule. The challenge for Mitchell here and Wells later was to turn conversations such as these away from abstractions and highlight the very real violence that black Southerners faced on a daily basis. For other contemporary accounts that focused on the violent nature of the victims rather than the nature of the lynching itself see Jessie White (Vedova) Mario, "Italy and the United States," *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature*, June 1891, Vol. 53, No. 6, pp. 837-849; Henry Cabot Lodge, "Lynch Law and Unrestricted Immigration," *The North*

than American Southerners and the imperial government better at heading off crises before they developed.

Like Bryce did for British colonists, but in a different way, white Southerners defined themselves as more civilized because of their reaction to the Italian lynching. The lynching of Italians in New Orleans created a strange dynamic in which Northern (and some British) papers sympathized with the lynchers while some elite white Southerners condemned the actions of the mob. White Southerners pointed to the reactions of the British and Northern presses in support of the lynchers and their own condemnation of them to define themselves as better than Northerners or Britons.⁷⁷ At least one Southern paper noticed that British newspapers tended to defend the mob's intentions if not their actions. According to *The Charlotte News*, English "newspapers have been singularly unanimous in excusing the slaughter on the ground that the bloodthirsty Mafia is out of all relations with modern civilization."⁷⁸ To the editors of the *Constitution*, the acceptance of lynch law by the Northern press demonstrated their hypocrisy in dealing with the South and their prejudice against foreigners. For Southern whites, the support of Northern newspapers was not as welcome as the chance to compare themselves favorably to the North. To them, the coverage of this event in the North demonstrated the higher moral ground from which

American Review, May 1891, Vol. CLII, No. CCCXIV, pp. 602-612; George Ticknor Curtis, "The Law and the Lynchers," *The North American Review*, June 1891, Col CLII, No. CCCXV, pp. 691-695; and "The Lesson From New Orleans," *The Christian Union*, Vol. 43, No. 13, p. 398. For more on Bryce and mob violence in the US South as well as his belief in black inferiority, see Chapter 3.

⁷⁷ The main exception to Southern condemnation was the white Louisiana press, which overwhelmingly favored the actions of the mob. See "New Orleans Lynching," *The Daily Picayune*, March 25, 1891.

⁷⁸ "Not Much Condemnation," *The Charlotte News*, March 23, 1891.

Southern white elites operated. They accepted lynching as a response to assault on white women, but strongly condemned the murder of “disagreeable foreigners who had shown themselves powerful enough to defy the law.”⁷⁹ Violence against foreigners looked considerably different to white Southern elites hoping to draw immigrants from the North than it did to Northern journalists who found in Southern justice something to respect, at least as far as immigrants were concerned..

The controversy ended when the US government paid reparations to the Italian government, but Mitchell’s campaign did not end. He continued to welcome any excuse to link white violence to the US South’s international reputation. In 1893, when Southern governors met in Richmond to discuss ways to encourage immigration and investment to the South, Mitchell saw another way that international affairs could help pressure white Southern leaders. Along with other local prominent African American leaders, Mitchell attempted to present a petition on behalf of Southern blacks to the conference of Southern governors. Though they were unable to present or submit their petition to the politicians, Mitchell did print it in the next edition of the *Planet*. The petitioners argued that lawlessness, which included lynching, drove capital and labor away from the South. As they said, “the unhappy state of affairs in many parts of our fair land have been published to the detriment of the South in many of the countries of Europe...the result has been that the major portion of the people in search of homes have shunned our state lines and directed their course to the fertile land but rigorous climate of the North and Far West.” They recommended that the governors undertake to raise up all the citizens of the South

⁷⁹ “Foreigners North and South,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 18, 1891.

through education and enforce laws against mob violence. Then, immigrants would want to come to the South.⁸⁰

Mitchell and his allies attempted to use the South's reputation in the world to frame a narrative that would challenge white Southern understandings of and justifications for lynching. Mitchell, and Wells later, wanted both Northerners and Britons to do confront the violence of the lynching itself rather focus than on the supposed crimes of the lynched men and women had been. While the Italian lynching did not force public opinion to move in their direction, it did set up a dialogue with which to seek allies, and an international campaign to embarrass Southern whites. When Ida B. Wells went to England, she drew from this dialogue and spoke to British audiences who were already questioning the civilization of the South. In looking to dialogues between Wells and the British, and the British and white Southerners, we can see how she and her allies used the press to shape an alternative narrative of lynching against the one that white Southerners and their supporters were making. The strength of both Wells and Mitchell's arguments was moving past the question of black barbarism, which, the previous chapter demonstrated, often elicited at least sympathy from British observers to a concentration on the violence of the acts themselves. Though Mitchell's hopes for an international outcry against the New Orleans lynching did not come true, his commentary on the event helped construct a

⁸⁰ "Colored Men Meet!" *Richmond Planet*, April 15, 1893. Mitchell and other black newspaper editors would explicitly link Wells and Parnell as two individual who worked for the rights of their people the next year. See "The Afro-American Editors Meet," *Richmond Planet*, September 15, 1894. For more on this linkage, see Chapter 4.

narrative that black Southerners could use to challenge white testimony on lynching and violence in the South.

Conclusion

As the United States was about to embark on its own imperial adventures, the British leader of the Irish home rule movement died quietly in his home. Approaching ninety and very ill, Gladstone's death in May of 1898 was not unexpected. After his death, white Southern newspapers were quick to celebrate the man and his work. Though they mentioned his earlier career, Southern editorials concentrated on his final two campaigns, Irish home rule and ending the atrocities in Armenia.⁸¹ For these white Southern papers, Gladstone's passing marked the end of a champion for human freedom. In an editorial about his life, the South Carolina *Weekly News and Courier* noted that Gladstone held advanced positions on "human freedom and liberty of conscience."⁸² The *Daily Picayune* mourned, "His death will be the world's and constitutional liberty's irreparable loss."⁸³ The *News and Observer* called him an "example for all public men."⁸⁴ Calling him by his nickname, "The Grand Old Man," white Southerners celebrated his defeats as much as his successes and argued that he had set in motion events that would provide a lasting legacy. In a letter to the *Macon Telegraph*, Walter Hill (future Chancellor of the University of Georgia) noted that "the seed he planted for home rule will yet bear its rightful fruit," adding that

⁸¹ For more on Gladstone, the US South, and atrocities in Armenia, see Chapter 4.

⁸² "William Ewart Gladstone," *The Weekly News and Courier*, May 21, 1898.

⁸³ "The Passing of Gladstone," *The Daily Picayune*, May 18, 1898.

⁸⁴ "An Example for All Public Men," *The News and Observer*, May 20, 1898.

Gladstone had admired the US South for its production of great statesmen.⁸⁵ In the years since the loss of Irish home rule, white Southerners had not lost their belief in its inevitability.

As this public mourning for Gladstone suggests, white Southerners took on his causes as their own in the late nineteenth century and envisioned the British politician as a man after their own hearts. By fighting for local democracy, white Southerners joined the Grand Old Man and demanded that the world (specifically, whites in the US North and Britain) recognize their values as civilized. Rather than looking the federal government for ideas of foreign policy white Southerners instead looked to the moral authority of a British Liberal. Understanding empire and European relations by looking at their own region's history and position in the United States, white Southern journalists and politicians constructed a worldview that placed their region at the cutting edge of nineteenth century progress. Reforming the Union would also mean reforming the world. This worldview also explicitly favored the New South creed of many of these white Southerners. Instead of moving the South back to the days of slavery, home rule would allow the South to be accepted as part of the civilized world.

In speaking of home rule, white Southerners created an image of empire that mirrored what they took to be their relationship to the North and the federal government. Yet, when Southerners spoke of democracy at home, they explicitly meant white democracy. This commitment to white supremacy was not nearly as

⁸⁵ Walter B. Hill, "The Foremost Man in All the World," *The Macon Telegraph*, May 20, 1898

explicit when Southern white journalists spoke of home rule abroad. In this way, home rule opened a discursive space in which white Southerners could speak of democracy without speaking about race. The lack of references to race in most Southern discussions of home rule is striking in a region where race meant so much and where many of its leading politicians actively held black voting rights in contempt. Instead, they typically argued that the Irish deserved to vote because home rule held universal value rather than because they were white.

In these discussions of home rule and violence in Armenia, we can see how each reveals the roots of white Southern anti-imperialism and the ways in which the white Southerners placed themselves within the world. By looking at them both together, we can see whites in the South drawing from the imperial world to justify their subjugation of Southern blacks in subtle ways. Instead of seeing the white imperial powers as their allies, Southern whites made sure to distance themselves and their region from empire. In setting up home rule as a demand of the nineteenth century, white Southerners imagined a world in which they were the colonized who yearned to be set free from imperial bonds. It was this image that framed their understanding of the world and peoples outside the South.

African Americans, too, called upon the international community to judge the US South by the standards of civilization. The Italian lynching first marked a moment in Southern history when the South (and the violence there) sparked international controversy. Though Mitchell was unable to make a significant international case against lynching, he did articulate lynching as more than a local matter. As Mitchell and other African American journalists clearly saw, international controversy would

bring Southern white leaders to defend their region. They hoped that part of that defense would be a stronger stand against lynching. If Southern white leaders cared as much about their region's international reputation as they made out, then it logically followed that people from outside the South could bring those same leaders to confront this stain on their region.

Yet, white Britons were more concerned with what the incident meant for Irish home rule than what it said about the South. Through all of these conversations, we can see both the US South and the world outside of it as battlegrounds over the proper definition for civilization. For white Southerners, the Irish were a resource in defending their own claims for home rule, and for black Southerners, perhaps people outside the South could bring needed attention to the violence they suffered at home. For Britons, the South demonstrated the problems that could arise when a centralized government ceded authority to local peoples. These dialogues about civilization and empire would continue through the rest of the century, and Southerners and Britons worked through them by speaking of and to each other.

2. A Problem of Money and Power: The Silver Question, the British Empire, and South American Trade

In the cotton trade and in their search for markets in South America, Southern white elites repeatedly named the British Empire as an obstacle to their region's prosperity. Over the course of the 1890s, white Southern politicians and journalists argued that British politicians and bankers opposed an international bimetallic agreement because it would raise the price of Southern cotton. In short, because the United States was on the gold standard, American silver had very little value. British cloth merchants could buy cheap American silver and trade it for Indian cotton because India was on a silver currency. Their actions forced Southern cotton farmers to sell their cotton at a low price to compete with their Indian producers.

In the same vein, white Southerners voiced fears of British trade with South America. When controversies emerged between the British government and Nicaragua and Venezuela, Southern whites saw the British as surrounding the site of a future South American canal and stifling American trade in the region. When a boundary dispute turned into the Venezuela Crisis (1895-96) and threatened war between the US and Britain, some white journalists even argued that the US should defend their fellow republic against the ever-growing British empire. In the cases of the gold standard and these South American incidents, white Southern journalists and politicians urged a greater US presence in world affairs as a counter to British power. Reading these narratives, we can see Southern whites defining an American foreign policy to counter a supposedly corrupt European imperialism.

The Venezuela crisis marked the last time that Britain and the United States would threaten war against each other. After this point, Britain would no longer be considered a threat to the United States as it had been throughout the nineteenth century. Paul Kramer, Kristin Hoganson, Edward Crapol, and Stuart Anderson have all documented the changing nature of the Anglo-American relationship during this period as well as the role Anglo-Saxonist ideologies played in this relationship. These ideologies, which took many forms during this period, saw the United States, Britain, and other English-speaking peoples and institutions as the most civilized in the world and often urged some sort of alliance among those peoples. Though these authors have addressed the connections between British imperialism, American imperialism, race, and gender, they have largely concentrated on the US North and West; Southerners appear in these narratives but are not central characters. This chapter builds on their insights, arguing that the South developed its own relationship to Britain and empire during this period. I add too that regional constructions of the South's place in the world influenced the construction and dissemination of Anglo-Saxon ideals and definitions of empire within that region. White Southerners who confronted the place of the South within a world dominated by empire came to see British policies as embodiments of the imperial system. During this period, Anglo-Saxonism was a growing transnational ideology but one white Southerners only partially accepted, one that they challenged and shaped depending on their own interpretations of the world and how that ideology interacted with their own experiences with the British Empire.¹

¹ See Edward Crapol, *America for Americans: Economic Nationalism and*

In December 1895, William Carr wrote to his father Elias, then governor of North Carolina, expressing hope that the United States would go to war with Great Britain over the Venezuelan boundary dispute.² Elias had at one time been the head of North Carolina's Farmers' Alliance and was connected to free silver advocates within that party.³ More conservative than some members of the Farmers' Alliance, Elias Carr did not support a break with the Democratic Party and won the governorship as a Democrat in a three-way race against Republican and Populist opponents. Along with many other white Southerners, William Carr understood the American-British relationship as one of domination by the monarchical, land-hungry British Empire

Anglophobia in the Late Nineteenth Century (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973). Also key to my analysis here are the works of Emily Rosenberg and Gail Bederman. Rosenberg demonstrates connections between race and gender constructions in the spread of 'dollar diplomacy' in the early twentieth century and the spread of the gold standard through US intervention in South America. Bederman describes the roles of race and masculinity in the worldview of white Southerners. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Paul A. Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (Mar., 2002), 1315-1353; Stuart Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904* (London: Associated University Presses, 1981); Emily Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

² William K. Carr was a land agent in Washington, DC and often wrote to his father with news from the capitol. See the Elias Carr Papers for the correspondence. The Elias Carr Papers, East Carolina University.

³ Amongst his papers are free silver pamphlets which attacked the British banking elite. See the Elias Carr Papers, East Carolina University. Though he attacked elites in Britain and the North, Carr was from an elite white family in his own state. Raised on a 2000-acre plantation, he graduated from the University of North Carolina and held a law degree from the University of Virginia. Though he considered himself a farmer, his experience of farm life was radically different from that of most farmers in the South.

over the democratic, bounded United States. In their eyes, a war between the two would be another war of independence to free Americans in general (and Southern farmers in particular) from this unjust arrangement. According to William, such a war would demonstrate “to the foolish voters of this country that we could live without English consent and assistance.” Yet, he doubted that the war would ever happen, explaining to his father that “the money power” would not allow the two countries to fight. Such a conflict would cost the moneyed elite their ability to control the governments on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴

Carr’s December letter was not the first he had written to his father on the subject of Britain. The previous March he included in his regular correspondence with his father a lengthy, hand-written extract from Charles Edward Lester’s 1841 *The Glory and Shame of England*. Lester’s work criticized Britain’s antislavery movements as well as the poverty he saw in London. William listed other works that his father should read about how bad Britain was. The first was William Booth’s *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), which compared England after the Industrial Revolution to “uncivilized” Africa.⁵ Carr did not see the British Empire as a legitimate undertaking. To him, the inequities of British society marked the British as anything but proper civilizing agents. In these private letters, we can see issues that dominated Southern constructions of imperialism in this period. The December letter focused on British power and theft in the form of “the money power,” while the

⁴ W.K. Carr to Elias Carr. December 20, 1895. Elias Carr Papers.

⁵ W.K. Carr to Elias Carr. March 15, 1895. Elias Carr Papers. Carr misidentified *Darkest England* as “Darkest London” but he named the author as Gen. Booth. The other book that he recommended was *England in India*. I have been unable to locate this work. He did not indicate its author.

March letter reveals a white Southern construction of imperialism as inherently illegitimate. To white Southerners like the Carrs, empire was not a noble civilizing mission as some British imperialists claimed. Instead, it created inequities at home and abroad and distracted the British populace from their poverty. In Carr's framing, Britain itself contained places and people as savage as those they supposedly found in Africa. If British imperialists were serious about a civilizing mission, they should have, in Carr's construction, helped their own people before conquering others. This chapter examines the South as white Southern elites like the Carrs wanted the world to see it, by considering how their definitions of empire helped them articulate their hopes for the region and distinguished it from the rest of the world.

India and the Silver Question

In an undated address, North Carolina governor Elias J. Carr described the South as “commercial enemies of India, because we must compete with her.” Though Carr called India an ‘enemy’ to the South, he did not attack Indian farmers. Instead, he blamed Britain for placing India and the South in competition and manipulating the world money supply to take advantage of cotton producers in the two regions. According to Carr, the United States was one of “the greatest producers of silver in the world, and India the largest buyer. England was not slow to grasp this fact and use it in her interest.”⁶ Carr referred to successive British governments’ efforts to block an international bimetallic standard over the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Rather than attack their direct competitors, white Southern elites like Carr

⁶ Undated Speech, Box 11, Folder B, Elias J. Carr Papers, East Carolina University.

described a kinship with Indian farmers and blamed Britain for impoverishing them both.

Southern journalists and politicians feared the imperial reach of Britain, and Carr was not alone in blaming Britain and British greed for poverty in the South. An 1895 letter to the Raleigh, NC *News and Observer* summarized white Southern attitudes towards both the supposedly-growing centralized authority in Washington and the power of British bankers. The writer, A. L. Mendenhall, was a reverend from Randleman, North Carolina.⁷ In his letter, Mendenhall claimed to have followed financial legislation for more than thirty years and argued that, first, “the tendency has been, since 1861, to centralization of all power in the hands of the wealthy class.” And that, second, “this centralizing power has put us under tribute to Great Britain.”⁸ To white Southerners like Mendenhall and Carr, advocates of the gold standard placed the United States under Great Britain and raised suspicions about the ‘wealthy class’ of Americans. White Southerners, often members of a wealthy Southern elite—like Carr and possibly Mendenhall—placed the blame for Southern poverty outside the South. When faced with the revolt of the Populist Party and its allies, they turned both to international monetary policy and the centralization of power in the Washington to explain forces that they could not control.

⁷ The only identifying item I have been able to find on him was a testimonial he wrote in 1896 for Mrs. Person’s remedy for running sores. See “That Wonderful Remedy,” *The News and Observer*, February 19, 1896. It is possible that he was connected to the wealthy Mendenhall family that resided in the area.

⁸ A.L. Mendenhall, “Deception and Ridicule the Weapons of the Gold Bugs,” *The News and Observer*, September 15, 1895.

During this period, New South boosters sought to turn the South into a productive, industrialized region and move it away from its reliance on agriculture. At the time, the South was primarily agricultural, and its economy lagged behind those of the North and West. Though immigrants came to the US during this period in large numbers, they mostly avoided the South due to its poverty and violent reputation. White Southern elites sought investors and immigrants from all over the world to help them build up the region.⁹ If Southern politicians could blame Southern poverty not only on bankers in New York, but also on an international group that sought power without fail and was itself controlled by a banking elite, then they could push blame for the South's problems away from the region's own white leaders. White Southern politicians and newspapers constructed an economic critique of British imperialism during this period that presented Imperial Britain as something of a bogeyman that they could attack from afar. By observing the development of these critiques we can see the US South connecting with and pushing away from imperial sites the world over.

For US Southerners, the spread of the gold standard was directly related to the spread of the British influence all over the globe. The British were essential in

⁹ For more on the worldwide connections of Southern labor systems and economy see Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *American Historical Review*, 109-5 (December 2004), 1405-1438. Here Beckert argues that after the American Civil War, similar economic systems of tenant farmers and debt peonage developed around cotton producers around the world and including the South. See also Matthew Guterl and Christine Skwiot, "Atlantic and Pacific Crossings: Race, Empire, and 'the Labor Problem' in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Radical History Review* 2005 (91): 40-61; Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

promoting a gold standard to other nations during this period. During the second half of the century, European governments and the United States gradually moved to a gold standard for a variety of reasons. Though many political leaders valued gold for its seeming stability, the reason that it became the leading monetary standard of the world was British power and influence. Great Britain came out of the Napoleonic Wars on the gold standard and never saw a reason to change. As Britain became more powerful through the nineteenth century, other nations picked up the gold standard: first the US, then France, Germany, and others. Though most of the world used a different currency, gold became the money of the 'civilized world,' with the most powerful European economies following it. White Southerners and others saw the British reliance on and propagation of the gold standard as a marked that British bankers controlled the world money supply.¹⁰

Southern activists charged that the gold standard placed farmers and workers at a disadvantage to bankers because the gold standard had a deflationary effect on currency.¹¹ Because of the limited supply of gold, the purchasing power of gold-backed currency deflated; that is, with less gold on the market, the gold that remained became worth more and gold-based dollars rose in value as well. This reliance on higher-value gold also removed smaller currency from the market. During this period,

¹⁰ For an examination of the spread of the gold standard to South America and elsewhere in the early twentieth century, the US role in that spread, and the cultural constructions that influenced that spread, see Emily Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World*.

¹¹ Free Silver advocates were not the only Americans to protest the gold standard before and during this period. The Greenback Party of the 1870s sought a paper money system not based in gold. See Gretchen Ritter, *Goldbugs and Greenbacks: The Antimonopoly Tradition and the Politics of Finance in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

there is ample evidence for a shortage of subsidiary currency; that is, the lowest common denomination of money in circulation was actually quite large. For farmers in the South, this shortage meant that they often had to deal in credit rather than cash when purchasing supplies.¹² This deflationary effect and reliance on credit helped bring about a debt peonage system of cotton farming in the South. Farmers borrowed money to pay for farms and supplies; as the currency deflated, they found themselves owing more money on their farms than they could repay, and good growing seasons lowered the value of the crops they could sell. In short, their loans gained value while the goods that they sold lost value. Free silver advocates argued for the coinage of silver at a set ratio to maintain the value of both metals. If one metal gained or lost value, the change would be offset by the stability of the other metal. Coining silver would also allow for more subsidiary currency in circulation, which, besides its other effects, would literally place more actual money in the pockets of farmers.

Beyond advocating for the US to produce silver coinage, activists in the Western and Southern United States urged Washington to do more to create an international bimetallic agreement. International and national bimetallism were two connected but distinct movements within the United States and Britain. The Free Silver movement in the United States was different from the movement for an international bimetallic agreement. In the white Southern press, the two movements were often conflated and connected, but they had different ends. The Populists and

¹² See Marshall Gramm and Phil Gramm, "The Free Silver Movement in America: A Reinterpretation," *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (December 2004), pp. 1108-1129. From their abstract: "A shortage of coins valued at a half-day's wage and less, raised transaction costs, produced hardship and spawned protest."

others in the United States sought to get the country to remonetize silver currency at a set ratio with gold. An international bimetallic agreement would not accomplish this goal, but it would set the ratio for exchange on the international market. According to Southern advocates of international bimetallism, such an agreement would boost the Southern economy, or, at least, it would remove the Southern farmers' disadvantage relative to Indian farmers. Its advocates hoped that a set bimetallic standard would stabilize both gold- and silver-backed currencies on the world market. For imperial states like Britain, France, and Germany, this set exchange rate could stabilize trade between the home country and imperial sites that used silver currency. Supporters of Free Silver in the United States hoped that an international agreement could lead towards the reintroduction of silver as currency in their country. A full restoration of silver would work to remove some of the power from powerful banking interests that controlled the world's money supply.

In their editorials and speeches, white Southern newspaper editors and politicians routinely conflated international and national bimetallism. One of the difficulties in pinning down Southern coverage of and conversation about free silver and international bimetallism is this routine conflation. For example, both the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Raleigh News and Observer* connected the American gold standard and the competition between American and Indian farmers. An 1891 editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution* argued that the South's disadvantage in regard to India did not exist before 1873 when the US demonetized silver. The editors argued that before the "Crime of '73," the value of silver in India and the United States remained relatively steady and connected. The *Constitution* explicitly described Great

Britain as robbing American farmers because of their role in promoting an international gold standard.¹³ Similarly, the *News and Observer* noted that Indian cotton and wheat “fixed the price” of Southern products on the world market. As white Southerners saw it, the gold standard was good for Great Britain, but not the United States and Southern farmers.¹⁴ In these articles, Southern white editors spoke of both the US gold standard and the problems associated with competing against a silver-standard country when there was no international exchange rate.

Over the course of the final decades of the nineteenth century, newspapers in the South and the rest of the US covered four international conferences that were held to set an international bimetallic exchange rate. After the United States adopted the gold standard in 1873, international meetings were held in 1878, 1881, 1892, and 1894. Though the goal of each meeting was to establish an international bimetallic standard, each ended in failure. The meetings were not intended to establish bimetallism all over the world, but instead work out a system for gold and silver countries to trade with each other at a standard ratio. At each of the meetings, Great Britain blocked any international agreement because it believed that bimetallism would not be to its benefit. However, by the 1890s, it seemed to many Southern

¹³ “The Gist of the Silver Question,” *Atlanta Constitution*, August 10, 1891. They do not always blame Britain or the British for the robberies. For instance, in 1891, the *Constitution* placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the US Congress rather than Great Britain while acknowledging that bimetallism should be the policy of the federal government. See “Honest Currency,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 17, 1891.

¹⁴ “Silver and Gold,” *News and Observer*, January 22, 1890.

writers that economic conditions in its imperial possessions could make Britain more receptive to an international bimetallic agreement.¹⁵

The precarious financial position of India raised hopes in the bimetallic press that the British would be forced to accept some sort of international bimetallism. The New Orleans *Picayune* argued that the empire could make Britain more interested in an international bimetallism because the demonetization of silver in India could have a disastrous effect on world commerce by causing the value of gold and silver to fluctuate wildly as country after country adopted the gold standard and abandoned silver.¹⁶ The *Knoxville Journal* described Britain as being “between the devil and deep sea” regarding the silver question. According to the paper, “Millions of her subjects demand silver legal tender, while on the other hand the nations of Europe one after another are pronouncing in favor of the single gold standard.”¹⁷ In these accounts, Southern commentators claimed that their own agenda was similar to that of the majority of the world’s peoples. As in the case with Irish home rule, white Southern elites argued that their position was the most democratic and that it was favored by most of the world. White Southerners placed their region’s concerns with that of colonized sites. Rather than see their region as similar to European elite

¹⁵ For information on the conference itself and the others held earlier in the century, see Steven P. Reti, *Silver and Gold: The Political Economy of International Monetary Conferences, 1867-1892* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998). For the 1892 conference, see pp. 115-156.

¹⁶ “The Movement in Favor of Bimetallism,” *The Daily Picayune*, March 2, 1892. See also, “Great Britain and the Bimetallic Conference,” *Daily Picayune*, May 13, 1892, which makes the same point.

¹⁷ “The Silver Conference,” *The Knoxville Journal*, December 8, 1892.

countries, they compared it economically to colonized sites even though this analysis did not fit actual conditions in the South.

As the 1892 bimetallic conference approached, white Southern papers worked to convince their readers that the results would be different than the previous conferences. According to the *Daily Picayune*, failure to reach an agreement at the coming international bimetallic conference would have disastrous effects for both regions. Declaring their interest in India's financial well-being the *Picayune's* editor wrote, "This country, and principally the southern portion of it, have...a direct interest in the financial condition of India" because it competed with Indian farmers in selling their cotton. According to US Southerners, if an agreement was not reached, Britain would soon have to place India on a gold standard because silver had lost so much value and India owed it so much money. This action would cause an international gold shortage because India would require so much to accomplish a switch from its silver currency.¹⁸ In light of these drastic consequences, the *Picayune* hoped that British financiers and their government would see the wisdom of an international agreement.

The *New and Observer* pointed to other reasons for European countries to agree to a bimetallic standard. The North Carolina editors argued that 'civilized' countries owed it to the rest of the world to work out an agreement this time around. In an editorial near the beginning of the 1892 conference, the North Carolina paper noted that four fifths of the world's population used a currency backed solely by silver. Because of the popularity of the white metal, the editors stated, "It would be

¹⁸ "A Gold Standard for India," *The Daily Picayune*, December 10, 1892.

abominable and oppressive action were the civilized nations to entirely ignore the interests of countries less advanced in enlightenment.” To these white Southerners, European powers had a moral responsibility to place silver on a firm footing by coming to an international agreement.¹⁹

The 1892 conference did not put in place a system that supported these silver-backed countries. The United States allied itself with the silver countries of Latin America while the Europeans did not push for a bimetallic agreement. Neither France nor Germany seriously attempted to leave the conference with an agreement. The British delegation, led by Baron de Rothschild, proposed one solution to the currency problem. Rothschild’s plan was very much like the US’s Sherman Silver Purchase Act except on a world-wide level. According to the Sherman Act, passed in 1890, the US Treasury purchased a set amount of silver each year. The intention of the act was to increase the price of silver. Rothschild’s proposition would have the countries of Europe doing the same thing and then lower the amount of silver that they bought when it reached a certain price level. However, this proposal was neither good enough for the American delegation nor mild enough for the gold standard countries. It would not have gone nearly as far as the free silver advocates had hoped. As an editorial in the *Macon Telegraph* commented, “What bimetallists work for is not merely a rise in the price of silver, but a complete restoration to the metal of its former power as money.”²⁰ Though one British representative offered something of a solution, it was not enough to satisfy Southern bimetallists.

¹⁹ “The prospects seem to be...,” *The News and Observer*, December 1, 1892.

²⁰ “Mr. Rothschild’s Silver Plan,” *The Macon Telegraph*, December 2, 1892.

It is not clear that Rothschild had much support even within his own delegation and white Southerners saw the plan as little more than a ploy to disrupt the whole conference while appearing to offer concessions. Continuing to paint Britain as a worldwide thief, they doubted that Rothschild was serious in making this proposal. According to the *Macon Telegraph*, Rothschild's fellow members of the British delegation were either downright hostile to his plan or sought to minimize further the concessions that it made to bimetallists. The internal divisions within the British delegation opened up to charges of "double dealing." Some delegates were convinced that the British delegation was trying to appear sincere to India and British bimetallists but that it was actually working to undermine the conference itself.²¹ According to an editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution*, "The extent, as well as the intent, of the proposition was not to take any step in the direction of bimetallism, but to meet the views of the financiers of British India."²² Though they had been initially hopeful about the conference, Southern journalists quickly came to see the British delegation as hostile to their interests.

Though its editors did not like the result of the conference, the *Atlanta Constitution* saw British power as an example for the United States. Responding to the *Richmond Times*—the *Times* had incorrectly noted that Great Britain was unlikely to attend the international monetary conference to be held that year—the *Atlanta Constitution* called Great Britain "her own monetary conference" who "carrie[d] out her financial plans regardless of the wishes or desires of other nations." Rather than

²¹ "Monetary Conference," *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 10, 1892. See also, "Double Dealing," *The State*, December 10, 1892.

²² "Mr. Rothschild Subsidies," *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 9, 1892.

condemn these actions, the editorial urged concisely, “Let us imitate her independence.”²³ In this case, the *Constitution* argued that Great Britain could serve as an example for the United States. To the Southern paper, the United States quite simply did not have to do as Britain and the world wanted and instead could act on its own. For the *Constitution*, this independence meant that the United States could indeed declare bimetallism on its own rather than waiting for the rest of the world to join them.

Their praise of British power defined empire as solely beneficial to the rulers of the home country. The editors implored “those who are set to rule over us to display a similar self-respect” to the independent Britain. This image of empire would be repeated in the Atlanta paper’s commentary on British imperialism for the rest of the century. According to the *Constitution*, “the financial as well as the political policy of Great Britain is fixed to suit the needs of her people, without regard to the effect it may have on the other people of the earth.” For this Southern paper, imperial subjects were not ‘her people’ and empire meant taking from the colony to support the needs of the metropole, regardless of what it would do to the colony.²⁴ While their colleagues at the New Orleans *Picayune* could argue that it was in the best interest of Britain imperial dominions to come to an agreement.

As the House of Representatives debated the repeal of the Sherman Act a few months later, Southern politicians condemned the power that they saw British bankers

²³ “A Lesson for the United States,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 16, 1892

²⁴ “The Waiting Game,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 10, 1892. See also an editorial six days later in which the editors of the *Constitution* again urged American leaders to learn from the independence of Britain, “The United States Must Settle It,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 16, 1892.

having over American monetary policy. Because they linked Britain to the gold standard, white Southern politicians saw any move on the part of the federal government in support of the gold standard as a capitulation to British bankers. Representative Claude Swanson of Virginia spoke against repeal and argued that caving in to Great Britain on this issue would bring about an international gold standard that would put the United States further under the power of Great Britain. At that point, he stated, “The financial domination of Great Britain would be more disastrous than her political domination before the revolutionary war.”²⁵ In speaking out against the gold standard, white Southern politicians like Swanson were also urging the United States to remain independent.

With the repeal of the Sherman Act, white Southern papers highlighted the connections between international bimetallism and the cause of free silver in the United States. Though they had opposed the repeal, the *Macon Telegraph* saw some reasons to be optimistic when Britain put India on the gold standard in 1894. The paper argued that the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act had destabilized the price of silver in relation to gold. This destabilization was further exacerbated by the British government deciding (because of the imminent repeal of the Sherman Bill) to

²⁵ “A Senator on the Inside,” *The Daily Picayune*, August 25, 1893. The same article reprinted excerpts from the speech of one of the House’s few African Americans members, George Washington Murray of South Carolina. Murray joined with white Southerners who supported the free coinage of silver. Having made clear that he thought of himself as representing the whole of his race rather than simply his district, Murray argued that the present economic depression was not caused by the purchase of silver but by the contraction of the money supply. He noted that African Americans had felt the sting of poverty before the silver purchase act. Bringing silver back into the money supply would help both races, he argued, by stabilizing the money supply.

stop minting silver in India. Because of this instability, the Macon editors argued that an international bimetallic agreement would be needed to provide stable rates of exchange.²⁶ The *Constitution*, however, was more pessimistic and declared that Great Britain and the money powers at its head had defrauded the United States by making this argument. According to the *Constitution*, the supporters of the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act suggested that it would force Britain to accept the need for a bimetallic standard by further devaluing the metal. Instead, England moved India away from silver. Indeed, the *Constitution* noted, “the calumnies that were predicted for the British interests have fallen chiefly on our own interests and our own people.”²⁷ In this white Southern narrative of international relations, the monetary supply of the United States directly influenced British imperial policy.

Later that year, the *Constitution* explicitly linked the position of India and the US South in relation to Britain but rather than seeing India as an ally, the Atlanta editors argued that the US was more powerful than the British colony. In an anonymous letter to the *Constitution*, a Georgia banker declared that the United States and India were in a similar situation regarding Great Britain. That is, England, “will not consent to give up the single gold standard until it has bankrupted the United States,” just as it was trying to do to India. The only recourse from bankruptcy that this banker could see was to return to a bimetallic system before it was too late, because, by his theory, the US would eventually be bimetallic after the bankruptcy. The *Constitution*'s editors echoed the sentiments of the banker and called India and

²⁶ “Bimetallism in Europe,” *Macon Telegraph*, February 24, 1894.

²⁷ “The ‘International’ Argument,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 15, 1894.

the United States, England's "two fat geese," but made clear that it disagreed about the bankruptcy. The editors argued that the United States was so much richer than India and that because England needed American wheat and cotton more than it needed Indian crops, it would not be possible for the British to exercise as much control over the United States. Simultaneously, the editors saw the gold standard as a "conspiracy" on the part of the British to control the world's financial system and take as much of the world's riches to England as was possible. The editorial ended by asking when the world was going to wake up to England's plot.²⁸ While they felt betrayed by England and considered themselves like India, the editors of the Atlanta daily still maintained that the United States could be an equal to Britain in ways that India could not.

While most of the South's newspapers argued in favor of an international bimetallic standard and saw bimetallism as the most just form of currency, there was disagreement among Southern journalists about how active the United States should be in pursuing a national bimetallic standard. In 1894 an extended conversation between the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Macon Telegraph* revealed telling differences in the ways that white Southerners imagined the place of the US in the world and how active American policymakers should be in foreign affairs. This conversation was part of a larger argument between the two that placed one of the New South's greatest champions against a smaller, middle Georgia rival. For the *Telegraph*, bimetallism should only come about through international agreement; if the United States tried to go it alone, it would have disastrous consequences for the

²⁸ "India and the United States," *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 18, 1894.

American economy. The *Constitution* on the other hand argued that the United States would have to take the lead and should immediately start coining silver. The *Constitution* began the exchange with a short comment asking if the *Telegraph* could explain whether the United States could not maintain the parity of gold and silver currency if the US alone chose to establish bimetallism.²⁹

Calling on examples from around the world, the *Telegraph* responded that the only way that the United States could maintain parity between the metals would be if they coined them at their true value rather than debasing them in any way. According to the Macon paper, if the two metals competed with one another, the cheaper metal would eventually become the standard currency. It pointed to Mexico where, there had once been some bimetallism but where there was no longer because silver had displaced gold.³⁰ A few days later, the *Constitution* continued the argument. The Atlanta paper also drew evidence from the international community. In this case, they argued that France demonstrated that a bimetallic system could be stable. To the *Constitution* this meant that the United States, which was gaining immigrants and developing at an astounding rate, would be able to lead the world to bimetallism.³¹ In choosing examples to argue their respective points, the *Constitution* and the *Telegraph* demonstrate their own understanding of America's peers. For the smaller paper, the United States stood with South American countries like Mexico while the larger Atlanta paper saw the United States as equal to Europe's imperial powers.

²⁹ "Does the Macon Telegraph..." *Atlanta Constitution*, March 19, 1894.

³⁰ "Parity of Gold and Silver," *The Macon Telegraph*, March 20, 1894

³¹ "The Free Coinage of Silver," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 22, 1894.

The *Telegraph* responded to the example of France by noting that that country had not faced the same challenges that United States would. When the United States and Germany stopped minting silver coins, France also stopped their production. For the United States to go it alone would be an insurmountable challenge. It further concluded that it would be a “criminal folly on the part of our government” to take up a challenge so difficult that France had not dared to do so decades before.³² The *Constitution* picked up on the language of crime in its response to the *Telegraph*. Having noted the fairness and clarity of the exchange between the two papers, the *Constitution* argued that the social problems raised by deflation were precisely those that produced crime. To the Atlanta editors, the problem would only be solved through the institution of a bimetallic standard in the United States and a path independent of the actions of Great Britain or other imperial powers. The *Constitution* described an exceptional America which would be able to make bimetallism work because of the dynamism of the American economy and one that should so that it could support its population. Though it picked on their theme, the *Constitution* ended this round by asking how exactly the free coinage of silver would be criminal folly.³³

Because the *Telegraph* took a couple days to respond the Atlanta paper’s question, the *Constitution* returned to it and reiterated its support for United States’s coinage of silver “without regard to the action of Europe.”³⁴ That same day, the *Telegraph* printed its response to their colleagues in Atlanta. The *Telegraph* argued that it simply did not make sense for the United States to chain itself to a currency

³² “Maintaining the Parity,” *The Macon Telegraph*, March 23, 1894.

³³ “The Question of Parity,” *Atlanta Constitution*, March 25, 1894.

³⁴ “Money and Low Prices,” *Atlanta Constitution*, March 27, 1894.

that the rest of the world had or was in the process of rejecting.³⁵ The *Constitution* concluded its contribution to this particular discussion by providing another defense of American separatism. Though it had acknowledged throughout the debate the interconnectedness of the world economy, it maintained that the United States was powerful enough to make bimetallism work. It asked the *Telegraph* if it would have the people of the United States suffer “until it is the pleasure of Europe to afford them relief.”³⁶ The invocations of an American solution to global problems reflected the *Constitution*’s push for a more powerful South as well.

In concluding the exchange, the *Telegraph* made the case that the United States could not alone bring about currency reform. Rather than pointing to the example of France in the mid-nineteenth century, the Macon editors referred to South American countries. Most South American countries at the time were on a de facto silver standard, and the *Telegraph* was convinced that such a fate awaited the United States if it tried to defy Europe on this point. They claimed that a bimetallism that was only statute and not practice was not a real bimetallism at all. While they hoped for an international bimetallism, they aligned American interests toward Europe more in relation to South America than as an equal power.³⁷ The *Constitution* and *Telegraph* agreed that bimetallism was the best course, but where they disagreed was

³⁵ “Value Increased by Scarcity,” *Macon Telegraph*, March 27, 1894.

³⁶ “The Result of Bimetallism,” *Atlanta Constitution*, March 30, 1894.

³⁷ “Bimetallism and Free Coina (sic),” *The Macon Telegraph*, March 29, 1894. See also, “Mr. Atkenson’s Speech,” *The Macon Telegraph*, September 13, 1894. Again responding to the *Constitution*, the *Telegraph* linked the poor record of Mexico against the ability of the United States to impose bimetallism unilaterally.

in how powerful the United States actually was. As it did over the course of the 1890s, the *Constitution* continued to push for more US involvement in world affairs.

The *News and Observer* echoed the opinion of the *Constitution* and further proposed fighting with Great Britain over the silver question. The North Carolina paper urged the American government to engage in a commercial war with Britain to get the British government to overcome their bankers' objections and come to an international bimetallic agreement. After clearly stating that British commercial interests, excluding the banks, wanted some form of silver agreement to shore up their reach in silver parts of the world, *The News and Observer* argued that the gold standard placed British banking interests above all others in the world. To counteract such greed, the North Carolina editors urged, "We should use our vast influence and power, if need be, to coerce dissenting nations into a full rehabilitation of that metal. Our efforts should not cease until the currency of the world is firmly established on a sensible basis, fair to all, and affording special advantages to none."³⁸ White Southern papers understood the US as a growing international power and sought to use that power to benefit their region.

Though the United States would never declare a trade war with Britain, and silver would not return to its prominence, white Southerners continued to paint Britain as a leading cause of their region's economic woes. While much of this discussion must be taken as wishful thinking on their part and a willful attempt to shift blame away from themselves when faced with the growing threat of both Populism and Ben Tillman's insurgency, it also demonstrated a growing construction

³⁸ "The Milk in the Coconut," *The News and Observer*, May 6, 1894.

of what imperialism meant, its relationship to the South, and Britain itself.³⁹ The image of Britain in the white Southern press was not an accurate representation of the government of the people. They often attributed motives to British actions that Britons themselves little understood. As this section has demonstrated, white Southerners both envied British power and decried how it was used. By making Britain so powerful in their portrait of international relations, they colored their perceptions of British actions in other areas as well. When the Venezuela Crisis emerged midway through the decade, white Southerners were primed to read it as British encroachment on their territory.

Challenging British Hegemony: Southern Coverage of the British Empire in South America

Though developments in Venezuela reached a crisis point in 1895, the Venezuelans had been lobbying for American support since early in the decade. In 1890, the *Atlanta Constitution* summed up Venezuela's position towards the British as being forced "to be robbed."⁴⁰ Though at this time, the paper did not make a case for American intervention in the dispute between the British and the Venezuelans, it noted that the Venezuelans were attempting to apply the Monroe Doctrine to this situation. A few months earlier, the Atlanta paper had pointed to the Doctrine when they wrote of a possible war between Britain and Venezuela. Then, the *Constitution*

³⁹ Ben Tillman was governor of South Carolina from 1890 to 1894. Working through the Farmers' Alliance in that state, Tillman presented himself as a friend of white farmers, and he challenged white elites who had previously controlled Democratic politics there. See Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁴⁰ "Poor Venezuela," *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 12, 1890.

explicitly called upon the United States's history as a republic in demanding that Washington step in: "It is difficult to see how this republic can calmly look on and see her South American sisters bulldozed and robbed by any European monarchy."⁴¹ These opening remarks about the Venezuela situation highlight themes that white Southerners would build upon during the months surrounding the crisis.

White Southerners saw in British treatment of South American countries further evidence that Britain posed a growing threat that the United States needed to stop. To these Southern men, Britain was edging closer to domination not only of the continent to the south but also valuable trade routes that they hoped would bring their region prosperity. Notable is their poor understanding of the British Empire, its relationship to South America, and the relatively minor role that the region played in British imperial policy.⁴² Reading Southern accounts of the Venezuelan conflict in this context explains to us both Southern views of the world and the world's connection to the South. To them, empire directly affected American monetary supply and benefited a transnational moneyed elite allied against farmers all over the world. Within their logic then, a sensible policy would be to confront the British before they became an even stronger power in their hemisphere. Southern responses

⁴¹ "Venezuela Will Fight," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 3, 1890.

⁴² For more on the British Empire and South America, see P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (New York: Longman, 2002). Cain and Hopkins argue that Britain and South American states at this time were linked by informal empire of influence and trade and that Britain never saw South America as site of possible formal empire. According to Cain and Hopkins, "The Latin American countries were treated as countries of white settlement" and therefore accorded more respect than the peoples of Africa and Asia. While white US Southerners were right to be concerned about British trade in the region, there was no reason for them to worry about the British taking over these countries, see pp. 272-274.

to the Venezuela Crisis illustrate how Southern constructions of gender contributed to their understanding of both the crisis and the imperial world. Throughout 1895 and 1896 as the controversy over Venezuela rose and then subsided, Southern papers debated the merits of the Monroe Doctrine and how a manly nation would defend it. By the time of the Venezuela crisis, the Monroe Doctrine had become in Southern eyes, a manly policy of protection against a British brute and in the defense of small, feminized South American republics.⁴³ The British Empire became a rapacious beast that American manliness should prevent from taking advantage of his sisters to the south.

Early discussions of the situation in Venezuela played into Southern Democratic constructions of a manly foreign policy. In 1891, an editorial in the *Daily Picayune* argued that the Monroe Doctrine would not be in force until a powerful South American country decided that they should have one of their own. Though the editorial lamented that “so long as our own insufficient republic is the only champion of the doctrine, the great powers of Europe will do as they please in America.” The *Picayune* admitted that Venezuela would likely be annexed by the British by the end of the year and that this would violate the Monroe Doctrine.⁴⁴ The *Constitution* shared the opinion of its colleagues in Louisiana about the outlook for Venezuela when facing the might of imperial Britain. The *Constitution* argued that the Harrison

⁴³ For more on constructions of manliness and US foreign relations, see Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood* and Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World*, for Southern manliness and challenges from Britain, see Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, for Southern manliness and race, see MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*.

⁴⁴ “England and Venezuela,” *The Daily Picayune*, March 27, 1891.

administration would only protect South American countries against a “feeble European power,” and would not even challenge the might of Imperial Britain.⁴⁵

In criticizing Harrison and his Secretary of State James Blaine, the *Picayune* and *Constitution* were participating in a white Southern construction of a more activist American foreign policy. Part of white Southern newspapers’ attacks against the Harrison administration were political; most were Democratic papers, and, as the previous chapter demonstrated, white Southern Democrats tended to link Republican governance with imperialism during this period. However, Southern Democrats were consistently defining a foreign policy that was not merely opposed to Republican practices. This new ‘strong’ foreign policy would mean a more active engagement against the European empires. The centerpiece of Southern foreign policy advice was the need to keep European hands off of South American republics. The reasons behind white Southern defenses of South American republics were twofold. First, white Southern journalists and politicians argued that imperialism was anti-republican and that it would bleed South America dry before moving up to North America. Secondly, in the event of a world war, the United States would be in a more difficult position if a hostile European power had a firm foothold in South America. The *Constitution* demonstrated this line of argument in an editorial welcoming the new Cleveland administration in 1893. “Our own self-protection,” the editorial stated, “makes it necessary to jealously guard our interests and prevent even the slightest foreign encroachment.” The editors reiterated their support for the Monroe Doctrine and called for the new administration to enforce it “peaceably if possible, but at any

⁴⁵ “A Flexible Doctrine,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 27, 1891.

cost if it becomes necessary.”⁴⁶ With a new Democratic president, the *Constitution* pushed for a more engaged United States freed from the weaknesses of the previous leaders.

It did not take long for the new administration to have the opportunity to assert the Monroe Doctrine in its relations with Great Britain. In 1894, a conflict arose between Nicaragua and Britain that led to continued Southern critiques of British imperialism and calls for a renewed commitment to the Monroe Doctrine. The British had protected a small settlement of Mosquito Indians on the Nicaraguan and Honduran coast since the mid-nineteenth century, and that year the Nicaraguans decided to annex the territory because the land was critical to the proposed construction of Nicaraguan canal. The Mosquitoes appealed to Britain to help them maintain their autonomy from Nicaraguan control. Britain expressed their support for the Indians and their monarch, and the British Navy sent warships into the area. American troops occupied a nearby port for a few weeks to protect American business interests. Though there were some tensions raised by the two armed forces in the area, Britain and the Americans withdrew peacefully and by the end of the year, the land was formally controlled by Nicaragua. The controversy in Nicaragua did not create anywhere near the war fears that the Venezuela crisis would a year and a half later. However, it did provide white Southern journalists with ammunition against a British Empire they already feared was surrounding them.

⁴⁶ “The Monroe Doctrine Again,” *Atlanta Constitution*, December 6, 1892. Southern whites were not the only ones pushing the US toward a more activist foreign policy. Alfred Thayer Mahan and Theodore Roosevelt too at this time saw the US as equal to the ‘Great Powers.’ Roosevelt however did not see imperialism as antithetical to American policy.

At the forefront of Southern concerns was the growing trade with South America. The Mosquito Indian land included the Atlantic side of a proposed canal route; though a canal would later be built south of Nicaragua (in what is now Panama), at that time many white Southerners were pushing for a Nicaraguan canal.⁴⁷ If Britain had control of that land, they could cut off Southern trade with South America or the Pacific. As the *Constitution* said, “At a time when we are about to push our trade in the Spanish-American countries we cannot afford to let England take everything in sight and hold it at the point of the bayonet.”⁴⁸ From South Carolina, the *State* similarly argued that a canal in Nicaragua should be built because it would increase cotton exports and “be the making of Southern commerce.”⁴⁹ For Southern whites who were particularly interested in creating more trade across the world, giving up more control to the British was unthinkable.⁵⁰

For the British, the case seemed simple enough and not nearly as insidious as white Southerners understood it. To them, the Nicaraguans were attempting to take

⁴⁷ Alabama Senator John Tyler Morgan would continue lobbying for a Nicaraguan Canal long after the United States had committed to complete the Panamanian project begun by France. The Nicaraguan Canal site was much more convenient to Alabama’s ports and would have brought more trade to his home states. See Joseph A. Fry, *John Tyler Morgan and the Search for Southern Autonomy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

⁴⁸ “England in Central America,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 20, 1894.

⁴⁹ “The State’s Survey,” *The State*, January 26, 1895.

⁵⁰ “The State’s Survey,” *The State*, April 24, 1895. A statement from Georgia Senator Patrick Walsh linked the debate over the Nicaraguan canal with that of the silver question. According to Walsh the two things that the United States had to do to return to prosperity were to 1) build a Nicaraguan canal and 2) get together with Latin American republics, Japan, China, and India to declare a standard bimetallic ratio. Taking these two steps would allow the US and other silver-using nations to circumvent the bankers of Europe and according to Walsh would represent two-thirds of the Earth’s population. “Senator Walsh Again,” *The Macon Telegraph*, July 20, 1894.

land from Mosquito Indians because they saw the territory as useful. It was key to the construction of a Nicaraguan Canal.⁵¹ The Central American republic also appeared to be tugging at the tiger's tale and daring the British to take action against them—possibly in the hopes that they could convince the Americans to intercede on their behalf. In August 1894, Nicaraguan authorities arrested the British Consul in the area on what appeared to the British to be trumped up charges. All they wanted was for the Nicaraguans to pay some reparations for the insult to their man. The *Glasgow Herald* hoped that the incident would raise sympathies for the Mosquito Indians rather than the Nicaraguans.⁵² The *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* called the whole affair a “trifle” and, “Nations, as a rule, do not go to war over trifles, although a trifle may be made the excuse for a declaration of hostilities.” Given the recent rapprochement between the two powers, the Aberdeen paper could see no reason for the affair to be troubling the Americans.⁵³ What appeared to Southern eyes as British desire for Nicaraguan land was nothing more than a slight on the other side of the Atlantic.

Despite British claims to the contrary, the seeming encroachment of Britain into Central America demonstrated to many Southerners the empire's apparent insatiable appetite for land and further justified their calls for a vigorous defense of the Monroe Doctrine. At the beginning of the controversy, the *Constitution* painted it as England gaining “a foothold under the sham government of an Indian chief who is in reality backed by England.” In these early accounts, it is apparent that Southern

⁵¹ The proposed Nicaraguan Canal would have been longer than the one built in Panama in the early twentieth century. However, the middle section would have been through a large lake that would have eased the project.

⁵² “The Frequent References...” *Glasgow Herald*, August 27, 1894.

⁵³ “The Nicaraguan Difficulty,” *The Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, November 29, 1894.

whites saw little merit in the claims of Native peoples. With the British also in Honduras (connected to the Mosquito Coast with this section of Nicaragua—the Mosquitoes claimed land that crossed the Honduran border) and the growing problem in Venezuela, the Southern press argued that this incident was further evidence of the British desire to control the world. As the *Constitution* put it, “England will in the course of a few years be so strong in the countries south of us that American trade and American interests will stand no showing.”⁵⁴ For the *Constitution*, this incident furthered Britain’s long-term goal of world domination.

Later that year, the *Constitution* urged the United States to intervene in Nicaragua because Britain already controlled too much of the Americas for the United States to feel secure should there ever be a Nicaraguan canal. According to the *Constitution*, England was “reaching out for more territory in Africa, China, and Venezuela,” and “has seized certain islands which command the entrance to the Nicaraguan canal.”⁵⁵ A few months later, the *Constitution* further explained why Americans must not let the British gain control of the canal. According to the Georgia paper, “England never sleeps. Her statesmen from generation to generation stick to the policy of extending British rule over all nations not strong enough to offer successful resistance.”⁵⁶ Allowing the British to gain control over a South American

⁵⁴ “England in Central America,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 20, 1894.

⁵⁵ “England in America,” *Atlanta Constitution*, November 20, 1894.

⁵⁶ “Shall We Yield the Canal,” *Atlanta Constitution*, March 28, 1895. Raleigh’s *News and Observer* was no less concerned about the future of South America than the Atlanta editors. Telling their readers, that the Monroe Doctrine was the only check against European “greed,” the North Carolina paper argued that surrendering the Monroe Doctrine would “place our future in jeopardy” by unleashing European empires on South America and giving Britain an upper hand in a possible war with

canal would give them the ability to choke off the Atlantic coast of the United States from the North (from Canada) and the South (the West Indies and northern South America). If a war did erupt between Britain and the US, Britain's advantage would be great.

To these Southern whites, too, the reasons for British intervention in Nicaragua appeared to be trumped up. For Southerners like William Scruggs, British claims about native rights seemed to be little more than an excuse used to gain access to land that the empire could not rightfully claim. Scruggs was a former ambassador to Venezuela, a fierce (and paid) advocate on behalf of that country, a resident of Atlanta, and a regular contributor to the *Constitution*. In an 1894 article about the situation in Nicaragua, Scruggs compared the British to a "cancer" that would take hold in South America. Dismissing the claims of the Mosquito Indians, Scruggs argued that all European nations had recognized the right of discovery over the rights of native peoples. In this case then, the desires of the native American group, who had not been conquered by Spain, did not match the rights of the Nicaraguans to annex their land as they saw fit. The problem, as Scruggs described, was that native Americans were "incapable of performing the duties of a sovereign state in the family of nations." Because they were uncivilized, Mosquito Coast Indians did not have the

the United States. The *News and Observer* understood the possible consequences of American involvement but insisted that Britain should not be allowed to annex Nicaragua "as long as there is a man or a gun to defend the Monroe Doctrine." See "The Monroe Doctrine," *The News and Observer*, 27 April, 1895. Concern over Nicaragua even inspired the North Carolina editors to put forth a Western name as a possible Presidential candidate. In an editorial, the paper endorsed James Budd, governor of California, who noted that the United States must protect its "sister republics" to the South. See "A 'Good Western Man,'" *The News and Observer*, 1 May 1895.

standing to ask anything of Britain. As Scruggs wrote, “The Indians were conceded a right of mere occupancy, which could be extinguished only by the authority of the nation in whose dominions they were found. All sales and transfers of territory made by them to third parties were absolutely null and void.”⁵⁷ While a republican Venezuela could appeal to the United States to defend it against monarchical Britain, the same understanding did not reach to Native American “monarchies” in South America. Race and civilization not only played a role in who white Southerners deemed capable of voting at home but also in who needed assistance on the world stage and from whom they could ask it.

While white Southerners saw British designs on a Nicaraguan canal, British journalists continued to marvel at the American ‘bluster’ and gullibility. The *Glasgow Herald* noted that not only did no one on their side of the Atlantic know of any British plans to build a Central American canal but that they doubted that British capitalists would invest in such a project. They reminded readers that an American had been in Britain a few years earlier attempting to get Britons to invest in such a scheme and that he had returned home with no money.⁵⁸ The *Manchester Guardian* noted the apprehension in the US South about the British canal and declared, “The affrighted ones do not seem to understand that the rumours of English negotiations for purchase were a bogey probably put forth in the hope of influencing the United States Government.”⁵⁹ The next year, the *Leeds Mercury* again pointed out that the

⁵⁷ William Scruggs, “An International Cancer,” *Atlanta Constitution*, December 31, 1894.

⁵⁸ “Can it be that...” *Glasgow Herald*, November 29, 1894.

⁵⁹ “Today’s telegram on the subject...” *Manchester Guardian*, August 28, 1894.

British had absolutely no intention of annexing any land in Nicaragua and believed that someone in the States was trying to “make mischief” between the two countries.⁶⁰ Rather than participating in a grand conspiracy to take the canal that Southern Americans felt was rightfully theirs, the British could not understand the importance that these Southerners placed in a small piece of land in Central America. They also could not comprehend the Southern image of the British Empire as an insatiable, land-grabbing juggernaut.

The British papers were correct in their assessment that the whole situation would end without fighting. The Nicaraguans had their way and annexed the territory. The United States and Britain both had naval ships in the region to protect their respective business interests, but neither side came close to starting hostilities in this conflict. By the time the situation in Venezuela reached a crisis point a year later, Southern papers were primed to see any dispute with the British as both a case of British greed and an opportunity to assert the Monroe Doctrine.

The difficulties between Britain and Venezuela began with the unresolved boundary between Venezuela and neighboring British Guiana. The line itself was in the middle of largely unsettled jungle. When gold was discovered in the disputed territory, Guiana attempted to claim more of the territory than it had previously. Realizing that they had little chance of success in a conflict against Britain, Venezuela asked that the United States intercede and cited the Monroe Doctrine as

⁶⁰ “Somebody in New York or Washington...” *Leeds Mercury*, April 19, 1895. A few days later, the *Glasgow Herald* accused the Nicaraguans of stoking American fears to get them to intervene. See “The folly of the Nicaraguan government...” *Glasgow Herald*, April 29, 1895.

justification for their request just as Nicaragua had done earlier. After some debate and a successful propaganda campaign engineered by William Scruggs, Cleveland came to see this incident as an opportunity to strengthen the Monroe Doctrine by invoking it. Though by this time, the Doctrine was almost a century old, it had been many years since the United States had used it as a justification to interfere in South American affairs and Salisbury had argued that it was not valid. However, because of conflicts with the Boers in South Africa, the British had little desire to fight with the United States. By the middle of 1896, the whole crisis had passed and the Americans and British accepted an arbitration committee to decide on the boundary line.

Similar to the situation in Nicaragua, white Southern papers saw the boundary dispute as having larger implications than the simple matter of drawing a line between the British Guiana and Venezuela. In an 1896 editorial, the *Atlanta Constitution* argued that control of the Orinoco River (the main point of contention between the Venezuelans and the British) would affect the whole of eastern South America. Especially troubling the white Southern paper was the strength of the British Navy. According to the *Constitution*, the British possession of Trinidad already gave them significant control over the entrances to the Orinoco. While the Atlanta paper was not as alarmist as the Venezuelan government—they pointed out that there were other ways of getting into the Orinoco—they still feared British power in the region.⁶¹ The *News and Observer* linked British desire for the territory near the Orinoco to supposed British greed. According to the North Carolina paper, the British were creating problems for themselves all over the globe because they wanted gold.

⁶¹ “England and the Orinoco,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 26, 1896.

According to these papers, Venezuela and South Africa both contained gold mines, and Britain found itself in two diplomatic disputes because of their attempts to gain control of mines in both places.⁶² For Southern white journalists, Britain's staunch defense of the gold standard continued to color their perceptions of British diplomatic aims.

Personal relationships with the Venezuelans and their advocates too influenced white Southern accounts of the difficulties. Two Georgians figured prominently in debates over the dispute in Venezuela, Leonidas Livingston, Congressman from Georgia and William L. Scruggs, former ambassador to Venezuela. The *Constitution's* firm stand in favor of Venezuelan rights may have had to do with the involvement of these two Georgians in making the case for the South American nation. Ambassador to Venezuela from 1889 to 1892 (and previously Colombia), Scruggs found the *Constitution* an ready outlet for his writings in defense of Venezuela. Though a Republican, he had the ear of the Atlanta paper, and the *Constitution* regarded him as an expert on the region.⁶³ Livingston was a key voice in Congress in support of a muscular defense of the Monroe Doctrine. It was his House Resolution that settled for nothing less than Britain submitting to arbitration in this matter. More than other Southern papers, the *Constitution* would defend the Cleveland administration in its dispute with the British government. For the *Constitution*, it was an opportunity to demonstrate American power to the world while upholding the honor of the United States in defending a less powerful republic.

⁶² "England seems to want..." *News and Observer*, January 11, 1896.

⁶³ See "The Opinion of an Expert," *Atlanta Constitution*, January 2, 1894.

The *Constitution's* relationship with Scruggs began when Scruggs resigned his ambassadorship when the Cleveland administration took office. After his return to the US, Scruggs was paid by the Venezuelan government to promote its interests in the United States and particularly to make the case to the American people to intercede on their behalf against Britain.⁶⁴ At the time, the *Constitution* welcomed him home with open arms and celebrated his return as a hero. A glowing editorial praised his work to protect American citizens during a recent revolution in Venezuela and his ability to be friendly with all of the factions in the conflict.⁶⁵ Back in the South, the former diplomat argued that trade with South America would improve if Venezuela were independent of British influence. According to Scruggs, most of the trade from both Venezuela and Colombia went to Europe even though European ports were “three times” further away than Southern ports. He hoped that the upcoming Atlanta Exposition would provide a forum for developing better ties between

⁶⁴ Scruggs claimed to have resigned, and that all contemporary accounts reflect this version of events including his obituaries years later. However, the actual story is more complicated. As Ambassador to Venezuela, Scruggs was charged with assisting an American recover money that he had invested with a Venezuelan. Scruggs did not recover all the money and sent about a fifth of it back to the United States. However, he supposedly had recovered about half the money. He claimed that he had had to bribe the Venezuelan President with the difference. The State Department decided that he had behaved improperly and asked for his resignation. After this incident, he was employed by the Venezuelans to lobby on their behalf in the States. See John A.S. Grenville and George Berkeley Young, *Politics, Strategy, and American Diplomacy: Studies in Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp 127-128 and 132-133.

⁶⁵ “The Venezuela Mission,” *Atlanta Constitution*, December 29, 1892. When Scruggs published a book about his experiences in South America, the *Constitution's* review spoke more about the respect they had for Scruggs and his knowledge of South America than it did about the content of his book. See “A Timely Book,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 8, 1894.

Venezuela and the US South.⁶⁶ To that end, Scruggs played a significant role in bringing South Americans to the Atlanta Exposition. In the months before the Exposition, Scruggs traveled through South America promoting the event and arranging for South American representation there. When he returned, he described the opportunities available to Southerners in the region. After interviewing Scruggs, the *Constitution* explained that he “made it plain that Atlanta is the natural market of Mexico, Central America, northern South America and the West Indies.” They further argued, “The inhabitants of those countries have been growing tired of European domination” and that only Southern “indifference” had kept them out of the region.⁶⁷

Scruggs further connected the peoples of Venezuela to the racial make up in the South. Responding to an opponent of intervention who called Venezuelans, “Spanish half-breeds, but semi-civilized,” Scruggs argued that Venezuelans in particular and South Americans in general were more civilized than most Americans gave them credit. He pointed to the racial heritage of South Americans to make his case. Noting that there were many ‘pure-blood’ whites in Venezuela, Scruggs described the educated elite of the country speaking three or four languages and being as civilized as any people in the world. He continued by favorably describing Venezuelans of mixed European and Indian descent (including the president of the country) and comparing them to Native Americans who lived in the South—who he linked to some of the best Virginia families. In direct contrast to his discussion of the Mosquito Indians only a couple years before, he now praised the culture of South

⁶⁶ William Scruggs, “Venezuela and Our Exposition,” *Atlanta Constitution*, February 25, 1894.

⁶⁷ “The Opinion of an Expert,” *Atlanta Constitution*, January 2, 1894

America's Indians. He also claimed that the Venezuelan leaders were the descendants of chiefs and warriors. Below these mestizos were pure-blooded Indians who he described as "docile" and efficient farmers. Finally, he acknowledged the presence of blacks in Venezuela and compared them to Southern blacks: "The African race is always the same wherever you find it."⁶⁸ In short, Venezuela came across looking very much like the US South.

From the coverage that the *Constitution* gave the Venezuelan contingent at the Exposition, it appears that the former ambassador was successful in promoting that country. An Atlanta man in Caracas on business in the months leading up to the Atlanta Fair wrote to the *Constitution* of the preparations that Venezuelans were making for their exhibit in Atlanta. I. W. Avery, the writer, claimed to have received personal assurances from both the President and foreign minister that their country would be bringing as good a demonstration as they could to Georgia. Avery also quoted the local paper as very appreciative of Livingston who was then on his way to visit the South American country. In this coverage, the Atlanta journalist made sure both to connect himself to Venezuela's rulers and to note how much they had relied on Georgian politicians to maintain their standing in the world.⁶⁹ The Venezuelans continued to build connections to Georgia when they arrived for the Fair. In an interview during the Exposition, two Venezuelan commissioners spoke highly of Atlanta and the US South. During a conversation that praised both Atlanta and the Exposition, Commissioner Luis Jove explained, "I should like very much to see direct

⁶⁸ "Reply to Mr. Carson," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 5, 1896.

⁶⁹ I.W. Avery, "Avery in Caracas," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 24, 1895.

trade established between the South and South America—especially Venezuela.”⁷⁰

Helping Venezuela would also mean creating ways for the South to move from poverty and develop trade to its south.

In late December 1895, when Cleveland issued his most definitive statement on the Venezuelan matter (called his ‘War Message’), he sparked conversations across the country about the meaning of the Monroe Doctrine and the possibility of war with Britain. In a statement to Congress, Cleveland expressed strong support for the Monroe Doctrine, noted that it applied in the case of Venezuela and declared that the United States would defend the small republic against the large empire. For the next year, Venezuela remained a lively topic of discussion, as the British government decided what to do about this unexpected development. The cost of a war with the United States would be high, and they would gain very little in South America. Southern papers routinely predicted an American victory in such a conflict and claimed that it would not only cost the British their position in South America but Canada as well.⁷¹ British Guiana only wanted a small part of Venezuelan territory and was not seeking further advance on the continent. There was very little to be gained by Britain in this conflict and quite a lot more to be lost, especially if Germany, France, or Russia joined the American side. Also, the controversy caused by the ill-fated Jameson Raid in South Africa that same month threatened conflicts with the Boers in South Africa and raised tensions with Germany a few weeks later. Though

⁷⁰ “From Venezuela,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 16, 1895.

⁷¹ It is difficult to know why, but white Southern papers that supported the President’s message overwhelmingly believed that the US would defeat Britain in any conflict. There is not a good reason to suspect that this would be the case. However, once they had defeated the British, they were also sure that they would take Canada from them.

the Salisbury government eventually accepted that arbitration would be the proper path, they took several months to come to that conclusion.

It was to Cleveland's War Message that William Carr responded so favorably. Like many Southern whites at the time, he supported the President's willingness challenge the British. The *Constitution* declared, "But what a wonderful change has been wrought by the stroke a pen," and pointed out that Georgian Congressman Livingston had been arguing for such a position for months.⁷² White Southern newspapers welcomed Cleveland's strong stand and linked it to their frustrations with Britain over the gold standard. South Carolina's *The State* hoped that this event would mark a break with the President's gold-standard-supporting allies. Responding to British press reports that Cleveland had "forfeited the support and confidence of the only class in the country with whom he was strong," the *State* noted that they thought that the Cleveland would "gain more friends that he will lose by the desertion of the Wall street gold clique." Not only did the South Carolina paper connect the crisis to the debates over the gold standard, but they also brought up European imperial 'piracy' in the next editorial. Defending the Monroe doctrine, the *State* called France and England "two great land-pirates," who would lead Europe to carve up South America if left unchecked, as they had done to Africa a decade earlier. Therefore, "If we make a concession to England, we yield the whole case, make ourselves impotent and contemptible, surrender our hope of controlling the South American trade, and

⁷² "Livingston and Venezuela," *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 20, 1895.

open the doors to the Europeizing [sic] of America.”⁷³ Again, Southern manliness supported a strong response to Britain. In this case, the only way for the US to avoid impotence would be to fight. Cleveland’s handling of the situation drew praise from a white Southern press that had been pushing him in this direction for some time.

White Southerners supported Cleveland’s call to arms across political party lines. The *Daily Charlotte Observer* published a letter from an unnamed correspondent who it called the “foremost Republican in the state” which attacked Britain and supported Cleveland’s policy. This unsigned letter brought together Southern hopes for trade with South America, constructions of gender, race, and empire, fights over the gold standard, and fear of British power. Condemning the connections between the “monied classes” on both sides of the Atlantic, the correspondent welcomed the chance to push Britain from their preeminent position in the world. The Republican writer too called upon American manhood to stand up to Britain but instead of seeing Britain as a male brute to be stopped, he portrayed the British as a woman unnaturally at the head of the world. He wrote, “England is not equal to her position as mistress of the world.” According to this white Southerner, a proper mistress would not allow imperial atrocities to be committed in her name.

⁷³ “The State’s Survey” and “The Monroe Doctrine,” *The State*, December 20, 1895. Though not as bellicose, the *Knoxville Journal* also explained to their reader that Cleveland was defending the Monroe Doctrine and South America from European intervention. See “The Question at Issue,” *The Knoxville Journal*, December 22, 1895. The *Commercial Appeal* out of Memphis, Tennessee, argued that Cleveland was taking a sensible approach and that the “jingoos” should be kept to the background at this delicate stage. See “Getting Serious,” *The Commercial Appeal*, December 18, 1895.

He further argued that only the United States could correct for this unnatural situation. The politician declared: “Wrongs and horrible atrocities against humanity have gone on right under the guns of her ships,” and the British working class did not know of it because they were too tired from their daily toil. The cause would be one of Anglo-Saxon civilization put right. “While it would seem that the magnificent Anglo Saxon race must become the factor to measure justice among all the races, it requires different institutions and a different training, a wider reach for intelligence, and a more universal manhood than England possesses.” If the United States performed its manly duty, “we could practically command the peace of the world, and justice to all people.”⁷⁴ For this writer, who claimed to have never voted for Cleveland, the Venezuela crisis provided a pretext for ridding the hemisphere of European influence and promoting the United States to the preeminent position in the world, usurping the other Anglo-Saxon power.

While many Southern papers respected Cleveland’s gamesmanship in the Venezuela situation, one paper which had personal connections to Britain attacked his belligerence. *The Fayetteville Observer* strongly criticized Cleveland’s jingoism over Venezuela and his handling of foreign policy. Notably, the editor of the paper, E.J. Hale had been the American Consul in Manchester from 1885 until 1889. To the *Observer*, Cleveland used the Venezuela matter to score cheap political points and distract the people from his failings as a president. The *Observer* was not a Republican organ, but instead argued that Cleveland was a bad Democratic President. The paper hoped to see Cleveland and his support of the gold standard pushed out of

⁷⁴ “Mr. Cleveland Sustained,” *Daily Charlotte Observer*, December 29, 1895.

the Democratic party in the coming election. After Cleveland's War Message, which the *Observer* called, "improper," the paper noted that it was possible for Cleveland to have committed an impeachable offense by threatening war when the President does not have the authority to do so under the Constitution.⁷⁵

Unlike the more supportive members of the press, the *Observer* printed letters that praised Britain's handling of the affair. One unsigned letter noted that the English had "the best of us in the competition of common sense" and contrasted the steady course of England to the "feverish conditions of this side of the water." To the reader, the whole affair was rather silly and not worth the amount of trouble that the United States appeared to be inviting.⁷⁶ Another letter from the same day argued that the United States would be better supporting Cuban revolutionaries, fighting "for one of the fundamental principles of human liberty," than to get into an ill-considered "fratricidal" conflict with Britain. According to letters in the *Observer*, the Monroe

⁷⁵ "The Venezuela Affair," *Fayetteville Observer*, January 2, 1896. The *State* argued that Cleveland's message could not be a trick because it weakened his standing on the gold standard. See "The State's Survey," *The State*, December 21, 1895. The *Commercial Appeal* worried that the war fear would further depress the economy. Rather than blame Cleveland, however, they saw Britain as the primary cause for drawing out the apprehension of war when they knew perfectly well that it was unlikely. The Tennessee paper could find no reason for this kind of behavior from the British government. See "Wars and Rumors," *Commercial Appeal*, December 21, 1895. The *Commercial Appeal* continued questioning Cleveland's handling of the affair. To the Memphis paper, the President should have been less harsh with Britain and sensible heads would have easily prevailed. They argued that the entire war scare was a failure of proper diplomacy. See "There is a wrong way of doing things..." *Commercial Appeal*, December 22, 1895.

⁷⁶ "How the People are Rebuking Our 'Hero by Proxy,'" *Fayetteville Observer*, January 2, 1896.

Doctrine was not as popular with the Southern people as the larger metropolitan newspapers made out.⁷⁷

A week later, *The Observer* reprinted an article from a Kentucky paper which noted the devastating effects that a war with England would have on the South. According to the author, war would mean, “millions and hundreds of millions wrung annually from our hardworking farmers, and mechanics, mainly for the benefit of contractors and a gang of politicians who hold that the world owes them a living.” It would turn free Americans into European peasants who the author claimed were kept down by the constant fear of war that their leaders hold over them.⁷⁸ That same week, the editors of the *Observer* continued their own attack against Cleveland and his message. In an editorial entitled, “How the President Inflamed the People,” the editors accused Cleveland of making false claims to convince the American people that war was the only answer to the Venezuelan question. The editorial charted Cleveland’s decision-making process and noted that within five days he both claimed to be certain that Britain had violated Venezuelan agreements and that he did not know. However, none of this indecision appeared in his message to Congress. To the *Observer* such behavior was proof that Cleveland had overstated his case and pretended that there could be war because he was trying to inflame the people.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ “Cuba and Venezuela,” *Fayetteville Observer*, January 2, 1896. A self-described “simple farmer” and Confederate veteran writing to the *Commercial Appeal* agreed with William Carr that the “goldbugs” would keep any war from materializing and that the jingoes were doing little more than causing trouble. See B. Bartemus, “No Need for A Jingo Asylum,” *Commercial Appeal*, December 28, 1895.

⁷⁸ “War to the Farmer,” *The Fayetteville Observer*, January 9, 1896.

⁷⁹ “How the President Inflamed the People,” *Fayetteville Observer*, January 9, 1896.

In commenting on a possible war, the New Orleans *Picayune* also specifically attacked Anglo-Saxonist notions of an alliance between Britain and the United States. In early 1896, an editorial in the *Picayune* connected Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric with those who benefited from close ties between the two countries—industrialists. According to the paper, these familial ideals first came up when it appeared that Germany and Britain might go to war. In this telling, Anglo-Saxonism was a means of forestalling a possible war between Britain and the United States when it seemed possible that the British might have another war on their hands. Though it did not advocate war on Britain at this time, the New Orleans paper looked to such calls with suspicion.⁸⁰ When in 1896 Arthur Balfour, head of the British Treasury, called a possible war between the United States and Britain a crime, the *Daily Picayune* refused to see his utterances as a peaceful gesture. Instead of concentrating on that aspect of his speech, the New Orleans paper reported that he did not name a specific basis for the settlement of the dispute and noted the readiness of the British military.⁸¹ Rather than see familial connections as a reason not to fight the British, the New Orleans paper argued that economic motives had kept the British from pursuing a more violent confrontation: “The people of the United States are the best customers the English factories and workshops have.” Put simply, the *Picayune*’s editors believed that Britain could not afford a war with the United States.⁸²

⁸⁰ “The Controversy with England,” *The Daily Picayune*, January 18, 1896.

⁸¹ “International Arbitration,” *The Daily Picayune*, August 18, 1896.

⁸² “The Will be No War,” *The Daily Picayune*, December 25, 1895. A couple months later, Henry Norman, an English writer for the *London Chronicle* published a piece in *Scribner’s Magazine* about the “Quarrel between the English Speaking Peoples.” In it, Norman expressed sympathy for the United States in this affair and claimed that

Ultimately, policymakers in London and Washington put an end to the controversy, and the white South never found out whether the British could afford to challenge the United States. As Britain and the United States constructed an arbitration treaty and the talk of war faded, white Southern papers gradually scaled back their criticism of British imperialism. The election of 1896 placed the bimetallic controversy at the center of domestic politics, but there was not another international conference that placed Britain at odds with Southern writers. However, that this debate occurred clearly marks a Southern discourse about empire that was based in the region's own culture and economy. White Southerners saw in Irish home rule a bit of themselves. They too saw suffering in Armenia that appalled them. These two stories did not connect directly to Southern relations to Britain. Yet, when combined with Britain's defense of the gold standard and that country's seeming encroachment into South America, they created in white Southern minds a portrait of an empire that had to be stopped. Primary to this image was the construction of a South as part of the world affected by that empire.

most British folks held a favorable view of Americans. He attributed the bulk of anti-American feeling in his country to a certain class of Tories. Though the editorial did not accept an American and British conflict as 'fratricidal' as Norman did, the *Picayune* still appreciated his approach to the issue. According to the paper, if all Britons saw as he did, then there was little that the two nations could not work out. "The Quarrel of the English-Speaking Peoples," *The Daily Picayune*, March 28, 1896. Later the New Orleans paper predicted that the US would disappoint those hoping for an alliance between "English speaking peoples" should Britain go to war in Europe and described the US as "an interested but neutral spectator" to such a conflict, "Combinations Against Great Britain," *The Daily Picayune*, July 7, 1896. In response to a British jurist again bringing up the alliance of English speaking peoples, the *Picayune* declared: "No such sentiment prevails in this country. Quite the contrary: the undercurrent of feeling among the masses of the people is unquestionably hostile to England and everything English," see "International Arbitration," *The Daily Picayune*, August 24, 1896.

In this construction, then, the South was taken advantage of by a powerful Northern aggressor linked to an imperial aggressor abroad. The South, on the other hand, was a model of local democracy, and black Southerners were marginalized. Black support of a war with Britain was mocked, and black farmers were largely erased from discussions of monetary policy. The white South could be a perfect place if not for the actions of a transnational moneyed elite which refused to give it proper respect. By examining these discourses about empire, we can see the conversation upon which Ida B. Wells and the British Anti-Lynchers would intrude during the mid-1890s. With such contempt for British civilization, it is little wonder that white Southern politicians would react badly to white Britons challenging them to live up to Anglo-Saxon ideals.

Taken together, white Southern discussions of Irish home rule, the violence in Armenia, British intransigence on the gold standard, and the British Empire's supposed relationship to South America opened a discursive space for white Southerners to articulate their place within a world defined by imperial relationships. This space was not marked by a deep understanding of the realities of British Imperial policy (as white Southern interpretations of British motivations demonstrate) but instead drew on white Southern cultural constructions of race, gender, civilization, democracy, and class. White Southerners imagined connections between themselves and the other parts of the world that were not particularly like them. The relationship between Irish tenants and the British government was not like that of the US North to Southern farmers; British government of Indian farmers was not similar to Southern agricultural poverty. While championing 'democracy' for Ireland or in South

America, white Southerners actively sought to remove African American men from their voter rolls.

3. “A Disgrace to the Fair Name of Anglo-Saxon Civilization”: Reporting on Southern Race Relations in Britain, 1889-1896

In the fall of 1890, the *Times* assigned its naval correspondent in the United States to write about the state of race relations in the US South.¹ The correspondent, W. Laird Clowes² traveled throughout the South in the weeks that followed, and that winter published his findings in a ten-part series for the *Times*. In his account, Clowes painted a bleak picture of a South marked by a barely-concealed race war. For him, the South would never be able to move past the racial antagonisms brought about by granting an ‘inferior race’ equal status to the more advanced whites. Deeply critical of Southern violence committed by both blacks and whites, Clowes called the South, “a disgrace to the fair name of Anglo-Saxon civilization,” and concluded that the only solution to the South’s dilemma was the mass deportation of African Americans.³

Though his position was extreme, Clowes was not the only Briton to journey through

¹ Clowes never explained why the *Times* gave him this assignment other than to say that they wanted him “to study upon the spot the conditions of the very extraordinary social problem which has gradually arisen there over the past two hundred years” and to document the changes that had occurred since emancipation and the franchisement of black men. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the War’s end may have also played a role in their interest. See W. Laird Clowes, *Black America: A Study of the Ex-Slave and his Master* (London: Cassell and Company, 1891). p. vii. It is also possible that the spread of the British Empire through Africa in this period played a role in the *Times*’s assignment. Clowes, in his series, posited a near-universal African inferiority to whites that included blacks in the US South and blacks in Africa. For more on the British Empire in Africa, see Ronald Robinson, and John Gallagher, with Alice Denny. *Africa and the Victorians: the Climax of Imperialism* (Garden City: Doubleday 1968); P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (New York: Longman, 2000); and chapters in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

² W. Laird Clowes, 1856-1905

³ “The Negro Question: VII. The Position of the Southern White,” *The Times*, January 3, 1891

the South during this period and offer an opinion on how to solve the South's race problem. The three elite white British men whose accounts are featured here shared Clowes's understanding of Southern blacks as inferior and his favoritism to the 'plight' of Southern whites. In looking at these accounts and British newspaper coverage of South Carolina's 1895 Constitutional Convention (explicitly called to disfranchise black men in the state), I argue that their understanding of imperialism coupled with an emergent Anglo-Saxonism led these men to see the South as a proving ground for transnational constructions of race, empire, and civilization.

That Britons and Americans built a transnational Anglo-Saxonism during this period is not a new insight. Both Stuart Anderson and Paul Kramer have noted the role that Anglo-Saxonism played in the rapprochement between British and American governments at this time as well as the construction of an American empire.⁴ Their work centers on conversations in and about American imperialism and amongst Northerners and the British. My chapter builds on their arguments by looking at the

⁴ Stuart Anderson. *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904*. (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981). Anderson provides a good exposition of northern ideas about race, but does not approach the southern United States; and Paul A. Kramer. "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and the United States Empires, 1880-1910" *Journal of American History*, 88-4 (March 2002). See also Kornel Chang, "Circulating Race and Empire: Transnational Labor Activism and the Politics of Anti-Asian Agitation in the Anglo- American Pacific World, 1880-1910," *The Journal of American History*, 96.3 (December 2009), 678-701. Chang argues that the working class men in the Pacific Northwest constructed a transnational white working class solidarity that worked to limit Asian immigration to the region. My own work here similarly maintains that white Britons constructed a transnational elite solidarity regarding the treatment of racial minorities at imperial site. Though white Southerners were slow to grasp this solidarity—they were largely anti-imperial throughout this period—it still allowed them to justify disfranchisement of black Southerners to both Northern and British elites. For more on the US South and their attitudes towards Imperial Britain at this time, see chapters 1,2, and 5.

interactions between Britons and white Southerners to see the evolving and contingent interplay between race, class, and gender in white British accounts of the South. I argue that these factors were primary in elite British acceptance of and support for white supremacist movements in the Southern United States during the early-1890s. Though they condemned the violence there, these elite white Britons' experience of empire and suspicion of popular democracy fueled their coverage of the US South and their conviction that the white desire to rule over black Southerners overruled black desires to protect themselves. While race and class were often intertwined—because most blacks in the US South were poor—in their coverage of and commentary on black voting in that region, the writers featured in this chapter called upon constructions of black inferiority more than class status as a justification for black disfranchisement. Though their response to white violence varied, few of the British writers in this chapter doubted that white men were correct in blaming violence on the black men on whom it was exacted.

Ida B. Wells's anti-lynching campaign came to England in the middle of this conversation, and her work shifted the conversation in subtle ways. This chapter contextualizes Ida B. Wells's anti-lynching missions to Britain by placing them within a larger British conversation about Southern democracy and violence (for more on Wells's missions and the responses of other Britons, see chapter 4). In these discussions we can see the challenges faced by Wells as she sought British support. Historiographic coverage of Wells's campaigns has largely been triumphal and has noted her success in bringing international attention to the plight faced by Southern

blacks at the hands of Southern whites.⁵ These accounts rarely speak to larger dynamics at play in Wells's interactions with the British press. She and her allies in BALC struggled to overcome the narratives described in this chapter.

Rather than see white violence as a means of stifling black progress, the authors covered here saw it as a marker of white Southerners' difficult position as a superior people forced into conflict with what should have been a subject people. Historians Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds demonstrate that white Britons looked to the South for ideas about their own governance of empire, and the failure of Reconstruction in the South had implications beyond the borders of the United States. Because the South could not overcome racial antagonisms, the violence of the South influenced the construction of white supremacist governments in settler colonies across the British Empire.⁶ In looking to the British accounts below, we can see what lessons Britons took from the South during this period and how British writers

⁵ Elite British white men sought and favored the arguments of men who looked like them, and they did so by ignoring what Wells had placed before their faces. For more on Wells, see previous chapter, and see Linda O. McMurtry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: the Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: a Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Paula Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Amistad, 2008); Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010).

⁶ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). The most famous case of US Southern white supremacy influencing the construction of colonial regimes is of course South Africa. See John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Lake and Reynolds however demonstrate that the US South also influenced white settler regimes in Australia and New Zealand as well as other parts of the Empire.

confronted the uncivilized behavior of their supposed Anglo-Saxon kinsmen.⁷

Because of their own experiences as empire-builders, white British writers saw the South as an extension of their imperial mission to control darker races.

Southern Whites Make their Case: James Bryce and W. Laird Clowes on the Problem of the South

Britons journeyed to the United States throughout the period following the Civil War. The War and its aftermath had created a new kind of democracy in the South by enfranchising the ex-slaves and seemingly breaking the power of the planter elite. British subjects were eager to see how the Southern states recuperated from the devastation of the War and how ex-slaves built new lives for themselves. Though the early years of Reconstruction were marked by a cautious optimism,⁸ by the 1880s and 1890s, British writers began to grow weary of the constant racial violence that

⁷ Both Gail Bederman and Kristin Hoganson have written about competing constructions of manliness and civilization during this period and their connections to constructions of race. Bederman in particular links discussions of lynching to these competing narratives. She argues that white Northern men who challenged lynching as uncivilized presented themselves as more masculine than both black men, who were inherently uncivilized, and white Southern men, who were more civilized than black men but who could not control their uncivilized urges to violence. Bederman's discussion of white Northerners lines up well with the way white Britons like Bryce, Clowes, and Burnley confronted Southern race relations. This chapter builds on Bederman's understanding of race, civilization, and masculinity to demonstrate that British understanding of US Southern violence were built on similar lines but also included the British experience of empire during this period. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 52; see also Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁸ For more on British coverage of the Reconstruction era, see David Macrae, *The Americans at Home: Pen-and-Ink Sketches of Men and Manners* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas: 1870). For analysis of Macrae and a second tour of the American South that he undertook in 1899, see chapter 5.

marked Southern life and elections. One of those visitors, James Bryce,⁹ published a detailed study of the United States, *The American Commonwealth* in 1889.¹⁰ Bryce was a Liberal politician, Member of Parliament from 1880-1907, and a supporter of electoral reformer in his country. He supported the Reform Act of 1867 and voted for electoral reforms in 1885, which extended the franchise in Britain. Bryce was also a committed student of the racial history of Anglo-Saxons.¹¹ In looking to the United States, Bryce studied the workings of American democracy and pointed to the superiority of white Anglo-Saxons and their institutions.

A massive work in two volumes, the *American Commonwealth* examined not only the US South, but the whole United States. In it, Bryce detailed the changes that were taking place across the United States to British audiences. Taking his inspiration from Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, Bryce sought to document the way in which the ideals of democracy interacted with the workings of American institutions and the party system in the United States. Bryce was both disappointed by what he witnessed in the US and convinced that American democracy would one day live up to its promise. In the introduction to *The American Commonwealth*, he explained, "A hundred times in writing this book have I been disheartened by the

⁹ James Bryce, 1838-1922

¹⁰ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1889). I concentrate here on the second volume because in it Bryce specifically engaged questions of the party system and public opinion in the US. In the first volume, Bryce discussed the federal government and the relationship between it and the states.

¹¹ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, for his support of reform see p. 55; for his training in Anglo-Saxon history, see p. 50. For more on the electoral reforms in Britain during the nineteenth century, see Ian Machin, *The Rise of Democracy in Britain, 1830-1918* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001).

facts that I was stating: a hundred times has the recollection of the abounding strength and vitality of the nation chased away these tremors.”¹² Throughout the book, Bryce wrestled with reconciling his belief in democracy as a system with his conviction that lower-class voters, white and black, created a cohort of political operatives who were not deserving of the responsibilities of office.

While Bryce expressed discomfort with the voting patterns of both poor black and white voters, his commitment to white supremacy led him to side with Southern whites in their efforts to stop black voting. In the *American Commonwealth*, Bryce denigrated black voters and argued that “the grant of the suffrage found them [ex-slaves] as unfit for political rights as any population could be.”¹³ Bryce’s account of black voting in the South was of a piece with his accounts of lower class voters in other parts of the country. When discussing lower class white voters in Northern cities, he described “vulgar” politicians, “the associates of criminals,” who “form groups through whom they can reach and control the ignorant voter.”¹⁴ Yet, he also maintained that white election fraud in the South was a necessary evil to deal with the masses of black voters who were unfit to exert such control over their racial superiors. As much as he distrusted Northern and Western poor, white voters, he

¹² Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, vol. 1, p. 10.

¹³ Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, vol. 2, p. 276.

¹⁴ Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, vol. 2, p. 33. Bryce also explained, “There is no class in America to which public political life comes naturally, as it still does to a certain class in England; no families with a sort of hereditary right to serve the state.” p. 38. For this reason (combined with the lack of status given to professional politicians and the opportunities afforded by American business), the “best men” in the US, according to Bryce, go into other fields rather than public service. p. 35-42.

never suggested bringing Southern electoral fraud to those regions.¹⁵ To Bryce, the US South was a special case that merited further study because of the interactions there between a superior and inferior race.

Bryce expanded on his account of race relations in the South and its connections to the practice of British Imperialism two years later in a piece for the American periodical, *The North American Review*. A general interest and literary magazine that circulated all over the country, *The Review* contracted him to write an article about race relations in the South from the view of an informed foreigner. Like many white Southern New South boosters, Bryce portrayed the South as a region overcoming its heritage of slavery and moving in the direction of civilization. The violence that he witnessed he attributed to lower class whites and commented that many wealthy Southern whites were “distinctly friendly to the negro.” From Southern blacks too were feelings of friendship. In speaking of them, he wrote, “There is a strong feeling of separation, but there is also a desire to live peaceably and

¹⁵ Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, vol. 2, p. 278. Earlier in the *American Commonwealth*, Bryce explicitly called blacks in the South inferior to whites and while he admitted that white election fraud “cannot be justified,” he argued that it was understandable because of the “ignorance of the negroes,” see *The American Commonwealth*, vol. 2, p. 8. While he criticized black voters, Bryce did not in the first edition of *American Commonwealth* condemn them to an inferior position in the South. According to the first edition, the ex-slaves had made tremendous progress in the few years since Emancipation, and Bryce expected them to continue to do so over the next several decades. Indeed, he praised Southern blacks for their work ethic and the lack of resentment against Southern whites that he saw in them, see Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, vol. 2, pp 708. For the lack of resentment, see p. 277. After touring the South again in 1890, he favorably compared blacks in the South to black workers in the British West Indies, see James Bryce, “Thoughts on the Negro Problem,” *North American Review* (December 1891) pp. 642-3.

amicably together.”¹⁶ In black-white relations, Bryce only saw difficulties when black men attempted to vote and thus placed themselves on an equal political footing with white men.

To Bryce, the US South would be a more peaceful place if whites could assume total control and not be forced to deal with black voters. In short, he argued that the US South should be more like British imperial possessions. As in *American Commonwealth*, Bryce pointedly described the vast majority (“nine-tenths”) of blacks as unfit for suffrage, but remained positive that they would eventually overcome their racial inferiority and poverty.¹⁷ Bryce further argued that their proximity to Southern whites had helped raise black Southerners beyond their racial brethren in other parts of the world. He explained: “Compare the negroes even of the semi-tropical States with the negroes of the coast of Guinea or the lower Congo...and the advancement is undeniable.”¹⁸ A committed imperialist, in speaking of the US South, Bryce was also making a case for the effectiveness of the imperial, civilizing mission. If ex-slaves could advance this much in twenty-five years, then the unspoken assumption would have been that the peoples of Africa could also be taught the values of civilization.

For the South to become more in line with Anglo-Saxon civilization, Bryce argued for a race blind educational requirement for suffrage. Bryce specifically argued that the literacy test should not be limited to the descendants of Africans because disfranchising all men unable to read “would stimulate the desire of the

¹⁶ James Bryce, “Thoughts on the Negro Problem,” *North American Review*, p. 644.

¹⁷ James Bryce, “Thoughts on the Negro Problem,” *North American Review*, p. 648

¹⁸ James Bryce, “Thoughts on the Negro Problem,” *North American Review*, p. 643.

negroes to acquire knowledge” and “would cast no slur upon them as a race.”¹⁹ In speaking of the Fifteenth Amendment, he noted that large sections of Western Europe had many people “scarcely fit for electoral rights,”²⁰ and Bryce further suggested that Northern and Western states should consider such a requirement for their many immigrant communities.²¹ Bryce dismissed calls for the deportation of Southern blacks and correctly noted the necessity of black labor to the Southern States. For him, the most just solution lay in keeping those who should not vote from doing so and allowing the rest to catch up through their education and tutelage at the hands of whites. According to his argument, removing those unfit from the voter rolls would encourage the peaceful co-existence that both white and black Southerners desired. In keeping with his image of a peaceful South, he expected Southern whites to allow educated blacks to vote and to allow more black voting as more of them reached an appropriate level of civilization. While Bryce criticized lower-class voters all over the United States, the lasting legacy of *The American Commonwealth* and in his *Review* piece was in his account of Southern black voters. According to historians Lake and Reynolds, Bryce became the recognized British expert on racial democracy in the South and his labeling of it as a failure set the stage for white supremacist governments all over the world.²²

¹⁹ James Bryce, “Thoughts on the Negro Problem,” *North American Review*, p. 655.

²⁰ James Bryce, “Thoughts on the Negro Problem,” *North American Review*, p. 649.

²¹ James Bryce, “Thoughts on the Negro Problem,” *North American Review*, p. 656.

²² According to Lake and Reynolds, J.X. Merriam, a Liberal leader in the Cape Colony, wrote to Bryce in 1892 to ask how the literacy requirement worked in the US and expressed a desire to bring it to the Cape, see Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, p. 63.

While Bryce was in the US South researching this article, another British journalist was writing about the South, and he painted a very different picture of the region for British readers. Rather than see peaceful Southerners working together to overcome their racist history, W. Laird Clowes found a barely concealed race war going on in the South. In 1890, the *Times* dispatched him as a special correspondent to study race relations in the South. At the time, *The Times* was supportive of British imperial expansion, against Irish Home Rule, and worked to define people of color as racially inferior. Clowes was an odd man for the editor to choose for such this assignment. His principle field of knowledge was naval affairs; indeed, at the time of his visit to the States, he was the *Times's* naval correspondent, and he did not have the scholarly background or credentials of Bryce.

He took his new assignment seriously and toured widely in the South. According to his own testimony, he spoke with learned men of both races throughout the region about the state of affairs and the best solutions. Clowes posted a series of ten letters entitled “The Negro Question in the United States,” that detailed the position of African Americans in Southern society from the end of the Civil War through the present. The next year, he revised and extended his columns into a book, *Black America: A Study of the Ex-Slave and his Late Master*.²³ Like Bryce, his accounts favored the testimony of white men and presented African Americans as childlike racial inferiors who were unjustly given the vote to punish white

²³ W. Laird Clowes, *Black America: A Study of the Ex-Slave and his Master* (London: Cassell and Company, 1891).

Southerners for secession. Unlike Bryce, he argued that the only just solution to the race problem in the South was the mass deportation of Southern blacks to Africa.

In his reports to the British paper, Clowes accomplished four goals: he revealed to British readers the state of race relations in the American South, explained that there was a serious problem there that could turn into a crisis soon if something was not done to avert it, described the historical conditions that brought about the problem, and explored possible solutions to the problem. Throughout, he regularly used examples from the British Empire to explain to British readers the state of things in the South. Additionally, Clowes clearly valued the testimony of Southern white men over those of all others. In the series and the book that followed, Clowes never explained how long his visit was or where in the South he went, though he did say that he drew his conclusions by talking with the South's "best men."²⁴ In *Black America*, Clowes revealed the names of his most reliable sources. Tellingly, they were all white men, though not all Southerners. The list included Theodore Roosevelt as well as other American thinkers and the governors of most of the Southern states. Clowes noted that he did interview "a number" of African American men, but they did not want him to identify them by name.²⁵

His most trusted source appears to have been Carlyle McKinley. McKinley was a white Southern journalist, Civil War veteran, associate editor of South

²⁴ The only place that he specifically spoke of being was in South Carolina during the 1890 election. As demonstrated below, his experiences in South Carolina colored his interpretations of Southern democracy and the effects that white Southern racism had on it.

²⁵ Clowes, *Black America*, pp. 214-215. Many of the quotations in this section appear in both the book and *Times*. In those cases, I have cited the newspaper articles because they appeared first.

Carolina's *News and Courier*, and an opponent of South Carolina Governor Benjamin Tillman. His book, *An Appeal to Pharaoh* (first edition published anonymously in 1889; later editions would bear his name), argued that the best solution to the race problem in the South was the mass deportation of Southern blacks and their 'repatriation' to a new colony in Africa.²⁶ In his account, Clowes specifically cited McKinley's book and claimed to have interviewed its author; the British author specifically thanked McKinley by name in *Black America* without comment on his authorship of *An Appeal to Pharaoh*. McKinley's work was a direct response to Albion Tourgee's *An Appeal to Caesar* which defended Southern blacks and urged Northerners to do more to protect them. Tourgee was a Northern white man and Union veteran who had participated the Reconstruction government in North Carolina. He moved North in the 1880s but continued to write articles and books in support of black rights in the South; notably, he was lead attorney for Homer Plessy in his case challenging racial segregation in the South. He was also a friend and ally of Ida B. Wells.²⁷ Though Clowes quoted Tourgee in his series, he gave more credence to the Southerner than to the Northern Republican who had worked with Southern Reconstruction governments. Like McKinley, Clowes would end both his series and the book by arguing that emigration was the best solution for Southern

²⁶ Carlyle McKinley, *An Appeal to Pharaoh: The Negro Problem and Its Radical Solution* (New York: Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, 1890). McKinley is not named as the author of this work. For his argument on the mass deportation of American blacks see pp. 120-130.

²⁷ Albion W. Tourgee, *An Appeal to Caesar* (New York: Ford, Howard, and Hulbert, 1884). For more on Tourgee, see Mark Elliot, *Color Blind Justice: Albion Tourgee and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

blacks. Though it did not appeal to Bryce, McKinley's argument found a British champion in Clowes.

Like Bryce, Clowes saw the race problem as central to understanding the way Southerners lived. He noted, "The cardinal principle of the political creed of 99 per cent. of the Southern whites is that the white man must rule at all hazards. In comparison with this principle every other article of political faith dwindles into ridiculous insignificance. White domination dwarfs tariff reform, protection, free trade, and the very pales of party."²⁸ Clowes used census data to prove that the demographics of the 'black belt' created this situation. Because African descendants already held the majority in South Carolina and they would soon outnumber whites in Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama as well—indeed, according to his [inaccurate] predictions, there would be more black Americans than white in the South as a whole in a few years—"the Negro problem constitutes the most serious and complex social question of the hour."²⁹ It was for this reason, he claimed, that he detailed the race question in the British paper and suggested a solution that required the assistance of the 'civilized world.'

Before he could solve the problem, he had to lay before his readers the precise causes of the situation in the South. In his second and third dispatches the

²⁸ "The Negro Question in the United States: I. The Black Belt." *The Times*, November 22, 1890. Henceforth: "The Negro Question:..." Bryce echoed these sentiments in his *North American Review* article: "Compared with it [the negro problem] those tariff questions and currency questions and railway questions with which politicians busy themselves sink almost to insignificance." Bryce, "Thoughts on the Negro Problem," p. 641.

²⁹ "The Negro Question in the United States: I. The Black Belt." *The Times*, November 22, 1890.

Times's correspondent provided a history of the Reconstruction era that painted it as a punishment inflicted on Southern whites by a conquering North. Claiming that Reconstruction upset the natural order of things, Clowes argued that the North allowed ex-slaves to enslave Southern whites. He wrote, white Southerners “had enslaved the black. Henceforth, for a season, the black, ignorant, unscrupulous, dissolute, and corrupt, was to enslave them.”³⁰ Clowes argued that the black-run governments had behaved as corrupt regimes that did little other than line their own pockets. Because of this supposedly unnatural usurping of proper authority, Clowes, again like Bryce, sympathized with Southern whites who attempted through any means necessary to place themselves again at the head of Southern governments. To him, if they could not rule through a democratic process because of the inferiority and corruption brought on by letting black Southerners vote, then they should do what they must to keep power in the hands of the ‘best [white] men.’

Though he understood their motives, he did not support all of the methods that Southern whites employed. He noted that British newspaper readers would surely know of the violence committed by whites against blacks, but he argued that in his talks with American journalists, he was able to gain a full picture of the conflict. He argued that though British readers knew of the regular lynchings of black men in the US South, they did not understand that these violent acts were part of a larger conflict. His sixth installment listed twenty-two examples of what he described as “white intolerance and tyranny” against black Southerners. Some examples were

³⁰ “The Negro Question: II. The Reconstruction Era.” *The Times*. November 27, 1890.

merely white Southerners expressing their hatred for blacks, others documented racial segregation in the South, and finally, a quarter of the entries involved some measure of violence against black men. From these instances, he inferred that a guerilla war existed between the two races that threatened to become an open war in the coming years.³¹

While he considered white conduct toward African Americans tyrannical, he accepted white accounts of black violence against white women and linked it to the race war. In his account, Southern black men carried on their side of the war “largely, though not exclusively, against the whites who are least capable of self-protection, and those whose safety is held most precious by those to whom they are near and dear.” Southern white women, in this account, were in constant danger because of the sheer number of black men that surrounded them and the harsh measures taken against black men were necessary but uncivilized means of dealing with a warfare like no other in the world.³² For Clowes, then, Southern life was a constant battle between Southern whites who routinely kept black men from the polls, beat them whenever they stepped out of line, refused to accept them as witnesses in court, segregated them regardless of their education or class, and regularly killed them for slights real and imagined. For their part, Southern black men responded to these crimes by taking advantage of white women whenever possible. Southern race relations then upturned Anglo-Saxon civilization. White men attacked racial inferiors

³¹ The Negro Question: VI. The Position of the Southern Negro (concluded),” *The Times*, January 1, 1891

³² “The Negro Question: VII. The Position of the Southern White,” *The Times*, January 3, 1891.

that they should be protecting and shepherding toward civilization while black men took out their frustration on even weaker Southern white women.

On top of the very real violence that Southern race relations fostered, Clowes, like Bryce, saw Southern racism distorting the proper workings of American democracy. Also like Bryce, Clowes saw race relations in the US South disrupting the rights of the upper classes to rule properly. Again showing the influence of Carlyle McKinley, Clowes cited Ben Tillman's recent election to the governorship of South Carolina as an example of the problems caused by the presence of African American voters in the South. In the contest between Tillman and Haskell for the Democratic nomination for governor in 1890, Clowes contrasted their supporters. Haskell had the support of the state's "best men" while Tillman drew on the "lower and least reputable class of whites."³³ Haskell too was a distinguished war veteran and a "gentleman" and Tillman's military record was limited to participation in a "race riot."³⁴ However, Tillman won the nomination because Haskell had some Republican support. Because of this support, the best men abstained or voted for Tillman rather than accept a leader who could appeal to Republicans and blacks. The 1890 election was also marked by election-day chicanery. In an earlier installment, he described Tillmanites stuffing the ballot boxes in a black district and destroying the voter rolls to cover up for their crimes.³⁵ As he concluded, "But for the presence of a negro

³³ "The Negro Question: VII. The Position of the Southern White," *The Times*, January 3, 1891.

³⁴ For more on Tillman, see Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000)

³⁵ "The Negro Question: V. The Position of the Southern Negro," *The Times*, December 26, 1890.

majority in South Carolina, Haskell would no doubt to-day be Governor-Elect.”³⁶

Blacks then forced Southern white elites to go against their best interests and place their support for unfavorable candidates.³⁷

Though he commented upon American democracy, Clowes also called upon contemporary accounts of European empires to define a universal blackness that marked African peoples and their descendants as inferior to whites all over the globe.³⁸ Like the editors of the *Times*, Clowes supported the extension of the British Empire. Many times in the series Clowes returned to James Froude’s 1888 *The British in the West Indies* to illustrate connections between the West Indies and the Americans South. Froude, an Oxford professor, supporter of imperialism, and racist, argued that no one should begrudge black West Indians the goal of equality, but that they were unlikely ever to reach it. The scholar’s accounts of the British West Indies matched Clowes understanding of blacks in the South. According to Froude the

³⁶ “The Negro Question: VII. The Position of the Southern White,” *The Times*, January 3, 1891.

³⁷ Clowes argument here, it should be noted, makes very little sense. There were examples from other parts of the South in which Southern Democrats supported white candidates who were able to draw support from black Southerners. During that same election year, William Northen won the governorship of Georgia with significant white and black support. In the case of Tillman, it appears that Clowes saw a class dynamic that he did not like and attributed it to race relations in South Carolina. For more on Northen and his conversion to the anti-lynching cause, see David F. Godshalk, “William J. Northen’s Public and Personal Struggles against Lynching,” in Jane Dailey, Glenda Gilmore, and Bryant Simon, eds., *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 28-66. For more Tillman, see Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

³⁸ In this Clowes is much like William Scruggs, a white Southerner and former ambassador to Venezuela. In a discussion of the various races that made up Venezuela, Scruggs explained that the black Venezuelans were like black people everywhere, see chapter 2.

British had a black population in their possessions that “have shown no capacity to rise above the conditions of their ancestors, except under European laws, European education, and European authority to keep them from war with one another.”³⁹ For Clowes, the relationship of European empires to black populations demonstrated that Southern whites were correct in their fear of black domination of Southern politics.

Just as the Caribbean figured into Clowes’s understanding of Southern race relations, so too did the continent of Africa. Clowes opened his final installment by citing H.M. Stanley’s recently published letter to the *Times* about Africans, and Clowes called on Stanley’s experience to demonstrate the need to control black Southerners. According to Stanley, “In order to rule them [Africans] and to keep one’s life amongst them, it is needful resolutely to regard them as children who require, indeed, different methods of rule from [white] English or American citizens.”⁴⁰ Stanley is particularly interesting figure for Clowes to invoke in this instance because he was familiar with both American racism and British imperialism. Though British by birth, Stanley fought on both sides of the American Civil War. Having worked on a Southern cotton plantation immediately before the war, Stanley initially enlisted on the side of the Confederacy. Captured by Union forces, he secured his release by joining their side. He appears soon to have deserted, spending the next few years as a merchant sailor. However, in 1864, he rejoined the war effort,

³⁹ “The Negro Question: VI. The Position of the Southern Negro (concluded).” *The Times*, January 1, 1891. To see how such impression of the West Indies developed, see Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ “The Negro Question: X. The Ideal Solution (Part II—Conclusion),” *The Times*, January 21, 1891.

again on the side of the Union (in the Navy). In the following years, he became famous for his explorations of Africa and for his travel writing. Stanley was also infamous for his harsh treatment of native Africans during his time there. By citing Stanley, Clowes related the South to a particular brand of British imperial thought and practice and a universalized “black” linking Africa to the West Indies to the US South.

Like Stanley, Clowes regarded African Americans as children, innately inferior to white Southerners. In the South, he said, “the white systematically regards the black as a child. And in this the white is certainly justified.” Though black and white children initially appeared to have the same level of intelligence, they began to diverge during puberty: “As a rule the grown negro, even if he has received a better education than the majority of his fellows, is in the mind always a child.”⁴¹ Clowes continued to make this analogy throughout the series. In the final installment, he stated, “every one who knows thoroughly the African negro, either in Africa or in America, can have no other estimate of his character” than to understand him as a child.⁴² For Clowes, white Southerners had a right, and indeed, a need to govern them in any way that they could. The only solution to the problem in the South must remove any semblance of control from the African American population.

⁴¹ “The Negro Question: V. The Position of the Southern Negro.” *The Times*. December 26, 1890.

⁴² “The Negro Question: X. The Ideal Solution (Part II—Conclusion),” *The Times*, January 21, 1891. Stanley’s letter appeared in the *Times* on December 9, 1890. In it he defends British atrocities committed in Africa, see Henry Morton Stanley, “Mr. Stanley and the Rear Guard,” *The Times*, December 9, 1890.

In his discussions of possible solutions, Clowes returned to examples from the British Empire and imperialists. He dismissed out of hand self-government, by which he meant leaving a state or states in the hands of a strong black majority. He then explained that white Southerners could not tolerate such a surrender. Though not part of the British Empire and having been free from French Empire for almost a century at this point, Clowes claimed that the example of Haiti showed what happened when people of African descent were left to govern themselves. He again turned to Froude to justify this assessment. Froude argued that the French spent two hundred years on San Domingo building roads and establishing a civilization and that, in the century since then, the Haitians had degenerated into savagery. Clowes quoted Froude's assertions that, "Ninety years of negro self-government have had their use in showing what it really means...The movement is backward, not forward."⁴³ The correspondent concluded by noting that "a fringe of negro states on the Southern and South-eastern borders of the Union would, therefore, be a perpetual danger to the whole Federation."⁴⁴ Not only did Clowes understand the American South through the success of British imperialism but through the failure of Haiti as well.

European empires, too, demonstrated that that racial categories were static and that the US South would not achieve peace through miscegenation. Though he acknowledged that "America has become a mighty nation from the intermingling of races," Clowes noted that most of those races belonged to the "Indo-Germanic stock."

⁴³ "The Negro Question: VIII. Some Suggested Solutions," *The Times*, January 8, 1891.

⁴⁴ "The Negro Question: VIII. Some Suggested Solutions," *The Times*, January 8, 1891.

When placed next to an African, they would not be so quick to intermingle.⁴⁵ Bryce too argued that miscegenation was an unworkable solution to the problem of the South. In his account, neither side wished to be mixed, and white Southerners would be giving far more up than African Americans gained.⁴⁶ To strengthen his argument, Clowes drew from the British experience in India, where, according to then-predominant racial theories, “whites and coloured people” were racially related. According to Clowes, most “of the half-breeds” in India were illegitimate. The Briton argued that this lack of mixing was based on a natural affinity for one’s own kind. He again turned to Froude and the West Indies. There, according to Froude, lived ten thousand Asian laborers; even they would not intermingle with the Africans. Froude claimed that the black West Indians and the “coolies...are more absolutely apart than the white and black [races].”⁴⁷ By looking at Britain’s imperial experiences, Clowes came to understand the South as similar to the British Empire.

It was also in the imperial world that Clowes found what he believed to be the solution to the South’s problems and that the British imperial system would be able to develop blacks (in Africa or from the US) into civilized men and women. The British correspondent argued that Southern blacks should go to a place in Africa that the US government should conquer for them. Alternately, he stated that European countries with colonies in Africa would welcome an influx of black Americans into their own lands or should let the United States have a small piece of land. He also offered a plan

⁴⁵ “The Negro Question: VIII. Some Suggested Solutions,” *The Times*, January 8, 1891

⁴⁶ Bryce, “Thoughts on the Negro Problem,” p. 651.

⁴⁷ “The Negro Question: VIII. Some Suggested Solutions,” *The Times*, January 8, 1891.

to make this scheme succeed. First, those emigrating must be able to better themselves—“enjoy a prospect of improved political, social, and financial status.” Second, he argued that American blacks should “be governed,” but not oppressed, though it is not entirely clear what he meant by this distinction. Clowes seems to have been arguing that blacks should be allowed to develop themselves free from the violence and racism of Southern whites while still having whites over them. Even in Africa, then, according to Clowes, American blacks were not to be allowed control over their lives. Finally, he maintained that those who owed a debt to them must help them make the journey. That is, white Americans should help pay the costs of the deportation. Here, Clowes specifically placed African Americans above native Africans; he called them “more civilized and less debauched” than Africans. Perhaps, the reporter proposed, black Americans would be able to assist in the civilizing mission: “if it be once understood that the salvation of Africa lies with the negro even more than with the white, there is every ground for believing that the American negro will rise to the occasion.”⁴⁸ Their African heritage would help black Americans prosper across the Atlantic and bring a new vitality to that land.

It was British rule in that new land that Clowes believed would make it possible for American blacks to succeed where they could not in the US South. In so doing, Clowes argued that British system was superior as a civilizing force than the system then in place in the US South. Africa, according to the reporter, would always

⁴⁸ “The Negro Question: X. The Ideal Solution (Part II—Conclusion),” *The Times*, January 21, 1891. This opinion of Africa was largely shared by some Black Americans. See James Meriwether, *Proudly We Can be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) to see black attitudes toward Africa shift.

be ruled by whites, and it “will not possess the irksome defects of white rule as it exists now in America.” Namely, the problem with the American system was that they allowed for too much power in the hands of black citizens. In Clowes’s telling, people of color in the British Empire could improve themselves but they would never be afforded the opportunity to govern. He argued that this arrangement worked much better than that in the U.S. South. According to Clowes, the ‘British negro’ did not need the vote because of the imperial government’s efforts to bring them civilization. On the other hand, African Americans clung to suffrage as their only “badge of humanity,” because Southern whites did so much to put them down. Southern black emigration to Africa would improve the lives of white and black Southerners, Africans, and the British in Africa.⁴⁹

The editors of the *Times* supported their correspondent’s conclusions; indeed, they praised him for his “careful, dispassionate inquiry as to a matter which conflicting interests and passions have obscured.” The editors saw no workable solution to race relations in the South and followed Clowes and Bryce by linking the tensions there to Reconstruction. They stated that they were disappointed that American blacks were not dying out as a race because they had hoped that after the Civil War, blacks would, “like so many other inferior races, die out when brought into contact with civilization.” Like Clowes, his editors thought that Southern whites needed to rule. They noted, “The white has for the time the mastery. The truth is, he must rule, no matter at what cost. But he knows he is hated; he is uneasy as to the

⁴⁹ For a more critical take on British treatment of Africans see Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, eds. *Black Experience and the Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

future; and he is conscious that his position is false and legally indefensible.”⁵⁰ Like Bryce, the editors of the *Times* demonstrated both sympathy for and distrust in Southern whites. They saw their efforts as both an affront to civilization and the only means of dealing with a difficult situation. In an earlier commentary, the editors had suggested that the large scale de facto disfranchisement of African Americans in the South seemed “to argue a radical inferiority of intellect and resource.” Black Southerners had allowed their votes to be taken from them and were therefore not the equals of those who stole them.⁵¹ In agreeing with Clowes, the editors of the *Times* also identified with white supremacists in the South.

One response to Clowes’s piece foreshadowed the white Southern response to Wells and BALC’s criticisms of the South. S.W. John, a self-identified Southerner, wrote to the *Times* to dispute Clowes’s belief that emigration was the only workable solution. He maintained that the Southern African American is “the highest type of negro race on earth” but that the races must remain separate. John countered Clowes assertion that white Southerners feared black domination, and he explicitly linked Southern white supremacy with Southerners’ Anglo-Saxon heritage. He wrote, “We in the South have never lost faith in the superiority of our race, nor have we any apprehension that the descendants of the Washingtons, Lees, . . . and thousands of other Southern men, who can trace their lineage direct to the best Anglo-Saxon British

⁵⁰ *The Times*. January 21, 1891. In this the *Times* is similar to Rudyard Kipling’s *White Man’s Burden* from later in the decade. In that poem, Kipling pointed to both the burden of empire and the effects that it had on the imperial agent himself.

⁵¹ *The Times*. December 15, 1890. Bryce too made this point. See Bryce, “Thoughts on the Negro Problem,” p. 655.

stock, will ever be dominated by the negroes.”⁵² Countering Clowes stance on British race relations, John closed his letter by asking the correspondent whether or not he would like to see the “leveling up of your negro population in the West Indies, or an amalgamation of the two races—English and negro—on any terms whatsoever.”⁵³ Just as the British journalist understood the South through the West Indies, the American Southerner approached race and the British West Indies through his experiences in the South. Proud of his British, Anglo-Saxon heritage, John, like Clowes, saw that white supremacy in the South and British imperialism as connected projects, but unlike Clowes did not see black Southerners as a problem. Southerners, like John and Tillman, knew how to handle their subject population.

As their accounts demonstrate, Bryce and Clowes closely identified with the problems of Southern whites. In so doing, they also spoke about British imperialism. In both of their accounts, the US South was like the British Empire, but the South could learn from the Empire. In so doing, they erased the violence that that maintained that empire—precisely the violence that white Southerners pointed to when confronted by BALC. Bryce and Clowes both posit the British Empire as superior to race relations in the US South. The British system, which they describe as providing private rights but not public rights to racial minorities would help black US Southerners as they moved toward civilization. The current system in the US South, as they imagined it, was not working and would continue to worsen. In their own

⁵² In this, John is echoing David Macrae, who, immediately after the Civil War, argued that Negro domination was an unfounded fear because white people would always lead inferior blacks. See Macrae, *The Americans at Home*.

⁵³ S.W. John. “The Negro Question in the United States.” *The Times*. January 23, 1891.

ways, they each argued that Southern whites should govern the South as British Imperialists did their possession. The irony of Bryce and Clowes arguments is that it was the realities of the British Empire which made such identification possible even as white Southerners criticized the practice of imperialism itself. Though they claimed to be unbiased observers, Bryce and Clowes both carried ideas of race and Anglo-Saxonism developed from the ideologies of empire. They provided white Southerners a direct line to make their case to the British people. Wells may have had BALC and its attendant connections to the Nonconformist Conscience of Britain, but white Southerners had men accustomed to the idea of ruling over subject peoples. In appealing to them, they made a space for themselves in an imperial world.

John Bull and Jim Crow: Britons Confront Disfranchisement

Bryce and Clowes reached their conclusions before Wells made her famous trips to Britain and BALC's activism on behalf of Southern blacks. Though they differed on their treatment of Southern violence, they both believed that Southern race relations needed to be confronted before the region was in crisis. While Wells and her allies clearly named Southern whites as the troublemakers, Clowes and Bryce saw the existence of Southern black voters as the primary cause of the South's problems. The year after Wells's second and more widely covered trip across the Atlantic, white South Carolinians attempted to follow the suggestions that Bryce had made and institute literacy requirements and a poll tax to disfranchise black voters in that state. It was not the first state to do so, and in fact, Bryce noted that Mississippi

had already passed laws to that effect when he published his piece. However, South Carolina's 1895 Constitutional Convention received more attention in the British press than did Mississippi's.

The reasons why Britons gave more coverage to the South Carolina movement than similar movements in other states are unclear. It is possible that the work of Wells and BALC had drawn more attention to the South. Perhaps too the publication of Clowes's book a few years before (and after the Mississippi convention) or the second edition of *The American Commonwealth* which appeared in 1893 drew more attention across the Atlantic. Another possibility is the active part played by Ben Tillman in advocating for disfranchisement of his state's black population. British interest in class dynamics in South Carolina may have played a role as well. As Clowes's coverage of the state demonstrates, Tillman's connections to the Farmers Alliance and his image as a spokesman for poor white farmers brought him international attention.⁵⁴ He also made international headlines with his reputation as a reform candidate. His attempt to create liquor dispensaries and control his state's alcohol sales received favorable coverage from Britain's prohibitionists, and the riots that followed his dispensary scheme saw more coverage in Britain than the

⁵⁴ Beyond Clowes account of Tillman's victory, the *Birmingham Daily Post* and *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* carried news of Tillman's defeat of Haskell. Both accounts described Tillman as a poor farmer and highlighted his links to the Alliance. The Aberdeen paper also noted his reputation as an ardent white supremacist. See "A Revolution in South Carolina," *The Birmingham Daily Post*, September 24, 1890; and "A Revolution in South Carolina," *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, September 25, 1890.

Wilmington, North Carolina race riots would a few years later.⁵⁵ Whatever the reason, British newspapers commented upon the South Carolina Convention in late 1895 and their commentary demonstrates that for British writers, the Empire figured prominently in their understanding of the US South. It further underscores the difficulties that Wells and her allies faced in advocating for black rights on both sides of the Atlantic.

British coverage of the South Carolina convention was both informative and opinionated. *The Pall Mall Gazette* in October 1895 explained why it was necessary for the convention to make the laws implicit rather than explicit in their exclusion of blacks.⁵⁶ Published in London, the *Pall Mall Gazette* was at the time a Conservative⁵⁷ paper owned by William Astor and edited by Henry Cust. Though it had been a Liberal organ under the editorship of William Stead, the editorial stance changed in 1892 when Astor purchased the paper and hired Cust as editor. According to the *Gazette*, the 15th Amendment to the US Constitution prohibited states from taking the

⁵⁵ For more on Tillman and the dispensary riots, see Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, pp. 181-197.

⁵⁶ For more on Tillman's role in the convention and black protest against it, see Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*, pp. 219-228.

⁵⁷ At the time, the British Parliament was made up of four main political parties, the Liberals, the Liberal Unionists (an off-shoot of the Liberals which allied with the Conservatives after the Irish Home Rule fight in 1886), the Conservatives, and an Irish Nationalist Party (allied with the Liberals). The Liberal Party had split after Gladstone's first attempt to pass an Irish Home Rule bill, and some members split with the Liberals to form a Liberal Unionist-Conservative government. The years between 1885 and 1895 also marked a series of shifting governments in Britain. During this time, there were six Prime Ministerships split between three men: The Marquess of Salisbury (Conservative), William Gladstone (Liberal), and the Earl of Roseberry (Gladstone's Liberal successor after the failure of the Second Irish Home Rule bill). For more on the 1886 split of the Liberal Party, see Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993)

vote away from blacks based on race. Instead, South Carolina, following Mississippi's lead, created a system of poll taxes and literacy requirements that were not based on a voter's race. Instead, this new system allowed local authorities to take away the vote from men who were unable to pass a literacy test. In effect, blacks would rarely be allowed to pass while whites could get the local officials to accept them under far less stringent requirements.

While the *Gazette* suspected that the move had more to do with party politics, the paper also noted that behind the movement was “the lasting doubt as to the fitness of the nigger for liberty. Black is black, and white is white. The brain of the black is differently convoluted from that of the white, and he must remain inferior to all time.” Like Clowes a few years before, the Conservative paper articulated a universal, inferior blackness that marked black Southerners and allowed British observers to relate to the actions that Southern whites took against black Southerners. Yet, even though they expressed doubts as to the fitness of black citizens, the editors concluded by stating that they were unsure that Southern whites should take this step. According to them, the enfranchisement of blacks was a mistake, but, “The withdrawal of liberties once conferred would, however, be a very strong measure for a democratic community to undertake.”⁵⁸ While they could support the aims of South Carolina, this Conservative paper worried over the questions about American democracy that the state's approach to black voting raised.

⁵⁸ “Just Keep Dem Big Feet Movin,’” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, October 2, 1895. That same day the *Gazette* noted that contrast between the machinations of South Carolina whites with the “Atlanta Compromise” speech of Booker T. Washington the previous month. See “The Negro Question in America,” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, October 2, 1895.

The next day, the *Birmingham Daily Post* demonstrated how the growth and consolidation of the British Empire in Africa influenced British constructions of the US South. A Liberal paper in the second largest city in England, the *Post* had supported the aims of Ida B. Wells a year earlier but had doubted the effectiveness of BALC's strategy. The paper favored a less confrontational approach than Wells and her allies took.⁵⁹ The *Post* provided a more favorable opinion of South Carolina's convention. The editors explained their interest in the South by pointing to the increasing size of the Empire. Instead of seeing African Americans as civilized at all, the British paper lumped them in with "uncivilized populations," that governments around the world were having to confront. According to the paper, "Of course, in all such discussions we assume that the white races are superior, and that theirs is the civilization which ought to be extended, and at all events, theirs is the power to enforce their views." Though the editors acknowledged the fundamental differences between their empire and the US South (that is, that blacks were unwilling immigrants to the South rather than natives newly subject to imperial rule), they still saw white Southerners as a fellow participants in the imperial mission. South Carolina and other states were making these changes to their laws because "the practical subjection of the 'superior race,' is very trying." The editorial concluded with possible advice to organizations like BALC and argued that foreign intervention in the matter would be fruitless and instead urged its readers to pay close attention to developments there.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ See chapter 4.

⁶⁰ "The race problem,,," *Birmingham Daily Post*, October 5, 1895

The South Carolina convention also allowed Britons to position themselves as something of an ‘older cousin’ to the Americans and to speak with authority on the issue. The *Bristol Mercury*, a Liberal paper from the Southwest of England which had shared the Birmingham paper’s criticism of BALC’s methods, declared that Britons could look with some amusement on the “ceaseless maneuvering of his American cousin to keep the negro ‘citizen’ out of his constitutional rights.” In calling white Southerners, their cousin this British editorial clearly distinguished white from black Americans as the proper inheritors of British civilization. Calling blacks, “ignorant and passionate,” the paper noted that Britons could sympathize with the dread that white Southerners felt at having African Americans rule over them, but they also acknowledged that the predicament was largely of white Southerners’ own making. It was their racism and violence that have placed blacks in this position, and the solution, disfranchisement, would only make it worse. Just as white Southerners believed that the fight over Irish home rule would turn violent, this British paper predicted that white Southern treatment of African Americans would have a similar result.⁶¹ As the editorial concluded, “It must appear to all disinterested observers that the Southern whites are going the right way to bring about a great revolt of the negro population, and terrible as such an event would undoubtedly prove, the blame would only lie at the door of those who are attempting to solve a serious and far reaching

⁶¹ Not a single British newspaper examined for this study linked disfranchisement in the US South to the Irish Home Rule movement.

question of racial different by a shameless piece of legislative subterfuge.”⁶² Using legislative tricks would only make what this paper saw as a bad situation worse.

Though none of these editorials refer to Clowes or Bryce, they clearly reflect similar understandings of race and the US South. After expressing frustration that no reconciliation between Southern white and black had come after Booker T.

Washington’s famous ‘Atlanta Compromise’ speech earlier in the year, the *Pall Mall Gazette* explained that it was “an open secret” that the laws would not be used against whites.⁶³ Such coverage again reveals the lack of attention that British newspapers gave to black voices. None of these British papers took note of black South Carolinian critiques of the law as it would affect white voters. Black representatives at the Convention correctly pointed out that because the laws would work against all poor people voting, it would have a detrimental effect on poor white voters as well.⁶⁴

⁶² “White V. Black,” *The Bristol Mercury Weekly Supplement*, October 5, 1895. The *Ipswich Journal*, a Conservative paper, also took issue with the particular methods that whites were using against blacks. Like the *Mercury*, the editors noted, “The means adopted to secure this end [black disfranchisement] while ingenious enough, are of so transparent a character as not to deceive even the most dense intellect among the class who will suffer.” The *Journal* also explained to their readers that they took the whole experiment of black enfranchisement to be a mistake. Revealing that they saw black voters as intellectually inferior the paper argued, “The negro was not fitted to exercise his privileges. His condition of servitude and lack of cultivation mentally were two insuperable objections to his immediate elevation to the rank fully-developed citizen, and the evil effects are now beginning to attract the world’s attention.” “Black V. White,” *The Ipswich Journal*, October 5, 1895. Demonstrating the connections between British papers during this period, the editorial echoed the sentiments of the *Pall Mall Gazette* of a few days earlier: “Withdrawal of liberties once conferred is a task that is fraught with great difficulties and one that is not to be recommended.”

⁶³ “The Negro Question in America: Proposed Disenfranchisement of the Black,” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, October 2, 1895.

⁶⁴ See Kantrowitz, pp. 222-224

For these papers, it was the white leaders of the South whose opinion mattered and whose voices would be heard.

One paper, however, paid more attention to American blacks. The *Manchester Guardian* too commented upon South Carolina's convention. Their editorial on the convention, its aims, and the status of race relations in the South bears close reading. The *Guardian* was under the editorship of C.P. Scott, a prominent Liberal activist whose name was listed among the members of the British Anti-Lynching Committee (BALC). He wrote frequently on the Armenian atrocities and urged the British government to do more for the Armenians.⁶⁵ The editorial on South Carolina opened by framing the convention as one intended just to disfranchise illiterate blacks. The editors then listed the number of illiterate blacks and whites in South Carolina and noted the difficulties of relying on those who cannot read to vote. Their brief history of Reconstruction followed, which fit within the same narrative that the other British papers had accepted. That is, unfit African American slaves were given the vote before they were ready, and then Republican carpetbaggers came to the South and with the assistance of those grateful, easily-duped ex-slaves, they created corrupt governments that Southern white men could not stand. Reconstruction then led to a violent quarrels between Republican blacks and white Democrats.

⁶⁵ It is unclear how much attention Scott paid to Wells or how direct a connection he had to BALC's activities. He was recruited into BALC by Florence Ballgarnie because of his connections to Armenian activism. See Florence Ballgarnie to CP Scott 9 July 1894. Guardian Archive. The University of Manchester. It is clear from this editorial that he paid more attention to Wells than other editors. For more on Scott's recruitment into BALC, see Chapter 4.

While its history of Reconstruction fit with other British commentators, the *Guardian* took a critical look at white relationships to mob violence in the South. Revealing that Wells and her allies had at least some influence over their understanding of race relations in the South, the *Guardian's* editorial about disfranchisement condemned lynching as a tool of racist whites. They noted the attempts of white Southerners to keep Southern blacks from “every place he could defile white men with his presence.” It is telling that this sentence which transitioned into a condemnation of lynching did not speak of defiling white women. Nowhere in this piece did the *Guardian* suggest that black men attacked white women or that segregation laws protected white women more than it had to do with white men’s racism. When they spoke of lynching, they described the outrages on black bodies: “hanging, stabbing, burning, tearing in pieces—often on mere suspicion and in every case without a form of trial.” Again, they did not explain that there was suspicion of rape or any other crime. Lynching, in this editorial, was part of a white plot to “depress their negroes to thorough political extinction, to unquestioned social inferiority, and, if possible, to hopelessness of the future.” Though not all British papers took Wells’s critique of white Southern racism to heart, it certainly influenced the leading Liberal paper of the day.

Yet, the *Guardian* was not as damning of the South Carolina plan as its understanding of race relations in the South suggests. The thrust of the paper’s argument was a general distrust of working classes and anyone who they considered uneducated. Later in the same editorial the *Guardian* advocated for the literacy plan. Though earlier the editorial writers acknowledged that the new laws would only be

enforced against black men, they also argued that educated blacks would not suffer in this new system. According to the *Guardian*, the proposed law would “no longer threaten the ascendancy of whites and would leave full rights to the educated and intelligent minority of coloured men.”⁶⁶ It was only poor blacks who would lose their suffrage in the new system. Like Bryce, they proposed that a national law of this kind would help Northerners deal with immigrants to their communities. In this way, Southern black disfranchisement would not be a mark against blacks as a race, but instead be based on educational requirements which could be met in time. They specifically condemned those whites who wanted to keep African Americans uneducated for all time, but still wanted to allow them this victory in the short run.

While the *Guardian* editorialized about the South Carolina Convention, in London the *Times* only briefly covered the convention in its pages. Several readers responded to the *Times* coverage and in publishing these letters the London paper hosted a debate among Britons about the proposed law. Two articles appeared in the paper that provided its readers with some news from the Convention. The first article called Tillman the “dictator” of South Carolina, and the correspondent explained that African Americans had largely been kept from the polls since 1886. The article explained that the impetus behind the movement was that white South Carolinians had tired of the violence involved in *de facto* disfranchisement. The article also noted

⁶⁶ “The race problem...,” *The Manchester Guardian*, October 3, 1895. It should be noted that this editorial appeared during the split of the Liberal Party (see note above) and that there was at the time a discussion among British Liberals as to the relationship between “the people” and the ruling civilized elite. See Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, pp. 304-306.

that it would be up to the North to protect the rights of African Americans.⁶⁷ The next day, the second article appeared, and echoed the comments of the day before. The correspondent this time referred to Tillman as “dangerous” and “violent” but expressed no opinion on the question of black suffrage.⁶⁸

The first letter on the subject to appear in the *Times*, from Herbert Sturmer, argued that the British should support the white citizens of South Carolina. Claiming family ties to that state and to have studied “negroes” in the West Indies, Sturmer maintained that white voters needed to confront the “problem” of black voting. He pointed out that white Southerners had faced terrible trials in the years after the Civil War and had made “enormous sacrifices...with the object of educating the blacks up to a standard of morality and industry sufficient for responsible citizenship.” If their efforts so far had failed, he argued that “they must try a different path” and that Britons should support their doing so.⁶⁹ Reader Thomas Edmonston echoed his countryman’s ideas. He even cited the *Times* series of a few years before and recommended them for anyone who wanted to know more about what was happening in South Carolina. Like Sturmer, Edmonston noted personal connections to South Carolina; he spent time there in 1873, and commented upon the trials of white Southerners at the hands of the Reconstruction government. Edmonston called the white South Carolinians “kinsmen” to the English and asserted that any Briton, when notified about the situation there, would give “emphatic approval” to what white

⁶⁷ “The Race Problem in America,” *The Times*, October 2, 1895.

⁶⁸ “The Race Problem in America,” *The Times*, October 3, 1895

⁶⁹ Herbert Sturmer, “The Race Question in the United States,” *The Times*, October 3, 1895.

South Carolinians did to take control of the state government. He cited precedent from the British Empire: “the methods of which we have approved in dealing with the electoral privileges of the coloured inhabitants of Cape Colony cannot from our own point of view be very far wrong when applied in far milder form to the negroes of South Carolina.”⁷⁰ From their shared racial heritage, their experience of empire, and their circuits of travel, these two writers defended white Southerners in their efforts to enshrine white supremacy into law.

Responding to Edmonston, Clowes himself wrote to the paper the next week in support of white supremacy in South Carolina. He defended the actions of the South Carolina’s white leaders and suggested that he himself had the idea of implementing a literacy requirement for voters. He contended that even if such a requirement disfranchised some white voters, it would take the vote from far more African Americans. Clowes believed that it was necessary to disfranchise African Americans because “speaking generally...the African race, as exemplified in the negroes and coloured people of the United States, is incompetent to govern itself, and therefore much more incompetent to contribute to the governing of whites.”⁷¹ He did not repeat his earlier criticisms of Tillman in this letter. However, those criticisms clearly influenced his support of disfranchisement. Without blacks forcing whites to subvert democracy in the South, perhaps the white South’s best men could defeat men like Tillman.

⁷⁰ Thomas Edmonston, “The Race Problem in America,” *The Times*, October 9, 1895.

⁷¹ W. Laird Clowes, “To the Editor of the Times,” *The Times*, October 14, 1895.

An American voice in London countered attacks like Clowes's and the rest on African Americans; Moncure Conway, wrote to the *Times* to explain why Tillman's disfranchisement of black men was wrong. Conway was a Southern white man from slaveholding Virginia family; he was expelled from the South in the years before the Civil War because of his anti-slavery positions. In the years after the War, he became a Unitarian minister in London. A member of BALC, he had returned to the South as part of that organization's information gathering mission in 1895. In this letter, he pointed out that ex-slaves received the right to vote both for their own defense and for the sake of the nation. Taking it away, he claimed, could open the door for a return to the days of slavery. Conway directly challenged Edmonston's representation of South Carolina as in the midst of a struggle between whites and "savage" blacks. Instead, he argued that African Americans were not savage but that their "pious submissiveness" allowed white Southerners to take advantage of them. Unlike Clowes, Bryce, and the *Times's* editors, Conway did not see white domination of elections as a reason to disempower them further.⁷² Very few voices in Britain came to the defense of black Southerners, and significantly, Conway did so not by defending their social equality but instead by arguing that black Southerners needed the vote to defend themselves against white men.

British coverage of the South Carolina convention was brief. They did not follow up on the results of disfranchisement in the weeks after the convention. Reading the editorials in British papers from the period, demonstrates the power that

⁷² Moncure D. Conway, "The Race Problem in America," *The Times*, October 15, 1895.

white voices from the South had over their conversations. Of the papers surveyed, only the *Manchester Guardian* reflected an understanding of Southern race relations that engaged Wells and her allies' critiques. Instead, British papers described the South in ways that echoed Clowes's and Bryce's coverage of the region. Like those two earlier commentaries, they saw in Southern whites something of their own imperial policies. They too saw white Southerners as kin in developing a means of dealing with supposedly inferior subjects. Though Wells certainly influenced some Britons, her arguments lacked the standing of Southern white testimony and Briton's own understanding of their empire and its relationship to white supremacy in the South.

Seeing a New South: James Burnley Encounters Southern Race Relations in an Industrial Setting

The 1890s saw white Southern elites attempt to replace the image of the Old Slave South with a New South.⁷³ The New South, to the region's most active boosters, would soon see industrialization and investment similar to that of the North and West. This section examines the work of James Burnley who came to see the New South rather than simply look at race relations there. In 1896, Burnley published a series of articles in the *Leeds Mercury*. The *Mercury* was a Liberal paper that had been connected to the abolitionist movement, though it was not one of the newspapers that was directly connected to BALC. Burnley's series for the paper focused on

⁷³ For the economic conditions and development of New South ideology, see Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of a New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992)

industrialization over the whole United States, but the author spent a considerable amount of time in the South and documented the work of New South advocates to bring industry to the poverty-stricken region. Appearing just two years after Wells's second tour of Britain, Burnley directly confronted her critiques of white Southern racism and, like so many before him, he sided with elite Southern whites. Indeed, Burnley suggested that British immigrants should move to that region instead of the North or West. Former governor of Georgia and immigration advocated, William Northen deeply influenced his coverage of the South. Northen was also a vocal opponent of Wells and BALC while he was still governor. Reading Burnley both demonstrates the ways that Wells and BALC entered into British conversations about the US South and the difficulties they faced in changing British narratives about the region.

Before coming to the South, James Burnley had written several books about industrialization on both sides of the Atlantic. In his works and his 1896 series, he celebrated industry and wrote of its romance. When he started a 23-part series in 1896, he brought his experience with these topics to the readers of the *Mercury*. Burnley did not only concern himself with the South or with politics. In his introductory statements, he told his readers that he had no desire to detail the political situation in the US, and hoped to demonstrate that the United States was approaching Europe "in the practice of the industrial arts." He warned that England must accept that the United States would dominate world markets in the years to come.⁷⁴ Over the

⁷⁴ James Burnley, "The Industries, Enterprises, and Resources of the New World: Introductory," *The Leeds Mercury*, January 17, 1896.

course of his lengthy series, he discussed several different industries individually and how they would affect English markets. Though the South was only a part of his account, he did cover the major industries of that region. He described the South in three specific sections, on Tobacco, Cotton, and emigration, and concluded the series by arguing that more Britons should emigrate to the South. Unlike Clowes and Bryce, he did not directly confront Southern race relations, though he was unable to ignore them completely.

Because Wells's campaign was still recent, and, indeed, BALC had just sent its own representatives to the South, Burnley addressed Southern violence in the first article in the series. After noting the happiness of black cotton pickers, Burnley minimized racial antagonisms in the South and raised doubts about Wells's accounts. His image of the South was more like Bryce's than Clowes's. According to Burnley, strict segregation was a tactic designed so that black and white Southerners could avoid racial antagonisms because "assimilation was impossible." For Burnley, lynching was not, as Wells described it, a tool that Southern whites used to keep Southern blacks down, but instead a response to violent attacks on white women. Though they occasionally threatened white women, Burnley maintained that Southern blacks were well cared for and the Southern whites took an active interest in their education. For him, violence only affected those blacks who deserved it. The British writer also challenged the idea that the South was a uniquely violent place. He pointed to Georgia Governor Northen who argued that lynchings occurred outside the

South as much as they did it.⁷⁵ When he saw race relations in the South, Burnley viewed them through the filter of elite white narratives of black violence and inferiority and dismissed Wells's claims out of hand.

Burnley's understanding of Southern race relations and Southern industrialization reflect the influence of Northen on his thinking. As governor, Northen, a former teacher, worked to educate Southern whites and blacks, and as noted above, he actively campaigned for black votes. He also was instrumental in passing an anti-lynching bill through the Georgia legislature years before Wells began her campaign. When she was in Britain, Northen produced a pamphlet challenging her claims about the South and continued to defend white Southerners against those who would portray them as violent or uncivilized for the rest of the decade. It is this contact with Northen that at least partially explains how Burnley reached such a different conclusion from Clowes. The earlier writer was in South Carolina during the election of 1890, and as his account of voting there reveals, he was not impressed with Southern white leaders. While Tillman led in South Carolina by taking advantage of white racism, Northen was not a racebaiting politician even if he was a racist.

Though Burnley believed that Northen was correct in his discussion of lynching and denounced Wells, he did not uncritically accept all of the Southern politician's assertions. Northen claimed that Wells had undertaken her anti-lynching tours with the funding of Northern and Western industrialists who hoped that she

⁷⁵ James Burnley, "The Industries, Enterprises, and Resources of the New World: Introductory," *The Leeds Mercury*, January 17, 1896.

would keep immigrants away from the South. Burnley expressed grave doubts that Northern or Western industrialists had anything to do with Wells's campaigns and argued that they would have little need. He noted, "The industries of the North and West have not yet come to such as pass as to require the aid of negress emissaries to confound their rising rivals of the South."⁷⁶ Yet, he argued that those industrialists would soon face competition from the South. Indeed, like many of the New South boosters that he appears to have interviewed, Burnley saw a new tide of immigrants coming to Southern cities and opening a new industrial South.

At the time of Burnley's interviews, Northen had completed his second term as Georgia Governor and taken the lead of the Georgia Immigration and Investment Bureau.⁷⁷ More than any other Southern leader, Northen attempted to bring immigrants and investors to the South. He also sought to counter the image of the South that Wells painted. Northen was instrumental in the 1895 founding of Fitzgerald, Georgia, a town composed of white Union and Confederate veterans. Fitzgerald grew to become a prosperous, if relatively small, city in a short time because of the steady flow of cash to the city in Union pensions and Northen's work to secure a railroad repair factory in town. Northen hoped that the community would inspire other groups to come to the South. He also believed that Fitzgerald marked a

⁷⁶ James Burnley, "The Industries, Enterprises, and Resources of the New World: Introductory," *The Leeds Mercury*, January 17, 1896

⁷⁷ Though the name implies that it was a government venture, the Georgia Immigration and Investment Bureau was a private venture undertaken by Northen with financial assistance from Georgia railroads. The idea behind the Bureau appears to have come from newspaper editor Hoke Smith and Georgia Senator Patrick Walsh—appointed by Northen in 1894. See Hoke Smith to Patrick Walsh, December 29, 1893, Box 2, Folder 11, William J. Northen Papers, Georgia State Archives.

reunion of sorts of North and South. If it was a reunion, it was orchestrated on the backs of black Southerners. The town itself was founded on land that had held a small black community, and the Colony Company explicitly forbade black veterans from participating in the scheme, though like the rest of the South it could not have been built without black labor. For Northen and his partners, it was only white blood that could rejuvenate the South.⁷⁸

Like Northen, Burnley came to believe that what the South needed was more industrious white people to help it to develop its true potential. In his last two entries for the series he urged potential emigrants to consider the South. He told them that they would find cheap land and that immigrants were already coming South from the US North and West. The British journalist also told them that the South was moving away from its violent past, and that the immigrant was “perfectly safe” there.⁷⁹ In his final installment, he contrasted the immigrants in Fitzgerald to those who had come for industrial pursuits. According to Burnley, landing in New York would doom most immigrants to living in slums, and miners in the West would face prejudice from American workers who would not want their wages depressed by incoming workers. In the South, however, hard work and available land yielded immigrants success and the ability to feed themselves while still producing for the market. In Burnley’s eyes,

⁷⁸ In a letter to Northen, the Colony’s founder Philander Fitzgerald wrote of the land that would become the colony: “Some colored people live and own small pieces. We want every piece in each lot.” See, PH Fitzgerald to William Northen, August 24, 1895, William J. Northen Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, Georgia State Archives.

⁷⁹ James Burnley, “The Industries, Enterprises, and Resources of the New World: XXVI. From the Emigrants Point of View,” *The Leeds Mercury*, July 14, 1896

British emigrants could provide the influx of blood and strength that Southerners like Northen thought that they needed

They needed white immigrants because Burnley believed that Southern whites were abandoning the field for industry and that Southern blacks would not be able to produce enough agricultural products for the market. Burnley compared Southern mills to their competition in the North and in England. He noted that Southern factories were unmarked by the labor troubles that touched mills in other areas. For Burnley, Southern agriculture had helped raise a strong white laboring class who would not complain about long work hours and had no desire to disrupt the workings of the factory. In this account and connected to his romantic view of British industrial workers, he placed Southern workers with the English in contrast to demanding Northern workers. To Burnley, British and Southern millworkers were willing and able to work for less; this willingness to do without was in stark contrast to Northern laborers who were accustomed to “a rich variety of food...[a] more comfortable house,” and greater wages than Lancashire millworkers.⁸⁰

In pointing to Southerners abandoning agriculture for the lure of the factory and city, the journalist was speaking for Southern whites only. For the English commentator, Southern blacks were connected to the soil and satisfied in their prescribed role as agricultural labor. Burnley saw attempts to place Southern blacks in industrial work as doomed experiments. First, he cited the Rector of Salisbury’s opinion that blacks were not intelligent enough to operate the mills’ machinery. Yet,

⁸⁰ James Burnley, “The Industries, Enterprises, and Resources of the New World: II. The Cotton Industry (continued),” *The Leeds Mercury*, January 21, 1896

even though he considered blacks inferior, Burnley saw another barrier to their work in factories. He argued that Southern whites would not let them work there in any case: “My own impression is that that whites of the south will oppose this forward movement of the negroes even more strongly than the New Englanders resented the immigration of the French Canadians.”⁸¹ It was not only inferiority that would keep blacks from participating in Southern industrialization but the racism of Southern whites who would keep them out. Thus, Burnley described white Southerners eager for immigrants to work in their factories but resistant to the use of laborers that lived there already.

In his travels in the South, Burnley confronted the stories that white men told to justify their treatment of African Americans. Burnley, like Clowes and Bryce before him, accepted those narratives with only slight caveats. Though industry was what brought Burnley to the South, his series reveals the connections between this Briton and white Southerners. Even when confronted with the actions of Wells and BALC, Burnley looked to white Southern men to testify about race in the South.

Conclusion

When these three white British men journeyed to the US South in the 1890s they brought with them more than simple curiosity. In witnessing the struggles between Southern whites and blacks, they found examples that both came from their experience of empire and spoke to it. Through all three accounts and the discussions

⁸¹ James Burnley, “The Industries, Enterprises, and Resources of the New World: II. The Cotton Industry (continued),” *The Leeds Mercury*, January 21, 1896

of the South Carolina law, several recurring themes appeared that connected white Britons to their supposed kin across the Atlantic. Each came to the South to see how it worked, and Bryce and Clowes argued that they were disinterested observers. Bryce explained that he was asked by the *North American Review* to look at the South precisely because he was not a participant in American politics. Editorials about the South Carolina law often mentioned the position of Britons as observers even as they drew connections between the South and their empire. Burnley, on the other hand, sought to promote the industrialization of the region and thought that it would make good place for Britons to live. As white men and imperialists, these writers brought their biases to their treatment of race relations in the South. Each identified closely with white Southerners and marginalized black voices in their coverage of the South. Clowes quoted by name one black man who supported emigration to Africa, and Burnley dismissed Wells's criticism of lynching in favor of the testimony of elite white men.

With the US South, elite Britons like these men built an elite class white solidarity that allowed for the disfranchisement of black Southerners but not the white violence on which de facto disfranchisement rested. For this reason, Bryce and others suggested disfranchising not only blacks but poor whites as well. They also were far more willing to accept elite black voting than their white counterparts across the Atlantic, though this was contingent upon elite black men accepting and displaying markers of what were labeled Anglo-Saxon values such as education and

independence (especially from Republicans⁸²). Because of their class and racial identification with elite white Southerners, these writers explained the violence there through the tensions that it placed on elite white men in the South. In seeing black suffrage as upturning the proper balance of Anglo-Saxon civilization, they argued that the “best” white men could not govern as they deserved. In their coverage of the South, white Britons not only saw their imperial selves but were participating in the construction of a transnational elite whiteness that affected the construction of colonial governments all over the world.

Their reliance on elite Southern white men contrasts sharply with the members of the British Anti-Lynching Committee. Not only did BALC form because of the speeches of Ida Wells, but women made up a significant proportion of its membership. Catherine Impey was pivotal in bringing Wells across the Atlantic even if personal troubles moved her away from the movement by the time of BALC’s founding. Florence Balgarnie was the secretary of the organization, and its members played a significant role in getting the International Women’s Christian Temperance Union to condemn lynching. On the other hand, none of the men analyzed here appeared even to speak with black women. Instead, the image that they had of Southern blacks appears to have come almost entirely from the mouths of men like themselves. As Gail Bederman demonstrated, it was precisely Wells’s identity as a black woman speaking of Anglo-Saxon civilization and the South’s lack of it that

⁸² Clowes and Bryce both pointed to black identification with and support for the Republican Party as a marker of their inferiority. To these British men, elite black Southerners had to demonstrate a willingness to vote for another party because Republicans had so badly damaged the South during Reconstruction.

made her campaign so powerful.⁸³ Without this crucial voice, white British men tellingly constructed a South that fit their own perceptions of race.

Their treatment of the South too reveals how constructions of gender and race contributed to these white British men's identification with white Southern men. Reconstruction, in their accounts, was something similar to the attacks many of them saw as the cause of lynching. Just as black rape of white women was supposed to have upended the proper social order, Reconstruction placed black men in a position of dominance over white Southern men. Because of this domination, white Southern men were again forgiven of their crimes against black political expression. If not forgiven, their violence was understood as an at least near-reasonable response to an untenable position. Implicit in these accounts is the denial of black manhood. To these British men, black Southern men were inherently unfit for civilized manhood and needed to be controlled. These Britons came to support black disfranchisement as a solution to white Southern violence. It would allow the social order to come back while still allowing for the eventual realization of Reconstruction's promise of black political equality.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, British observers saw a New South overcoming the economic devastation of the Civil War, but one still caught up in the social, political, and economic fights of that era. Though white Southerners were deeply critical of British imperialism, it was precisely that empire and industrialization's role in this version of empire which allowed British observers to

⁸³ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

accept white Southern treatment of black Southerners. As the Americans began to embark on a formal imperial project which would see the articulation of white supremacy in an imperial site far from home, white Northerners like Theodore Roosevelt similarly accepted white Southern accounts of black inferiority. Accepting a white man's burden abroad also meant accepting that white Southerners participated in the imperial project even if they themselves could not identify it as such. White supremacy connected the US South to the world in ways that made it both an example to be emulated and condemned.

4. “An Open Door in a Stone Wall”: Changing Narratives about Lynching and Violence, 1893-1895

In 1893, Ida B. Wells received an invitation to bring her anti-lynching campaign to Britain. She later noted that the opportunity to speak in Britain “seemed like an open door in a stone wall.” In her autobiography, she explained that she had been speaking to audiences in the US North for almost a year, and the Northern press had barely mentioned her campaign at all. Going to Britain, she hoped, would awaken the Northern white press to her mission to reveal that lynching was a tool white Southerners used to oppress black Southerners and gain moral support for her campaign to end the practice.¹ She succeeded in getting the attention of not only the white press of the North, but the presses of both the US South and Britain as well. Wells successfully connected with Liberal and Radical Britons eager to take up her cause. In reading trans-Atlantic conversations during and after her campaigns, we can see how Southerners, white and black, and Britons each called upon ideas of civilization to bolster their arguments against each other. At issue was who could speak for and to the US South about mob violence and the connections between violence, civilization, and empire.

White Southerners had spent much of the late 1880s and early 1890s telling the world that there had risen a New South that was stable, primed to industrialize, and welcome to investment.² To accomplish this construction, white Southern elites

¹ Alfreda M. Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1970), p. 86.

² See Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of a New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

had to downplay acts of extralegal violence against black Southerners. Simultaneously, and important to this chapter, white Southerners had also spent that time demonizing imperialism and the British Empire and placing Southern ‘democracy’ and home rule over violent imperial theft.³ When Wells first and the British Anti-Lynching Committee second challenged these two narratives of white Southerners, white Southerners saw two groups that they had regularly disparaged, black women and the British, naming them as uncivilized.⁴ They, especially those who were particularly concerned with the South’s international image, could not let such attacks go unanswered. Wells and her allies turned lynching into an international

³ For white Southern descriptions of the insatiable British Empire, see Chapter 2; for images of white Southern and American democracy as better than European imperialism see Chapters 1 and 2.

⁴ For a more recent scholarly work on Wells see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: a Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Linda O. McMurtry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: the Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Patricia Ann Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Sarah Lynn Silkey, *Evolving Morality in a Transatlantic Society: Ida B. Wells, Anti-Lynching Activism, and British Interference in American Race Relations, 1877-1914*, Phd Dissertation, University of East Anglia, 2006; James West Davidson, *‘They Say’: Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2007); Paula Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Amistad, 2008); Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010). For more information on lynching see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993) and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), though she does not mention Wells very much. Gail Bederman provides an interesting reading of the response to Wells’s campaign. She places it within a discussion of civilization. My own argument furthers her argument by placing Wells’s actions within a transnational frame.

controversy precisely when Southern white elites were articulating them as local issues that they could solve on their own.

This chapter argues that Wells's campaigns and their immediate aftermath demonstrate the interplay between constructions of empire and civilization in the US South. In examining international debates over violence both within a Southern and imperial context, we can see how Southerners, white and black, and Britons positioned both the British Empire and the US South within a world marked by imperial relationships and the ways in which those relationships both relied on and strained relations between Briton and Southerner as well as white and black Southerners. In constructing separate 'civilized worlds,' they each articulated how the people outside the United States should understand the South. In directing British attention to the South and forcing the South to confront British constructions of civilization, Wells and her allies demonstrated that US Southerners were not the only ones allowed to define the region to the world.

Making a Transnational Conversation: Ida B. Wells's Second Anti-Lynching Tour, 1894

When Wells journeyed across the Atlantic, she and her allies interrupted white Southern narratives about the New South and briefly placed violence against blacks at the center of this discussion. They compellingly argued that the problem lay not with 'inferior black brutes' but instead with Southern whites who refused to see blacks as fully human. Important to this battleground were the participants of this conversation from the British side. Wells spoke to a very specific set of British

audiences. The people to whom she spoke were instrumental in making Wells's campaigns into international controversies.

In the British Anti-Lynching Committee (BALC), she gathered together two groups of people who welcomed the chance to articulate their vision of Anglo-Saxon civilization and the place of racial violence within civilized society. The first were British radicals, mostly members of religious sects distinct from the Church of England, who argued that British imperialism should bring civilization to savage parts of the world and not simply control them. At the time of her visit, Nonconformists held considerable sway in English political life. Their influence was nicknamed the "Nonconformist conscience" by contemporaries, and many church leaders felt that they should have a say in various aspects of English life, from politics to foreign affairs. Nonconformists, those who did not conform to the doctrines of the Church of England, almost equaled the number of Anglicans, according to contemporary estimates. They did not make up a single church but included many, such as Congregationalists and Methodists. They also had considerable connections to churches in the United States from the abolitionist movement.⁵ Almost to a person, they opposed those same British policies that Southern white elites would claim disqualified their testimony—notably, violence as imperial policy and rule over Ireland.

The second group that made up BALC and overlapped with the first, were British journalists deeply connected to Liberal politics who were also supportive of

⁵ For more on the Nonconformist Conscience, see D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982).

Irish Home Rule.⁶ The members of this group continued supporting Gladstone and the Liberal Party after the Liberal Unionist split in 1886.⁷ While not all as radical as the other group, these journalists too accepted that lynching in the US South was a mark against Anglo-Saxonism and should be stopped. Critically, they also provided a platform for Wells and BALC to make their case across Britain and the world. It was through newspapers and periodicals that traveled across the Atlantic and spoke to local readers that this battle over the image of the US South would be fought.

In her speeches, Wells largely ignored discussions of the British Empire and instead positioned Britain as the superior nation. Responding to a Birmingham city councilor who wanted to know why she traveled so far to talk about what he saw as local matters, Wells said, “The pulpit and press of my country remains silent on these continued outrages...It is to the moral and religious sentiment of Great Britain that we now turn.” Wells claimed, “America cannot and will not ignore the voice of a nation that is her superior in civilization.” She believed that once Britons heard about the violence done in “Christian (?) Anglo-Saxon communities” they will raise another cry.⁸ Wells’s skillful deployment of Anglo-Saxonist, Christian, and civilizing

⁶ At the time, the British Parliament was made up of four main political parties, the Liberals, the Liberal Unionists (an off-shoot of the Liberals who tentatively allied with the Conservatives after the Irish Home Rule fight in 1886), the Conservatives, and an Irish Nationalist Party (allied with the Liberals). The Liberal Party had split after Gladstone’s first attempt to pass an Irish Home Rule bill, and some members split with the Liberals to form a Liberal Unionist-Conservative government. For more on the 1886 split of the Liberal Party, see Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁷ The Liberal Party split in 1886 after the failure of Gladstone’s first Irish Home Rule bill, see Chapter 1.

⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, May 16, 1893. See also Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, pp. 45-46.

discourses explain why white Southerners would be so frustrated by the British committee and the attention she received when she was in Britain. Rather than, as they did, view the British as an inherently uncivilized imperial power, she turned their rhetoric against them. In her telling, Britain was the superior civilization. Upending white Southern constructions of home rule and race, Wells charged that white Southerners were the savages that needed to be educated about civilization. She was not only attacking lynching as a practice but the image of the South and white Southerners that white Southern elites had spent years constructing.

Wells's personal experiences with mob violence in the South helped build her credibility with Britons. Wells's campaign against lynching started before she went to Britain and were inspired by a personal tragedy.⁹ In Memphis, where she co-edited a small newspaper, three friends of hers were lynched because their grocery store competed with one owned by a white man. When a group of white men came to damage their store, they repelled the attack. Their success was shortlived, and the sheriff arrested them soon after; white newspapers in Memphis claimed that they had wounded officers of the law. After they had spent a couple nights in jail, a mob took them from their cells and executed them. Responding to their executions at the hands of a white mob, Wells began to campaign against lynching; she later claimed that their lynching opened her eyes to the real reason Southern white lynched black men and women: "An excuse to get ride of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and

⁹ For more information on Wells see Alfreda Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: the Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1972). The section in it about her trip to England is compiled from the reports that she filed with the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*. Unfortunately, Wells personal papers from the period were destroyed in a house fire. See also the Ida B. Wells Papers, University of Chicago.

property and thus keep the race terrorized.”¹⁰ After she penned a controversial editorial about lynching and white womanhood and she was away in Philadelphia, another white mob destroyed her printing press and threatened to execute anyone attempting to rebuild the paper.¹¹ In the years that followed, she took her campaign against lynching to the North and across the Atlantic. She brought these personal experiences with her when she spoke against lynching, and her British audiences found her to be a convincing advocate against mob violence.

Those British audiences were shaped by the women who first brought her to England and introduced her to British radicals. Wells first crossed the Atlantic because of two British women who hated racial intolerance the world over. Catherine Impey had seen Wells speak in New York, and spoke of her to Isabelle Fyvie Mayo, a wealthy Scottish woman who joined Impey in opposing race prejudice in the United States and the British Empire.¹² Mayo, the wealthier of the two, sponsored Wells’s first trip to England.¹³ She and Impey opposed the caste system in India (with its complex connections between race and class) and the lynching of African Americans

¹⁰ *Crusade for Justice*, 64. Wells was already an activist at this point, but she had not yet turned to lynching as the focus of her activities. In 1884, she won a court case against a railroad whose conductor had removed her from the first class Ladies Car and attempted to place her in a segregated Colored Car. The Tennessee Supreme Court later reversed the lower court’s decision. See Giddings, *A Sword Among Lions*, pp. 62-68, 136-137.

¹¹ At the time, Wells had already decided to leave Memphis. See *Crusade for Justice*, pp. 48-67.

¹² Antoinette Burton provides an interesting counterpoint to the women Wells interacts with. None of them appear in her work, and the women who do had very different attitudes toward racial equality than did Impey. Yet, many of her subjects felt a similar call to help other women. See Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina, 1994).

¹³ Catherine Impey, 1847-1923; Isabelle Fyvie Mayo, 1843-1914.

in the South. Indeed, Impey, a Nonconformist and activist, spent most of her life campaigning against racial discrimination wherever she saw it. In 1888, she founded the journal *Anti-Caste*, which was “Devoted to the Interests of the Coloured Races.”¹⁴ Impey linked the treatment of black people in the US to that of Indians and black West Indians in the British Empire in her writings. As other Britons noted connections between the colonizers and white Southerners, Impey compared the colonized and black Southerners. She and Mayo formed the Society for Recognition of the Universal Brotherhood of Man (SRUBM) to carry on the fight against racism.¹⁵ They brought Wells into contact with both Charles Aked, a Liverpoolian Nonconformist Minister who would become a key ally to Wells and William Axon,¹⁶

¹⁴ McMurtry, 170. Impey herself attributed the idea for *Anti-Caste* to Booker T. Washington’s *Southern Letter*. In an 1890 letter to Washington, written on an anti-segregation circular, she revealed, “I tried to get my English printers to make mine just like yours in shape and style.” See Catherine Impey to Booker T. Washington, March 5, 1890, reprinted in ed. Louis Harlan, *The Booker T. Washington Papers: Volume 3: 1890-1895*, pp. 33-34.

¹⁵ Impey and Mayo had a falling out when Impey proposed marriage to a Ceylonese boarder of Mayo’s. Impey’s forwardness offended the more conservative Mayo, who referred to her as a “nymphomaniac.” Mayo’s belief in racial equality did not extend to the bedroom. She kicked Impey out of the Society and tried to get Wells to disown her as well. This Wells would not do (even though Mayo was the one financing her trip), because she had seen nothing wrong with Impey merely expressing her love for a man. Impey never married, see McMurtry, *Ida B, Wells-Barnett and American Reform*, pp. 190-2. Impey’s work continued to touch on transnational challenges to white supremacy. Eventually another organization she would form would break up because some of its members refused to leave their Odd Fellows chapters then branches in the American South accepted segregated chapters, See Catherine Impey to W.E. Axon, February 19, 1895, W.E. Axon Papers, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

¹⁶ William Axon, 1846-1913.

a Manchester journalist, radical, friend of Impey,¹⁷ who was well-connected within the country's Liberal press. It was these two groups that would help Wells draw attention to the black struggle in the South.

While Wells's first trip to England gained her key allies in her fight, it did not receive nearly the coverage in the British or American presses that the second trip would a year later. Why the second trip received so much more attention is not clear, though it was a much longer tour and included meetings with Members of Parliament. The formation of BALC explains the trip's lasting significance, but her second tour had already received considerable media coverage before BALC was even formed. Early American commentary on the 1894 trip predicted that it would provide a wider forum than her earlier tour. The *New York Times's* unnamed correspondent in England accurately predicted that Wells would find a ready audience there. Convinced that "England will pay a lot of attention to Miss Wells," the journalist claimed, "It does not take a profound knowledge of the English society to foresee that this young woman, if she keeps her head, may create a great furor in these islands, with consequences which our people at home, no matter what their attitude on the lynching question itself, will angrily resent." According to the New York paper, her speeches covered just the sort of topic that excited British "reformers and busybodies." Also predicting white Southern responses to Wells, he suggested that

¹⁷ Impey wrote to Axon to explain what had what had happened with Mayo. See Catherine Impey to W.E.A. Axon, November 9, 1894. W.E.A. Axon Papers, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

Wells mixed truth and falsehood when she spoke to her British audiences.¹⁸ While dubious of their abilities and Wells herself, the *New York Times* reporter knew, like Wells hoped, that Wells could gain attention in Britain that she could not in the United States.

Believing that they could affect change in the US South as much as white Southerners argued that they could help bring about Irish home rule through their protests from their side of the Atlantic, some Britons felt that their outrage would be enough to bring white Southerners toward a more civilized relationship with African Americans Southerners. In response to a meeting that Wells held in Liverpool, one of her earliest stops and where she received the most favorable attentions from the Nonconformists, the *Bristol Mercury* argued that the voices of the British would have a great effect on American minds. After quoting one of Wells allies, the Rev. Robert Armstrong of Liverpool,¹⁹ to verify that she was trustworthy, the *Mercury* noted, “It is well that public opinion in England should be roused, so that the terrible outrages alluded to shall be no longer possible.”²⁰ For both Southern white and British journalists it was possible for activists on one side of the Atlantic to effect change through their efforts to describe public opinion in their loyalty.

¹⁸ H.F. “Church Scorned by Wales.” *New York Times*. April 29, 1894. The *New York Times* correspondent was responding to early coverage of Wells’s speaking tour. Why this person commented on this tour and not the first is not explained in this dispatch. The writer also attacked her claim and attributed lynchings in the South to the rape of white women.

¹⁹ Armstrong would later become a member of BALC and co-edited with Aked *The Liverpool Pulpit*, which covered Wells’s anti-lynching tour.

²⁰ *The Bristol Mercury*, April 10, 1894.

International publications brought more coverage to Wells's argument about lynching if not to her personally.²¹ In June of 1894, Charles Aked, Wells's close ally, published an article in the *Contemporary Review*. The *Review* was edited by BALC member and Gladstonian Liberal Percy Bunting;²² read on both sides of the Atlantic, the journal hosted intellectual conversations on the issues of the day, mostly from a Liberal perspective. Wells had met Aked during her 1893 tour of Britain and considered him a close ally to the cause. Aked himself had heard of the lynching problem from others in the United States. A July 1893 sermon on a trip he had made to the US the previous year did not mention Wells by name, even though he had already met her by that time. He also linked the anti-lynching campaign to the abolitionist cause. According to his sermon, while traveling in the United States, he attended a service at Henry Ward Beecher's church in New York. There he witnessed an unnamed African American preacher declare, "They are hanging men, they are burning men, they are devouring and slaying among the coloured citizens of the South... Give your own spirit, Beecher, to the preachers of this country! Speak to them Beecher, and bid them stand for the coloured men as you stood for them in days gone by!"²³ Before he sought a wider audience, Aked first brought his advocacy to the people of Liverpool.

²¹ See also Silkey, *Evolving Morality in a Transatlantic Society*, pp. 245-247. Silkey argues that Wells herself was instrumental in getting Aked to publish this piece as a strategic move to gain more attention to her campaign. It is equally likely that Aked himself wanted to make this protest.

²² Percy Bunting, 1836-1911.

²³ Charles Aked, "A Sunday Evening in Henry Ward Beecher's Church and A Sensational Evening Service in the First Baptist Church of Chicago by the Rev. C. F. Aked" *The Liverpool Pulpit*, August 1893, No 19, Vol 2. P. 115. *The Liverpool Pulpit*

In his *Contemporary Review* piece, entitled, “The Race Problem in America,” Aked challenged Southern white supremacy on many fronts, detailing the convict lease system, criticizing white violence at the polls, and segregation. Aked’s article reflected the influence of Wells, even if he did not name her directly. In it, he argued that lynching was a tool of white supremacy and described in detail several lynchings that did not conform to white Southern narratives of black rape. Indeed, he clearly expressed his outrage at the repeated invocation of this crime to defend all lynchings. After writing of the lynching of several black women, he declared, “The women who were shot and hanged and put in barrels can scarcely have been suspected by a dehumanised Southern mob of this particular crime!”²⁴ He also pointed to white hypocrisy in accepting relations between white men and black women as well as their utter disbelief that white women could want to have sexual relations with a black man: “Why assume that it is a monstrous and impossible supposition that the coloured man and the white woman yet come together in the South? The evidence shows that they do, and that sometimes the coloured man is lynched for his ‘assault.’”²⁵ Echoing Wells, Aked attacked the “press and pulpit” of the North and South. He accused them of sitting idly by while knowingly allowing black men and

was a monthly publication that gathered together sermons from around the city, both Nonconformist and the Anglican Church from 1890 to 1895. Aked was co-editor throughout its run, and Rev. Armstrong, another member of BALC co-edited it with him as well.

²⁴ Charles F. Aked, “The Race Problem in America,” *Contemporary Review* (June 1894), p. 825.

²⁵ Charles F. Aked, “The Race Problem in America,” *Contemporary Review* (June 1894), p. 827.

women to be killed for doing nothing more than what came naturally to them or to maintain the fiction of white dominance over the Southern black.

Such criticism did not sit well with the white South, and a Southern Christian journal attacked Aked's piece in this international forum. The *Christian Advocate* (of Nashville and not to be confused with the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, a black newspaper in New Orleans) published a reply to both Aked and the *Contemporary Review*. According to the Nashville paper, Bunting refused to publish their response to Aked. They summarized Bunting's position: "That having allowed an ignorant fanatic the use of his Review for the purpose of giving currency to a batch of slanders affecting the reputation of 12,000,000 English-speaking people, he now deliberately closes the door against even the most temperate response." The Southern paper could not allow Aked's 'attack' on Southern white women to go unnoticed. Having established that they held no regard for Aked and Wells's argument (and evidence) that lynchings occurred outside of the crime of rape, they defended Southern white women. The editorial declared, "A purer womanhood than that of the Southern states does not live under the sun." They defended this assertion by claiming that they know of only one white woman who had a child by a black man. Turning to Aked's understanding of race relations in the South, the Nashville Methodist editor blamed slavery on the British and attacked British governance of the former slaves in the West Indies. In doing so, the *Advocate* not only repeated the familiar critique of British impertinence (see below) but also set up a further challenge to Aked's claims.

While Aked trumpeted black achievement in the years since emancipation as having been accomplished despite the efforts of Southern whites, the Southern journal

argued that Southern whites had taken the lead in promoting black uplift—in spite of the actions of the Northerners who had placed social inferiors above their rightful masters. According to the *Advocate*, Southern whites supported black schools, led the missionary efforts that turned supposed African savages to good Christians, and welcomed black property ownership. Of course, they acknowledged, change had not come to the South without some violence. However, they ask, “Did it, moreover, ever occur to Mr. Aked that a social and political upheaval, the vastest in modern times, and one of the incidents of which was a deliberate effort to put the bottom rail on top, could not occur without stirring up the worst human passions?”²⁶ In short, the problems of the South were caused by the interference of white Northerners and the British who had supported slavery in its early days, and Southern blacks would be better off if everyone outside the South left well enough alone.

In response, the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* printed an editorial in support of Aked. In defending Aked, the black Louisiana ministers welcomed British criticism of white Southern violence for the same reasons that Wells went to Britain. That is, they hoped that he would draw international attention to the routine violence that blacks in the South faced. The newspaper argued that the British were well within their rights to criticize Southern whites. Though they acknowledged that many white Southern ministers and editors had protested lynching, the *Southwestern Advocate* continued, “many of these really good (?) people have consciously or otherwise condoned the great evil by assertions that the punishment, though horrible,

²⁶ “A Clerical Slanderer,” *The Macon Telegraph*, August 17, 1894. Though this piece appeared in the *Telegraph*, it was reprinted from an editorial in the *Christian Advocate*.

was not too severe to be meted out to Negroes who outraged white women.” They instead maintained, “It will go without saying that Negroes are lynched frequently because they are Negroes, and because of the prevalence of that spirit which has been engendered by that class of white people who see no good in the Negro whatever.”²⁷ To them, then, Southern white leaders participated in making it appear that lynching was a defense against black brutes when it was not. Welcoming the British commentators, the Louisiana paper, like Wells, hoped that the British press could shed some light on the trials that Southern blacks endured in their relationships to Southern whites.

As Wells’s continued her tour of Britain, more British voices joined the conversation. From London, the *Daily News*, another Liberal paper owned by future BALC members (the Claydens, whose home would become the organization’s headquarters), placed the blame squarely on Northerners who had abandoned the process of emancipation before it was complete. Taking the word from a Liverpool preacher (Armstrong again) who was close to Wells, they reflected on the history of the American political system and its abandonment of blacks in the South. The *Daily News* then correctly pointed out the irony of Northern politicians not being more sensitive to the needs of black voters in the South. That is, because they were no longer slaves, they counted fully in the census. Since white Southerners had made it difficult for blacks to vote in parts of the South, white Southern politicians in Washington had more power than the number of actual voters in their regions. This disparity would worsen after legal maneuvers in the South made it even more difficult

²⁷ “A Clerical Slanderer,” *The Southwestern Christian Advocate*, August 16, 1894.

for blacks to vote. The British paper did not see this problem growing however. The editors argued that they and others merely had to reveal to Northerners what was happening in the South to make them see that they needed to get involved there. Their editorial concluded, “The attention of the North needs only to be called to the horrors that are being perpetrated in its name, and the people who purged their nation from slavery at an almost infinite cost may be trusted to wipe out this greater stain.”²⁸ The North was both the problem and solution for Southern blacks.

When confronted with the controversy that Wells raised in Britain, white Southerners attempted to reclaim their authority by speaking directly to the British press. For instance, the *Liverpool Mercury*, a newspaper deeply connected to the British Liberal Party, expressed support for Wells when William Northen sent them a letter accusing her of being unreliable and attacking the British criticizing the South. Northen was particularly stung by these attempts to shame the South. As governor, he worked to bring industry and immigration to his state. After leaving the governorship in 1895, he was employed by the Georgia Immigration and Investment Bureau, a private company that sought greater investment in the South. For the Bureau, his greatest success was the founding of Fitzgerald (outside Macon), “the colony city of

²⁸ “Race Problems in America,” *Daily News*, May 31, 1894. Why these British journalists placed so much faith in the North is unclear. Perhaps because they saw the Civil War as a fight over slavery rather than a sectional tragedy and did not accept the image of Reconstruction as a violent action against white Southerners, they saw the North as a possible defender of Southern blacks.

South,” a new city of Northern immigrants and Civil War veterans who were to rebuild the South and begin a new wave of immigration to the region.²⁹

British newspapers were not quick to take him at his word. According to the *Mercury*, there was no need to deny the reports of lynching that Wells simply highlighted: “We have seen lynchings reported, with every circumstantiality of detail, almost week by week, and no one has ever ventured to deny that they have taken place.” According to the Liverpool paper, “Governor Northen cannot get rid of the fact [of lynching] by a vague denial.”³⁰ Unlike the white Britons who had journeyed to the South and developed personal relationships with Southern whites (like James Bryce and W. Laird Clowes, as detailed in the previous chapter), Wells’s supporters in Britain would not simply accept white Southern attempts to turn lynching into a local matter that they should manage.

²⁹ Fitzgerald was the brainchild of Philander Fitzgerald, a Northern journalist and former drummer in the Federal Army. Gathering together more than a thousand subscriptions of Northern veterans, Fitzgerald and Northen found land for them about 70 miles from Macon. The town prospered in its early days, unlike similar projects, largely because it had a reasonable amount of capital from the Federal pensions that many of its new residents brought with them. Fitzgerald himself would never live in the town that still bears his name and would be indicted years later for fraud after the failure of a similar project in Texas. Though it is largely a success story from this period (the town prospered through the first half of the twentieth century, though it’s economy has struggled after the closing of much of its factories), the town’s existence also marks a distinct turn in American race relations. Though the founders were members of the Civil War Army that had liberated black slaves, they expelled black veterans who had bought shares in the venture. It was from then on described as a “White Man’s Colony.” It also was located on land that had been home to a small black community who were removed from the region before the white colonists arrived. Central to Fitzgerald’s town mythology is the coming together of Northern and Southern veterans in the town square. Quite literally in this case, North and South came together to erase the victories of the Civil War and establish that white Southern racism was to be excused by the North. For more on the founding of Fitzgerald, see William J. Northen Papers, Box 2, Georgia State Archives.

³⁰ “No less a person than...” *The Liverpool Mercury*, June 6, 1894.

Other newspapers would also publish testimonies to Wells's faithfulness. Significantly, it was American blacks who would support her cause and who were given a voice in these publications. The *Daily News* printed a letter from Jason Lynch in July, 1894. Claiming to be an old classmate of Wells, Lynch noted that she "is a coloured lady of the highest standing, and possesses scholastic attainments of the highest order, and is in every way qualified to lay before the people of the civilized world the facts concerning the great crimes of her native land." He seconded her mission: "It is a source of gratification to the coloured people of the United States to know that in grand old England, where all men are free and equal, her people condemn the diabolical crimes of our native land. We appeal to all good people throughout the civilized world, of whatever religious or political belief, to raise their voices in behalf of our unfortunate people in the South who are victims of prejudice and hate."³¹ As Wells's second tour progressed, Southern white leaders realized that they simply could not call her a liar and expect to be believed by the British press.

The white Southern press responded to British journalists' trust in Wells with scorn and attempted, like Northen, to shift the conversation away from lynching itself and into a discussion of Wells. When the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* sent the *Liverpool Daily Post* an article supposedly disproving Wells's claims, the Liverpool paper repeated that they did not rely on her testimony alone and that "whatever that journal might prove against the champion of the coloured race would fail altogether to justify the existence of lynch law." Finally, the *Daily Post* claimed that all British commentators had offered was "a condemnation of lynching, which condemnation

³¹ Jason Lynch, "American Horrors," *Daily News*, July 5, 1894.

the *Memphis Commercial* proves to be justified.”³² When confronted with these defenses of Wells, the *Commercial Appeal* turned to attacking her British supporters instead and claiming that those supporters did not speak for their country. According to the Memphis paper, Wells’s British supporters did not speak for their country: “As to the force of English public opinion—bah! The so-called public opinion that is manifesting itself by adopting resolutions of endorsing the slanders of this woman receives very little respect in England and none at all in this country. Negroes are novelties in England.”³³ White Southerners did not know how to respond to these new attacks on lynching from an unexpected source.

At the heart of white Southern complaints was the definition of civilization and its connections to race and gender at the time. For them, Wells should have been dismissed as nothing more than a lying black woman intent on spreading trouble and turning local issues into international news, and they simply could not abide a black woman gaining such a following across the water. White Southerners thought they knew what caused lynching and while they could admit that lynching itself was terrible, they could not stand to be called uncivilized by either a black woman or, as they saw them, British imperialists. Yet, British accounts remained supportive of Wells and praised her trustworthiness. She had managed to gain a significant following with influential members of the British press and pulpit, and they worked to bring her message to wider audiences. As she was leaving Britain, a group of her

³² “We have had sent to us a copy...” *The Liverpool Daily Post*, June 13, 1894.

³³ “We have received a letter...” *The Commercial Appeal*, July 3, 1894.

supporters got together to bring even more attention to her mission. Their work would keep the controversy alive for several more months.

BALC Takes Shape and Takes Action

Just as Wells was about to return to the United States, a group of her allies in Britain approached her about the possibility of forming a British Committee to take a more active approach to protesting Southern lynching. Much has been made of Wells's journeys across the Atlantic and the reception her speeches received on both sides of the Atlantic. However, no one has looked at the people who made up the Anti-Lynching Committee or its activities in the months after Wells left England. Such a committee was not unusual in London at the time; there were similar groups protesting the treatment of Armenians in Turkey, Jews in Russia, and other places the world over. It also was a relatively minor one. The Anglo-Armenian Association, which included several BALC members, gained far more coverage (and for longer) in British newspapers than BALC did during this same time. It was also supported by Irish Home Rule's champion, William Gladstone, several times Liberal Prime Minister of Britain. He did not comment on Southern race relations. Though it was not as strong as the Anglo-Armenian Association, BALC continued its activities into the next year and further incensed white Southerners who hoped that Wells's message would fade from coverage of the South. This transnational conversation rested on local relationships: in the formation of BALC, the coverage it received in the British press, and the reactions to Wells and BALC in the South. By looking at these local and international connections, this section argues that to understand the meaning of

BALC and the international controversy over lynching, we must turn to the interplay between transnational constructions of race, empire, and civilization and relationships between black and white Southerners and British journalists and activists.

BALC itself was a product of a network of British activist and drew from its leading members' connections to the Liberal press.³⁴ Florence Ballgarnie, the secretary of the group, described its founding in a letter to C.P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*.³⁵ In it, she asked if he would join the organization. Scott was a prominent voice in the Liberal press and had written numerous editorials in support of the Armenian cause. Ballgarnie told him that several people had met under the invitation of P. E. Clayden,³⁶ who owned London's *Daily News*, to discuss what they could do "check the frequent outrages upon negroes reported on authentic evidence from America." At the meeting were representatives of the *Chronicle*, the *Echo* (John Passmore Edwards³⁷), and the *Contemporary Review* (Percy Bunting). The meeting unanimously voted to "give expression of public opinion in condemnation of such outrages in whatever way may best seem calculated to assist the cause of humanity and civilization." Courting the influential member of the British press, Ballgarnie noted that membership would involve no work on Scott's part but "would

³⁴ In her autobiography, Wells gave a slightly different account of BALC's founding. In her telling, her British friends formed the committee on her last night in Britain, after a social evening. For some reason, Ballgarnie does not note her presence at the meeting in her letter to Scott. See *Crusade for Justice*, p. 215.

³⁵ C.P. Scott, 1846-1932.

³⁶ P.W. Clayden, 1827-1902.

³⁷ John Passmore Edwards, 1823-1911.

considerably strengthen us in the stand we are making on behalf of the oppressed.”³⁸

Though Scott’s reply does not survive, he was listed as a member of BALC. As the letter demonstrates, Wells had made contact with people in Britain who were willing to take action on her behalf and were further connected to others who would do the same.

Though there is no surviving list of official BALC members or any of its correspondence outside of those published by newspapers, lists of members appeared in several British newspapers in 1894. The (London) *Times* first reported on BALC on August 1, 1894. Wells herself included a list of members in her own newspaper accounts to the *Inter Ocean*.³⁹ Combining these lists places the public membership of BALC at 66, including several married couples who were listed together in these announcements. Most of the members listed were prominent in Liberal, Radical, and/or religious circles. The majority of BALC’s public members supported Irish Home Rule, justice for the Armenians, and votes for women. Seventeen were MPs and one member of the House of Lords. Seven were journalists, and thirteen women. The organization was overwhelmingly Liberal, with only one member of the Tories (Sir John Gorst, an MP who broke with his party over Irish Home Rule). Most members of BALC were wealthy,⁴⁰ though also on the list were trade unionists

³⁸ Florence Ballgarnie to A. O. Scott, July 9, 1894. The Guardian Archive. John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

³⁹ See *Crusade for Justice*, pp. 216-217, and “Anti-Lynching Committee,” *Times*, August 1, 1894.

⁴⁰ The *Dictionary of National Biography* lists the wealth at death of 35 members of BALC or their spouses. The lowest figure given is £233 and the highest £63636. The average wealth at death for the group was £15032 and the median £10903. While this is an imperfect means of getting at their wealth at the time when they were members

including Benjamin Tillett and Thomas Mann. The only Indian MP Dabhadai Naoroji was also a member as was the African Ogontula Sapara. That is to say, BALC was made up of British activists, who had made names for themselves in politics or religion, and who regularly took part in public protests of one kind or another.

While BALC expected their opinions to be taken seriously, the *New York Times* greeted the news of the Committee's founding with no shortage of sarcasm. Echoing the papers previous coverage of Wells's speeches, an editorial argued that BALC was not attempting to alleviate suffering, but was another in a long line of British committees that placed themselves at the center of international controversies. Wells, according to the *New York Times*, "seems to have succeeded in firing the slow-burning British heart, and in inducing the formation of a committee, quite according to the approved British precedents, with a real Duke at the head of it, if it only be the Duke of Argyll." The editors did refer to lynchings as "the acts of savages," but then noted that the "provocation in the South has been extreme" and expressed doubts about Wells's testimony. For the *New York Times*, the only solution to the problem of lynching was to make rape a capital offense and "to see that judicial processes are not so much slower and less exemplary than mob law as they now are." The editorial concluded by predicting failure for BALC: "Upon the whole, we fail to see any channels in which the Duke's committee can be useful, and perhaps it had better

of BALC—some individuals lived several decades into the twentieth century—it at least suggests that BALC was made up, publicly at least, of Britons who were quite well-to-do.

disband.”⁴¹ Even before, BALC began its mission, the *New York Times* attacked its standing to make any criticisms of what they saw as Southern affairs.

British journals too debated whether or not such an organization could help. Tellingly, the papers most suspicious of BALC’s effectiveness were Liberal papers generally but unconnected to BALC. The *Leeds Mercury* predicted that any attempt to influence race relations on the other side of the Atlantic would be met with calls to mind their own business and yield little tangible results.⁴² The *Bristol Mercury* disagreed and argued that Britons had a moral imperative to intercede. Though the editors admitted that it was a delicate matter to tell another sovereign power how to behave, they maintained, “Where hundreds of lives are being sacrificed every year to brutal instincts it is necessary to let the voice of protest be heard, and the committee consists not only of Englishmen widely separated in opinion on matters political and religious, and the object is merely to arouse the sons of the Abolitionists and other lovers of freedom to action in their respective states.”⁴³ The formation of BALC was also met with the creation of a competing committee that was not affiliated with Wells. This new Lynch Law Repression Mission disagreed with the direct actions of BALC and instead tried to create an international equal rights group.⁴⁴ The

⁴¹ “British Anti-Lynchers.” *New York Times*. August 2, 1894.

⁴² “Miss Ida Wells, a coloured lady...” *The Leeds Mercury*, June 16, 1894

⁴³ “Lynch Law,” *The Bristol Mercury*, August 2, 1894

⁴⁴ “Lynch Law Repression Mission,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, October 30, 1894. The members of the Lynch Law Repression Mission apparently believed the BALC had brought too much controversy and were making the situation worse. They had also planned on sending black British Rev. Peter Sanford to the South to investigate though they abandoned this plan. Given the South’s reaction to white members of BALC coming to the South, it is probably best for Sanford that he did not undertake this mission. See also “Lynch Law Repression Mission,” *Birmingham Daily Post*,

Repression Mission failed to attract nearly the same attention as BALC and quickly faded away. Its existence however demonstrates the debates within the Liberal press about the best method for influencing white Southern behavior. To some Liberals, BALC's direct action would have little effect and instead would cause more problems than it could hope to solve.

As part of their campaign against lynching, BALC undertook a three-part strategy. First, they sent letters to the governors of Southern states demanding that they do more to stop lynching in their states. Secondly, they followed these letters with more protesting individual lynchings when they heard of them. Finally, BALC also sent a fact finding mission of their own to the Southern states. While not all of the members of BALC who journeyed to America were made public, two members were listed in the press, John Gorst and Moncure Conway.⁴⁵ Sir John Gorst was the only member of BALC who was a Conservative. He entered Tory politics in the 1860s. At the time he opposed reforming Parliamentary elections to make them more democratic, but he gradually began to identify himself as a Tory Democrat; he

September 17, 1894. Though started at the same time as BALC and immediately after Wells's tour of England, she never mentioned this alternate group and it did not receive the coverage that the other group did. Similarly, Liberal critic of British imperial policy, Henry Labouchere argued that Southern whites could justifiably critique BALC's methods. In an article in the *London Truth*, the politician noted that white Southerners could rightly say, "If we kill a negro occasionally for maltreating a white woman, you killed thousands of black men in Africa because there was gold in their country, and this was done, not by a mob, but by a company acting under a royal charter." Within Britain, there was a debate about how and whether to take action about American lynching that reflected differing understandings of the place of Britain and the British Empire within the world. See "British Negro Treatment," *The Macon Telegraph*, September 4, 1894. This same article appeared earlier in the same paper, see "British Treatment of Them," *The Macon Telegraph*, August 28, 1894.

⁴⁵ John Gorst, 1835-1916; Moncure Conway, 1832-1907.

clashed with members of his party who still saw it as solely interested in representing landed interests. He also sidestepped the Conservative party line and supported Irish Home Rule. Also a supporter of Irish Home rule, Moncure Conway was the only American member of BALC and a Southerner. Born in Virginia in 1832, his family owned slaves, and his brothers fought in the Confederate Army. Unlike them, Conway was an abolitionist from an early age, and fled the war-torn United States in 1863. Once in England, he established himself as a writer and minister in South Place Chapel. From his pulpit and in his writings, he championed independent and critical thought. In joining BALC, he renewed his fight for African American rights.⁴⁶

In September of that year, Georgia Governor William J. Northen responded to their visit. When asked by the *New York Times* about Gorst's proposed tour of the South, Northen pointed to the hypocritical nature of British subjects criticizing Americans. Alleging that BALC received its information on lynching from "irresponsible sources" (i.e., Wells), Northen challenged the Committee to "punish as it deserves the barbarous, wholesale slaughter of negroes in Africa by Englishmen who go there to steal their gold...give to the Irishman the rights that humanity demands, and when they have pulled the beam out of their own eyes they may then with better grace appoint themselves a committee to hunt for the mote that may be in our eye."⁴⁷ Interestingly, given the political composition of BALC, many of its

⁴⁶ *Crusade for Justice*, pp. 217-218.

⁴⁷ "Governor Northen is Aroused," *New York Times*, September 11, 1894. While Northen, O'Ferrall, and Jones are the only Southern governors to appear here, other governors also responded to the BALC. See "The Governors Speak Right Out," *The Daily Picayune*, September 11, 1894.

members would have agreed with Northen's charge, if not his conclusion.⁴⁸ In keeping with his attempts to bring capital to the South, the Georgia governor also suggested that a syndicate of, according to the *Literary Digest*, "English and American capitalists who have large investments in the Western States" had sent Wells abroad to stir up trouble.⁴⁹ To Northen, BALC was really an organization founded to embarrass the South and protect Western investments of British capital.

Northern was not the only governor to comment upon BALC's mission, Virginia's Charles O'Ferrall both defended and condemned lynching while echoing Northen's take on British imperialism. In a letter to the *New York World*, O'Ferrall referred to the "rapacious colonial project in Africa, and the degrading effects upon the Chinese resulting from her opium war." After this attack on British policies, O'Ferrall argued that the British commission could have found everything that they needed to know from newspaper coverage of lynching. O'Ferrall framed the issue as being one of civil authorities attempted to control the mob. To him, lynching was entirely brought on by the white community's need to suppress black rape of white women. In his telling, civil authorities, specifically in Virginia, "in every case have asserted all their power to suppress the lynching spirit, and within the last few month I have protected from violence with military, at heavy expense to the State, three negroes who were charged with outraging a white woman." After noting that all three were eventually executed after trial, he concluded, "These sympathetic Englishmen

⁴⁸ See A.P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: a Study in British Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1959). See also Debbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*.

⁴⁹ "An Anti-Lynching Crusade in America Begun," *Literary Digest*, August 11, 1894.

might find missionary work among the negroes of the South in warning them against the consequences of the forcible gratification of their devilish lusts.”⁵⁰ Rather than educate Southern whites about civilization, O’Ferrall proposed that BALC turn to educating Southern blacks.

Unlike O’Ferrall and the *Commercial Appeal*, the *Fayetteville Observer* saw some benefit to the South in BALC’s visit, and it also pointed to a vision of the South as a nation rather than a region within the United States. Unlike other white Southern editors, Edward Hale, the editor of the Fayetteville paper, had first-hand experience in Britain and with Britons. Hale had been US Consul in Manchester from 1885 to 1889, and his paper gave more sympathetic coverage to Britain than most white Southern papers (see Chapter 2). When discussing BALC’s visit, the Fayetteville editor thought Southern whites would benefit from the committee’s fact-finding tour. In an editorial about BALC, Hale argued that the white South (although they only named it as “the South”) would be able to challenge the “slanderous crusade” of Wells. Comparing the South to a nation, the North Carolinian argued, “The South has a character to maintain in the community of nations.” The *Observer* maintained that the South had not been conscious enough of this duty before the Civil War and had allowed *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (“Mrs. Beecher Stowe’s vile book”) to define slavery across the Atlantic. From her book, Hale claimed, the world came to view Southern slavery as an evil to be abolished. he asked, “Who knows but that if we could get the committee here we could not only open their eyes on the lynching subject, but cause the world,

⁵⁰ “O’Ferrall Follows Carr,” *The News and Observer*, September 11, 1894.

through them, to reverse its general judgment of the slavery question?”⁵¹ For Hale, the committee presented an opportunity to turn the world to its side not only in this conflict but in the writing of the history of American slavery.

Black newspapers, however, did not think that BALC would be satisfied by white accounts of Southern life. In an editorial about BALC’s visit, the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* noted that white Southern politicians and newspapers would find such a mission impertinent, especially those white leaders who had repeatedly condemned lynching. Yet, they argued that lynching was not merely a local matter and, “that wherever the rights of the people are ruthlessly trampled in the dust, that there are good people in every land who have the moral courage to speak against it.” The editors also believed that lynching was driven by poor whites whom white elites either could not or refused to control. To this paper, an organ of the black Methodist church, lynching was closely tied to Jim Crow restrictions in the South, which “cruelly robbed” Southern blacks of their “manhood.” Within such a system, they asked, “How do the Southern people expect to put a stop to lynching Negroes by mobs, for nameless or other crimes, when they make lynching respectable by allowing laws to remain on their statute books which encourage the baser elements to revel in their high-handed lawlessness?”⁵² For this black journal, the British could

⁵¹ “A New View on the Lynching Committee,” *The Fayetteville Observer*, September 27, 1894.

⁵² “The Anti-Lynchers,” *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 6, 1894. It should also be noted that in this editorial the paper defended Wells and connected African American suffering to that of Russian Jews and the Irish, as the *Richmond Planet* had also done, see above.

shine a light not only on the violence of lynching but the everyday sufferings of African Americans in the South.

The next month, in the London *Times*, another governor responded to BALC's letters, echoing Northern's attack on the supposed crimes of the British Empire and demonstrating BALC's persistence in shaming white Southern politicians. In August, two black men had been accused of murder in Alabama. They were taken by a mob, hanged, and shot while hanging but still breathing. In response to this outrage, BALC sent a letter to the governor of that state. In their letter, they wrote, that it "appeared almost incredible that such lawlessness could occur in communities supposed to be civilized" and that acts of this kind, "whose inhumanity. Lawlessness, and cowardice cannot fail to compromise the reputation of Americans generally."⁵³ Following Wells's language, such accusations were all but guaranteed to stir a vigorous response in white Southern politicians.

Such a response arrived a few weeks later. The (London) *Times* printed a letter signed by the Governor of Alabama, Thomas G. Jones, (written by his aide) challenging the assertions made by BALC. The unnamed governor's aide reminded readers that the committee was not a part of his constituency and that he did not criticize British abilities to maintain law and order. He asked that they extend the same courtesy to his state. While he condemned lynching, the aide linked the lynching of African Americans to the British treatment of Indians. The aide argued that few Americans would accept the "blowing of sepoy's from the mouth of a

⁵³ Excerpts of the letter appear in "We have more than once..." *The Leeds Mercury*, October 8, 1894.

cannon” as the proper test “of British humanity or civilization,” and that therefore the British should not condemn the Americans because of the actions of a mob.⁵⁴ Like the other connections that white Southerners made between British imperialism and race relations in the South, the link between the treatment of Sepoys and white violence against blacks is striking. Not only was the event several decades in the past, the so-called Mutiny and the British response had happened in 1857, it was also seen as a response to a violent revolt on the part of Indians against the rule of the British East India Company. In essence, then, the Alabama politician was arguing that the lynching of black men was an equivalent response to the revolt of former slaves over their white masters. Though attributing lynching to black rape, he was arguing that the proper prism to view race relations in the South was through the lens of empire, with Southern blacks challenging the whites who should properly rule over them.

The editors of the *Times* agreed with most of the letter’s claims. They did criticize lynching as a moral wrong, but still sided with the Alabama governor over Wells and BALC. Perhaps they recalled their own series from four years before which described the situation in the South as a race war. Having linked lynching to race hatred, the *Times* then blamed the victim: “the negro, it must be acknowledged, does something to justify such differential treatment by the frequency and atrocity of

⁵⁴ “Lynching in America.” *The Times*, October 6, 1894. Arkansas Governor William Meade Fishback responded to BALC as well; as with Jones, BALC wrote to him after a lynching in Arkansas. Similar to Jones and Northen, he declared, “The treatment of Irish tenants; of the Africans; of the Egyptians; of the Sepoys of India; of our own colonial ancestors; of whatever people over whom she had secured control, whether legitimate or illegitimate, all attest to the hypocrisy” of assuming “that England has a higher regard for human rights...than the United States.” See “Gov. Fishback Replies,” *New York Times*, November 23, 1894.

his outrages on white women.” The editors then chastised BALC for its “impertinence,” and concluded by telling Florence Balgarnie, the secretary of BALC, to mind her own business and noted that they had more sympathy for the lynchers than the anti-lynching committee. For the *Times*, the testimony of white Southern men counted more than that of Wells or her allies in BALC.⁵⁵ They stood with them against the Liberal presses from London and Northern England.

BALC and its supporters were quick to respond to the attacks of Southern governors and the London paper. Two days after Jones’s letter appeared, the *Times* published a letter from Balgarnie; in it, she claimed that the committee’s letters were having an effect in America. Balgarnie argued, “Lynching is now denounced where it was once condoned or even advocated, or at best, passed over in silence.” She cited a letter from an African American lawyer and journalist, F.L. Barnett⁵⁶ of the Chicago Anti-Lynching Committee, in which he thanked the British committee for writing their letters and states that the country would have continued to ignore the crime if the they had not spoken out. He explained, “If England had not raised the voice of protestation against the awful barbarism of America, this crime would have passed unnoticed.” Barnett encouraged Britons to keep voicing their disapproval to American leaders in an effort to end lynching.⁵⁷

Part of the battle over BALC then was who could speak for the South and precisely what position it held in the world. Responding to Jones’s letter in a letter of

⁵⁵ “The Governor of the State of Alabama.” *The Times*. October 6, 1894. Re-printed in the *New York Times*, October 15, 1894.

⁵⁶ Though they were not yet considering marriage at the time of the letter, Barnett married Wells the next year.

⁵⁷ *The Times*, October 8, 1894.

his own to the *Times*, William Lloyd Garrison, American and son of the famous abolitionist, argued that Wells spoke to deaf ears in the United States before journeying to England. However, “Spoken from the vantage ground of London, her faintest whisper goes like an arrow to the mark...A year ago the South derided and resented Northern protests; today it listens, explains, and apologizes for its uncovered cruelties.” Garrison further claimed that African Americans had a right to appeal to the world for judgment. He countered the arguments of the Southern governors and cited anti-slavery protests from London, Mazzini’s appeals to Italy from there earlier in the century, and Armenians seeking the assistance of a British committee in their struggles against the Turks.⁵⁸ For Wells and her supporters, Southern blacks were roughly equivalent to other peoples fighting for recognition from the world. For white Southern politicians and the British editors of the *Times*, white Southerners were like members of the imperial administration who struggled to balance the demands of whites against the violence inflicted by their racial inferiors.

The *Times* was not the only British paper to print a response to Jones’s letter, though none of the papers associated with BALC printed his letter or responded to it. The *Birmingham Daily Post*, which had supported Wells on her tour, but was not associated with BALC, argued that Jones had gotten the better of the conversation. In their editorial the *Daily Post* did express support for BALC’s mission if not their

⁵⁸ William Lloyd Garrison. “The Anti-Lynching Committee.” *The Times*. November 9, 1894. Other observers would write to British papers about lynch law in America. In October, 1894, a British correspondent wrote to *Reynold’s Newspaper* (London) and argued that Wells did not have her facts straight. The letter writer quoted the Rev. R. D. Cobb of Virginia in declaring that Wells did not let known “the devilish cause” of lynchings (that is rape). See “We have hear a good deal...” *Reynold’s Newspaper*, October 28, 1894.

methods: “Every right-minded person, of course, must concur with the Anti-Lynching Committee in condemning lawless outrages of this kind, but it is rather a delicate matter for aliens to obtrude their opinions unsolicited on the officials of the peccant state.” They also questioned the logic of calling violence in the British Empire as a greater evil than lynching in the South and suggested that Jones would have been better off by simply ignoring the letter, “but the opportunity of posing before the world as the champion of Alabama rights to lynch niggers, if they think fit, and to stub the outside censors, was too much for him.” Even so, the Birmingham paper believed that BALC had committed a blunder in challenging a sitting governor so.⁵⁹

BALC’s activities continued into the next year, and the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* maintained a relationship with the organization. When Frederick Douglass died in early 1895, Ballgarnie wrote to the Louisiana paper to express the sympathies of the whole of BALC. She also noted that the organization continued to watch the anti-lynching crusade in America with interest—as did the rest of the British press, according to her—and commented upon proposed anti-lynching legislation in Tennessee and Texas.⁶⁰ Ballgarnie again wrote to the paper when news

⁵⁹ “An amusing illustration of the risks...” *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 Oct, 1894. The *Leeds Mercury* concurred and noted that Ballgarnie must also be regretting the tone of BALC’s letter. The main reason that the *Mercury* criticized the tone of the letter was because they were unsure whether or not this particular lynching fit in with those described by Wells. That is, if this was the lynching of murderers, then BALC did not have as much standing as it would to articulate such a strong case against Southern civilization. Even though they accepted that not all lynchings were justified, this British paper thought it better to leave well enough alone when those murdered deserved their execution if not the form it took. See “We have more than once...” *The Leeds Mercury*, October 8, 1894.

⁶⁰ Florence Ballgarnie, “London Letter on the Death of Hon. Frederick Douglass,” *The Southwestern Christian Advocate*, April 4, 1895.

reached Britain of another lynching, and a lax response from local authorities. Citing the *New York Age*, a black newspaper run by Wells's friend and ally, T. Thomas Fortune, the British committee expressed their outrage at the act and their continued support for black Southerners. In a brief response to Ballgarnie's letter, the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* thanked BALC for listening to black accounts of these crimes. To them, it spoke of the organization's commitment to the cause that they did not simply accept white Southern accounts of "Negro outrages."⁶¹

Wells's trip abroad and the subsequent activities of BALC also strained local relationships in the South, both among black and white men and within the Southern black community. The possibility of Wells's coming to Richmond to address black journalists there caused a telling exchange of letters between the Governor O'Ferrall and Wells's ally John Mitchell, Jr, editor of the *Richmond Planet* an influential black newspaper. O'Ferrall and Mitchell did not agree on many issues, but they both detested lynching. O'Ferrall, opposed mob violence on moral grounds, and, as his response to BALC above demonstrates, could truthfully point to cases in which he had called out the militia to protect black and white prisoners. After her second trip to England, Wells was invited to address the Afro-American Press Association meeting in Richmond. An old friend of Wells, Mitchell had published numerous articles publicizing her efforts abroad. Mitchell also invited Governor O'Ferrall to the meeting. Though he initially agreed to come, O'Ferrall eventually decided that he could not be there unless the organization repudiated Wells's speeches in England.

⁶¹ "What They Think of Us Abroad," *The Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 6, 1895.

While Wells also had to cancel at the last minute, the Association voted unanimously to endorse her crusade in Great Britain.⁶² In his letter to the conference, O’Ferrall noted his opposition to lynch-law, but argued that the organization’s endorsement of Wells was “calculated to do harm rather than good and intensify rather than mollify the spirit of violence which so frequently manifests itself, not only in Virginia, but throughout the South, when a certain crime is committed.” He then asserted that if the convention and other black leaders condemned that crime then the lynchings in the South would lower considerably. For O’Ferrall, lynching was a problem, but more a problem with black men than with the white men and women who did the lynching.

The response of the convention to this letter reveals how these journalists placed their own appeals for rights within a global context. They based their support of Wells not only on her membership in their organization but also on other movements for freedom. Their letter states that “just as Hungarians endorsed Kossuth and the Irish Parnell during their crusade in America in favor of the rights of their people,” they would defend her.⁶³ To them, their people were like other peoples struggling for rights up against a more powerful foe. While these journalists backed Wells at their meeting, Mitchell would also attempt to smooth over the disagreement

⁶² “The Afro-American Editors Meet,” *Richmond Planet*, September 15, 1894, see also “The Afro-American Press,” *Richmond Planet*, September 22, 1894.

⁶³ “The Afro-American Editors Meet.” Lajos Kossuth was a Hungarian freedom fighter and politician who had died earlier that year. Interestingly, while touring the US in the 1850s, Kossuth refused to condemn slavery. Parnell was an Irish politician who attempted to have Irish Home Rule enacted. He had died a few years before this letter. For more on white Southern attitudes towards Parnell and Irish Home Rule, see Chapter 1.

with the governor a couple weeks later. Hearing that O’Ferrall had received threats for his remarks about Wells and his refusal to address the Press Association, Mitchell argued in an editorial that “there is no need for any feeling of bitterness” and that “we should not forget that on the lynching question, he is allright, although only seven eighths converted to our way of thinking.”⁶⁴ While they could not convince him that lynching was about more than rape, black Virginians could still rely on him to protect the next black man stuck in jail, which was better than a lot of places.

In Georgia, Wells’s campaign revealed tensions within the black community there and the delicate balance that black Southerners had to maintain in their relationships with white politicians. The Georgia Colored Teachers Association’s response to Wells’s campaign would provide Georgia’s Governor Northen with ammunition in his attacks against Wells and it would also spark a conversation amongst black journalists that reveals the differences between an activist and agitator like Wells and Southern black educators who relied on white politicians for funding for their schools. Unlike the Press Association which considered Wells a colleague, the Colored Teachers Association had no personal contact with her. Northen, on the other hand, had made positive steps towards black schools and education. In 1892, the Colored Teachers Association endorsed his reelection bid. According to the *Atlanta Constitution*, the association supported Northen for “his efforts toward the education of the negro as well as the white children, for the strong position that he took against

⁶⁴ “Anonymous Letters for the Governor,” *Richmond Planet*, September 29, 1894.

lynch law.”⁶⁵ During their annual meeting in 1894, the Teachers Association considered a motion to endorse Wells’s charges from England. Though the Press Association had passed such a motion unanimously, the Teachers buried the resolution in committee.⁶⁶

While white newspapers like the *Atlanta Constitution* would trumpet this result, black journalists were not so kind, and in their attacks of the Teachers Association, we can see that gender constructions not only shaped white defenses of lynching but also arguments within black communities over how best to defend a black woman, Wells, and stand up to white leaders. Articles in the *Savannah Tribune* suggest that the Teachers Association did not speak for many Georgian blacks. Like the *Richmond Planet*, the *Tribune* was a relatively small weekly paper that connected black communities in Southern Georgia to the rest of the world. Though not as militant as the *Planet*, the *Tribune* attacked the teachers for their unmanly capitulation to the governor. Scipio Americanus,⁶⁷ a regular contributor argued that the teachers would receive no respect from white leaders because. “The white race as a whole is a manly race and looks upon such unmanly acts with scorn.”⁶⁸ A week later, a former

⁶⁵ “Colored Teachers Endorse Northen,” *Atlanta Constitution*, August 18, 1892. The Georgia Afro-American Press Association also endorsed his campaign against lynching. See also, Schechter, *Ida B. Wells and American Reform*, p. 106.

⁶⁶ There seems to be some confusion over who was to blame for the lack of attention that the resolution received, a Mr. William Flagg (or X. Floyd—different articles attribute authorship to different people) brought the resolution and the President R.R. Wright sent it to a committee. According to the *Tribune*. Flagg would have had to ask for it to be moved from the committee. Others blame Wright for shelving the resolution and knowing they would never return to it.

⁶⁷ I have not figured out who this is. It is at least a partial pseudonym.

⁶⁸ Scipio Americanus, “Negro Teachers of Georgia Disgraced,” *Savannah Tribune*, July 7, 1894.

columnist, identified as the Hustler, seconded Scipio's assessment, and asked, "Where is the manhood and backbone in such conduct?"⁶⁹ For these men, the Teachers Association—at least, their male leaders—had a duty as men to protect not only Wells, a woman, but the truth as well. Not doing so was an act of cowardice.

It also allowed Northen to claim that Wells did not have the support of the all Southern African Americans. Had they been trying to please Northen, the teachers association could have not done much better. The governor did not hesitate to use their lack of endorsement for Wells as a strike against her. In response to the formation of the anti-lynching committee, Northen reminded voters that Wells had been run out of the South from her Memphis home. Though it was whites not blacks that had run her out of town, Northen claimed that this demonstrated that "the colored people of the south repudiated her." He then turned to the Teachers' Association. To him, "The good colored people of the south have no sympathy whatever with anybody making such malicious attacks."⁷⁰ While Scipio and the Hustler strongly agreed with Wells's mission, the Teachers' Association's mere refusal to comment provided the governor with enough accommodation to serve his ends.

Ignorant of these local controversies, BALC would continue to pressure Southern whites to end lynching. Before a meeting of BALC in 1895, Moncure Conway, gave a mostly positive account of the organization's work. He noted that lynchings were less frequent in Virginia, Maryland, and South Carolina. Conway

⁶⁹ The Hustler, "Mr. Editor," *Savannah Tribune*, July 14, 1894. Scipio had taken his place when he stopped writing his regular column. He also is unidentified by anything but his pseudonym in the paper.

⁷⁰ "Strong Words," *The Atlanta Constitution*; June 27, 1894

hoped that these states could provide an example to the rest of the South. He also noted that the South was not completely against Wells's missions. At one meeting in Texas he found all those present, "proud of Miss Wells and indignant when I told them of the slanders transmitted for use against her in England." Of his trip, he concluded, on an optimistic note, "The result proved that there is a good deal of feeling in the South adverse to the atrocities, much of it being latent. It is not improbable that some great protest will presently arise in that region, where millions of respectable people are disgraced by the few thousands of ruffians who hunt and murder negroes."⁷¹ Conway told his British audience to keep the pressure on the South and hope that the best of the white race would be able to prevail against what he, and others in BALC, saw as uncivilized ruffians who prevailed because of the indifference of some of those in power in the South. The *Daily News* greeted Conway's speech with a similar optimism and reiterated BALC's defense of its methods against lynching in the United States. Interestingly, the London paper transitioned from calling lynching a particularly Southern crime and instead calling the nation as a whole to task for its presence. The editorial argued, "Humanity is happily of no race or country, and humane opinion in the United States is daring to assert itself with ever-increasing energy and boldness against this national sin."⁷² As far as BALC was concerned, their cause was noble, and at this point they were committed to keeping the pressure on Southern whites.

⁷¹ "Lynching in the United States," *The Daily News*, July 30, 1895. See also, "Lynching in the United States," *The Birmingham Daily Post*, August 1, 1895 also reprinted under the same title in *The Bristol Mercury*, August 3, 1895.

⁷² "We publish to-day..." *The Daily News* (London), July 30, 1895.

During that year, BALC members remained committed to the cause, but the organization began to fade from both the American and British presses. Balmorie and the *Daily News* would both write about the organization's plans for the new year, but they could not raise international attention in the ways that they had only the year before. In November 1895, Florence Balmorie wrote to the *Birmingham Daily Post* to let the paper know that BALC planned a demonstration in Manchester early in the next year to protest lynching in the United States.⁷³ A month later, the *Daily News* published a brief report of BALC's activities over the past two years. The report noted that BALC had met eleven times since its founding and welcomed Conway's report. It stated that while some commentators had criticized the organization, they had received many letters of thanks for their efforts. The article concluded with a statement from Wells encouraging the Committee to redouble their efforts.⁷⁴ Though BALC claimed that it would organize a conference on lynching in May of 1896, this article is the last mention of the committee in the British press.

Aked continued to comment on lynching in the United States, however. After passing through Chicago in 1896, he met with Wells's husband, Ferdinand Barnett (because Wells was not in the city). Barnett assured him that the number of lynchings in the South had gone down since Aked and BALC had begun their agitation. Barnett also spoke of "the abounding, affectionate gratitude in which the coloured citizens of

⁷³ Florence Balmorie, "Anti-Lynching Committee," *Birmingham Daily Post*, November 5, 1895. In her letter Balmorie wrote of a conversation she had had with a Texan earlier that year. The Southern man supported lynching despite her arguments. The most frustrating part of the exchange for Balmorie was the indifference of his girlfriend to his support of the practice. No account of this demonstration appears in British newspapers from this period.

⁷⁴ "The Anti-Lynching Committee," *The Daily News*, December 21, 1895.

American hold the preachers and writers of England and Scotland who called the attention of the preachers and writers of the United States to their duty with such immediate and far-reaching result.” As something of a response to white politicians and journalists who spoke against British impudence, he noted too that a delegation from the United States could justifiably “bombard” England over their abandonment of the Armenians.⁷⁵ For Aked and much of BALC, humanity and the devotion to justice knew no national barriers. In fighting for American blacks, they were not only seeking justice in the South but articulating an international vision that saw all civilized nations responsible for the behaviors of another.

BALC’s activities disappear from the public record at this point. Perhaps many of them followed Aked and declared success. On the other hand, it is possible that they continued their efforts without the coverage of the press on either side of the Atlantic. Wells herself spent the next four decades fighting for racial justice. She did not return to England for another anti-lynching tour (her next few years were spent organizing in the Chicago area and starting a family with Barnett), and without her presence to spur them on BALC members may have moved on to other causes. It is also possible that BALC’s members became disheartened at the continued presence of lynching in the South. In his autobiography, published in 1904, Conway gestured in this direction. While he mentioned slavery and violence against blacks in the South after the war, Conway did not write about BALC. Conway briefly explained why he left the United States for good in early 1898: “Broken by personal bereavement [his

⁷⁵ “The Rev. C. F. Aked on the Triumph of a Great Cause,” *The Liverpool Mercury*, September 12, 1896.

wife died in December, 1897], filled with horror by the reign of terror suffered by negroes in the South, alienated from my countrymen by what seemed to be a mere lynching of Spain...I left for Europe.”⁷⁶ Not only did Conway lose hope for his country, but the war with Spain left him soured on the whole US. For Conway, the South and the United States had moved away from all that he had hoped for it.

Violence in Armenia: White and Black Southerners Condemn the Ottoman Empire

While mob violence in the US South sparked a transnational conversation about race, empire, and civilization in the region, it was not the only discussion of violence at this time. When the Turkish government took violent action against Christian Armenians within their territory, men and women across the world protested their actions. This section concentrates on how white and black Southern newspapers placed the violence in Armenia within a local and international context. White Southern responses to these atrocities were influenced by their own region’s very recent encounter with BALC and that organization’s critiques of Southern mob violence. Though white Southern politicians and journalists had responded to BALC with scorn, the campaign had made white Southerners aware of the role that lynching played in their region’s international reputation. When in 1895, Southern whites took the side of the oppressed Christian Armenian against the Turkish government, some observant whites understood that lynching similarly marked their region as one outside the bounds of civilization.

⁷⁶ Moncure Daniel Conway, *Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway, Volume 2* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1904), p. 498.

In the mid-1890s, newspapers across the world carried news from the Ottoman Empire. The Sultan, attempting to control the Orthodox Christian Armenians, ordered a massive demonstration of force to bring them into line. Though it is difficult to tell how many Armenians died between 1894 and 1896, contemporary reports indicated that the Turkish Army had killed tens of thousands. The Turks committed acts of violence against Armenian women and children as well as belligerent men. In so doing, they attracted the attention of the world. Newspapers in New York, London, Berlin, and Paris carried regular reports and attempted to send journalists to that remote area to see if they could get an accurate account of what was going on there. Smaller papers in the US South and England picked up on these stories, and their editors regularly explained to their readers what the Turkish atrocities meant to the spread of civilization, the treatment of Christians in Muslim lands, and the ways that they could help these poor people. Over the next few years, European empires and the United States held a series of talks with the Ottoman government trying to ease the suffering of the Armenians. Though there was talk of violent reprisals, the Sultan remained in power, and the Armenians received little relief.

Heading the charge against Turkish atrocities was the South's old ally in Irish Home Rule, William Gladstone. Having recently retired from politics after the downfall of his second home rule bill, Gladstone still attempted to exercise his moral authority to support the suffering Armenians.⁷⁷ He wrote letters and gave speeches

⁷⁷ Gladstone resigned after the defeat of Irish Home Rule in 1893 and a few other defeats. At the time, he was 82 years old. His immediate successor, Roseberry, did

that demanded that the Tory government that had replaced his take the lead in punishing Turkish treatment of the Armenians. In an 1897 editorial, the *Constitution* argued that there might not have been so much bloodshed in Armenia if the government had listened to Gladstone and followed his advice. Indeed, in all the world powers, the paper noted, “Not a single leader has dared to assist him in upholding the cause of humanity and civilization.”⁷⁸ Throughout the debate of the atrocities and what the world response should be, white Southerners turned to Gladstone to defend their desire to take action in support of the Armenians. To them, justice demanded that someone defend the Armenians from their oppressor.

Gladstone was not alone in pushing the British to more direct action on behalf of the Armenians. Many of the same folks who had joined with Wells against lynching in the US South would come together to support the Armenians.⁷⁹ Unlike the British Anti-Lynching Committee however, the Anglo-Armenian Society received favorable coverage in the Southern press. The *State*'s coverage of a meeting of the Society was typical of other Southern papers. In a November 1894 article, the South

not last long and a new election in 1895 led to a coalition government of Liberal Unionists and Conservatives. That is, Liberals who left the Party over the issue of Irish Home Rule formed a government with the Tories. Lord Salisbury became Prime Minister until 1902 when his chosen successor Arthur Balfour took his place. The Tories would remain in power until the election of 1905.

⁷⁸ “Mr. Gladstone Speaks Out Again,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 3, 1897. A few months later, the editors again note that British public opinion was for doing more to help the Armenians. See “The Workingmen of England,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 25, 1897.

⁷⁹ Indeed, the connections between the Anti-Lynching Committee and the Anglo-Armenian Association are quite strong. In 1894, Florence Ballgarnie wrote to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* asking if he would join the Anti-Lynching Committee because she knew him through their work for the Armenians. Florence Ballgarnie to CP Scott, July 9, 1894. The Guardian Archive, University of Manchester.

Carolina paper praised the members of the Anglo-Armenian Society who protested against the lax response of the government.⁸⁰

As in the case of home rule, white Southerners constructed a narrative about Armenia that saw themselves clearly on the side of civilization. In so doing, they simply assumed that they could declare what the “civilized world” thought of the situation there. Constructions of race and civilization, too, figured into Southern perceptions and descriptions of the Turkish government. While the *Atlanta Constitution* specifically cited the Sultan’s religion as a causal factor in this conflict more than other white Southern newspapers, many blamed the problems on the religion of the Turks. Virtually every story written about the Armenians mentioned their position as Christians in a Muslim empire. In first reporting on the violence there, *The Biloxi Herald* described women raped before being killed and babies murdered while still at their mother’s breast. The brief editorial highlighted the Christianity of the victims by concluding, “Hundred were thus treated rather than deny the Savior.”⁸¹ White Southern newspapers connected outrage at religious persecution with masculine appeals to protect women and children. In abandoning these women to their fate, British imperialists were also failing to be men.

The fate of American missionaries in Turkey also carried special meaning for white Southerners as they responded to the atrocities there, and it was not only newspapers that brought news of Armenia to the US South. Ministers from the South

⁸⁰ “The Armenian Troubles,” *The State*, November 28, 1894. An 1891 editorial in the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* had described Russian Armenian women taken from their homes to be placed in Turkish harems. See “The Unspeakable Turk,” *The Daily Picayune*, April 27, 1891.

⁸¹ “Three thousand Armenians...,” *The Biloxi Herald*, November 24, 1894.

had been missionaries in Armenia and told their congregations about the situation. At one such meeting in Macon, Georgia, the Pastor of Tatnall Square Presbyterian Church, S. L. Morris told of his travels in the Ottoman empire. He began his sermon by describing the glories of the Armenian Christian Church and informed his listeners that it was one of the oldest in Christianity. When Morris turned to the Turks (in his telling, “The Unspeakable Turk”), he called them the “most fanatical and bigoted of the Mohammedans.” Morris further described the Muslim prayers he witnessed there as “guttural” and told of them referring to Christians as “dogs.” Morris visited with and consulted missionaries amongst these people and hoped that the Christian powers would help them.

While he criticized the civilization of the Turkish people, most of his scorn at the situation in Armenia was placed in the hands of the British. Of the three reasons that he listed for the continuing cruelty faced by the Armenians, all of them blamed the British. The first was the amount of money that the British banks had loaned the Turkish government; they would stand to lose a fortune in the event of hostilities. The second was that Queen Victoria feared an uprising amongst her many Muslim subjects across the world if Britain fought against the Sultan. And the third was that Britain wanted to have the Ottoman Empire as a buffer against Russia.⁸² Though race and civilization played key roles in Southern constructions of the relations between

⁸² “Armenia and the Turks,” *The Macon Telegraph*, December 9, 1895. Morris would repeat his lecture at the Macon YMCA a week later. See “Dr. Morris’ Lectures,” *The Macon Telegraph*, December 16, 1895. The next year a Persian speaker came to Macon also on behalf of the Armenians. See, “The Unspeakable Turk,” *The Macon Telegraph*, October 21, 1896 and “Horrors in Armenia,” *The Macon Telegraph*, October 22, 1896.

Armenians and Turks, it was the affairs of empires and the responsibilities of them that kept Europeans from assisting their religious fellows. The *News and Observer* thought that Americans must intercede and also saw British money keeping the powers from helping the Christians. In an editorial about the situation there, the paper asked, “Are the American missionaries to be butchered without retaliation because England esteems the debts due by the Sultan of more value than the lives of its subjects?”⁸³ Armenian atrocities brought out calls to national honor that conflicted with the realpolitik of inter-imperial relations.

White Southerners doubted that European empires would end up challenging the Turks and cementing real change in Armenia. White Southern understandings of empire led them to believe that the Europeans could not commit violence against the Ottoman without risking further conflict. In 1895, the *State* noted that though all the powers admit to the problem “none of the powers is willing to expose itself” to the dangers inherent in taking on the task themselves. While they dithered, “Christians are being put to the sword.”⁸⁴ Even when white Southern papers saw European empires lobbying on behalf of the Armenians, they often doubted their sincerity. Though they respected Gladstone, Southern journalists were far more suspicious of Britain’s motives than any other European power. An 1895 editorial in the *Picayune* explained that some people suspected that the European powers encouraged Armenian separatists to attempt a fight for freedom. Knowing that the Turkish government would respond badly, these powers would be able to justify military

⁸³ “What About Armenia?” *The News and Observer*, December 20, 1895.

⁸⁴ “The Killing of Christians,” *The State*, December 1, 1895.

action against the Turks and gain their land. If an international commission did investigate the atrocities, the *Picayune* was sure that its report would speak more for the “secret ambitions” and “greed” of European powers than the crimes of the Turks. Of all the powers, the *Picayune* noted that Great Britain had been the most active on this path.⁸⁵

The most vocal Southern critic of British inaction was the *Constitution*, which printed several editorials attacking the British government in the last years of the decade. In 1896, the editors noted that Britain was “humiliatingly beaten” by the Turks and that the Southern paper saw little reason to expect things to change in the future.⁸⁶ Just over a week later, the same paper printed a letter that saw British inaction not only as negligence but also as criminal. The writer, Rebecca Felton, was the wife of a former Congressman and a prominent activist in the US South. In her activism, she defended lynchings and advocated for white women’s voting rights.⁸⁷ In her 1896 letter, Felton questioned whether England had received money to look the other way. Outraged that the peoples of the United State and England would not do more, Felton asked, “How can we ever boast again that Christ lives and reigns in America or England when women and children are butchered by the thousands because they embraced the Christian faith under the teachings of English and

⁸⁵ “The Armenian Outrages,” *The Daily Picayune*, February 4 1895.

⁸⁶ “Editorial Comment,” *Atlanta Constitution*, January 20, 1896.

⁸⁷ For an account of her work and its relationship to Wells, see Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009) and see Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 105-106.

American missionaries?”⁸⁸ Felton returned to the atrocities against women and children many times in her letter. A defender of lynching, Felton was here appealing to the same white Southern manhood that justified summary execution of African American men.⁸⁹ When writing about the Armenians, white Southerners like Felton saw them through a gendered lens that reflected their region’s own understanding of manliness and civilization.

A few weeks later, Felton continued her critique of Britain and specifically blamed the empire for Britain’s inability to act. In her second letter, she argued that Britain was too interested in protecting India from Russia to make a real move against the Sultan of Turkey. If they removed the Sultan, she declared, then Russia would move in to take much of the land. When that happened, they could start to move towards India. For Felton, the maintenance of empire kept Britain from fulfilling its duties to the world.⁹⁰ Later that year, the *Constitution* itself made the same connection. They admitted, “why it is that the great British empire submits to so much at the hands of weak and barbarous Turkey is hard to say.” Like Felton, they concluded that the “English government cares more for the interests of trade that it does about humanity.”⁹¹ Trade kept the empire afloat and the empire then kept other places safe from Britain’s power.

⁸⁸ Her reference to missionaries is quite strange. The Armenians boast one of the oldest Christian traditions in the world, but she may have mentioned them to shame the Americans and British into action.

⁸⁹ Mrs. W. H. Felton, “The Armenian Outrage,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 28, 1896.

⁹⁰ Mrs. W. H. Felton, “England and Armenian Massacres,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 20, 1896.

⁹¹ “Covering Turkish Atrocities,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 15, 1896.

The outrages, too, led white Southerners to reflect on the relations between civilized and uncivilized powers. The *Picayune* argued that the outrages in Armenia did not befit the behavior of civilized countries and that “if the Turkish government connives at such affairs, it should be made to understand that its position in Europe will be imperiled.”⁹² That is, the Turks were in Europe because white civilized nations allowed it. If the Turks could not act in a civilized manner, then white Europe would have to eject the invader. In one editorial, the *Constitution* explicitly stated that, “the strange appetite of the Turks for slaughter is largely the outgrowth of the Mohammedan religion.” The editorial further maintained that Muslims would not rest until they had wiped Christianity from the globe and that the campaign in Armenia was but one part of the process. In response to this violence, the *Constitution* suggested that the “allied powers of Europe should literally wipe from the face of the earth” the government of Turkey.⁹³ Violence in Armenia, then, was a clash of civilizations in which Europe and the United States had a duty to protect the poor Armenians from their rapacious Turkish masters. For white Southerners, the world was one in which white Europeans and their descendants had the duty to commit genocide to protect other Christians from violence.

Both white and black Southerners understood that it was not only a case of helping the Armenians that drove this discussion. Instead they each saw that this case was a worldwide discussion over questions of civilization, empire, and the legitimate

⁹² “Turkish Outrages in Armenia,” *The Daily Picayune*, November 18, 1894. See also “Worthy of Contempt,” *The Macon Telegraph*, July 16, 1895.

⁹³ “Europe May Depose the Sultan,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 25, 1896. See also, “The Armenians,” *The News and Observer*, December 9, 1894 for a similar argument.

use of violence. To that end, both white and black journals attempted to place lynching within the context of violence and surprisingly agreed to a certain extent that violence in the South was like that committed by the Turks in Armenia. In January of 1895, John Mitchell, Jr. argued that the President did not need to send a representative to Turkey to see if there were any outrages against civilization. Mitchell noted that the investigator could find ample evidence of uncivilized atrocities “within twelve hours ride of President Cleveland’s official residence.” He then listed several recent lynchings that had occurred in Virginia.⁹⁴ For Mitchell, the outrage of so many Americans toward the Armenians ignored the atrocities committed inside the borders of the United States against Southern African Americans.

Mitchell and the *Planet* were correct that it would not be hard to connect the violence committed by white mobs in the South to suppress African Americans to that committed by Turkish arms suppressing Christian Armenians. British papers did carry stories of Southern lynchings throughout this period. In December of 1894, a lynching of a fifteen-year-old black boy received coverage in several British journals. Though most did not link violence in Armenia to that in the South, the articles themselves were grouped next to short notices about what was going on there.⁹⁵ It would not take much to bring the two together, and a few British newspapers actually did. The *Daily News*, a London newspaper owned by members of the British Anti-Lynching Committee linked these two regions. As the paper observed in a brief

⁹⁴ “Refused the President’s Request,” *The Richmond Planet*, January 5, 1895.

⁹⁵ See “Negro Lynching in America,” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, December 13, 1894 and Untitled Editorials, *The Glasgow Herald*, December 14, 1894.

article on a lynching in Georgia, “The treatment to which the negro women are being subjected is said to rival the reported Armenian outrages.”⁹⁶ Led by Frances Willard, the Women’s Christian Temperance Convention in London in 1895 condemned both the atrocities in Armenia and lynching “at all times and everywhere.”⁹⁷ Though these few sources closely identified violence in the South with that in Armenia, most British papers were not as easy to convince as Mitchell hoped.

Though the violence of the South was well known at this time, Southern African Americans or white Southerners themselves were more likely than Britons, even those who were a part of both the Anglo-Armenian Society and BALC, to point out the similarities between the US South and Armenia. White Southern journalists saw these similarities as a mark against the South and the international outrage against the Turks led many of them to argue more strenuously for a serious effort to curtail mob violence at home. This varied white Southern response to the connections between Armenia and lynching suggests that BALC and Wells succeeded in at least demonstrating to white Southerners that mob violence there marked the region as uncivilized to some observers. *The State*, a South Carolina paper linked to the Democratic Party but bitterly opposed to the Democratic-Governor Ben Tillman’s

⁹⁶ “The Racial Troubles in Georgia,” *The Daily News*, December 26, 1894. Similarly, a column in the *Manchester Guardian* the next year carried a story about outrages in Armenia at the top of the column and at the end was coverage of lynchings in South Carolina and Mississippi. See column beginning, “The Massacres in Armenia,” *The Manchester Guardian*, November 26, 1895.

⁹⁷ “The World’s Woman’ Convention Meetings in London,” *The Manchester Guardian*, June 21, 1895.

regime,⁹⁸ reprinted editorials from around the country after one particularly brutal 1895 lynching. This murder saw a black man whipped to death for crimes that were not capital offenses as well as the executions of more black men and at least one black woman. Even those who could defend the lynching of an accused rapist would not excuse this crime. From the North came an editorial that demonstrated what was at stake if white Southerners could not get a handle on mob violence. The first paragraph of the editorial stated, “There has nothing worse or more brutal happened in Armenia than this latest lynching in South Carolina...and a community that will tolerate such cold-blooded cruelty can no more claim civilization in the United States than in the remote east.” The editors of the *State* highlighted the comparison to Armenia, and the criticism certainly hit home to those white Southerners who wanted to show the world an industrializing South not an uncivilized one.⁹⁹

The *Constitution* linked that particular lynching to the violence in Armenia. To the paper, “It will not do for us to [start] a crusade against the unspeakable Turk and let the savages at our own [gates] go free.”¹⁰⁰ Sounding more like a black newspaper than a white one, the editorial concluded: “The lynchers must go. There is

⁹⁸ *The State* was founded by Narciso and Ambrose Gonzales, two sons of Confederate officer Ambrosio Jose Gonzalez, a Cuban revolutionary and immigrant to the South. Narciso, the older of the two, would be murdered by Tillman’s nephew in 1903.

⁹⁹ “The Shame of the State,” *The State*, December 9, 1895. The paper quoted is the Springfield (Mass) *Republican*. No date given. The Massachusetts paper was probably driven by a petition of its black citizens that asked that “the lynching of negroes in the south without trial or before court shall be condemned equally with the Turkish murders of Armenians.” See “Complicating the Question,” *The Birmingham Age Herald*, December 8, 1895. The *Herald* did not respond the charges.

¹⁰⁰ Parts of the text are illegible. I have tried to reconstruct them accurately.

no room for them in this land of industry, peace, and order.”¹⁰¹ Earlier in the year, black Methodist preachers in Louisiana had made similar a similar argument. To the preachers, “It is a gross inconsistency for the United States Government and Christian churches to denounce outrages in Armenia, and be silent when the outrages are perpetrated within the shadow of Christian churches and under the American flag.” Far more disturbing to these ministers was the apparent fact that white Southerners felt no shame about the mob’s actions.¹⁰² While there appeared to be a debate going on about the duties owed to a Christian people abroad, American Christians were committing acts of barbarism against other Christians. For some Southerners, those connections meant that they must do more to stop such violence.

In 1899, the New York *Herald* made the connections between the South and Armenia more explicit when they sent a reporter to the South who had covered Armenia for the paper. In conjunction with the *Constitution*, George Hepworth was given a tour of the South and interviewed the politicians and individuals involved in the brutal lynching of Sam Hose, which had sparked international outrage.¹⁰³ In introducing Hepworth to their readers, the *Constitution* commented that he seemed “to admit without saying so that [the lynching] surpassed the war-compelling-ravages

¹⁰¹ “The Colleton Horror,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 21, 1895.

¹⁰² “The Lynching Outrages,” *The Southwestern Christian Advocate*, January 3, 1895.

¹⁰³ The Hose Lynching is particularly infamous. Accused of murdering his white boss and sexually assaulting his wife. He was tortured to death and his body parts were distributed and sold as trophies. Black soldiers fighting in the Philippines reported that the Philippine resistance fighters had made signs about the lynching asking the black soldiers to join with them.

of the red-handed brutes who made massacres flourish in Armenia.”¹⁰⁴ Though the Southern journalists imagined that Hepworth would view the region in that way, the presence of white opponents of lynching led the New York minister to distinguish between the US South and Armenia. Though he acknowledged the cruelty of lynching and urged Southerners stop it, he also pointed to upper class whites who wanted to see lynching stopped. Unlike in Armenia where the government supported violent measures, he argued that there was not a race of barbaric lynchers in the South, but a small group who made the region look bad.¹⁰⁵ In the battle over claims to civilization, white Southerners were able to pass off the systematic lynching of Southern African Americans. Though there was a risk of them being like the Turks, their demonstration of civilized outrage placed them against the racially-other Turk.

For Southerners, white and black, then, the Armenian atrocities provided a forum for discussing not only the role of violence in civilization but the strains that empire placed on the metropolitan culture. The Turkish atrocities faded from the headlines after a tentative agreement was reached in 1896, and the Turkish government refrained from new attacks until early in the twentieth century. By reading Southern coverage of these attacks, we can see Southerners placing their region with civilization but against empire. In 1895, the *Constitution* presciently predicted that the next century would see wars of an immense scale, and that European empires would be a part of them because: “Human nature is not likely to change. Scratch through the thin veneer of civilization, and savagery will be found

¹⁰⁴ “First of the Letters by Dr. Hepworth on Lynching in the South and the Remedy,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 14, 1899.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

under the surface.”¹⁰⁶ Though they imagined themselves as civilized, their own recent history demonstrated how tenuous that claim was. According to the *Constitution*, the world would soon understand that as well. They were certain that it was their duty to stand up against perceived savagery, at home and abroad.

Conclusion

Though BALC did fail to stop lynchings in the South, their presence reveals a key component of Southern race relations and white Southern identity in this era. Wells hoped that the British group could do what the North would not: protect black lives from the violence of Southern whites. White Southern leaders for their part also used international events to define Southern life. By its very existence, BALC brought those two constructions into conflict. By viewing the South through this lens, we can see that the region could demonstrate the perils of interracial relations and simultaneously mark a country unfit for civilization.

Wells’s campaigns and the creation of BALC forced Southern whites to confront violence in their region. Instead of rethinking their attitude to the lynch mob, white Southern governors attacked Wells and the British. They saw lynching as local matter rather than an international one. Through their actions, BALC continued the international conversation about lynching long after Wells had left Britain. The importance of their action is not what they accomplished against lynching—their results were ambiguous at best given the prevalence of lynching well into the twentieth century. The creation of BALC, its members, and its success in receiving

¹⁰⁶ “Looking Forward,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 31, 1895.

responses from Southern governors reveal the multi-layered place of the South in international circles. As previous chapters have demonstrated, white Britons often conflated race relations in the South with their own empire. In many ways, BALC continued this conversation, but instead of welcoming the South as an imperial site to be emulated, they saw it as a marker against Anglo-Saxon civilization.

This chapter has demonstrated, too, the tension between the local and the transnational. White and black Southerners were both concerned with their region's international image to different ends. White Southerners hoped to bring foreigners and investment to the South. They thus projected an image of the region as one where whites were regaining control over an unruly population of ex-slaves. Black activists on the other hand saw the South as a violent region in which whites attempted to roll back the gains made by ex-slaves and their descendants. In BALC, they found an ally for making this case to the world. As in the other chapters, these conversations mark a delicate interplay of race, gender, and civilization. At the heart of BALC's case was the belief that civilization was a transnational space. That is, British activists thought that they could influence the quality of civilization anywhere. They saw the South as a place that they could judge and one in which white Southerners only needed the verdict of Britain to change their acts. In similar ways, empire to white Southerners, was such a space—inherently uncivilized.

The violence in Armenia gave white Southerners a chance to articulate the differences between their ideas of civilization and empire. They noted that the violence of their region could mark it as uncivilized, and Southern white elites, politicians and journalists, began to take on the language of civilization to oppose

lynching. That they did so reflected the campaigns of BALC and Wells but also demonstrated the fleeting nature of British interest in protesting Southern race relations. BALC appeared for a brief moment but did not capitalize on the links between Armenia and the US South. Instead, white Southerners framed the issue such that it became a marker of their own civilized status and gave them the chance to condemn the alliances that empire made necessary. As peoples across the world from each other debated the connections between civilization, violence, and empire, white Southerners continued to maintain that their region was distinct from empire. Wells and her allies briefly intruded on this conversation but it would take more than their protest to accustom Southern whites to imperial ideologies.

5. New Perspectives and A New Empire: Booker T. Washington at Home and Abroad and White Southerners take Another Look at Empire, 1899

While white Southerners in the US South had spent much of the 1880s and early 1890s constructing an image of empire that called imperial ambitions thievery and the practice of empire inherently uncivilized, not all Americans had done so. When the United States defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War in 1898, some Americans, notably future-President Theodore Roosevelt, jumped at the chance to acquire imperial territory and join European nations in the Imperial Mission. As British poet Rudyard Kipling suggested, these American imperialists wanted to “take up the white man’s burden” and bring civilization to the Filipinos.¹

White Southerners responded to the new American Empire by declaring that they had already spent years with that burden—in their relations with black Southerners—and while some wanted none of the new mission abroad, others argued that the United States should become an international power.² Rather than being

¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” *McClure’s Magazine* 12 (February 1899). For Roosevelt, race, and empire, see Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980). For more on US Southern attitudes towards empire, see Joseph A. Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); and Tennant S. McWilliams, *The New South Faces the World: Foreign Affairs and the Southern Sense of Self, 1877-1950* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988). Both Fry and McWilliams examine US Southern attitudes toward the new American Empire, my own work in this chapter is to look at how white Southern discourses about the British Empire had changed in the years after 1895, when white Southern politicians and journalists had been almost unanimously critical of it.

² Before an audience in Boston in May, 1899, William Northen made this claim. He also continued attacking Ida B. Wells’s and BALC. See “The Negro at the South: Address by W.J. Northen (Ex-Governor of Georgia) before the Congregational Club, Boston, Mass., May 22, 1899.” The Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, Atlanta, GA. Box 3. William Northen Papers. State Archives of Georgia.

opposed to empire as they had been before 1898, some white Southerners began to see value in both a US empire and in defining the Southern race relations in terms of the white man's burden. At this time, too, Britons still journeyed to the US South, but the stakes were different. White Southerners no longer worried about British critiques of their civilization. This chapter examines changing conversations in Britain and the United States about race relations in the South and about the British Empire in the year following the Spanish-American War. I argue that while constructions of empire, race, and civilization were still rhetorical tools that black and white Southerners called upon when describing the world around them, they also had shifted meaning in the years after Wells had traveled abroad. When the US became an empire, the white Southern construction of an imperial imaginary was no longer defined in strict opposition to the US South. The American Empire made some white Southerners more accepting of both the British and imperialism.

A Continuing Problem: Britons and Southern Race Relations in 1899

In 1899, Booker T. Washington traveled to Britain. After his friends noticed that he had worked himself near exhaustion, Washington and his wife accepted the gift of a European vacation from Northern white friends of theirs. At the time, Washington was the most respected black man in America. Following his Atlanta Compromise speech in 1895, he was widely recognized as a spokesman for black Americans. In England in 1899, he met with British politicians and scholars and gave addresses on the state of race relations in the South. Unlike Wells, Washington did not make lynching and violence a central theme in his work. Instead, he repeatedly

argued for the industrial education of black Southerners as a means of improving black life in the South.³ Washington and Ida B. Wells did not agree about the ways to stop lynching in the South, and their respective European trips have rarely been brought together in the historiography of this period.⁴

Yet, the wildly different reactions to their trips to Britain only five years separated provides a forum for addressing the differences between the two and how they interacted with empire, race, and civilization in this period. In speaking to and of the South, Washington's position as a respected black man counted for far more than Wells's as a black woman who had been forced out of the South. When he spoke to British and American audiences, Washington was very different from Wells in temperament, style, and politics. While Wells favored direct confrontation as a strategy to help black Southerners, Washington advocated for black Southerners to improve themselves and accept that whites would not respect them until they had proven themselves.⁵ These different approaches led British observers and white

³ For more on Washington, his legacy, and his work in the US South, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress: Up from Slavery 100 Years Later* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T, Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Lanham: SR Books, 2003); Raymond Smock, *Booker T. Washington: Black Leadership in the Age of Jim Crow* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009); and Robert J. Norrell, *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2009); see also Louis R. Harlan, ed., *The Booker T. Washington Papers* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1972-1984).

⁴ The disagreements between Wells and Washington themselves have been discussed. See Norrell, *Up from History*, p. 229; Paula Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Amistad, 2008) pp. 434-435.

⁵ Wells recognized the during her lifetime, and she also opposed his strategies. While in her autobiography, Wells did not attack him, she noted that "fighting for political rights had no place whatsoever in his plans," whereas the group she founded

Southerners to respond to these two black advocates in different ways. In looking to Washington's European trip, the coverage of speeches in Britain, and the lack of a reaction from Southern whites, we can see the continuing relevance of the race question in the US South to Britons. The US South became less of a battleground and white Southerners less confrontational in their discussions with Imperial Britons.

In 1899, Booker T. Washington was at the height of his influence. White Northerners and Southerners both saw him as spokesman for black America, and they printed his opinions on industrial education for blacks regularly. His relationship to race and civilization was also a complicated one.⁶ Unlike Wells, who sought Northern and British allies in her fights against racism and lynching, Washington looked to Northern philanthropists to help fund his education endeavors in the South. Washington also repeatedly turned to white Southern elites in his efforts to make black lives in the South better. While much has been made of the efficacy of this strategy (the scholarly arguments on this score are more than a century old at this

denounced "the wrongs and injustices which were heaped upon our people, and to use whatever influence we had to help right them." Wells also knew that his institution's residence in the South forced on him more compromises than she could accept. She acknowledged that Washington had to steer clear of her radical agenda for the sake of his school work and to prevent trouble from Southern whites, "by whom he was surrounded in Tuskegee." Though she did not mention it, Washington would also find a welcoming reception among the white people of Britain, some of whom were her friends. See Alfreda M. Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1970), p. 265 and pp. 280-281.

⁶ See Sarah Deutsch, "Being American in Boley, Oklahoma," *Beyond Black and White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the U.S. South and Southwest*, Stephanie Cole and Alison M. Parker, eds. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), pp. 97-122.

point, beginning with *Souls of Black Folk* and continuing to the present),⁷

Washington's framing of the race question in the South undeniably made his anti-lynching argument more palatable to Southern whites than Wells's or her allies. His 1899 vacation in Europe demonstrates how much this framing influenced white Southern reactions to his criticism of lynching.

While Washington would post a letter from Europe that criticized lynching in the South, it was not the first time that he had expressed his opinion on lynching. His first public comments came after the dramatic and brutal lynching of Sam Hose in Georgia.⁸ In a speech in Philadelphia in April of that year, he argued that education for both whites and blacks would solve the lynching problem. He condemned men who had been charged with raping white women, but he also attacked violence of any kind. He urged white Southerners to punish those men but to do so through legal means. The solution, he argued was "to be found in the thorough mental, religious and industrial education of both races in the South." He noted that no black man who had had higher education was ever charged with raping white women.⁹ Following this

⁷ See Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, "Exploring a Century of Historical Scholarship on Booker T. Washington," *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (Spring, 2007), pp. 239-264. Smock discusses Washington's "secret life" of promoting protests privately that Washington would not support publicly, see Smock, *Booker T, Washington*.

⁸ Hose was accused of killing his white boss and sexually assaulting his wife. He was brutalized, tied to a tree, and burned. Later investigations demonstrated that he had acted in self-defense and had not attacked his boss's wife. See Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Random House, 2002).

⁹ "Mob Violence," *The Daily Picayune*, April 26, 1899. Washington's argument on lynching was not the only statement on the matter that placed some responsibility on black Southerners to solve the problem. A black Southern preacher, E.K. Love, published a sermon on the matter in 1893. See E.K. Love, "A Sermon on Lynch Law

speech, the *Fayetteville Observer* argued that Washington spoke the truth about the solution to lynching and described him as a black man with whom the white South could agree. The *Observer* maintained that Washington was moving away from “race hatred” against whites that blacks had been taught after the war, and he make the South better. They saw Washington as a spokesman against “social equality” which they saw as the root of the problem.¹⁰

Not long after this speech, Washington and his wife left the United States for an extended vacation. After a speaking engagement in Boston, friends of his noted how tired he looked and urged him to take a vacation—he reportedly slept fifteen hours a day on the voyage across the Atlantic.¹¹ Acknowledging that he had not had a vacation in more than a decade and a half, he and his wife accepted a trip to Europe from his friends.¹² He and his wife toured the continent and eventually arrived in Britain later that year. The trip to Europe was not a speaking engagement as Wells’s had been; nor was it overtly political though his work dominated letters he wrote from Europe. He wrote to American papers about his trip and commented upon how what he saw in Europe reminded him of the South. Yet, violence did not disappear from his commentaries either. In his letters, Washington focused on the image of the South abroad and returned to the subject of lynching after some of the controversy surrounding the Hose lynching had passed.

and Raping,” E.K. Love at the 1st African Baptist Church of Savannah, Ga. at which he is pastor, 5 November 1893, in the Elias Carr Papers, East Carolina University.

¹⁰ “Good Reading for White and Black,” *The Fayetteville Observer*, May 5, 1899.

¹¹ Norrell, *Up from History*, p. 177.

¹² Booker T. Washington, *The Story of My Life and Work*, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol 1, p. 145.

Indeed, his prescriptions for the South as a whole reflected a new concentration on violence, though he did not mention lynching specifically. One letter to the black *Indianapolis Freeman* while he was in Holland demonstrated the ways in which he would frame the lynching issue in the South and the differences between his argument on lynching and that of Wells, though he, too, brought constructions of civilization into his critique of violence in the South. To the *Freeman*, Washington explained, “The foundation of the civilization of these people is in their respect for and observance of the law. This is the great lesson which the entire South must learn before it can hope to receive the respect and confidence of the world.” In this letter and others that followed, Washington would group black and white together in the whole South. He further noted that he asked men in Europe why they would not consider emigrating to the South, and they universally replied, “No law,” and “they kill.”¹³ Like Wells, Washington argued that the world saw the South as uncivilized. He directly challenged white Southern claims to a civilized society by pointing to the disrespect for the law that people from all over the world witnessed there. Unlike Wells and crucially, Washington did not directly attack Southern whites as a people. Instead, he couched his criticism in terms of region. In his telling, “The South” should learn, not just white Southerners.

This construction of Southern violence as a problem for the whole South continued in the letter he posted from Paris a few weeks later. Washington wrote to the Associated Press and explicitly criticized lynching in the South. Washington was

¹³ Booker T. Washington to the Editor of the *Indianapolis Freeman*, May 23, 1899. *The Booker T. Washinton Papers*, Vol. 5, 117-120, published in the *Freeman*, June 17, 1899.

nervous of the response his argument would receive in the United States. In a letter he wrote to Emmett Jay Scott, his chief aide at Tuskegee, he wanted it to have “larger circulation than any other article that I have written as yet.” He explained that he expected black and white papers to cut out the parts that spoke to the other race which “would do me great injustice.”¹⁴ Washington’s letter appeared in various forms throughout the South in June 1899. Excerpts of the letter appeared in *The Daily Picayune* (Louisiana), *The Macon Telegraph* (Georgia), *The News and Observer* (North Carolina), *The Weekly News and Courier* (South Carolina), *The Birmingham Age Herald* (Alabama), *The Atlanta Constitution* (Georgia), and *The State* (South Carolina).¹⁵ None of these papers noted that it had come from Europe. White Southerners either did not know that Washington was speaking to them from abroad or chose not to mention it.

Like the previous letter to the *Freeman* this letter explicitly challenged white Southern civilization and simultaneously articulated the problems of the South as ones that both blacks and whites should solve. This letter further develops the

¹⁴ Booker T. Washington to Emmett Jay Scott, June 5, 1899, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 5, p. 125. The date is approximate. Scott replied to Washington after the publication of the letter in the Southern papers and noted what he called the *Constitution’s* “old tricks” that robbed it “of its real practical effects.” He did note other Southern papers carried the letter in full. Scott also told Washington that the *Constitution* attributed the letter to Tuskegee rather than from abroad. See Emmett Jay Scott to Booker T. Washington, June 23, 1899, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 5, p. 138.

¹⁵ Every article appeared on June 22, 1899. Attributing the letter to Alabama appears to have been done by the Associated Press. Northern papers too listed Birmingham in their dateline, see “Lynchings in the South,” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 22, 1899. Norrell discusses Washington’s letter on lynching, but, like the contemporary press accounts, he does not mention that it was written in Europe. He notes that Washington’s “comments did not raise the ire of many southern whites,” see Norrell, *Up from History*, pp. 170-171.

distance between him and Wells on the issue. Much like Wells, he identified lynching as uncivilized and argued that its existence was a mark against Southern society in the eyes of the world. Unlike Wells, Washington spoke of his deep attachment to the South and his work for its wellbeing. Washington opened the letter by explicitly declaring his feelings on the South as a region: “There is no white man of the South who has more sincere love for it than I have, and nothing could tempt me to write or speak that which I did not think was for the permanent good of all the people of the South.” He further argued that he felt wounded whenever he encountered criticism of the South, and he maintained that he felt as a white man would in that situation.

Wells, of course, did not frame her critique of lynching through a love of the South. She directly challenged white Southern claims of Southern advancement. By repeatedly aligning himself in parallel to Southern whites, Washington set up his attack on lynching as one that would help all the South and did not ask for assistance from anyone other than residents of the South. He appealed to President McKinley to do something to create “such a public sentiment as will make human life here just as safe and sacred as it is anywhere else in the world,” but explicitly noted that he did not want him to intercede directly. It is not clear from the letter what he expected McKinley to do. He rejected the claim that other sections lynched people as relevant because he spoke for the betterment of the whole South: “I want to see our beautiful southland free from this terrible evil of lynching.” He noted that the North, at the urging of Southern whites, had largely left white and black Southerners to themselves in recent years. Turning their advocacy for home rule against white Southerners, Washington maintained that this arrangement created “sacred trust” between black

and white Southerners. To him, the whole South, black and white, had to live up to the responsibility.

One of the requirements, then, that Washington placed on the South was to make the region a peaceful place for all residents and maintain a healthy image of the South in the world. Washington included blacks as an equal party in the prosperity of the South. He referred to them and whites within the first person plural when discussing how the South looked to outsiders. When Wells spoke in the plural, she explicitly meant black Southerners; Washington, on the other hand, spoke of black and white in the South as working together toward a shared goal. According to him, few white Southerners understood “to what extent it is not only hurting us in the eyes of the world, but injuring our own moral and material growth.” Lynching then was not a crime committed solely against black people to keep them down, but instead a moral blight that marked the whole South.

Like Wells too, he challenged the argument that lynching was reserved for one crime alone. Instead of calling Southern whites complicit in all of the crimes, he explained, “Many good people in the South...have gotten the idea that lynching is resorted to for one crime only.” He pointed to statistics that he had read from a reputable source¹⁶ about lynching in the South to make the same argument that Wells and her allies had done five years before: “When we get to the point where four-fifths of the people lynched in our country in one year were for some other crime than rape we can no longer plead and explain that we lynch for one crime alone.” Notably he

¹⁶ He does not identify the source of the statistics, though it may very well have been Wells herself.

used the first person plural in this sentence, “we get” and “we can no longer plead.” He then pointed to the lynching of white men and black women to suggest that lynching was spreading. That is, that the lynching of black men for rape led to lynching for other crimes which in turn led to lynching other people. Yet again unlike Wells, Washington instead acknowledged that there may have been an historical link between lynching and rape. That link had broken down; numerous statistics on the crime demonstrated that. Lynching, he further maintained, hurt the South by driving hardworking blacks from the country where they could “make the best living, and where their services are of the greatest value to the country,” and forced them to “already overcrowded cities.” To Washington, mob violence was hurting the whole South.

Washington also brought a construction of civilization into his criticism of lynching, but, as in his inclusive definition of the South, he did not challenge white Southerners to be civilized but instead argued that they could lose their civilization if they allowed lynchings to continue. In his description the difference between ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’ was in how people responded to crimes. Like Wells and other activists, he argued that civilized people did not commit lynchings: “We cannot disregard the teachings of the civilized world for 1800 years that the only way to punish crime is by law.” The South, in accepting so much lynching was “advertising ourselves to the world as a lawless people.” Washington then used the children of the South to make the case that lynching should end. After this statement Washington reiterated, “I am not pleading for the negro alone. Lynching injures, hardens and blunts, the moral sensibilities of the young and tender manhood of the South.” He

then told the story of a white child who had witnessed a lynching. According to Washington, the young boy noted that he had seen a man hanged and hoped to see one burned. To him, the South could not afford to raise a new generation in such conditions. Civilization then was not something that the South lacked, but something that it could lose.

Washington further claimed that lynching was disrespectful to the government of the South and the practice directly challenged the masculinity of Southern white leaders. To him, lynchings declared to those men: "I have no faith in you and no respect for you." According to Washington, such sentiments made little sense in a South in which all of the offices of government were filled with white men. He turned white arguments against themselves. Washington evoked ideas of white manhood to say that lynching was disrespectful of white men. White men of the South had spent the decades after the Civil War arguing that they should be left in charge. In this argument, the fact that they had largely won this privilege and that white men routinely ignored the laws they had enacted meant that the South's best men were not being respected. They were not being treated as men worthy of respect but instead pushed aside. Rather than attack white Southerners, Washington argued that lynching as an institution harmed white Southern leaders and unmanned them.

Unlike Wells, Washington then turned to what Southern blacks could do to end lynching. He reiterated his belief in the uplift of Southern blacks through industrial education as a solution. Washington urged Southern blacks to "teach with unusual emphasis morality and obedience to the law...there should be such a sentiment created regarding the commitment of crime against women, that no crime

shall be charged against any member of the race.” To Washington, Southern blacks had a responsibility to ensure that all of those guilty of such crimes should be brought to justice swiftly and faced with the full consequences of their actions. Washington’s admission that there could be some connection between rape and lynching went against Wells’s sense that any acknowledgment that there were a few black rapists legitimated the whole logic of lynching. In keeping with his argument that there was one South, Washington did not place the blame for lynching solely in the hands of Southern whites, and instead named things that the black community in the South should do to stop the practice.

Indeed, Washington argued that the best friends of Southern blacks were some Southern whites: “the Negro has among many of the Southern whites as good friends as he has anywhere in the world.” While Wells appealed to the North and the British to awaken Southern consciousness on the issue, Washington instead argued that Southern whites would help solve the problem of lynching. He concluded, “With the best white people and the best black people standing together, in favor of law and order and justice, I believe that the safety and happiness of both races will be made secure.” Notably, too, Washington did not lump all white Southerners together, as Wells did. To him there were some who lynched and others who were good to Southern blacks. While Wells’s viewed Southern white attempts to curb lynching with suspicion, Washington portrayed them as genuine attempts to deal with a problem that he saw affecting both black and white Southerners together. To Washington, the answer to lynching was the same as the answer to the race problem more generally. That is, blacks and whites of the South must work together to make

the region prosper as much as it can. Only in this way could the world see the South as a region worth praising.¹⁷

Perhaps because he already had a favorable reputation amongst Southern white leaders, or because he partially accepted that Southern blacks shared some of the work in ending lynching, his statement was not greeted with scorn by the white press. Instead, white reaction to Washington's letter was mixed. Most papers printed parts of his letter but did not comment on it. The *Macon Telegraph*, the only Southern paper to comment on the letter directly, welcomed Washington's opinion on lynching. According to the Georgia paper, Washington rightly spoke "not to the president, or to New York or New England, but to the citizens of the Southern states."¹⁸ While the *Telegraph* was the only paper to editorialize about the letter, there was a divergence in the leaders to the article in various white Southern papers. From South Carolina, the *State* called Washington, "a Colored Solomon," and declared that he was pleading for "Southern manhood" against "the evil that is blighting" the region.¹⁹ The most negative comments came in the *Constitution*. According to that paper's leader, "Head of Tuskegee School Declares Lawless Method Ineffectual—Questionable Facts Given—Intention to Show Lynching Not Confined to Assault Cases—Says the South is Not Alone Guilty—Intelligent Negro Leader Addresses Good Advice to the Idle and Thriftless of His Race."²⁰ Yet, though Washington

¹⁷ Booker T. Washington, *The Story of My Life and Work*, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol 1, p. 149-154.

¹⁸ "Booker Washington's recent 'appeal' ..." *The Macon Telegraph*, June 23, 1899.

¹⁹ See "Booker Washington A Colored Solomon," *The State*, June 22, 1899.

²⁰ See "Washington Makes Defense of Negro," *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 22, 1899

feared that his words would be divorced from their content, most white and black papers included the whole piece. In mostly praising his take on lynching, white Southern papers demonstrate that Washington had effectively spoken against the practice without alienating white Southerners.

Washington did not follow up on this statement with direct challenges to lynching, and white Southern papers did not carry any notices of his travels in Europe. His meetings with Britons demonstrate that they were still curious about the race question in the South. Washington met with British intellectuals and politicians about the state of race relations in the South. In London, Washington gave an address to a reception of British thinkers interested in the race problem in America. In attendance were James Bryce, who had written much on race relations in the South (see chapters 3 and 4), and J. Murray Macdonald, a member of BALC. According to the *Times* coverage of the meeting, Washington provided his usual account of race relations in the South and the conditions of black Southerners. He explained that slavery had robbed Southern blacks of their independence and the ability to work for themselves. He promoted his own work towards industrial education as a means of overcoming white hostility and black poverty. After Washington finished speaking, Bryce gave a brief response which included his opinion that the “general sentiment of white people was one of friendliness and a desire to help the negroes.” He called upon his own trips to the South to justify his own take on Southern race relations.. Bryce argued that it was natural that it was difficult because “the whites had such a long start of the coloured people in civilization.” Bryce then echoed white Southern sentiments regarding black political expression. That is, he maintained that “equal

citizenship must depend upon the quality of the people who exercised those rights.”²¹

At his meetings in Britain, Washington met with both the allies of Wells and those sympathetic to the aims of Southern whites.

Though Wells’s allies were no longer active in attacking lynching, they had not abandoned her take on lynching and violence in the South. While in London, Washington was also interviewed by the *Daily News*, which was owned by the Claydens, members of BALC whose home was used as the headquarters for the organization. Before his speech in London, the *Daily News* provided its readers with a profile of Washington. Describing his work as “the emancipation of his race,” the London paper favorably reported on his efforts to secure industrial education for Southern blacks. Washington told the paper that the best opportunity for Southern blacks was in business in the border states rather than the Deep South. He argued that they faced less prejudice in business than elsewhere.²² After his speech, the *Daily News* editorialized about the position of African Americans in the South and what could be done to improve their lot. The London paper followed Washington and claimed, “The negro must learn to make himself useful as a citizen, and the White Man must learn to encourage him with social and religious sympathy.” According to the *Daily News*, “as the superior,” white held the stronger obligation. Then, demonstrating that they had not given up on the lynching question, the paper noted,

²¹ “The Coloured Race in America,” *The Times*, July 4, 1899. This article is reprinted in the *Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 5, pp. 144-146.

²² “The Negro Leader,” *The Daily News*, July 3, 1899. The *Bristol Mercury* also covered an address by Washington during his visit there. Washington said basically the same things that he had said in London and the *Mercury* offered no further comment. See “Emancipated Slaves,” *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, July 12, 1899.

“The lynchings stop the way.”²³ That is, lynching broke down the cycle of obligation. If Southern whites were serious about improving race relations in the South, they would have to do more to stop routine and harsh acts of violence in the region. In so doing, they were able to take Washington’s statements and make them more in harmony with those of Wells.

While in London, Washington, too, looked to the British Empire. Washington used his time in Britain to explore the possibilities for American blacks in Africa. According to Washington, there was little in Africa to offer American blacks. He wrote that Africa presented significant problems for immigrants because it was divided amongst several European states, “leaving almost no hope for self-government in any part of Africa.” Imperial rule too was bad for blacks in Africa. Washington declared, “In many cases the Negroes are treated by Europeans in Africa almost as badly as they have ever been treated in the South.”²⁴ He wrote in detail about this in a letter to the *Colored American*. According to Washington, London provided an ideal place to study this question because the British controlled much of Africa. As he had already famously told Southern blacks to cast down their bucket where they were in his Atlanta Compromise speech a few years earlier, he saw nothing in London that suggested that American blacks should emigrate to Africa. He wrote to the *Colored American*: “Aside from other almost insurmountable obstacles, there is not place in Africa for us to go where our condition would be improved.” In so doing, he provided a strong critique of European imperial practices. He cited Cecil

²³ “One of the most significant things...” *The Daily News*, July 4, 1899.

²⁴ Booker T. Washington, *The Story of My Life and Work*, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol 1, p. 149.

Rhodes declaration, “I would rather have land than niggers,” and noted that Rhodes was responsible for the deaths of thousands of black Africans. Though he believed that in much of the imperial world, “the weaker races are well treated...this is not true in most cases in Africa.” He wrote of the current controversy in the Transvaal, where the natives “are treated worse than the Uitlanders of the Transvaal, and their restrictions are worse than were the cruelties of slavery in the United States.” Though he claimed that there were Britons working to change this policy, he argued that Africa would provide no place for African Americans.²⁵ Britons, who, in Wells’s campaigns, had served as a more civilized people able to criticize the South, were not seen as superior by Washington.

Washington would continue his attempts to build a black educational establishment in the South for the rest of his life. The significance of his anti-lynching letter and his visit to Britain was not in its effectiveness as a strategy to end violence in the South. Rather, its importance lies in the very different responses that it received when compared to Wells. Like Wells, Washington spoke from Europe and critiqued Southern violence. Instead of responding with anger, white Southerners barely paid any attention to his words. Because stopping lynching in the South was not his main agenda, Washington did not seek allies, and because he did not have an organization in Britain to bring the matter continued coverage, his trip to Britain did not cause the

²⁵ Booker T. Washington to the editor of the Washington *Colored American*, July 20, 1899, *Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 5, pp.164-166. Published in the *Colored American*. August 19, 1899. For a white Southerner who suggested Africa as a great place for educated black Southerners, see “What the Negro is Doing,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 4, 1896. The article gives the opinions of a white Southern soldier recently returned to the country from Africa. This was also the time of Bishop Henry Turner’s Back to Africa movement.

transnational conversation that Wells's did. White Southerners were not as concerned with the international reputation of their region as they had been only a few years before.

In looking to Scots Minister David Macrae's tour of the South and his account of it, in contrast, we can see that Britons still remained curious about race relations in the South. Before embarking on a career in the church, Macrae had made something of a name for himself as a journalist. Unlike the British authors and journalists profiled in earlier chapters, Macrae was not connected to either supporters of empire (like James Bryce and W. Laird Clowes) or protests movements in Britain (as were the members of BALC). From Glasgow, he was far from London and, as a Scottish nationalist, he was not committed to the construction of England or the British Empire as a civilizing force. He also was not prominent in the Liberal political circle from which Wells drew her support. Wells journeyed to Glasgow as part of her 1893 anti-lynching tour of Britain, though Macrae never gave any indication of having seen her speak or having read her work.²⁶ More than any other British author in this text, Macrae reflected both the concerns of elite Southern whites and the hopes of black Southerners to live in peace.

Unlike the other authors presented here, Macrae witnessed firsthand the early days of Reconstruction. His first book, *Americans at Home: In Pen and Ink*, was published in 1870; it examined Reconstruction and explained to British readers the

²⁶ Wells spoke in Glasgow on May 2, 1893. The *Glasgow Herald* printed an editorial supporting her message. See "The Negro Question in South America," *The Glasgow Herald*, May 3, 1893. For more on Bryce and Clowes, see chapter 3. For more on the men and women of BALC, see chapter 4.

status of the ex-slaves and the defeated whites of the South. He also interviewed famous Northerners like Henry Ward Beecher and Ulysses Grant (before he was a candidate for President). Though the racial categories of the day and their racist assumptions mark *Americans at Home*, it still spoke positively of Southern blacks. For Macrae, the work that white and black Northerners were doing on behalf of the ex-slaves would lead the latter to become productive members of a rebuilt South. When in the South, Macrae had made sure to interview both whites and blacks about the progress of Emancipation; he took seriously black accounts of slavery and Reconstruction.²⁷ In his concern for and interest in black Southerners, Macrae shared more intellectually with the members of BALC than he did with other British journalists and intellectuals who had journeyed to the South during the 1890s.²⁸

As sympathetic as Macrae was for the strivings of black Southerners, he kept the situation of the Southern white at the forefront of his account. The first chapter of the second volume of *Americans at Home* detailed how Emancipation had freed white Southerners as much as it had the slaves themselves. According to the Scotsman, the

²⁷ In Virginia he talked to two planters who had fought for the Confederacy and who tried to convince him that the War had more to do with states' rights than with slavery. Then, when questioned about emancipation, one planter responded, "Emancipation...has sealed the doom of the black race. The nigger himself is finding it a mistake. He was happier in slavery. Many of them would like back." See Macrae, *The Americans at Home I*, p. 138. When he left the planters and doubting their account, he turned to a black waiter at his hotel and asked about the truth of their statements. The waiter confirmed that he and all other former slaves much preferred freedom to slavery. He quoted the ex-slave, "Some of our people are poor, but they would rather be poor, sah, and be free." See Macrae, *The Americans at Home I*, p. 139.

²⁸ Between 1890 and 1895, Britons W. Laird Clowes, James Bryce, and James Burnley would each tour the US South. None quoted a black man or woman by name and each of them identified with white leaders of the South. For more information on them and their trips, see Chapter 3.

slave system placed a great burden on Southern whites as humans, businessmen, and Christians. The treatment that the system demanded, whippings, killings, and mistreatment of slaves, corrupted Southern whites and forced them to see black human beings as property. As businessmen, they were forced to keep on slaves during hard times or when they could no longer work when a free labor system would have allowed them to fire the offending parties. Finally, their treatment of slaves placed them in opposition to the most of the Christian world. Southern white Christians were ostracized by civilized Christianity because of the brutality involved in maintaining the slave system. Emancipation, then, was not only a boost for the slaves, but for Southern whites who could re-enter the civilized world and would open the South for investment and immigration.²⁹

In 1899, David Macrae again turned his attention to the American South and journeyed there that year. Macrae wrote a series of articles for the *Glasgow Herald* upon his return to Scotland in 1899, and his tour of the South received coverage in Southern papers. In an interview with the *Atlanta Constitution*, Macrae listed three reasons for his return to the South. The first was to see how the race question had developed since his last visit and test the impressions that he had had on his initial visit. In this interview, he refused to comment on the race question because he found his thoughts too complicated on the matter. The second was the liquor question, and he explained that he had gone to South Carolina on the way down to Georgia. He spoke highly of efforts to rein in the sale of liquor, but the Scotsman was not sure that

²⁹ Macrae, *The Americans at Home II*, pp. 1-12.

system in South Carolina was a particularly promising effort.³⁰ He claimed that there was evidence that it actually increased liquor consumption. Finally, he admitted his admiration for white Southern women. He had spoken of her fortitude in the 1860s and was happy to see that white women in the South had become much healthier looking in the years after the Civil War.³¹

When given a chance to interview a white Southerner in public, Macrae devoted most of the conversation to the two initial concerns. On the evening of February 25, 1899, Macrae sat down for an interview with the Rev. Sam Jones, of Atlanta. In his conversation with Jones, Macrae demonstrated a curiosity about the nature of Southern white racism and a disbelief in the hard distinction that Jones drew between black and white. From the newspaper coverage of the conversation, Jones was a respected minister in Atlanta and spoke for white ministers in their defense of white supremacy and liquor prohibition. The first half of the interview saw broad agreement between the two religious figures on the need to curb the consumption of hard spirits. The second half of the interview was more pointed, though the two men ended the evening as friends. Initial questions on the religious natures of Southern blacks were met with interest by Jones, and he painted Southern blacks as religious but not pious. In his telling Southern blacks were superstitiously interested in religion, but they did not have the moral sense of the truly pious. Still, Jones encouraged every

³⁰ In 1892, South Carolina Governor Ben Tillman introduced a dispensary system to his state. Liquor sales were limited to state-run dispensaries. The introduction of the system caused riots in his state. See Stephen David Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

³¹ "Rev. David Macrae Talks of the South," *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 24, 1899.

effort to educate them on proper religious sensibilities but not in ways that would allow them challenge white domination.

Jones's statements about black Southerners puzzled the Scots minister, and he pressed his American counterpart on the issue. In this case, he directly challenged a Southern white man to defend his belief that Southern blacks were and always would be inferior to Southern whites. Macrae asked Jones if blacks had been becoming more civilized, more religious, and more educated of late. While Jones admitted that some blacks had, he did not endorse education for Southern blacks. Instead, he argued that they should not receive that much education because the only two avenues open for educated blacks were teaching and preaching. Macrae asked what effect this very narrow construction of black opportunity would have on Southern blacks. He questioned the wisdom of these sentiments because it did not seem to leave many options for black improvement. Jones responded by saying that blacks did not need education to make them think that they were gentlemen. For Jones, there was no point in trying to make Southern blacks gentleman because there were enough educated whites and, in his opinion, blacks should know and respect their inferior status in the South. For every job opening, he claimed, there were more than enough white applicants and that blacks should continue doing menial work.

When Jones praised Booker T. Washington as a fine black man who could do much for his people, Macrae began to focus the conversation on the limits that Southern whites placed on black Southerners. The mention of Washington allowed Macrae to press the American about the strange nature of Southern race relations, and the Scots minister seemed confused at how the Southern white man could both praise

Washington and still label him inferior. For the last half of the conversation, Macrae attempted to have Jones explain whether or not any black man could possibly be better than a white one. Jones replied in the negative. Macrae used the example of Washington and asked, “Do you think...that a man like Booker T. Washington should be excluded or would be excluded because of his color from a high office to which he might be elected?” The Southern minister replied that while Washington may be as good as many thousand white men in the South, he should still not hold office. Just as he had been in the 1860s, Macrae was puzzled by Southern white refusals to accept black men as citizens.

The conversation closed with disagreement between Jones and Macrae on the status of slaves in the pre-Civil War South. After Macrae explained that folks in Britain wanted to know what the experiences of Americans have been since the end of slavery, Jones argued that Southern blacks were better cared for in slavery than they were at the time. The Southern minister claimed, “Slavery taught him to read and write,” and given them religion. With Macrae’s interest in the education of black children, this is a strange statement to make. As Macrae would certainly have been aware, slaves were at times discouraged and at other times outright forbidden to learn to read and write. However, Macrae conceded the point on education, but could not accept that blacks were better off in slavery. He responded by saying that slavery did not give blacks principles, and that the “bad examples,” presumably of Southern whites, had led blacks down a path of immorality and lack of restraint. For Macrae, the student of Reconstruction, it was Southern whites who had failed in their duty to help blacks. He could not understand the strict segregationist feeling amongst

Southern whites, and he attempted to get answers from a Southern minister. While an absorbing conversation, it revealed the different approaches that this Scot and this Southerner took to the race question.

The conversation abruptly came to close, though both men expressed warm feelings for the other before they stopped speaking. For Macrae, the discussion continued in the *Glasgow Herald*, and he wrote of his new experiences in the South later that year. Macrae's first discussion of his trip to the United States appeared in April 1899. Though it does not bear his name, an article entitled, "Impressions of America, 1898," fit within the general discussion of the American place in the world that marked later entries that identified him as an author. In the first piece, Macrae did not only speak of the South but instead noted the growing prominence of the United States in world affairs since it defeated Spain and took on an empire of its own. Just as he considered the aftermath of the Civil War to provide a lesson for the British about life in the United States, he argued that Americans would learn much about the world from their involvement with building a new empire. In looking to the US after the Spanish-American War, Macrae, like many Britons, saw the new status of the US as an imperial power shifted the grounds of analysis. By looking to the South, he could examine white American interactions with another race and judge them both in terms of progress since the War and their commitment to uplift.³²

His analysis of the US South did not praise the region and would not have pleased New South boosters of the era. The first to appear was a column devoted to the poor Southern white. Two months after his encounter with the Georgia minister,

³² "The Passing Throng," *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 27, 1899.

Macrae painted a bleak picture of poverty-stricken Southern whites. To him, they were the primary causes of many of the South's problems. Lynchings, disfranchisement, and segregation were led by poor whites eager to take on the psychological wages of whiteness. Their inherent dislike of blacks, which Macrae dated from slave days when they were unable to afford slaves themselves, inspired them to lynch and attack blacks at the slightest provocation. It also caused them to refuse to share public spaces with them. As with Bryce and British editorial writers, this distrust of poor whites meant that Macrae was willing to accept an educational requirement for suffrage as long as Southern governments enforced the restrictions equally among blacks and whites.³³ However, according to the Scot, the poor Southern whites kept the governments doing just that. He noted, "the States that have disfranchised the illiterate negroes have not ventured to disfranchise even the most illiterate whites." For these violent, ignorant people, Macrae recommended much the same as he did for Southern blacks, education and religious outreach. In placing the blame for white violence in the hands of poor whites, Macrae also absolved white Southern elites of their own roles in exacerbating racial tensions. For this British observer, more needed to be done for the poor Southern white if the region was going to solve the race question.³⁴

³³ See Chapter 3. For more on Bryce and the educational requirement see Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³⁴ David Macrae, "The 'Poor Whites' of the South," *The Glasgow Herald*, April 22, 1899.

Macrae also explained that Southern blacks, though they had made great progress since the War, continued to need education. Macrae toured Booker T. Washington's institute at Tuskegee spoke with the most respected black leader of the time. As with black schools after the end of the Civil War, Macrae painted a glowing picture of the building and the aims of the school. Like his discussion of education and poor whites, his conversation with Washington continued his discussion with Jones. After detailing Washington's position about the correct kind of education for Southern blacks—that is Washington's insistence that blacks primarily engage in industrial education rather than a more humanistic approach—Macrae questioned the schoolmaster about race relations in the South. As he did with Jones, the Scotsman asked whether Southern whites would truly not accept riding in the same car as he. In describing Washington's patience with white restrictions on his race, Macrae portrayed Washington as having the correct sense of the situation in the South. He encouraged Washington in his educational mission, as he had done with so many situations a generation earlier, and concluded the column by suggesting that more Southern whites and blacks should follow through on this noted black man's insights. Rather than locate the solution to the 'negro problem' outside the South, Macrae thought he had found one from a respected black man.³⁵

Finally, Macrae confronted lynching, and he condemned the practice as uncivilized and hoped that sensible white Southerners would end the practice. In an article devoted specifically to the question of lynching, Macrae expressed surprise

³⁵ David Macrae, "A Visit to the Most Noted Negro in America," *The Glasgow Herald*, June 3. 1899

that some white Southerners not only condoned but approved of mob violence. He noted that white Southerners were “civilized and Christian,” and that they should look upon lynching “with detestation and abhorrence.” Referring to his experience in the South in the 1860s, he recalled that white Southerners had spoken glowingly of the loyalty of their slaves during the war effort. He did not understand where the supposed black male propensity to rape white women had developed, but he declared that it must have happened after Reconstruction. Though he accepted rape as the cause of lynching, he did not think that it made such violence acceptable.

Indeed, he blamed Southern whites for the conditions that made it possible for black men to rape white women. First, Southern whites had not provided enough education to Southern blacks which made them more likely to perpetrate such crimes. Second, white men provided a poor example to black men with their own willingness to take advantage of black women. He even praised black men for their restraint in not seeking a similar punishment for white men who took advantage of black women: “If negroes were as reckless of white chastity as the white men are of black; and if, when their own women are violated by white men, they copied the whites in their ferocious forms of vengeance, what a hell of horror and brutality the Southern States would speedily become.”³⁶ He hoped that white Southerners would abandon lynching; Macrae, however, doubted that they would be able to do it.

Booker T. Washington’s rise not only marked a new direction for Northern whites looking to the South, but also for British whites as well. As this section

³⁶ David Macrae, “Lynching in the Southern States,” *Glasgow Herald*, September 13, 1899.

demonstrates, Washington's more moderate approach gained him few enemies, but it also failed to generate the conversation about race and civilization that Wells did. At the same time, Southern whites no longer derided any message coming from Britain. David Macrae was able to sit with both Booker T. Washington and Sam Jones. He asked both men about the race question and presented his own take when he returned to Britain. In looking to the South, he did not see lessons for Britons in their empire; instead, Macrae feared that the South would never be able to rise above the racial antagonism that marked the region. By 1899, empire and the US South were no longer incompatible, and Britons and Southerners had moved beyond the controversies that had placed them against each other in the past.

Citizenship and Empire: White Southern Papers Debate the Boer War

When the United States debated the merits of retaining the Philippines as a colony after gaining the territory in the Spanish-American War, many white Southerners regarded the American mission in the Philippines with suspicion. Though they had overwhelmingly supported intervention in Cuba (and had in fact urged the US to act for years before the war in 1898), they did not see an overseas empire as a legitimate result of that war. For many Southern whites, empire was against American tradition and values; as the previous chapters demonstrated, white Southerners repeatedly argued over the course of the 1890s that empire was an uncivilized undertaking. For many white Southerners, American imperialism was just as illegitimate as European. On the floor of the Senate, South Carolina Senator Ben Tillman asked of US policy, "Are we to take the place of Spain as task-masters and

tyrants?” He also quoted from Rudyard Kipling’s pro-imperial poem “The White Man’s Burden” and declared, “We of the South have borne ‘the white man’s burden,’ and discovered it to be more trouble than it was worth. According to Tillman, white Southerners could not support the annexation of the Philippines because their own dealings with black Southerners demonstrated that there was nothing glorious in bringing ‘civilization’ to a supposedly inferior race. He also drew from Britain’s imperial missions to argue against American policy in the Philippines. Tillman pointed to troubles that the British government had had with the Boers and noted that all the Americans should control in the Philippines was their foreign policy, which was the arrangement that the British had with the Boer Transvaal Republic.³⁷ In looking to the Transvaal, however, not all Southern whites were as ready as Tillman to challenge British imperial aims in the region.

This section examines the convoluted conversations that white Southerners had about the conflict in South Africa. It marked a break with their prior near-unanimous opposition to empire and articulated a different interpretation of international events. Though their previous coverage of British imperialism would suggest that white Southerners would condemn British actions in the region as little more than greedy gold-hungry landgrabbing, white Southerners saw more nuance in the conflict than they had with Venezuela only a few years before. Central to white Southern coverage of the conflict were two changes that had occurred in the intervening years. The first and most telling was the emergence of the United States as an imperial power that year. With the support of Britain, the US had taken a colony

³⁷ “Tillman on the Right Track,” *The Weekly News and Courier*, February 11, 1899.

in the Philippines, and white Southern papers that supported that effort tended to see the British as just in their treatment of the Boers. Rather than intercede, they saw the United States as standing by in a conflict that did not affect them and would affect their relationship with a friendly power. Seeing the controversy in terms of race, white Southerners argued that Anglo-Saxons should not be denied the rights of their race to achieve citizenship in the country that they settled. In this case too Britain was a friend. They were also Anglo-Saxons and thus entitled to protect these rights on an international stage. White Southern commentators saw no tension in their region's efforts to disfranchise Southern black men even as they defended Anglo-Saxons from such treatment.

The Boer War, too, complicated simple race constructions of the time. The two main combatants were white peoples, but they were fighting over African territory that one claimed as historically its own. The Boers were the descendants of Dutch peoples who had colonized Africa centuries before. In the shifting constructions of the time, the Boers were not Anglo-Saxons. In white Southern coverage of the conflict, they were either independent farmers defending their rural way of life or poorly educated, racist, violent men and women who were barely more civilized than the Africans with whom they shared the region. The Boers were also noted in the late nineteenth century for their particular violent engagements with black African powers in the region. They had formed their own republic in the Transvaal and attempted to claim that their republic was better than monarchical, imperialistic Britain. White Southerners looking at the conflict saw not only two white peoples fighting over Africa but one white power that was explicitly noted for

treating black Africans badly while the British Empire at least nominally spoke of bringing civilization to Africa. In all, the Boer War was a difficult concept to confront, and one that challenged white Southern understandings of race, empire, and civilization in Africa and the world.

While the war was undertaken for many reasons, not least of which being the British government's desire to control the region's rich mineral deposits, white Southerners largely attributed the conflict to the Boer treatment of British immigrants to the region.³⁸ After a brief fight in 1880-81, the British government granted the Transvaal Republic some political independence but remained in control of the region's foreign policy. British expansionists, most notably Cecil Rhodes, wanted the British government to exert more control over southern Africa. He and his allies used the status of British immigrants in the region as a pretext to urge the British government to remove the Boer government. The Boers, descendants of Dutch immigrants from the seventeenth century, did not like having the British government over them. They sought to control their own republic by denying anyone who was not a Boer voting and other rights of citizenship. By the turn of the century, this status quo could not hold because the immigrants were gaining economic power through their control of South African mines and their connections to the British government. These resident non-citizens were known as the Uitlanders or the Anglicized "Outlanders" in the American and British presses and were mostly British subjects.³⁹

³⁸ For more on the Boer War, see Denis Judd and Keith Surridge, *The Boer War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

³⁹ It should be noted that even at the time, the claims of the Uitlanders were not taken at face value in Britain. In 1900, J.A. Hobson argued that a small band of politicians

When Paul Kruger, president of the Transvaal Republic, refused the British request to grant Uitlanders citizenship after five years of residence in the colony (Kruger wanted the time to be seven years, which was a significant concession on his part), the two states edged closer to war. Throughout 1899, the two parties vied for international sympathy and finally began to fight outright in October 1899.

When looking at the War, white Southern editors acknowledged that they had changed their opinion on the British Empire in recent years. In mid-1899, the *Macon Telegraph* argued that times had changed, and that they no longer could support the Boer cause. When it appeared that war could start at any moment, the *Telegraph* remembered its own coverage of the Jameson raid a few years earlier. In December 1895 armed British citizens under the command of Leander Jameson, an employee of Cecil Rhodes, attempted to spark an uprising amongst the British residents of the Transvaal. His scheme failed to materialize and white Southern papers, along with much of the rest of the world, saw this effort as an attempt by the British (and Cecil Rhodes) to goad the Boers into a conflict that would allow the empire to take possession of the Transvaal Republic. Combined with the tensions of the Venezuela crisis of that year (see chapter 2), white Southern newspapers were quick to criticize

stoked Uitlander desires for the franchise. He saw the reform drive as just but was “convinced that, until the agitation of the last year, the concrete grievances which arouse the sympathy and indignation of the British public lay very lightly on the soul of the average Outlander,” see J.A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), pp. 53-54. The book was originally published in 1900. It is not particularly important to my argument here that the Outlanders were not particularly justified in their claims against the Boers. Instead, what is important is that white Southerners almost universally accepted that the claims were just and reacted to them as such. For a similar misinterpretation on the part of white Southerners, see Chapter 2 on their understanding of British designs for South America.

British actions and reflect on the rapacious imperial policy of the British state. The *Telegraph* was not as critical of Jameson as their confession in 1899 made it appear, but they did celebrate the Boer republic in an editorial about the raid. The Georgia paper argued that the Boers had “won the respect and admiration of the world by their unflinching courage and devotion to the cause of self-government.”⁴⁰ In 1896, the *Telegraph* and many other white Southern papers linked the Boer’s cause with that of self-government and home rule.

Less than four years later, the *Telegraph* had begun to see things differently. The Macon paper argued that both sides made reasonable points. They noted that Uitlanders in the Transvaal had been treated badly by the Boers. In the years after the Jameson raid, the British government took up their cause. Britain then, in this telling, had a just object in their conflict with the Transvaal government which was mistreating its citizens. According to the Macon paper, the Uitlanders “have rights that should be respected.” The *Telegraph* argued that the Boers would be conquered because the British were so much more powerful but that the conflict would not be simply an attempt on the part of the empire to acquire more land even if that would be the ultimate result.⁴¹

As tensions rose in the region, newspapers throughout the South attempted to explain the causes of the problems there to their readers. Rather than having a dominant narrative in which most white newspapers came down on one side of the issue, white Southern papers displayed a deep divide over the question. Some saw the

⁴⁰ “Mercy is Wisdom,” *The Macon Telegraph*, January 9, 1896.

⁴¹ “Misfortune Ahead of the Transvaal,” *The Macon Telegraph*, May 20, 1899.

British as just while others continued to see the greedy overreaching of an imperial power and supported the Boers. The *Macon Telegraph* used the race of the Uitlanders to make the case for their rights. A brief editorial in May of 1899 read, “The complaint of the Uitlanders in the Transvaal is that they have no vote, no citizenship, no free speech, and are compelled to bear all the burdens of taxation. The men who make these complaints are Anglo-Saxon, and if the half of them are true a revolution in the Transvaal is as certain as the rising of the sun.”⁴² The *Birmingham Age Herald* agreed that the Boers were tyrannical rulers of the region. According to an editorial in that paper: “The Outlanders pay a large proportion of the taxes, but they are excluded by stringent rules from citizenship or any voice in the government. Their money is accepted, but not their advice...It is tyrannies such as these that has created a condition of unrest in the Transvaal.”⁴³ No longer was Britain the tyrant, but now the defender of the downtrodden. According to these reports the Boers were violating the rules of civilized society by treating whites as second-class citizens.

The *Telegraph* continued this juxtaposition into the next week and furthered their racial argument to deny the Boers their own claims to civilization. To them the Uitlanders “are as a rule educated people, some of them are as intelligent citizens as the world can show, while the Boer farmers, mostly scattered over the country on remote farms, are notoriously ignorant, a large proportion of them being unable to read or write.” It should be noted that at this time, white Southerners throughout the South were working to disfranchise Southern blacks and many poor whites by

⁴² “The complaint of the Uitlanders...,” *The Macon Telegraph*, May 19, 1899.

⁴³ “The Transvaal Trouble,” *The Birmingham Age-Herald*, May 24, 1899.

enacting poll taxes and literacy requirements for voting. Of course, in practice, the literacy requirement was selectively enforced and largely accepted only for blacks. In looking at the Transvaal, they saw the opposite of this policy. Instead of creating a richer republic by taking the votes from those they considered ignorant they instead denied proper leaders their rights to rule. For this reason, the *Telegraph* argued, “The Transvaal, therefore, should be called an oligarchy rather than a republic. An ignorant minority has absolute control.” The Boers, in this construction, were simply natives, lower down in the of hierarchy civilization—that is, “the simply patriarchal pattern known to Abraham...hundreds of years behind the age”—locked in a struggle with more civilized immigrants.⁴⁴ They continued to make this case over the following months. A few weeks later, the *Telegraph* noted, “It is the same thing which led to the American revolution, taxation without representation, a condition which no body of Anglo-Saxons will long endure.”⁴⁵ In this case, civilization was central to the understanding of the Boer conflict, but it was not an idea of civilization that only placed colored people below white but instead, Anglo-Saxon over Dutch, who had in effect become Africanized.

The *Birmingham Age Herald* argued that the Boers were bringing this crisis on themselves and in so doing would bring about their downfall. Writing in support of the Uitlanders and Britain’s intervention on their behalf, the Alabama paper maintained that a possible war would make it even less likely that the Boers would retain control of their republic. They claimed that “Mr. Chamberlain [the Prime

⁴⁴ “Curious Conditions in the Boer Republic,” *The Macon Telegraph*, May 24, 1899.

⁴⁵ “The Transvaal Boers evidently realize...,” *The Macon Telegraph*, June 12, 1899.

Minister] will not show the Boers much mercy if they stubbornly bring on a war and great expense and possibly some slaughter” and “no one will be apt to weep over their fate.”⁴⁶ A month later, the *Age Herald* continued their case against the Boers. An editorial in July 1899 called Kruger, “virtually a dictator in the Transvaal republic.”⁴⁷ To their readers, white Southern papers like the *Birmingham Age Herald* and the *Macon Telegraph* constructed the Boers not as republicans defending their rights against an imperial power but as dictators in their region who refused to live up to the standards of civilization.

The *Macon Telegraph* published a couple editorials days later that underscore how the new position of the United States in the world changed their attitudes toward the British empire and how the situation in the Transvaal was not easy for white Southerners to view in a straightforward manner. The first editorial predicted war in the Transvaal, and claimed that the paper had a difficult time in choosing a side because the conflict was “between two civilized people.” The paper continued to see some merit in both the Boer and British cases. According to the paper, the Boers had a prior claim on the land and did not care for all of the immigrants to the region. On the other hand, Britain “no doubt feels that she has as much right to interfere in behalf of the oppressed men of her own race as we had to interfere in behalf of the Cubans.”⁴⁸ Though a few years prior, the *Telegraph* would have defended a republic over the empire, the new American empire caused them to see some justice in Britain’s case. In the very next editorial about the possibility that Cuba could be a

⁴⁶ “Transvaal Republic in Peril,” *The Birmingham Age Herald*, June 15, 1899.

⁴⁷ “The Transvaal Trouble,” *The Birmingham Age Herald*, July 16, 1899.

⁴⁸ “War Probable,” *The Macon Telegraph*, September 6, 1899.

republic under an American protectorate, the Georgia paper urged American policymakers to look to the Transvaal to see the problems such things could cause. The *Telegraph* noted that the paper had a few months previously warned: “England’s empty suzerainty over the Transvaal, at once satisfactory to herself and galling to the Boers was an object to this country and a warning of what should be avoided in colonial government.” The heightened tensions of that fall illustrated to the editors of the *Telegraph* the accuracy of that statement. To them, the United States could either leave Cuba free or take control; there could be no in between or the US would risk facing the same difficulties there that Britain was then experiencing with the Boers.⁴⁹

The real problem according to the *Telegraph* a few days later was the sheer amount of gold in the region. If it were not for the gold mines, the paper argued that there would be no conflict: “It was the discovery of gold in the Transvaal that brought about the great influx of Englishmen into that country and the friction between these and the native Boers is the cause of the present troubles.” The riches made the Boers want to keep the foreigners out and gave the British government a stronger motivation to intervene for their subjects who lived there.⁵⁰ As war seemed more likely, the Georgia paper the Boers “have the right to conduct their internal affairs as they see fit.” Britain had a hard time making its case in the face of direct comparisons between the two states. The *Telegraph* commented, the Boer’s “helplessness in a contest with a powerful nation also excites sympathy in their favor.”⁵¹ A week later the *Telegraph* returned to this argument: “it would seem that England has a legal if

⁴⁹ “A Doubtful Plan,” *The Macon Telegraph*, September 6, 1899.

⁵⁰ “A Solid Pile of Gold,” *The Macon Telegraph*, September 9, 1899.

⁵¹ “The later advices from London...” *The Macon Telegraph*, September 10, 1899.

not a moral right to interfere. At any rate, it is clear that in their treatment of the Uitlanders the Boers have broken their promise and have committed a grave wrong. At the same time, it is impossible not to sympathize with these dull, antiquated, brave and unconquerably determined Dutchmen of South Africa, and it is to be hoped that they will yet be induced to grant all desirable reforms and that war may be averted.”⁵² For white Southerners, the outrages against the Uitlanders were real controversies but the fact of British gold influencing their war plans and their sheer overwhelming power made them less sympathetic than Boers who merely wanted to be left to their own devices.

Newspaper editors were not the only Southern whites sympathetic to the British case against the Boers. W. McKay wrote to the *Telegraph* to express his support for the British and claimed that the Boers were struggling against the forces of civilization. In his telling, the British imperialists had become agents of civilization rather than heartless landgrabbers. According to McKay, the Boers displaced native Africans “because these were wasting the country and because they thought that they could make a better use of it.” While he did not challenge the justice of this claim, he argued that the whole argument rested on making a more civilized place. If the Boers failed to live up to the standards of civilization, then they had no right to have treated the African natives as they had. It was then up to the ‘civilized world’ to pass judgment of the Boers. According to McKay, the whole reason that the Boers had even crossed the Vaal river, was because the British would not let them treat black Africans as they wanted. Before the British took over, the Boers practiced “all kinds

⁵² “Briton and Boer,” *The Macon Telegraph*, September 16, 1899.

of cruelties” on black Africans and eventually “trekked off to themselves where they could each ‘wallop his own nigger’ as he pleased.” When gold, diamonds, and other minerals were found in the Transvaal, the Boers refused to work the mines for the good of the civilized world, and people from England, America, and Germany had to come do it for them. The Boer government was, in McKay’s reading, “a monstrous anachronism, which has reached a point where it must be mended or ended.”⁵³ In short, McKay constructed the Transvaal republic not as a virtuous government but instead as a mismanagement of the resources which it had been given. The Boers were not whites leading the progress of civilization in Africa, but were instead holding up the region and needed the steady hand of an imperial power to make their region into a model for the rest of the world.

A week later, the *Birmingham Age Herald* would make the same case and in so doing portray the Boers as less white than the Uitlanders. According to the Alabama paper, the Boers were blocking the progress of the whole continent and “It is necessary for the civilization of interior African that England should have a free hand.” Not only did this Southern paper argue that the British should be able to do as they please to the Boers, but in stark contrast to images of empire only four years before, the *Birmingham Age* declared that the Boers “are defying civilization’s chief agent, Great Britain.” The paper also began to portray the Boers as less white than they had previously. Concluding this editorial they called the Boers “essentially as

⁵³ W. McKay, “Great Britain and the Transvaal, *The Macon Telegraph*, September 13, 1899.

fanatical as the Arabs who fought under the Mahdi.”⁵⁴ A couple days later, they continued to paint the central problem as Boer fanaticism. After describing the demands of the Outlanders, the *Age Herald* declared: “The truth is, the issue is beyond negotiations unless the Boers get off their high horse.”⁵⁵ Rather than seeing the Boers as freedom fighters, these white Southern supporters of the British instead placed them with people that they saw as hopeless fanatics and less civilized than British imperialists.

White Southern papers also questioned which side of the war would best help the black African peoples of the region and continued to promote British imperialism as a civilizing force. The *Macon Telegraph* reported on a tribe of African blacks who were deciding whom to support in the conflict or to remain neutral. According to the Georgia paper, the natives of Basuteoland⁵⁶ sacrificed two oxen said to represent the British and the Boers. According to their tradition, the rite predicted that the Boers would be the victors. The *Telegraph* treated the whole affair as relatively curious and included a reference to the Basutos going “on the warpath.” The editors also mocked African beliefs in deities that would predict the future through the hardiness of oxen. However, they also argued that the black Africans, who “regard the Boers with mortal hatred,” owed it to the British to try the rite again before deciding to side with the Boers. According to the editors, “the English, not the Boers, have been the friends of the black man in South Africa.”⁵⁷ The *Savannah Tribune*, a black paper, agreed with

⁵⁴ “Boer Block African Progress,” *The Birmingham Age Herald*, September 20, 1899.

⁵⁵ “Transvaal Case Hesitated,” *The Birmingham Age Herald*, September 22, 1899.

⁵⁶ Now spelled Basutoland.

⁵⁷ “They Should Sacrifice Again,” *The Macon Telegraph*, October 4, 1899.

the *Telegraph* that the Boer treatment of black Africans was a disgrace, though the Savannah paper did not share in the mockery of African natives. In a brief editorial comment the paper stated, “War in the Transvaal seems a certainty and on account of Oom Paul’s government treatment of our people, we are not averse to Great Britain spanking him a little.”⁵⁸ To both white and black Southerners, Boers could use an education on proper behavior towards black Africans.

Not all white Southerners agreed with this assessment of the Outlanders or the Boers. Also opposing the annexation of the Philippines, South Carolina’s *The State* noted that the British immigrants to the Transvaal knew what kind of reception they would receive from the Boers: “They have gone there to make their fortunes and have voluntarily incurred the penalties of their pursuit of wealth. They are mostly Englishmen, but they have not taken with them the right to British law.” The South Carolina paper argued that the British government had no right to intervene on their behalf because the British should not be able to declare that a republic should follow the laws of another. To the *State*, the Uitlanders had a right to rebel against the Transvaal government if they decided that the situation was unbearable but that they should not expect support from the country that they left.⁵⁹

Other papers too supported the Boer position and portrayed the Boers in a positive light. Kentucky’s *Morning Herald* declared, “England pompously proclaims her intention of carrying the light of ‘civilization into the Transvaal,’ but it should be noted that the average Boer sharpshooter can put a light out at 500 yards with a

⁵⁸ “War in the Transvaal...” *The Savannah Tribune*, October 14, 1899.

⁵⁹ “The Transvaal Crisis,” *The State*, June 10, 1899.

rifle.”⁶⁰ In Charlotte, the *Charlotte Daily Observer* similarly saw the Boer position in a more sympathetic light. Though the paper acknowledged that the Uitlanders were “made up of men from all the civilized nations,” the Charlotte editors also noted that allowing them the franchise would move Boers to the rear of their own nation. That is, the Outlanders so outnumber the Boers that they would overwhelm them once they were allowed the vote. In other words, “The Boer government would be remodeled on British lines.” Because they supported the Boer’s hope to control their own country, they sympathized with them in their dispute with the British.⁶¹

Other Southern papers also called upon the narratives about the British Empire that had been prevalent a few years earlier; these bimetallist papers continued to imagine British imperialism as a quest for gold. They linked the conflict in the Transvaal to the silver question that had dominated their pages in 1896. In a letter said to be from Wall Street, a Southern observer argued that the war in the Transvaal was necessary to maintain the flow of gold from the region. The pseudonymous letter writer maintained, “The British gold standard is the logical sequence of the British imperial policy of conquest.” He also linked the Filipinos with the Boers in opposing the so-called money power: “The Filipinos and the Boers appeal to the God of battles and the civilized world.”⁶² The *State* in South Carolina took the opportunity to further its case for free silver. Because the flow of gold from the Transvaal helped bring the world out of a recession, they worried that the war would upend to the world’s

⁶⁰ “England pompously declares...” *The Morning Herald*, September 20, 1899.

⁶¹ “The Casus Belli,” *The Charlotte Daily Observer*, October 3, 1899.

⁶² “A Breezy Letter from Wall Street,” *The Fayetteville Observer*, September 28, 1899. The letter originally appeared in the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*.

monetary supply. Because the cause of the war was, to them, obviously the world's need for gold to make the gold standard workable, the tenuous nature of that supply meant that the world should reconsider free silver. Then, they would not have to fight these wars over the yellow metal.⁶³

More than many papers which were conflicted about the conflict, the *Arkansas Democrat* unambiguously praised the Boers and supported their claims against Britain. In an editorial that called the Boer government, "a model republic" with "simple and just laws," the *Democrat* declared that "all right-thinking people will be with the burghers." They argued that the Boer demand that Uitlanders declare allegiance to the Boer republic before being granted citizenship "rests on a correct principle and a sound public policy."⁶⁴ To them, the only way that the Boers could keep their land from becoming a British dependency would be to make their British citizens loyal to them instead of the crown. The next day, the *Democrat* continued to make the case for the Boers. The editors asserted: "England has no more right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Transvaal republic than she has to meddle with the affairs of Mexico or of the United States." They linked their own defense of local self-government to that of the Boers and called the demands of England "arrogant." To those who argued that Britain support for the US in the recent war with Spain should change their opinion on this matter the *Democrat* maintained: "All American citizens, without regard to party and without reference to the part played by England in our war with Spain, should show their sympathy for the sturdy little Dutch

⁶³ "The Transvaal Gold," *The State*, October 5, 1899.

⁶⁴ "The Boers are a sturdy, industrious, self-reliant people..." *The Arkansas Democrat*, October 5, 1899.

republic.”⁶⁵ For these Southern whites, the matter was a simple question of republican self-government versus the interference of an imperial power.

The *Democrat* further articulated this sentiment the next week. Again declaring that Britain had no right to interfere in local affairs, the Arkansas paper rejected claims that the Boers had violated their agreement with Britain. Unlike other papers, they did not separate this conflict from British imperial policy. Instead, the *Democrat* argued that this recent problem was based on longstanding British tradition: “Back of it all is the greedy grasping for gold and diamonds which has marked the course of that nation for a thousand years. It is the old story of the strong animal devouring the weak.”⁶⁶ From South Carolina, the *State* declared that the British always hoped for the war because they wanted the Transvaal for themselves. All of the diplomatic wrangling in the days leading up to the war was not to stop the conflict but to give the British time to prepare and to turn the people to their side. However, according to the editorial Britain’s end was inevitable, “coercion and conquest.”⁶⁷ Also from South Carolina, *The Weekly News and Courier* tried to defend the Boers. Accusing “Pro-British Americans” of misrepresenting the Boers, the *Courier* quoted a British man who called his country’s actions a crime.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ “England has no more right...” *The Arkansas Democrat*, October 6, 1899.

⁶⁶ “What is suzerainty?” *The Arkansas Democrat*, October 16, 1899.

⁶⁷ “Cant about the Boer War,” *The State*, October 14, 1899.

⁶⁸ “In a special dispatch...” *The Weekly News and Courier*, November 1, 1899. The *Birmingham Age Herald* also thought British greed was behind the war: A struggle for gold seems to be imminent; and this is perhaps the reason for England’s immense war preparations. She proposes to crush the war speedily, because she desires above all else to reopen without unnecessary delay the Witwatersrand gold mines.” See “Gold at the Bottom of It,” *The Birmingham Age Herald*, October 20, 1899.

As the war began, the *New York World* circulated a petition asking that President McKinley offer his services as a mediator of the conflict to both parties. Reading white Southern responses to this call demonstrates the changing position they saw for the South and the United States in the world. The *World* stated that the United States should “strive to prevent the wiping out of two of our sister republics...the slaughter of thousands of civilized men, and the drenching of South Africa with blood and tears.”⁶⁹ Newspapers in the South responded to this call in ways that brought up the recent history of the US and its newfound imperial status. To the *Macon Telegraph* such an offer would only be regarded as unfounded interference from the British. In an editorial about the request, the Georgia paper argued that the US would have considered such an offer unfriendly in both the Civil War and the conflict with the Filipinos. According to the *Telegraph* just like the situation with the Philippines the Boer-British conflict was “domestic rather than international. Though they expressed some sympathy for the Boers, the *Telegraph* noted that it would be in the interest of progress and civilization for them to be defeated by the British.”⁷⁰ The new US foreign policy changed some Southern attitudes to Britain. The *Daily Picayune* agreed with this sentiment. The Louisiana paper wrote, “An offer of mediation to England would not be a friendly act and would

⁶⁹ Reprinted in *The Macon Telegraph*, October 8, 1899.

⁷⁰ “Ill Advised,” *The Macon Telegraph*, October 8, 1899. A week later, when it was clear that McKinley would not take up the task, the *Telegraph* praised him for not interfering in this fight. In an editorial about the proposed mediation, the editors noted that while the situation in the Philippines was different, the US would have also been unfriendly to mediation. They argued that whatever one’s opinion about the Philippines, it was still not right for another nation to intrude. See “No Intervention,” *The Macon Telegraph*, October 14, 1899.

be a poor return for the moral support which the British Government gave this country during our war with Spain.” Had it not been for that support, the *Picayune* argued that continental European nations would have sided with Spain in that fight. Like the *Telegraph*, they pointed out that the US would not take it kindly if a European nation offered to mediate their conflict in the Philippines.⁷¹

While these papers pointed positively to the Philippines to dissuade Americans interested in arbitration, not all white Southern papers were supportive of that mission. In South Carolina, *The Weekly News and Courier* pointed to both the war in the Philippines and the Transvaal war as unjust undertakings. The South Carolina paper noted that “our brethren across the water have been doing their level best to foster the growth of our budding imperialistic ambitions.” This paper however did not see that as a reason to support the British. To them, the subjugation of the Philippines was as unjust as the British campaign against the Boers. Instead seeing British friendship as a positive force, the *News and Courier* argued that the US was violating its own moral philosophy in the Philippines. A few years before, the paper maintained, the US could have “become the self-elected champion of Republics, even though they were in the uttermost parts of the earth.” They echoed the words of the *World’s* letter and state that the US was even then “for commercial reasons, engaged in accomplishing the desolation of thousands of homes, slaughtering thousands of civilized men and drenching an archipelago with blood and tears.” The Philippines too, noted the paper, had a republican government. They predicted that McKinley

⁷¹ “The First Fight,” *The Daily Picayune*, October 14, 1899.

would pay as much attention to the Boer republic as he had the Filipino one.⁷² From North Carolina, the *News and Observer* agreed that “we are in the business of criminal aggression too deep to rebuke others.”⁷³ To those who opposed the US empire abroad, the Boer War was similarly a problem of empire that betrayed American principles.

Rarely white Southern papers related their own treatment of black Southerners to the conflict in the Transvaal. Though the *Arkansas Democrat* had repeatedly sided with the Boers in the conflict, they still posted a letter from a supporter of the British side. J.T. Duncan, the writer, brought up concepts of race and civilization in defending the Britons. According to Duncan, the British entered into the war to defend people of their own race, the Uitlanders, who were being oppressed by the Boers. He challenged the idea that the conflict was between a small republic and a powerful monarchy. Instead, he called the Boers an oligarchy. Calling upon recent Southern history, he claimed, “It may be laid down as a principle that neither the British nor American people are going to be dominated in the nineteenth century by a minority of an inferior race or by a race of lower civilization...we in the south have a standing example of that in the attitude towards the negro majority.”⁷⁴ In this argument, Duncan explicitly linked the Boers to black Southerners. According to him, they were both inferior races who had attempted to dominate a superior race. Like white Southerners, Duncan argued, Britons would not abide this treatment. The *Democrat* did not accept Duncan’s claims and responded the next day. The paper

⁷² “Not the Man for the Job,” *The Weekly News and Courier*, October 7, 1899.

⁷³ “Why We are Silent,” *The News and Observer*, November 30, 1899.

⁷⁴ J.T. Duncan, “Anglo-Boer War,” *The Arkansas Democrat*, November 1, 1899.

argued that the only proper lens to view this fight was by understanding Britain as a monarchy and the Boers as republicans. Though the editorial praised the British government as relatively tolerant and open, the editors refused to see it as anything other than a monarchy. In their words, Britain “is still a monarchy, where caste and aristocracy are basic principles. . . . The Boer is against this idea and he is fighting manfully to destroy it.”⁷⁵ For many white Southern papers, the case against the Boers was not as strong as what they saw as the basic principles of republican government.

As these letters to the editor suggest, the white South was divided in their opinion of the conflict. Throughout the weeks leading up to the beginning of the war and during its early days, white Southern papers repeatedly engaged in arguments with their readers over the proper interpretation of the war. They also occasionally responded to other newspapers which criticized their position. After *The Savannah Press* linked the *Macon Telegraph* to the New York press in supporting the British and declared that it regretted the Macon paper taking such a line, the *Telegraph* responded by further articulating why they sided with Briton over Boer. The deciding matter, to the Macon paper, was the refusal of the Boers to let European immigrants vote.⁷⁶ The *Charlotte Daily Observer* further underscored the divisions within the white South when the paper completely switched allegiances in the conflict. According to the *Observer*, the editor of the paper had gone on a long trip before the controversy erupted. Those who filled his position supported the Boers and published editorial and clippings in support of the Boer cause. However, when the editor, who

⁷⁵ “The Boer-British War,” *The Arkansas Democrat*, November 2, 1899.

⁷⁶ “In Good Company,” *The Macon Telegraph*, October 18, 1899.

was not named, returned, he changed the policy of the paper to support of the British cause.⁷⁷

The *News and Observer* from North Carolina further articulated these principles in an editorial titled, “The Era of the Meddler.” According to the North Carolina paper, the British and American imperialists were attempting to turn emergency measures into an international policy. The editorial distinguished between American intervention in Cuba with the Boer War. According to the *News and Observer*, the United States only fought Spain “when Spanish rule had become such an affront to civilization and such an offense against humanity that it was intolerable and dangerous to the United States.” They argued that it was no business of either the US or Britain if the Boers were behind the age. The editors claimed that the Boers had carved a republic in the face of “savage blacks and the land-grabbing and insolent English.” To them, the people of any republic should get to decide who was worthy of citizenship and noted that the United States itself had not only denied citizenship to the Chinese but actively barred their immigration.⁷⁸ Given the white South’s own efforts to disfranchise Southern blacks, it is surprising that this principle was not more widely shared throughout the South.

As the Boer War continued, white Southern papers discussed the results of each victory and setback for Britain. However, it was the discussions of its early days that saw the defining discussion of the conflict. As this section has demonstrated, white Southern journalists looked at the Boer War with a different set of priorities

⁷⁷ “Why It Is,” *The Charlotte Daily Observer*, October 27, 1899.

⁷⁸ “The Era of the Meddler,” *The News and Observer*, December 28, 1899.

than they had only a few years earlier. Though many papers continued to see the British Empire as hopelessly corrupt and defended the Boers as republican defenders of their own traditions, other white newspapers argued that the world had changed. No longer would the white South automatically attack the British for their actions in Africa. While five years earlier they had declared that the British had no standing to criticize Southern civilization, they were now describing the Empire as a great hope for African advancement. The Boer War too confused the terms of debate. Boer farmers were either whites defending their lands or they were racially other, marked by their commitment to the land and their treatment of black Africans as inferior to the more civilized British. In looking to this early commentary on an imperial conflict, we can see the white South engaging with the US's new role in the world.

Conclusion

In 1900, the *Atlanta Constitution* invited Africans to come to the Georgia to escape the British Empire: "If we could swap off some of our other foreign-born citizens for South African immigrants we could reap handsome profits out of the exchange." The *Constitution* was not in fact inviting more people of color to their region, but was instead encouraging defeated Boers to flee from their recently defeated country. According to the *Constitution*, the Boers could "realize many of the ideals of freedom under the stars and stripes—more than they could ever hope to realize under the flags which have now gone down in defeat." In the Boers, some white Southerners like those in charge of the Atlanta paper saw something of

themselves.⁷⁹ While some black leaders argued that American blacks should go to Africa to escape white Southern racism, some white Southern leaders sought white Africans to come to the US and saw them as their allies.

As this chapter has demonstrated, 1899 marked a year of shifting alliances in the relationships between the white South and the world. Though the *Constitution* and other papers would continue to side with the Boers, other white Southern papers began to see the world differently than they had before the Spanish-American War. Britons too looked at new testimony from the South. Although Booker T. Washington already had a reputation in the United States, British newspapers had not really discussed his work before 1899. In that year, however, they turned to him to explain the black experience in the South. Their reactions to him were quite different from those sought by Wells, and Washington left Britain with friends but not with allies as Wells had.

In the twentieth century, white Southerners would be deeply connected to South Africa, and black Americans would continue to struggle for their rights in a segregated South. Ida Wells would continue her fights against lynching and racism into the twentieth century, but she never would reclaim the international allies she had in 1894. This chapter explains how the US South became accustomed to empire and began to accept the white man's burden as their own. By accepting empire as a civilizing mission rather than a project of thievery and domination, white Southerners began to see empire as a project that they could understand and accommodate. In redefining empire, they made a new relationship for themselves to the world.

⁷⁹ "Boer Immigrants Welcome," *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 6, 1900.

Conclusion: The US South, Empire, and the Color Line

As W.E.B. Du Bois famously noted in his 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk*, “The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.”¹ This dissertation has attempted to explain how trans-Atlantic conversations during the last decades of the nineteenth century influenced and were influenced regional and transnational constructions of color lines all over the world. Over the course of the twentieth century, groups across the world from each other would confront the problem of the color line, including in the US South.

Making the US South a part of that construction occurred against the backdrop of white Southern criticism of imperialism. It was only in the early twentieth century that white US Southerners came to accept their color line as connected to the imperial world. During the decades leading up to the twentieth century, white Southerners vocally opposed what they saw in European imperialism. They regarded it as corrupt, monarchical, anti-democratic, and kleptocratic. They imagined that the US North had colonized the South after the Civil War, and they attributed their own economic misfortunes to this colonial relationship to the North and to British bankers who they posited controlled the British Empire. To US Southerners, empire was an entirely uncivilized undertaking, and more than any other European empire, they singled out the British Empire as especially worthy of condemnation. When white Southern politicians and journalists attacked the British Anti-Lynching Committee by

¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1903), p. xxxi.

criticizing British imperialism, they were drawing on images of empire that they had been constructing for decades.

Yet, at the beginning of the twentieth century, they were claiming the white man's burden and its connections to the imperial mission as their own. White Southerners did not come to accept their links to imperialism because they became friendlier to Britons but instead called upon empire because it helped them prop up their own construction of white supremacy. In a short period, they came to define empire less in terms of what it was taking from the South and more as weapon to be used to defend white supremacy. This acceptance of empire was a part of white Southern attempts to define their region that both drew from earlier discussions of empire and marked a break with them. White Southern articulations of the imperial mission only came about after they had confronted black Southerners and Britons who sought to improve the lives of black Southerners by condemning their treatment at the hands of Southern whites.

In the 1880s and 1890s white Southerners used many tactics to discredit critics of the South, and to define the South as more civilized than European imperial states. They also drew from controversies that had erupted in the South during their own recent history. White Southerners reacted to the changes that affected their region, industrialization, race riots, wartime devastation, the growing black middle class, the poverty of rural life in the South, by looking abroad for enemies and reading their relationship to the North as a proxy for their relationship to empires. In Irish Home Rule, white Southerners saw a way of drawing Northern and British attention away from white supremacy in the South and instead presenting white

Southern home rule as an extension of movements all over the world. In defining themselves against the British Empire during the Venezuela crisis and the debates over international bimetallism, they also sought to portray their own civilization as superior to that of the British Empire and suffering because of British greed. These discourses marked the South as distinct from the world and positioned the US South at the head of supposedly worldwide movements toward local democracy, the revaluation of silver currency, or a more activist American foreign policy. Yet, they also demonstrate white Southern strivings to use the world to defend their independence from the North. Calling upon empire and the white man's burden in the early twentieth century was yet another attempt to keep Northerners from interfering with the development of their region.

Black Southerners worked to make Southern whites unsuccessful in their attempts to define the South to the world outside of it. They attempted to use the world outside the South to gain allies in their struggles against white violence in the South. Rather than define white Southern civilization as superior to European empires, they instead positioned the South as distinctly uncivilized. When Ida B. Wells traveled to Britain, she interrupted both white Southern discourses that promoted the New South as better than the old and their justifications for lynching black men and women there. By tapping into the Nonconformist conscience of Britain and the country's Liberal press, she momentarily revealed white violence against black Southerners for what it was: concerted efforts on the part of white Southerners keep Southern blacks subservient to them. Her campaigns, and British responses to them, reveal the underlying tensions at play in white Southern

definitions of themselves. White Southern definitions of the South only worked when they were the ones setting the terms of the debate, whether to white British travelers who supported the aims of Southern white supremacy or to Northerners eager to take up the imperial mission abroad.

In participating in these conversations, white and black Southerners and Britons created images of both the US South and the British Empire that only at times revealed a deep engagement and understanding of the ways in which the people who lived in these places understood their place in the world. What is important is not so much their accuracy but in what it reveals about the ways in which the outside world factored into the lives and imaginations of peoples across the world from each other. Few of the men and women cited above actually traveled to the locations that they both criticized and used as examples. When they did, they brought with them the controversies and debates of their own regions to the parts of the other country that they witnessed. British coverage of the New Orleans lynching spoke to their own concerns about debates over Irish Home rule and their understanding of black disfranchisement in South Carolina underscored elite British worries over the enfranchisement of lower-class men. In looking abroad, Britons and Southerners interpreted the world in ways that supported their campaigns at home.

This way of using the world to underscore controversies at home would continue in the early twentieth century. In looking to the US empire, black activists would continue to paint white Southerners as uncivilized, but they were not able to bring the same attention to white Southern racism that Wells did. In 1904, New York journalist T. Thomas Fortune argued that white Southerners were particularly bad

imperialists. Editor of the *New York Age*, an influential black newspaper, and friend to both Ida B. Wells and Booker T. Washington, Fortune was vocal advocate for black rights at this time. In a series of articles in the *Voice of the Negro* in 1904, Fortune argued that white Southern racism toward Filipinos made them unfit to carry out a civilizing mission. In Fortune's telling, white Southern racism bred resentment, and resentment undermined the whole point of trying to bring civilization to the supposedly uncivilized Filipinos. According to Fortune, the only way for the mission to succeed would for the US to send more black men to the islands to work with the Filipinos instead of treating them like children.² Fortune's account also used the imperial mission to condemn the racism that black men faced in their home country. He argued that the United States owed it to its the black population to send them to a place where they could avail themselves of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," which they could not receive in at home.³ And in their new land they would find a people who were unable to conceptualize race prejudice.⁴ It is difficult not to read Fortune's articles about white Southerners in the Philippines as a direct response to white Southern claims of expertise on the white man's burden. For Fortune, the imperial mission could not be undertaken by white men who exported Southern constructions of white supremacy.

That Fortune would make such claims demonstrates the continuing construction and revision that concepts like empire and civilization underwent

² T. Thomas Fortune, "The Filipino," *The Voice of the Negro*, March 1904 (I: 3), p. 95-96

³ T. Thomas Fortune, "The Filipino," *The Voice of the Negro*, June 1904 (I: 6), p. 246.

⁴ T. Thomas Fortune, "The Filipino," *The Voice of the Negro*, May 1904 (I: 5), p. 201

through the twentieth century. In this case, he revised the argument of Carlyle McKinley, a white Southern journalist, and W. Laird Clowes, a Briton who both wanted to send black Americans to Africa to participate in the civilizing of that region. Instead of seeing black inferiority as a reason for sending black Southerners out of the South like McKinley and Clowes, in Fortune's case it was white Southern inferiority that made it necessary to send black Americans abroad. Despite Fortune's argument, there was no increase in black emigration to the Philippines, but his frustration with Southern white racism and the structural racism of US Southern life was matched by black men and women in the South. Many of them would leave the region in the first half of the twentieth century to seek better opportunities in the North. Fortune's criticism of American imperialism did not cause much controversy in the US. As with Booker T. Washington's anti-lynching statement, without the vocal support of an organization in Britain or elsewhere, black criticisms of the US South did not have the same sting that they had had only a decade before.

As the pages above have documented, the last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed transnational dialogues that contested the meanings of civilization, empire, and race in the US South and Britain. Constructions of race, empire, and civilization were at once regional and transnational. Within the US South especially, definitions of race relations, manliness, civilization, and empire rested on the ways in which white and black Southerners interacted with each other and the ways they looked to peoples outside the South. Through conversation and contestation, Southern whites and blacks, and Britons identified both what it meant to be a part of the

civilized world and how each looked to the other to define their relationship to that world.

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¹ Many, but by no means all, of these newspapers are collected in digital form. Databases consulted for this project include: 19th Century British Newspapers, 19th Century American Newspapers, American Historical Newspapers, and Proquest's Historical Newspapers series.

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Biography

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