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## When George Washington's Ghost Turned Handsprings: South African Conflict and American Identity, 1899-1902

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## Introduction

"This Nation's heart, say what men may  
Who butcher Peace and barter Truth,  
Beats true as on its natal day,  
Beats true as in its battle-youth,  
Beats true to Freedom, true to Truth,  
Whatever Tories dare to say.  
Of all who fought with Washington  
One Arnold was and only one.  
Christ chose but twelve, yet one poor soul  
Sold God for silver. Ever thus  
Some taint, and even so with Us:  
But Freedom thrills the whole."

—Joaquin Miller, "To Ye Fighting Lords of London Town," from *Chants for the Boer* (1900).<sup>1</sup>

From 1899 to 1902, the world's foremost superpower—under the pretext of defending "liberty"—engaged two white supremacist republics in the interior of Africa in a bitter and destructive struggle for dominance.<sup>2</sup> For almost three years—years that also witnessed horrific wars in the Philippines and China, the death of Queen Victoria, the assassination of an American president and the dawning of a new century—the world was riveted to the conflict. Its scale far surpassed that of other colonial wars: by June 1902 almost half a million British troops were stationed in southern Africa, striving with

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<sup>1</sup> Joaquin Miller, *Chants for the Boer* (San Francisco, Calif.: Whitaker & Ray, 1900): 11.

<sup>2</sup> This thesis is the culmination of two years of research and discussion, and would not have been possible without the good offices, advice, and kindness of a multitude of people and institutions. Special thanks are due to the research librarians at the Library of Congress, the Library of Virginia, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the National Archives and Records Administration at Adelphi, Maryland, the New Jersey Historical Society, the New York Public Library, the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia, the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University, the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary, and the Virginia Historical Society, who were so willing to advise and enlighten such a novice to archival research as myself. Thanks also to the Roy R. Charles Center, the Renick and Tyler families, and the Lyon G. Tyler Department of History at the College of William and Mary for their generous financial support of my project. I am indebted to Professors George Greenia, Cindy Hahamovitch, Kay Jenkins, and Robert Vinson for providing invaluable inspiration to spur me along on this great journey. My heart is full of gratitude for the support and camaraderie of fellow honors students, especially Kelsey Schneider and Catharine Strycharz, as well as the Rev. John Maxwell Kerr and the men and women of the Canterbury Association at the College of William and Mary, who have continually reminded me of how truly fortunate I am.

limited success to suppress a Republikeinse fighting force probably no larger than sixty thousand at its height.<sup>3</sup> Thirty thousand farms were burned, and three and a half million sheep were slaughtered in the interest of quashing the Republikeinse insurgency.<sup>4</sup> Twenty-eight thousand white Republikeinse died in the infamous British concentration camps, the vast majority of whom were children—yet this is probably at least matched by the number of black and colored South Africans thought to have died in camps alone (the war's full death toll being surely much greater).<sup>5</sup> To regard it flippantly as "the last of the gentlemen's wars" or even "the last enjoyable war" (to quote Winston Churchill) would be a callous error.<sup>6</sup> The stakes were high all around. For the Dutch-speaking white citizens of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, it was a fight for political survival against a geopolitical behemoth bent on exploiting their mineral wealth and curtailing their independence. For Britain the war was an unpleasant performance under the watchful gaze of a mostly hostile world: could the great empire live up to its rhetoric? Did it deserve its superpower reputation? For the disfranchised, coerced and persecuted black and colored Africans who made up the majority of southern Africa's population—without whose labor a massive land war could never have occurred—the stakes were also high. Surely the union of southern Africa under British administration would mean a more enlightened approach to questions of race, land ownership, and political participation—at least that was the hope. The reality, as in so many other things South African, was far more complicated.

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<sup>3</sup> R.W. Johnson, *South Africa: The First Man, The Last Nation* (London, U.K.: Phoenix, 2006):102.

<sup>4</sup> Byron Farwell, *The Great Boer War* (London, U.K.: Allen Lane, 1977): 353.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, *South Africa*, 103; 105.

<sup>6</sup> Bill Nasson, *The South African War, 1899-1902* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1999): vii; Donal Lowry, "'The Boers Were the Beginning of the End?' The Wider Impact of the South African War," in *The South African War Reappraised*, ed. Donal Lowry (New York, N.Y.: Manchester University Press, 2000): 229; the second quote is attributed to Churchill by J. Colville.

Americans, despite their distance from the front and a busy domestic news cycle, were by no means oblivious to the protean brawl raging thousands of miles away. In December 1901, even as the conflict descended to its gridlocked nadir, John E. Milholland (father of the prominent suffrage activist Inez Milholland) could write matter-of-factly that "in all human affairs I know nothing so important as this War in South Africa; so far reaching in its effects upon our advancing civilization"<sup>7</sup> As of December 1899, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt was "absorbed in interest in the Boer War," while two years later at Harvard University, his distant cousin Franklin Delano Roosevelt entered the fray as an organizer for the Boer Relief Fund—just one of a dizzying profusion of pro-Boer and anti-war organizations formed in the United States while the war raged on.<sup>8</sup> Today however, the war has all but disappeared from American collective memory, and is unfamiliar even to serious students of American history. As Byron Farwell observed in the preface to his 1977 narrative history *The Great Boer War*, "Americans remember the war but none of its details, and they have completely forgotten their own interest and involvement in it."<sup>9</sup> If Farwell's assessment was accurate in 1977, his words ring even truer today, when the South African War (if mentioned at all), is treated in collegiate history courses as little more than a remote colonial conflict—"Britain's Vietnam"; perhaps even "Britain's first War on Terror," but little more.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John E. Milholland to W. Bourke Cockran, Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>, 1900, box 1, folder 10, William Bourke Cockran Papers (MssColl 582), The New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.

<sup>8</sup> Roosevelt to Cecil Spring Rice, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1899; quoted in Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, 145; "Boer Relief Fund," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1902, accessed September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1902/3/17/boer-relief-fund-pseveral-members-of/>>.

<sup>9</sup> Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, xiii.

<sup>10</sup> See Johnson, *South Africa*, 104-105, for an example of the Britain's Vietnam trope appearing within a concise description of the conflict. See also Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, xii.

This state of affairs is regrettable, not only because ignorance of the impact of the South African War on the United States (and vice versa) constitutes such a significant lacuna in historians' understanding of the era, but also because it exemplifies the estrangement of American experiences from those of Britain's other "white colonies"—not only South Africa, but also Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. To continue ignoring America's role in the South African War is to thwart a meaningful and productive investigation into the story of the British-ruled settlement colony.

That latter term—"settlement colony"—frequently used in colonial studies to distinguish colonies that promoted white settlement as opposed to indirect exploitation, is rarely applied to the United States as an independent country. Most students of American history, however, will acknowledge that the distinction between pre- and post-1776 America is not so absolute. Most historians of American slavery, racism, diplomacy, immigration and commerce would agree that the independent America of the earlier federal period was not built from scratch; rather, it was heavily informed and influenced by colonial structures and ideas.<sup>11</sup> It is clear, then, that for colonial studies such an artificial and (for American scholars) self-centered understanding of the United States ought to be cast aside. Thus when Walter LaFeber speaks of Cuban, Hawaiian and Philippine annexation in *The New Empire* as "a natural culmination" of events, he refers

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<sup>11</sup> The question of racism's genesis in America—the so-called "origins debate"—has spawned a voluminous literature since the mid twentieth century, much of which has been focused on the Virginia Tidewater in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See, for example Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Towards the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1975); Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

to an American expansionist impulse that was just as "colonial" as it was "imperial."<sup>12</sup> It has been a few decades since writers like John Cell and George Frederickson first began charting the parallels between the American and South African racial milieux, but their admirable work is only a starting point.<sup>13</sup> In addition to a comparative mode of analysis, bringing America into the settlement colony fold, a connective dimension is necessary—an acknowledgement that, despite their collective amnesia, Americans of diverse backgrounds were consistently in dialogue with their overseas counterparts, working by turns collaboratively and contentiously through the challenges of living in an Anglo-Saxon "daughter state."

This paper is rooted, then, in the premise that the facts of America's political genesis (as a confederation of former settlement colonies on a foreign continent) suggest both real and imagined similarities with South African history, similarities that quite naturally precipitated dialogue when the time came. For both emerging nations cultural, social, and linguistic heterogeneity was an ineluctable fact. The Cape Colony, established in 1652 by the Dutch East India Company, grew by 1910 to encompass an enormous variety of Khoisan-, Bantu-, Dutch/Afrikaans-, and English-speaking populations (not to mention the impact of twentieth century African, Indian, and Chinese immigration). Likewise the United States, though politically linked with the 1607 establishment of Jamestown, united (in law if not in spirit) the populations of former

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<sup>12</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963): vii.

<sup>13</sup> See John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1982); George M. Frederickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1995); *Ibid.*, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1981). In its own way W.A. de Klerk's curious volume *The Puritans in Africa: A Story of Afrikanerdom* (New York, N.Y.: Pelican, 1976) can even fit into this category.

French, Spanish, Dutch, Swedish, Russian, Mexican, and indigenous polities (again, before one even considers the impact of subsequent immigration). Both South Africa and the U.S. carry a burdensome legacy of slavery and official sociopolitical oppression. Both territories experienced colonial struggles with the British metropole, and in both countries a self-conscious frontier ethos emerged, uniting white supremacist thought, elements of Protestant Christianity, and a history of violence against native peoples.

An equally crucial premise, apprehended by many of the American protagonists of this story, is the fact that the United States of 1895-1905 was quite different from the United States of 1776. To argue that America had "fundamentally" or "essentially" changed at some particular point during the nineteenth century is to paint with too broad a brush, yet the impact of over a century of independence (not to mention the great shock of the American Civil War), meant that the axioms of American self-identity by 1895 had become somewhat fragile as the economic and geopolitical stature of the U.S. continued to increase. By 1895, America could be mythically constituted any number of ways: as the pious and egalitarian nation of the Pilgrim Fathers, the ethno-racial nation of the Anglo-Saxons, the bi-racial union of Lincoln's second inaugural address, the agrarian democracy of Jefferson, the capitalist powerhouse of Cornelius Vanderbilt, or any combination thereof. As American prestige and influence waxed and commentators like the British newspaper editor W.T. Stead began to speak of "the Americanization of the world," Americans sought and discovered powerful yet increasingly contradictory referents through which to explain their past, present and future.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See W.T. Stead, *The Americanization of the World: The Trend of the Twentieth Century* (New York, N.Y.: Horace Markley, 1901); Fred A. McKenzie, *The American Invaders: Their Plans, Tactics, and*

The territory that would become South Africa in the wake of the 1899-1902 war had also experienced momentous nineteenth century change. By 1899 it had been revolutionized, most directly by a quick succession of mineral booms in which American businessmen and mining engineers played a key role. Long derided as a faraway backwater, by 1899 it seemed that southern Africa's moment had finally come, as immigration, industrial capital, and the trappings of urbanity poured into newly-throbbing mining camps and cities, a story that might just as well have been set in California, Montana, or the Arizona Territory. All comparisons aside however, by the time war broke out between Republikeinse commandoes in the Transvaal and British forces, many Americans were quite ambivalent about which side to support. Notwithstanding the war's possible parallels with the American Revolutionary War, even figures as rugged and brash as Vice President Theodore Roosevelt (the scion of a wealthy Dutch-American family, no less) approached the crisis with an uneasy circumspection. Though the U.S. government loudly (and disingenuously) proclaimed its equanimity throughout the war, for many Americans the trouble in southern Africa made for a restless and confused neutrality.

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Perhaps one reason for the distressing absence of the South African War from American historical thought is the rank inadequacy of the tiny core of specialist texts which constitute the historiographical bedrock of this subject.<sup>15</sup> All is not right when the

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*Progress* (New York, N.Y.: Street & Smith, 1901) for examples of the more alarmist of the contemporary literature regarding America's rise.

<sup>15</sup> A key reason for writing this study is the diffuse nature of historical information on this subject. Dedicated texts such as the ones described in this section tend to focus inordinately on diplomatic history, yet a text as colossal as George C. Herring's 1,035 page history of American foreign relations contains only



premier text in a particular sub-field is seventy-five years old. John H. Ferguson's *American Diplomacy and the Boer War* was published in 1939, and one searches in vain for an English language text to supplant it. It represents the first attempt at a comprehensive study of American policy during the war, and why, specifically, there seemed to exist such a disconnect between public opinion (divided, but broadly pro-Republican), and the pro-British sympathies of the Republican administration, notwithstanding official State Department policy. While Ferguson understands the American government's conduct during the war to be legally proper and ultimately for the best, he does not mince words when he observes that "the American government acted throughout the war as if in friendly alliance with England, and by doing so did much to prevent intervention by European powers, thus assuring the annihilation of the Boer republics."<sup>16</sup> While most strongly concerned with the official angle on the subject, *American Diplomacy and the Boer War* includes a useful chapter on the pro-Republican propaganda effort, noting how the use of propaganda during the war (to great effect in Europe, if not quite the United States) foreshadowed the essential role it would play in subsequent twentieth century wars—as well as the difficulty pro-Republican elements faced in spurring the United States towards useful action on their

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one reference to the South African war, with no treatment of American opinion on the subject (official or otherwise). See George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2008): 308. America merits only a few trifling sentences in Bill Nasson's history of the South African War, yet buried within Tyler Dennett's 1933 biography of Secretary of State John Hay one finds provocative words. "It is common to date the emergence of the United States as a world power from the Spanish-American War" Dennett observes, "but actually it was during the period of the Boer War, from October, 1899, to June, 1902, that the American government made its position recognized and secure." The task, then, is not so much to demonstrate the importance of the South African War for American history, but to draw the conclusions of past scholars out of their hiding places, apply them to a less ghettoized understanding of U.S. history, and modify them accordingly. See Nasson, *The South African War*, 164-165; Tyler Dennett, *John Hay: From Poetry to Politics* (New York, N.Y.: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1933): 240.

<sup>16</sup> John H. Ferguson, *American Diplomacy and the Boer War* (Philadelphia, Penn.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939): ix.

behalf. Written only a few decades after the war, it is quite understandably a bit dated. Ferguson's greatest shortcoming, however, is his exclusive focus on American archival sources for his analysis, missing many useful South African archives, including the correspondence of the important American-born Orange Free State consul and activist Charles D. Pierce. It yields "a well-organized, coherent narrative account," to quote William Tilchin, yet at the same time it is "legalistic and time-bound, and its interpretations lack insight and imagination."<sup>17</sup> It makes a fine introduction, but cries out for something better.

In 1978 the diplomatic historian Thomas Noer responded to Ferguson with a fresh perspective (if idiosyncratic execution) in *Briton, Boer and Yankee: The United States and South Africa, 1870-1914*; "a curious little book," according to Shula Marks, "which in places betrays and unforgivable ignorance of the basic facts of South African history and geography."<sup>18</sup> While still locating the war within the broader process of Anglo-American rapprochement following the Spanish-American War, its main innovation concerns of the magnitude of American influence in southern Africa in the years leading up to war—in both the mining sector and trade generally.<sup>19</sup> Without neglecting the British angle, Noer attempts the admirable work of turning a spotlight on South Africa itself: not always successfully, but often usefully. Wading into an increasingly loud debate then raging in American society over how to approach apartheid South Africa, Noer applies the same

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<sup>17</sup> William N. Tilchin, "The United States and the Boer War," in *The International Impact of the Boer War*, Keith Wilson, ed. (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave, 2001): 121.

<sup>18</sup> Shula Marks, "Scrambling for South Africa," *The Journal of African History* 23.1 (1982): 109.

<sup>19</sup> In this he responds to Myra S. Goldstein's earlier call for historians to better "recognize the importance of the relations of the United States with the countries of Africa." Noer's book in many ways picks up where Goldstein's dissertation leaves off. See Myra S. Goldstein, "The Genesis of Modern American Relations with South Africa, 1895-1914 (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 1972): 5.

dilemma to the late nineteenth century: "Which group in South Africa is most favorable to American goals and what methods should be used to support that faction?"<sup>20</sup> In Noer's view, the U.S. government's Anglophilic approach to the region was a foregone conclusion, anticipated as early as the 1870's in Commodore Robert Shufeldt's naval reports, which derided the Dutch-speaking Transvaalers and Free Staters as "surly in their immense farms—never learning and never forgetting anything" and predicted the rise of a British-led South African nation "possessing all of the characteristics and qualities of Anglo-Saxon nationalities"—primed for economic expansion and American capitalist enterprise (Shufeldt's son, incidentally, would attain prominence as a white supremacist writer, author of such august titles as 1907's *The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization*).<sup>21</sup> By supporting Britain in the war, Noer argues, American elites hoped to gain access to a postwar South African bonanza. Yet the promised payout never came. Pre-war American inroads alarmed the British, Noer observes, and American became victims of their own success as the new colonial administration enacted protectionist laws. As soon as 1903, when American exports to southern Africa reached an all-time high at over thirty million dollars, American trade began to plummet, as "a bitter conflict [ensued] between the two English-speaking powers for control of the South African market."<sup>22</sup> Not until after World War I would U.S. exports again achieve such success. While instructive and illuminating, Noer's attempt to frame the period in terms of Americo-South African rather than Anglo-American relations in the end rather overstates

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas J. Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee: The United States and South Africa, 1870-1914* (Kent, Oh.: The Kent State University Press, 1978): ix.

<sup>21</sup> Robert W. Shufeldt (Jr.), *The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization* (Boston, Mass.: The Gorham Press, 1907); Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93.

the importance of South African trade. It is true that many American insiders saw southern Africa as an emerging market, but the prospect of future trade was simply not a significant factor within broader American discourses (notwithstanding the great importance of trade and commerce as an abstract social value, as this paper will show). Capitalism was frequently put on trial in the course of the war, but almost always amid a broad debate over civilization and values—not public policy.

Published in 1994, Richard Mulanax's *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy*, marked a return to the Fergusonian scheme for writing about the war in American life. Pushing back hard against Noer for arguing that "American interests were driven by interests internal to South Africa," he re-oriented the topic around Anglo-American rapprochement<sup>23</sup> Ultimately however, Mulanax contributes little to challenge Ferguson's general thesis of American diplomatic success, though he accuses others of neglecting "the degree of difficulty faced by American statesmen in achieving that policy"<sup>24</sup> Despite Mulanax's use of a much wider range of archival material, one is inclined to join Tilchin in concluding that Ferguson wrote the better book. "The inadequacies of *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy* are so large in quantity and so fundamental in nature," from poor organization and typesetting to outright historical errors, "that the book's value is ultimately very limited."<sup>25</sup> If Mulanax

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<sup>23</sup> Richard B. Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994): 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Tilchin, "The United States and the Boer War," 121.

and Louis Changuion (discussed below) really cooperated as closely as the latter claims, it is remarkable that works of such disparate quality could have resulted.<sup>26</sup>

Mulanax's chapters on American politics and public opinion are most relevant to this study, yet despite exhaustive research into manuscripts and the journalism of the period, his conclusions are as prosaic as Ferguson's, identifying a clear tension in American self image, but doing little to explore or drive home its possible significance. Alluding to the shifts in American identity evident in archival sources, Mulanax comes closest to the mark when he observes that

The craftier moralists demanded policies that, if carried out, risked war, but they did so with the assurance that such policies would never prevail. Thus they assumed a position of moral righteousness without taking any risks, or so they thought. The World of 1899 was a much different place than the World of 1897, and policies that were riskless for the United States early in the decade could wreak havoc by the end of the decade. America had emerged onto the world stage, like it or not.<sup>27</sup>

Thus while Mulanax's research is potentially compelling, his arguments ultimately trace back to colorless and parochial discussions of American foreign policy, a tendency that the literature badly needs to transcend in order to capture the true American significance of the war.

Perhaps the best attempt to do this is also the most recent: Louis Changuion's 2001 *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull: Amerika en die Anglo-Boereoorlog*. Tragically available solely in Afrikaans, it combines the rigor of Mulanax's source material with a broader approach to the events themselves, integrating public opinion, official U.S. actions, and Republikeinse propaganda efforts in a lavishly illustrated

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<sup>26</sup> Louis Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull: Amerika en die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902* (Pretoria, South Africa: Protea, 2001): iv.

<sup>27</sup> Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy*, 108.

volume that goes further than any other text in bringing the period to life. Approaching the topic from a self-consciously South African perspective, Changuion quotes C. F. J. Muller in arguing that "a thorough and informative South African history cannot base itself solely on South African sources." "I soon realized," explains Changuion,

that there was much more to say about American involvement, and that other aspects of the subject justified deeper studies that might occupy several volumes. It struck and interested me most that the U.S.A. was able to terminate the war if it wished. To some extent the same situation existed in the years 1970 to 1989 when South Africa was dependent on the U.S.A.'s friendship and support in order to confront an enemy (in this case communism).<sup>28</sup>

Once again the specter of apartheid-era South Africa is invoked to create continuity between distant and recent pasts. Yet, however one appraises Changuion's comparison, English-only researchers should be advised that his study is an important contribution to the field, ignored at one's own peril.

Naturally, of course, it has its own shortcomings as well. While its faithful focus on the failure of the American pro-Republikeinse movement and its South African organizers to bring about favorable changes in American policy is refreshing and productive, that failure deserves further investigation and requires a deeper understanding of the late nineteenth century American landscape than Changuion provides. African-American perspectives, addressed to some degree in Noer but ignored in other works, are also glaringly absent; though published in 2001; the preoccupations of the book bespeak

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<sup>28</sup> Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*, iii. All translations from Afrikaans are my own, taken from a near-complete translation I made over several weeks in the summer of 2013. Though my knowledge of Afrikaans is limited, with the help of a good dictionary—Jan Kromhout's *Afrikaans-English/English-Afrikaans Practical Dictionary* (New York, N.Y.: Hippocrene, 2000)—I feel I can stand by the veracity of my translations. It is worth noting that in contrast to Mulanax's aggressively spartan volume, Changuion's text is illustrated on almost every page, printed on glossy paper, and much larger than its American counterpart (Changuion's introduction discusses consulting Mulanax in the course of writing *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*; see note 21). The superficial differences testify powerfully to differences in the way the South African War is remembered today in the United States and South Africa.

a clear Eurocentric bias as problematic in the American sphere as on the South African side of things. To speak of "American opinion," moreover, is necessarily misleading: one should rather speak of "American opinions" or, better yet, "Americans' opinions"—a phrase that better captures the diversity of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Just as the efforts of authors like William B. Gatewood Jr. and Bill Nasson have strove admirably to problematize the notion of the South African War as a white man's war, the time has come to desegregate a system that shunts American "black opinion," into a separate discourse.<sup>29</sup> To investigate "Americans' opinions" must mean both those of both black and white, acknowledging their disparate outlooks, but ghettoizing neither as a special case.<sup>30</sup>

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It is impossible to approach South African history without encountering words that are steeped in controversy and patterns of oppression. It is, therefore, crucially important to be deliberate about one's word choice, and furthermore to be open about that deliberative process. In many cases it would appear that the terminological minefield of South African history has left no ideal choices at scholars' disposal, the 1899-1902 war itself serving as a case in point. In recent scholarship the term "South African War" has risen to prominence over such other names as the Second Boer War, the Second Anglo-

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<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the most important work of this nature is Bill Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War: A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> There are a handful of works that do, in fact, deal with African American views of the South African War, though they are seldom found cited in the dedicated, diplomatically-focused histories. The most useful works are Willard B. Gatewood Jr., "Black Americans and the Boer War, 1899-1902," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 75.2 (1976), 227-244; Sylvia M. Jacobs, *The African Nexus: Black American Perspectives on the European Partitioning of Africa, 1880-1920* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981): 135-168; Clement Tsehloane Keto, "Black Americans and South Africa, 1890-1910," *Current Bibliography on African Affairs* 5 (1972), 383-406; *ibid.*, "Black American Involvement in South Africa's Race Issue," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 3.1 (1973), 6-11.

Boer War, *die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog* (Second War of Freedom; an Afrikaner nationalist label), or, most simply, the Boer War (the "First Anglo-Boer War" of 1880-1881 would be rechristened the Transvaal War under such a scheme). To be sure, the shift towards "the South African War" has been a positive development insofar as it excises the troublesome word "Boer" from the title and better reflects the widespread and too often neglected participation of black, colored (mixed-race), and Indian southern Africans in the war.<sup>31</sup> While "the South African War" is not without its own faults as a descriptor (most egregiously its Anglocentricity, as if it were the only war ever fought in a "South Africa" that legally did not even exist until 1910), it is the name that will be used in this investigation outside of quoted sources.

This paper's use of "Republikeinse" to denote the Orange Free State and South African Republic in preference to "Boer republics" bears particular explaining. Unusual as it may seem, it seeks to remedy a formidable terminological dilemma. The word "Boer," whose plain meaning as "farmer" is retained in modern Dutch and Afrikaans, was originally used in English to refer pejoratively to the Dutch-speaking settlers who left the Cape Colony in the Great Trek of the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1890's however, the word had been appropriated by the descendants of the *Trekboere* and was the term most generally used to refer to white citizens of the Free State and the S.A.R. "Afrikaner" or—more commonly—"Afrikander" was in the 1890's and 1900's a newer term whose precise meaning had yet to really emerge; in any case it would be imprudent

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<sup>31</sup> See "South African War," in Christopher Saunders and Nicholas Southey, *Historical Dictionary of South Africa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2000): 238-239. For more on black, coloured, and Indian participation in the war, see Hulme T. Siwundhla, "White Ideologies and Non-European Participation in the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902," *Journal of Black Studies* 15.2 (1984), 223-234; Christopher Saunders, "African Attitudes to Britain and the Empire Before and After the South African War" in Lowry, *The South African War Reappraised*, 140-149; Balasubramanyam Chandramohan, "'Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark Left Out'?: The South African War, Empire, and India" in *ibid.*, 150-168.



to refer to a conflict between Britons and "Afrikaners" since thousands of the latter lived in the British-ruled Cape Colony throughout the war and were generally loyal to the Empire.<sup>32</sup> By the end of apartheid in the last decade of the twentieth century the war "Boer" again became problematic; rather like the word "redneck" in American English, what is still worn as a mark of pride for some conservative Afrikaners for others is a slur evoking the very worst of South Africa's racist past<sup>33</sup> "Republican" would be an alternative ill-suited this paper due to its frequent references to the American Republican Party. Therefore Republikeinse, an Afrikaans adjective with the same meaning, is put forward instead to distinguish white citizens of the Orange Free State and South African Republic as a historical group. When the word "Boer" is found outside quoted sources, most noticeably in Chapter II, it refers to the result of essentialist discourses on the Republikeinse people—a construct fashioned from the accounts of writers and eyewitnesses pitched towards a captivated American public intent on making sense of the situation in southern Africa. Indeed, the peculiar gulf between the actual Republikeinse cause and the various American constructs of "the Boer" stands at the heart of this investigation.

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<sup>32</sup> For more on the sentiments of the "Cape Dutch," see Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, 155-156 or Mordechai Tamarkin, "The Cape Afrikaners and the British Empire from the Jameson Raid to the South African War" in Lowry, *The South African War Reappraised*, 121-139.

<sup>33</sup> See "Afrikaners," "Boers," and "Trekboers," in Saunders and Southey, *Historical Dictionary of South Africa*, 11; 39; 261. The complex connotations of the word in the twenty-first century are perhaps best exemplified by the recent controversy surrounding (now former) African National Congress Youth League President Julius Malema's hate speech trial for singing the popular anti-apartheid song "Dubula iBhunu" ("Shoot the Boer") at party events (Melissa du Preez, "A.N.C., Malema, Afriforum Settle on 'Shoot the Boer' Controversy," *Mail & Guardian*, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012, accessed October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <<http://mg.co.za/article/2012-10-31-00-shoot-the-boer-debate-put-to-rest>>.). At the same time, President Jacob Zuma proudly commented in 2011 on his willingness to speak to South Africans who identified as "Boere" (Pieter du Toit and Lizel Steenkamp, "Afrikaners Must Find Their Own Nkandla—Zuma," *News24*, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011, accessed October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Politics/Afrikaners-must-find-their-own-Nkandla-Zuma-20110216>>.).

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This paper is divided into four parts.<sup>34</sup> The first chapter, "Manifesting Destinies," concisely presents relevant historical information on the United States and southern Africa to 1896, setting the stage for the Jameson Raid and John Hays Hammond trail that for many Americans would mark the first time southern Africa had ever entered into their consciousness. Crucially though, the chapter also treats the pre-history of South African-American relations—a surprisingly complex story stretching all the way back to the 1799 appointment of John Elmslie as U.S. Consul at Cape Town (and, before even that, to colonial era trade).<sup>35</sup> Two things will be hopefully be seen clearly as a result: first, that the story of southern African-American relations prior to the twentieth century is not simply that of Anglo-American relations on a smaller scale, and second, that even though southern Africa would remain obscure to most Americans until the late 1890's, the pre-Jameson Raid interests and impressions certain Americans had of southern Africa exerted a considerable impact on the subsequent relationship between the two.

Secure in these broad foundations, "Uncivilized Whiteness" zeroes in on the years leading up to and immediately following the Jameson Raid, delving further into American impressions of southern Africa and how those impressions began to shape themselves into narratives that would hold throughout the war years. By focusing on the perspectives of people like John Hays Hammond, Ella Graham Agnew, Orpheus McAdoo, and Poultney Bigelow (among others), this chapter explores the connective

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<sup>34</sup> This scheme of organization is conceived in conscious contrast with the accounts of Ferguson and others. Some writers, like Noer and Changuion, have maintained a strict chronological approach to the subject, with Changuion going so far as to use months to establish a periodization. Ferguson and Mulanax compose their texts around broader themes, but this approach is limited by their preoccupation with diplomatic history and domestic politics—an inadequate model for the current investigation for reasons already described.

<sup>35</sup> Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 5.

aspect of southern African-American relations, providing insight into how the different sides of American got their genesis. It also begins to tackle the trickiest question American observers had to confront: who were the "Boers"? Even a cursory glimpse at American writing from this period—in published sources, newspaper accounts, and personal correspondence—reveals that there were any number of different answers. For some, the Boer was an uncivilized barbarian: barely white, certainly not Anglo-Saxon, and inviting comparisons to similarly degenerate Ethiopians, American Indians, and Latin Americans. For many others, the Boer was an "ultra-white" embodiment of the American ancestral *genius*: a liberty-loving, privilege-hating figure whose fight against the British Empire became a fight for the very soul of Western humanity against malign and globally ascendant forces of capitalism and imperialism. To cast opposition to British policy in South Africa as a rebellion against "the modern" is too simplistic, failing to account for the ways in which definitions of empire and expansion, imperialism and international law, whiteness and civilization were all being debated in the 1890's and 1900's United States—which was, after all deeply involved its own colonial war in the Philippines.

Chapter III, "Vicksburg, Valley Forge, and Vaal Krantz," builds upon this analysis to focus on American responses to the outbreak of the South African War in 1899—both pro-British and pro-Republican—occupying itself specifically with the important role of historical metaphor in the debate. The South African War sparked a tremendous amount of interest in the United States, manifested in personal letters, pamphlets, books, editorials, volumes of poetry, art exhibitions and other means. Permeating this voluminous discourse was a constant tendency (no matter what the

position being advocated), to reframe the conflict through the introduction of referents from the American past. For American opinion makers, the answer to the conflict in southern Africa lay hidden within their own history. For writers like Charles Francis Adams, Jr., the Civil War was the natural analogue; for the pro-Republican historian Sydney Fisher, it was the American Revolution. But while debate raged over the finer points of historical metaphor, the conclusion became ineluctable that for Americans, the South African War was about American self-identity. For the majority of American writers, the reaction elicited was not aggressive zeal for overseas activism, but internal activism, soul-searching, and domestic political talking points. This, the chapter argues, was the crucial reason underlying the success of the administration's softly pro-British policies.

The last chapter, "Pro-Boers At Bay," ends this study by examining the American pro-Republican movement and tracing how the fundamentally self-centered tenor of American debate on the South African War spelt its doom despite considerable pro-Republican sympathy in the United States, and the perceived uniqueness of America's position. American pro-"Boer" or pro-Republican organizing represented only one face of an international anti-South African War movement (active, most notably, in Great Britain itself). What distinguished the U.S.'s corner of the movement was the widely-shared conviction that Americans were uniquely able to effect change in British policies—a hope continually frustrated by activists' utter failure to actually do so. For despite continual challenges from pro-Boer elements, the Republican administrations of Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt were free to maintain a gently pro-British posture for the duration of the war, with no real repercussions. Why, despite such a large pro-Boer

element in the United States, was the movement so ineffective? Writers from Ferguson to Changuion have done a fine job decrying the movement's disorganization and lack of focus, but at least two more factors are relevant. The first is the monopolization of firsthand knowledge of southern Africa in the hands of an elite clique of American writers and South African visitors, whose goals were not always in congruent with the activist movement at the grass roots. The second was a direct result of self-focused American rhetoric—Americans saw *too much* of themselves in the southern African situation and used its example chiefly as a guide to domestic policy and self-identity rather than as a call to arms. Through the instrumental use of the war to shape debate over imperialism in America's present, Americans took ownership of the war in a way that fueled their interest and consideration but did not inspire their intervention. While the State Department may have been aware of America's increasing indispensability on the world stage, more Americans were concerned about the changing nature of the United States itself. After outlining tentative conclusions regarding the effect of the South African War on American identity, a brief epilogue on South African-American relations will conclude the paper.

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By analyzing the ways Americans rendered faraway events intelligible by means of analogy and the construction of historical metaphors, this paper seeks to defend the assertion that the full significance of the southern African crises of 1895-1905 to the U.S. can be appreciated not only in their impact on American diplomatic history but rather the remarkable place they held, however fleetingly, in the American mind. The war

disappeared quickly from memory in the United States not because of apathy but because American interest in the war was always fundamentally self-centered.

In the words of R.W. Johnson, South Africa “has always seemed like a vast social science experiment, a theatre in which the rest of the world finds echoes of its own struggles.”<sup>36</sup> The following is a detailed examination of one such case. For the most part, Americans were interested in the South African War not because they were concerned about the world, but because they were concerned about themselves. The pro-Republicinse movement was a failure because it inspired more brooding than action—thereby establishing a pattern for other internationally-focused activist movements. Its leaders, diverse and energetic as they were, could not transcend this challenge.

As Oscar Wilde observed eight years before the South African War in his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, “the highest as the lowest form of criticism is a form of autobiography.” Whether criticizing a novel or criticizing a war, his words are worth considering.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *South Africa*, vii.

<sup>37</sup> Oscar Wilde, “The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891),” in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, v. 3, ed. Joseph Bristow (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2005): 167.

**Chapter I: Manifesting Destinies  
Southern Africa and the United States to 1896**

"On my describing the beauties of the countries through which we had passed, and at the same time expressing an astonishment at their being unoccupied by christian settlers, I was informed, that so desirable an event could never take place, as long as the Dutch remained in possession of the Cape."

—Captain Benjamin Stout, from *Narrative of the Loss of the Ship Hercules* (1798).<sup>38</sup>

"Flowers without scent,  
Birds without song,  
Rivers without water,  
Women without beauty,  
Men without honor."

—Proverb used by Julian Ralph to describe South Africa, from *An American With Lord Roberts* (1901).<sup>39</sup>

In 1796, Captain Benjamin Stout, an American employed shipping rice for the British East India Company, was shipwrecked off the South African coast some distance from Cape Town, among a "Caffree tribe." Having made his way to London by 1798, Stout published the story of the wreck and his subsequent journey across southern Africa in a volume that would enjoy several printings and eventually be republished in 1820.<sup>40</sup> Praising the country through which he passed as "a second Eden," Stout was impressed by the friendliness of the native people—rumors of their savagery being to Stout "a

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<sup>38</sup> Benjamin Stout, *Narrative of the Loss of the Ship Hercules Commanded by Captain Benjamin Stout on the Coast of Caffraria the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, 1796; also, a Circumstantial Detail of His Travels Through the Southern Deserts of Africa and the Colonies to the Cape of Good Hope with an Introductory Address to the Rt. Honourable John Adams, President of the Continental Congress of America* (London, Great Britain: J. Johnson, 1798): xvi-xvii.

<sup>39</sup> Julian Ralph, *An American With Lord Roberts* (New York, N.Y.: Frederick Stokes Co., 1901): 294. The proverb, in some form or another, was frequently used by Americans describing South Africa during the war and even appears in the 1850 inaugural volume of Charles Dickens's journal *Household Words* introducing an article entitled "'Cape' Sketches" (page 165).

<sup>40</sup> David Johnson, "African Land for the American Empire: John Adams, Benjamin Stout, and Robert Semple," in *ibid.*, *Imagining the Cape Colony: History, Literature and the South African Nation* (Edinburgh, U.K.: Edinburgh University Press, 2005): 91. See also Eric Rosenthal, *Stars and Stripes in Africa: Being a History of American Achievements in Africa by Explorers, Missionaries, Pirates, Adventurers, Hunters, Miners, Merchants, Scientists, Soldiers, Showmen, Engineers, and Others, with Some Account of Africans Who Have Played a Part in American Affairs*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cape Town, South Africa: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1968): 33-48.

calumny so undeserved, so atrocious...I cannot suffer to pass without calumny or contradiction."<sup>41</sup> At the same time, he was deeply distressed by the lack of agricultural development in what he believed to be a fertile and potentially lucrative land. The 1798 edition of his narrative even includes a passionate appeal to President John Adams in favor of establishing an American colony the region, in order to spread the ideals of the American Revolution and check the predations of Dutch settlers—"enlightened savages" who "hunt the unfortunate settlers as they do the lion or the panther."<sup>42</sup>

Captain Stout had little success convincing Americans to move forward with his proposal, but David Johnson notes that appeals like Stout's were very much in keeping with the missionary spirit of the strident post-Revolutionary era. The United States, having shaken off the British yoke and shocked the world, was keen to spread its values abroad. "A mighty empire takes its birth/ And Heaven asserts the claim," declared the poet-diplomat David Humphreys in his bold 1787 poem "The Genius of America," part of an extensive body of late eighteenth century literature emphasizing America's greatness and its divinely-ordered destiny.<sup>43</sup> But if Americans were finally ready to spread their ideas around the world, they could look forward only to following the already well-trod paths of United States commerce. Captain Stout was likely one of the first Americans in the interior of "Caffraria," but he was no novelty in Cape Town itself, where by 1806 American trade was second only to British trade in value and importance,

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<sup>41</sup> Stout, *Narrative of the Loss of the Ship Hercules*, 61; 46.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, ii; v.

<sup>43</sup> David Humphreys, "The Genius of America—A Song" in *ibid.*, *The Miscellaneous Works of David Humphreys: Late Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Court of Madrid* (New York, N.Y.: T. and J. Swords, 1804): 225-226.



with American ships comprising over a quarter of all arrivals at Cape Town harbor.<sup>44</sup> As a natural result of such lively commerce, reports of the Cape periodically made it into American newspapers, such as the 1787 account of "an American Gentleman" whose experiences with Dutch womenfolk accorded so well to his tastes that "I almost fancied myself in a circle of Bostonians, whose elegance of person, dress, and movements will ever please."<sup>45</sup> Accounts of South African life written by the European travelers Peter Kolbe and the Abbé Raynal were read and circulated, and the disruptions to American commerce at the Cape caused by the Napoleonic Wars were also covered in the coastal papers. In late July 1804 (with Cape Town in the hands of Napoleon's short-lived Batavian Republic) the *United States' Gazette* proudly reported the availability of that most prized of Cape luxuries: "far famed Constantia wine....formerly nearly wholly engrossed by the Dutch government, who distributed it in presents to the crowned heads and potentates of Europe."<sup>46</sup> The spread of republicanism to Europe and its colonies has thus reaped its inevitable and virtuous results: increased trade and welcome democratization. According to the rhetoric, at least, America at the dawn of the nineteenth century was out to reshape the world. The Dutch-*cum*-British Cape Colony constituted a distinct, if minor, arena in that effort.

Ultimately, however, American commercial interests in southern Africa were no match for global politics, and when the 1807 Embargo Act curtailed America's (legal) trade with foreign ports, the services of Consul Elmslie became unnecessary. After eight years of service, he was recalled—not, as Noer argues, due to the irrelevance of his

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<sup>44</sup> Johnson, "African Land," 112.

<sup>45</sup> "Sketches of the Cape of Good Hope," *The Massachusetts Magazine*, June 1789 (the letter reproduced is dated November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1787).

<sup>46</sup> "Charleston, July 14<sup>th</sup>," *United States' Gazette*, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1804.

posting, but as part of a larger trend of souring relations with Great Britain: one that would culminate, eventually, in the War of 1812.<sup>47</sup> Yet still, the fact remains that though the Embargo Act was only in effect for fifteen months, until 1834 the United States would have no formal representation at the Cape of Good Hope. Noer treats this twenty-seven year hiatus as further proof of the Cape's irrelevance, but actually it is likely that other forces were at work. According to David Johnson, as early as 1796 British writers like Captain Robert Percival and the loyalist American Robert Semple were expressing concern over American influence at Cape Town, and mouth-watering reports like Stout's likely aggravated this anxiety.<sup>48</sup> A Washington, D.C. newspaper printed a letter from Cape Town in 1806 decrying the indignity of British ship inspections there and accusing the customs officials of saying that "THE AMERICANS WERE ALL A SET OF WORTHLESS DAMNED RASCALS."<sup>49</sup> Deepening anger at British treatment of American shipping thus confronted British disdain for America's commercial intrusion into new imperial territory. There was more to the recall of John Elmslie and the end of the Cape Town consulate than meets the eye.

Nevertheless, after the Napoleonic Wars, it is true that the average American commanded only a dim awareness of southern Africa. Aside from scattered missionary

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<sup>47</sup> Richard W. Hull, *American Enterprise in South Africa: Historical Patterns of Engagement and Disengagement* (New York, N.Y.: New York University Press): 12-13; Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, "African Land for the American Empire," 114.

<sup>49</sup> "Extract of a Letter from an American Gentleman at the Cape of Good Hope," *The National Intelligencer and Washington Advertiser*, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1806. It should be noted that a report of just two days later reports the accreditation of Elmslie, "who had remained in Capetown, unaccredited for several years by the Dutch," and commends the British governor, Sir David Baird, for whom "the most prompt attention, and gentlemanlike deportment, have always marked his conduct" towards American shipping ("From the Cape of Good Hope," *New-York Commercial Advertiser*, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1806). Two years later, frustration resumed with the closing of the Cape to neutral shipping (*The Scioto Gazette* [Chillicothe, Ohio], June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1808). These reports, inconsistent as they are, nevertheless fly in the face of the notion of a sedate Cape irrelevant to American commerce.

efforts, and some scant reporting on the progress of the British "1820 Settlers," Americans encountered few dispatches from southern Africa. Scarcely more is known about the attitude of southern African people towards America, particularly the Dutch-speaking frontier settlers whose periodic rebellions against European rule (in 1795 at Swellendam and Graaf-Reinet, in 1801 at Graaf-Reinet once again, and in 1815 at Slagtersnek, as well as the non-violent 1778-1787 activism of the "Cape Patriots") have inspired some comparison with American cases.<sup>50</sup> However, by the late 1830's, when Dutch-speaking farmers at the Cape began emigrating *en masse* towards the interior of the continent in a bid to escape colonial rule and liberal British post-abolition social policies, it is clear that some American ideas were at play. Images of austere and religious pioneer ("voortrekker") men and women crossing the South African *veld* in covered wagons in due course would cultivate notions of Afrikaner chosen-ness similar to American "manifest destiny," yet even in their own time one perceives some American fingerprints. The Pennsylvania-born Daniel Lindley, originally an American missionary among the Zulu people, felt his mission disrupted by the Voortrekkers' war with the Zulu and came to believe that "nothing effectual can be done among the nations should the Boers be neglected." His travels among the Voortrekkers earned him the honor of being

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<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Afrikaner nationalist thinkers in the twentieth century often marshaled these early revolts as evidence of a common republican lineage with the United States. See André Du Toit and Hermann Giliomee, *Afrikaner Political Thought*, v.1 (Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 1983): 1-49. The movement of the Cape Patriots is by far the most important of the two, since it reflected "much more than a protest against the venality of Company officials....a more general political awareness extending to a reflection on and a confrontation with...colonial society" (ibid., 4). According to Giliomee, the Patriot movement was in direct conversation with the Enlightenment political discourse of which the American Revolution was a key component (Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2003): 54-56. The significance of the other rebellions have been downplayed in recent years as mostly Afrikaner Nationalist constructs; see Leonard Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986): 105-143 for an example.

remembered as “the official pastor of the Trekkers,” and a small town in the modern Free State province of South Africa still bears his name.<sup>51</sup> Certainly the rudiments of republican political thought were also latent in the air. Pieter Uys’s Voortrekker band explicitly committed itself as early as August 1837 to establishing a constitutional polity “on the same principles of liberty as the United States of America.”<sup>52</sup> How far American principles were actually understood is less certain, but Changuion, for his part, imputes to Lindley a great deal of credit for the legal shape of the eventual emigrant republics—alongside Joseph Orpen, an Irish-American, who two decades later would help draft the first Orange Free State constitution.<sup>53</sup> In any case, the apparent similarity of the American and the two eventual Republikeinse constitutions (which, among other things, explicitly prohibited “equality between the colored and white inhabitants, either in Church or State”) would become, decades later, a major talking point for pro-Republikeinse organizations and activists in the United States.<sup>54</sup>

On the southern African veld, the stage was being set for the great conflicts that would mark the latter half of the nineteenth century and provide the crucible in which modern South Africa would be born. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1838, the trekking party of Piet Retief met with disaster as its men were massacred on the orders of the Zulu chief Dingaan (the story goes that they were killed following celebration of a peace treaty that had recently been signed). Following a second massacre at the present-day town of Weenen (Afrikaans for “weeping”), war broke out between the Zulus and the remaining

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<sup>51</sup> “South Africa,” *Vermont Chronicle* [Windsor, Vermont], September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1840; de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa*, 48.

<sup>52</sup> Excerpted in Du Toit and Giliomee, *Afrikaner Political Thought*, 283-284.

<sup>53</sup> Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*, 4.

<sup>54</sup> The quote is from the 1858 Transvaal constitution, quoted in Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 36.

trekkers, reaching its climax in the December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1838 Battle of Blood River, in which little more than five hundred trekkers and their servants defeated a Zulu force ten to twelve thousand strong with no loss of life on their own side and three thousand Zulu dead.<sup>55</sup> This event, and the religious mythology surrounding it, would be critical in marshalling Republikeinse identity in the late nineteenth century as well as later Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>56</sup> While the true nature of Voortrekker religiosity has been much debated, there is evidence even at this early date there was a sense, however amorphous, of biblical mission in the emergent Voortrekker consciousness—wandering in the wilderness and cleansing the Canaanite Bantu-speakers from what was sure to become the Trekboer Israel. Daniel Lindley himself—the great trekker mentor—referred to his flock as “an exceedingly illiterate people,” “ignorant and wicked....members of the Reformed Church to which they have a bigoted, rather than intelligent, attachment...about as good Christians as the Nestorians.”<sup>57</sup>

After founding and then being compelled to abandon the Republic of Natalia by the British in the early 1840's, the Voortrekkers retreated to the interior plateau, where they struggled to establish stable polities in a settler culture where farmers were isolated and political sympathies were vehemently anti-government. Having never recognized the weak and divided trekkers' renunciation of British citizenship, in 1848 the British government intervened again through Natal, as Governor Harry Smith declared a huge swathe of the southern African interior (including all Voortrekker land and a number of Bantu-speaking polities) to be under British authority. Engaging and defeating a group of

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<sup>55</sup> Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 165.

<sup>56</sup> For an analysis of this significance see Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid*, 144-188.

<sup>57</sup> Letters of 1839 and December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1837, quoted in *ibid.*, 160-161.

trekker commandoes on the Orange River at the battle of Boomplaats, Smith appeared to succeed in snuffing out the fifteen year old dream of Trekboer self government.<sup>58</sup> But victory was pyrrhic, and it soon became clear that the British had bitten off more than they were prepared to govern. In 1852 the Sand River Convention repudiated the British advances of 1848 beyond the Vaal and in 1854 under the Bloemfontein Convention the Orange Free State was established between Orange River and the Vaal as a fully autonomous entity. Five years later, in 1859, the more distant party of trekkers between the Vaal and Limpopo Rivers proclaimed their own state—the Transvaal or South African Republic— under the leadership of the old Great Trek patriarch Andries Pretorius. The challenges of governing such a harsh, vast place were obvious, but it was not for a few decades that its leaders would learn just how difficult it would be.

Despite the fact that this complex drama was playing out halfway around the world, for American newspapers dispatches from southern Africa were rare in the mid-nineteenth century and tended towards the exotic; most expressions of sympathy or interest in events there that appeared in American papers were tempered by displays of deep ignorance about the actual nature of the country. Thus the *Emancipator and Free Liberator* of Boston, Massachusetts could endorse the expansion of Port Natal as “destined to be attended with the most important results...[We see] no reason why the greater part of Africa may not undergo the same changes, which have raised America from savage degradation to social happiness and political importance,” without grasping

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<sup>58</sup> This defeat was remembered as particularly bitter as a result of Griqua participation (a mixed-race “tribe”) alongside white British troops. In the words of the pro-Republikeinse pamphlet *A Century of Wrong*, this force “chiefly consisting of blacks” constituted “another murder and deed of shame in South Africa’s account with England!” See *A Century of Wrong [Eene Eeuw van Onrecht]* (precise authorship unclear), issued by F.W. Reitz (London, U.K.: Review of Reviews, 1900).

the fact that the Voortrekker presence there largely evaporated with the 1842 reassertion of British administration over Natal.<sup>59</sup> Until the 1870's, references to "the Transvaal Republic of Madagascar," were not at all out of place.<sup>60</sup>

Restrained antagonism and great distrust set the general tone of Anglo-Republikeinse relations for the rest of the century, fueling racializing stereotypes of the Dutch-speaking Voortrekker that would persist right up to 1899. Roualeyn Gordon-Cumming, a Scot whose account of years spent game hunting in southern Africa in the late 1840's provided a key early source for both British and Americans curious about that region of the world, described the white Republikeinse citizens ("burghers" in Dutch) as "hospitable to every white stranger," and "rather partial to Scotchmen" though "they detest the sight of an Englishman."<sup>61</sup> Racially, their status as white is obvious, yet at the same time the squalor of the average semi-nomadic farmers' existence presents itself as a complicating factor for Gordon-Cumming. Describing one Hendric Strydom as "a tall, sun-burned, wild-looking creature with light sandy hair and a long, shaggy red beard," the Republikeinse mode of living is characterized as dangerously uncouth.<sup>62</sup> Gordon-Cumming frequently describes burgher houses in unpleasant and lurid terms, in this case the home of a man named Stinkum:

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<sup>59</sup> "Port Natal," *Emancipator and Free Liberator* [Boston, Massachusetts], September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1843. Though established in 1824 by a party of British adventurers, Port Natal was occupied by the Voortrekkers in late 1839 as part of the short-lived Republic of Natalia. In December 1842, however, the British government announced its intention to annex Natalia; by August 1843, after some isolated military action, this had been done, and the Volksraad (legislature) of Natalia had agreed to relocate across the Drakensberg. The eventual result of this move would be the creation of the Orange Free State and South African Republic. See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 166-169.

<sup>60</sup> *Daily Placer Times and Transcript* [San Francisco, California], February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1853.

<sup>61</sup> Roualeyn Gordon-Cumming Esq., *Five Years of a Hunter's Life in the Far Interior of South Africa with Notices of the Native Tribes, and Anecdotes of the Chase of the Lion, Elephant, Hippopotamus, Giraffe, Rhinoceros, &c.*, v. 1 (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Bros., 1850): 21; 70.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

It being now summer, flies prevailed in fearful swarms in the abodes of the Boers, attracted thither by the smell of meat and milk. On entering Stinkum's house, I found the walls of his large sitting room actually black with these disgusting insects... When food is served, two or three Hottentots or Bush-girls are always in attendance with fans made of ostrich feathers, which they keep continually waving over the food until the repast is finished.<sup>63</sup>

In this way, even as events in southern Africa reached few on the other side of the Atlantic, British notions of "Boer" identity were quietly incubating. As phenotypically white but culturally uncivilized, as arrogantly Christian but theologically ignorant, as frontier pioneers afflicted with all the provincial pettiness of the Old World, the "Boer" as constructed by early accounts and honed through the wars at the end of the century, was full of paradoxes and proved difficult to pin down even as it became clear that the Republikeinse burghers were deeply hostile to British influence over their admittedly precarious society.

During the 1850's and most of the 1860's, the British government was content to leave the burghers alone as the Transvaal struggled through an abortive civil war and continual armed struggles against Griquas and Bantu-speaking groups on their frontiers. By 1867, however, everything was about to change. That year diamonds were discovered in what became known as the Kimberley region, near the ill-defined western frontiers of the Orange Free State. In the words of R.W. Johnson, "diamonds changed South Africa forever."<sup>64</sup> By 1871 75,000 laborers and businessmen, both black and white, had moved to Kimberley, and the rush was on.<sup>65</sup> Yet ownership of diamond fields was disputed. The territory sitting atop the Kimberley diamonds was claimed by the Cape Colony, both

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>64</sup> Johnson, *South Africa*, 92.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 91-92.



Republics, and the Griqua leader Nicolaas Waterboer, and, with the British government acting as arbiter, the land was awarded to Waterboer, a pliant figure who allowed to British to declare a protectorate and exploit the area's mineral resources. A few American newspapers gleefully excerpted sketches of the fields, many of which reflected British caricatures of the Boer as self-conscious, racially suspect and uncivilized, such as this account of "a reception given by 'President Brandt of the Transvaal Republic'" :

Some of the 'court ladies' present appeared to be almost loaded down with diamonds...shown off to their greatest advantage when contrasted with the dark complexions of some of the distinguished female guests from adjoining States. One lady in particular made a special display of the precious jewels...A person might have walked behind her in a crowd and plucked whole fortunes from her by the handful.<sup>66</sup>

As revolutionary as the discovery of diamonds in southern Africa was, as a dramatic event in the history of the Republikeinse states it pales in comparison to the annexation of the Transvaal Republic in April 1877 by Sir Theophilus Shepstone, a special representative of the Natal Colony. The reasons for Shepstone's annexation were compelling: the South African Republic had always struggled in relation to the wealthier, more cosmopolitan Free State, and was also constantly at war with Zulu and Sotho groups on its borders. Shepstone framed his intervention in Transvaal affairs as a bid first and foremost to save white settlement there from being overrun by Zulu attacks, though the importance of establishing British preeminence in southern African affairs (over both blacks and whites) was doubtless also crucial. The burghers were fatigued by years of civic instability and expressed little real opposition to the move, particularly

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<sup>66</sup> "A Diamond Belle in South Africa," *Boston Daily Journal*, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1870. It seems unlikely that the "distinguished female guests" mentioned were not considered white, if the reception really was by the president of the Transvaal. There is an "Oriental" ostentation to the proceedings, explicitly invoked earlier in the article ("marvelous tales, quite throwing in the shade those told in 'Arabian Nights'"), that deepens the impression that Boer civilization is being critiqued.

because it meant British help in thwarting a Zulu invasion. Reports of *de facto* slavery persisting in the Transvaal buoyed public opinion abroad in support of the move.

Not everyone, however, was quite satisfied. "SO VERY INNOCENT, YOU KNOW," declared the *New York Herald* with sarcastic relish as it recounted the annexation of the Transvaal,

by which a few thousand of the miserable and barbarous South Africans are to be taken into the lap of Britannia, untainted by any of those horribly selfish motives which impel the Muscovites to a desire to annex a country which lies adjacent to its own dominions or which opens up for them a pathway to the sea.<sup>67</sup>

The *Herald* was not alone among the American press in expressing unease about British expansion in South Africa, but worries over the march of the British empire were soon eclipsed by the 1879 outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War, which the annexation had partly sought to deter. At Isandlwana on January 22<sup>nd</sup> the British suffered a stunning defeat at the hands of Cetshwayo's Zulu forces, though by July they were able to break Zulu resistance at the Battle of Ulundi and assert their dominance over Zululand, the fertile coastal area east of the Transvaal Republic and north of Natal.<sup>68</sup>

Far from establishing peace however, neutralization of the Zulu threat meant that anti-British Transvaalers now felt free to assert their dissatisfaction with re-imposed British rule. On December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1880 at Paardekraal, a meeting of thousands of Transvaal burghers declared the restoration of the South African Republic under a triumvirate composed of S. J. P. (Paul) Kruger, Piet Joubert, and M.W. Pretorius. The famous "covenant" said to have been declared on the eve of Blood River was reaffirmed

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<sup>67</sup> "So Very Innocent, You Know," *New York Herald*, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1877.

<sup>68</sup> For an analysis of the Battle of Isandlwana in relation to American experiences in the West (specifically Col. George Custer's famous "Last Stand" at Little Bighorn, see James O. Gump, *The Dust Rose Like Smoke: The Subjugation of the Zulu and the Sioux* (Lincoln, Neb.: The University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

in the form of a cairn monument to "a new determination and a new trusting in God," to quote W.A. de Klerk.<sup>69</sup> War was nigh.

Against great odds, on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1881, Piet Joubert and the Transvaal rebels shocked the British with a victory at Majuba Hill, a battle that would resound through Afrikaner history for decades to come. The commandoes' success in storming the hill, which the British commander Sir George Colley believed to be impregnable, effectively ended what became known variously as the First Anglo-Boer War, the Transvaal War, or *die Eerste Vryheidsoorlog* (the First War of Freedom). The British were unwilling to fight for land they perceived as worthless anyway, and in August the United Kingdom assented to the Pretoria Convention, establishing "complete self-government, *subject to the suzerainty* of Her Majesty, her heirs and successors" in the Transvaal.<sup>70</sup> The Transvaal was free to elect a president and pass its own laws, with control over all foreign policy matters reserved to the Crown ("suzerainty" was a familiar concept in the administration of Indian princely states).<sup>71</sup> This treaty was superseded in 1884 by the London Convention, which deleted all language of suzerainty but maintained the principle (somewhat weakened) of British oversight in the South African Republic's foreign affairs, explaining that

The South African Republic will conclude no treaty or engagement with any State or Nation other than the Orange Free State, nor with any native tribe to the eastward or westward of the Republic, until the same has been approved by Her Majesty the Queen.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa*, 65.

<sup>70</sup> "The Convention of Pretoria; Convention' for the Settlement of the Transvaal Territory, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1881," South African History Online, accessed October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <<http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/convention-pretoria-convention-settlement-transvaal-territory-3-august-1881>>.

<sup>71</sup> Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy*, 22.

<sup>72</sup> "Selected Official Documents of the South African Republic and Great Britain," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 16, Supplement 14 (1900): 8.

The terms of the Conventions were embarrassing to Great Britain, but once again Britain was unwilling to expend resources to impose dominion over a people whose land was seen as largely worthless and whose total suppression would invite the intervention of the German Empire or some other sympathetic force and create an international disturbance. President Paul Kruger (widely known as Oom Paul or Uncle Paul, after a common Afrikaans honorific) was therefore largely free to govern as he wished, notwithstanding the tricky question of whether "suzerainty," absent from the London Convention, had been intentionally removed from the 1884 treaty or was implied by it. The diplomatic fortunes of the governments in Bloemfontein and Pretoria seemed to be at increasing variance. Though by 1871 the Orange Free State had already negotiated a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Extradition with the United States, the Transvaal was in no state to conduct international diplomacy on its own in the 1880's<sup>73</sup> In 1872, an informal Free State consulate was even established, at Philadelphia under J. Henry Riley.<sup>74</sup> America's rejection of a similar treaty with the Transvaal in 1885 signified a early and (for Transvaal burghers) disheartening reluctance to offend British interests in Africa, but overall in the early to mid-1880's affairs were at a lull.<sup>75</sup>

That lull shattered and everything changed with the discovery of vast gold deposits in the Transvaal in 1886. Giliomee's bold declaration that "never before in world history had a mineral discovery so suddenly and dramatically, and so utterly, transformed an obscure rural backwater," does not seem so hyperbolic in light of the

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<sup>73</sup> Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy*, 74.

<sup>74</sup> Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 17.

bloodshed and suffering that was soon to follow.<sup>76</sup> Just eight years later, the South African Republic (more specifically the goldfields of the Witwatersrand) would be responsible for one fifth of the world's total gold production.<sup>77</sup> Yet in 1900 there are estimated to have been only about three hundred thousand white Republikeinse men, women, and children living in the Transvaal and Orange Free State *combined*.<sup>78</sup> By the 1890's, one hundred thousand people, only a small fraction of whom were Republikeinse burghers, were involved in the Rand gold-mining industry.<sup>79</sup> Fifty thousand whites, only six thousand of whom were Transvaal citizens, found themselves living in Johannesburg (the queen city of the Rand boom) by the eve of the Jameson Raid.<sup>80</sup>

Unsurprisingly, in keeping with what had occurred in Kimberley years earlier, spearheading the development of the Rand goldfields were British capitalists and speculators. Of these savvy businessmen none was more prominent and controversial than Cecil John Rhodes, the son of an English clergyman who arrived in South Africa in 1870 when he was just seventeen years old. "Possessed of an energy so inexhaustible that to the ordinary man he must have seemed almost a demon," he had already accrued a diamond fortune on the Kimberly by 1880, and the next year secured a seat in the Cape Parliament where he allied with the dominant "Cape Dutch" political faction, the Afrikaner Bond, and gained a reputation for friendliness towards Dutch-speaking

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<sup>76</sup> Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 236.

<sup>77</sup> C. Tsehloane Keto, "The Aftermath of the Jameson Raid and American Decision-Making in Foreign Affairs, 1896," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 70:8 (1980), 1-46.

<sup>78</sup> Johnson, *South Africa*, 102.

<sup>79</sup> Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 236.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

whites.<sup>81</sup> Joining forces with the other financial giants of the Cape Colony, like Alfred Beit and Barney Barnato, Rhodes succeeded in consolidating the mining operations in the region and, by 1891, his De Beers Consolidated Diamond Corporation controlled ninety per cent of all diamond production in the colony.<sup>82</sup> After becoming premier of the Cape Colony in 1890, Rhodes became increasingly interested in both the territory and mineral resources of the Transvaal, just as President Kruger's government began desperately enacting measures to preserve burgher power in the midst of what most Republikeinse citizens regarded as an onslaught of *Uitlanders* (foreigners). It was this multivalent struggle of interests: avaricious British enterprise against corrupt Republikeinse government, burgher versus Uitlander, farmer versus miner, Kruger versus Rhodes, that would set the Transvaal on its crash course with the British Empire—manifesting itself first in the infamous 1896 Jameson Raid, an incident through which large numbers of American eyes were for the first time riveted to events playing out at the bottom of Africa, and then finally in the South African War, a conflict whose outcome would directly shape the future of Africa's southern tip for almost a full century after the guns fell silent.

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Trite as it may sound, for the people of the United States the late nineteenth century was a period of momentous transition. One common term associated with the period, Reconstruction, is most closely associated with the American South in the years immediately following the Civil War. Yet post-Civil War "reconstruction," interpreted in

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<sup>81</sup> John Hays Hammond, *The Autobiography of John Hays Hammond*, v. 1 (New York, N.Y.: Farrar & Rinehart, 1935): 218. For more on the Afrikaner Bond and Rhodes' relationship to it see Tamarkin, "The Cape Afrikaners," in Lowry, *The South African War Reappraised*, 121-139.

<sup>82</sup> Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 25-26.

a broad sense, was far more than a governmental program foisted on the defeated American South by a particular political faction. In recent years many historians have suggested that Reconstruction is a useful term for invoking the whole momentous process by which America rebuilt itself as both state and nation in the years leading up to "the American century." While 1877 has traditionally been used to mark the end of the Reconstruction era (as the year of the Hayes-Tilden electoral dispute and subsequent compromise), more recent scholarship by authors like Heather Cox Richardson have approached Reconstruction as much longer process affecting the entire country right up to the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898 and beyond. As black Americans adjusted to the harsh realities of second-class citizenship, white Americans in particular sought to transcend their complicated history not only by reasserting their racial privilege but by a redoubled commitment to expansion in multiple spheres: spiritual, economic, diplomatic, and militaristic. As Jackson Lears observes,

Longings for rebirth had a rich and complex history: rooted in Protestant patterns of conversion, they also resonated with the American mythology of starting over, of reinventing the self. After the Civil War, the entire country was faced with the task of starting over. The idea that the Union has reaffirmed its very being through blood sacrifice promoted a postwar dream of national renewal through righteous war...political leaders in both sections refined the [Civil War] as an epic expression of Anglo-Saxon martial virtue.<sup>83</sup>

The Civil War dealt an enormous blow to white American identity, and far from spreading the conventions and values of Northern free labor to the South as many anti-slavery Northerners had hoped, in some ways it reinforced differences in the economic systems of the two regions by precipitating to a Northern boom and a severe Southern economic depression. While in the North crop values skyrocketed 103 per cent during

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<sup>83</sup> Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins, 2009): 1-2.

the war, by 1865 fully half of the farm equipment in the South had been destroyed. The huge sums Southern farmers and planters had invested in enslaved persons and their domestic trafficking evaporated rapidly. Southern manufacturing, never much to begin with, was utterly crippled. It would not be until 1910 that Southern livestock numbers would again approach 1860 levels.<sup>84</sup> Factoring in threats to antebellum Southern social structures, huge rates of white male mortality, and the authoritarian system of military administration instituted by the Radical Republicans in Congress, the signs did not seem to presage a tidy process of reconciliation.

For both black and white Americans, urbanization and industrialization roared ahead in the years after the Civil War, disrupting traditional ideas of America as a fundamentally agricultural nation, and threatening traditional notions of what was meant by "American freedom." Wage labor was no longer "a stop on life's journey" for millions of American city dwellers—it was instead the endpoint, an emerging norm.<sup>85</sup> Traditional liberal doctrines emphasizing the importance of land ownership and personal autonomy seemed anachronistic to many elite "native Americans" concerned about the influence of working class labor unions and immigrant-led political machines in Northern and Midwestern cities, movements which to them seemed to prove the ultimate incompatibility of such groups with a traditionally "democratic" society.

Accounts of civic treachery in the South—carpetbagger Republicans paying freedmen for their votes, while Democrat-sponsored Ku Klux Klan terrorists sought to repress them—are familiar to students of American history, but less widely recognized is

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<sup>84</sup> Jack Beatty, *Age of Betrayal: The Triumph of Money in America, 1865-1900* (New York, N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007): 56-58.

<sup>85</sup> H.W. Brands, *American Colossus: The Triumph of Capitalism in America, 1865-1900* (New York, N.Y.: Anchor, 2010): 96.



the extent of anti-democratic systems practices in the country at the time. Democracy, just as in southern Africa, proved for many to be a sad mirage. Influenced by the emergent doctrines of scientific racism, Anglo-Saxon supremacy and social Darwinism, the political culture of the post-Civil War era reflected the concerns and insecurities of society at large. At the statewide level, redistricting schemes left over from before the Industrial Age ensured that Rhode Island's twenty-eight smallest towns—less than ten per cent of the state's population—elected almost three-quarters of the state senate.<sup>86</sup> In Connecticut, just one state over, the city of New Haven was accorded the same number of state representatives as the tiny village of Union, despite boasting almost eighty-six thousand more residents (Union claimed less than five hundred).<sup>87</sup> Fraud also existed at the local level, and in rural areas: in one rural Ohio county it was discovered that "eighty-five per cent of the electorate had either bought or sold votes between the 1870's and 1910, when a crusading judge and magazine exposés...forced a stop."<sup>88</sup> In addition, the introduction of voting by secret or "Australian" ballot furnished new opportunities for both fraud and voter suppression, making it more difficult and embarrassing for the illiterate to vote and driving down voter turnout rates to the low levels familiar in modern American elections.<sup>89</sup> It is curious, therefore, that in 1896 when white Americans found themselves debating the Jameson Raid and the question of whether Uitlanders in the Transvaal should have the right to vote, their discussions usually avoided the fact that

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<sup>86</sup> Beatty, *Age of Betrayal*, 209.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>89</sup> Brands, *American Colossus*, 392; Heather Cox Richardson, *West From Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America After the Civil War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007): 257. Citing a variety of different studies, according to Beatty "average turnout in presidential elections in the South fell from 69.4 percent in 1868-80 to 24.7 percent in 1920-48, and in the North from 85.4 percent in 1884-96 to 60.6 percent in 1920-32" (Beatty, *Age of Betrayal*, 383).

suffrage in the United States was itself a threatened institution and a complex issue—and not just in Dixie's ruined plantation counties.

This sketch of American history in the decades before the southern African crises is by no means comprehensive. Between Appomattox and the Maine incident of 1898 were many important incidents and turbulent periods impossible to treat here comprehensively. This is particularly true as regards the experiences of African-Americans and other marginalized groups, whose various takes on "American-ness" and the elite discourses of the time are nuanced and often difficult to assess.<sup>90</sup> Implicit in the very nature of the reconstructive task was the need to build up narratives to render a complex and muddled past intelligible. In recent decades historical scholarship has discredited many such narratives—the failure of Radical Reconstruction, the effectiveness of the Homestead Act, and the success of the Progressive Movement being among the most significant.<sup>91</sup> Any scholar wading into this period of American history should appreciate its full complexity and approach grand narrative approaches to it with the utmost caution. In many ways, America was putting forward a façade.

By the 1890's, among many in the "native American" elite (a rhetorical construct neither fully inclusive of nor actually limited to American-born citizens) there was a mounting sense of unease regarding America's future trajectory. Though the U.S. was surely growing, immigrant blood and phenomena like urbanization and the closing of the West seemed to be changing America's basic fabric as a nation formerly removed from

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<sup>90</sup> For more see Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (New York, N.Y.: Harper Perennial, 1990); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1910* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Timothy E. Fulop, "The Future Golden Day of the Race: Millennialism and Black Americans in the Nadir, 1877-1901," *The Harvard Theological Review* 84.1 (1991), 75-99.

<sup>91</sup> See the work of Beatty, Brands, Foner, and Lears already cited.

the concerns and conflicts of Old Europe. For better or worse, it seemed that the time had come to put away childish things. In the words of Francis Walker (writing in 1892), "No longer can a continent of free virgin lands avert us from the social struggle which the Old World has known so long and so painfully."<sup>92</sup> Some white elites came to be known derisively as "Mugwumps" for their aloof detachment from the two party system and their increasing lack of faith in democracy itself. Decrying the simultaneously rising tides of American materialism, jingoism and populism, the Massachusetts-born editor and Mugwump intellectual Charles Eliot Norton lamented in 1896 that "it is hard to have the whole background of life grow darker as one grows old. I can understand the feeling of a Roman as he saw the Empire breaking down, and civilization dying out."<sup>93</sup> In February 1900 the German-American senator Carl Schurz alluded to the same concerns in an address he delivered at Philadelphia:

What a democracy, based upon universal suffrage, like ours needs most to insure its stability is an element of conservative poise in itself. This can be furnished only by [faith in institutions]...popular reverence for high ideals and traditions...[and respect for the Constitution]. Take away these conservative and ennobling influences, and the only motive forces left in such a democracy will be greed and passion. I can hardly imagine any kind of government more repellent than a democracy that has ceased to believe in anything.<sup>94</sup>

Literary figures as diverse as Francis Parkman, Mark Twain, and Edward Bellamy each spent time exploring cures for what they perceived to be failures of late nineteenth century society, in works that often questioned the foundation of republican government

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<sup>92</sup> Francis A. Walker, "Immigration," *Yale Review* 1 (1892), 125-145, quoted in H.W. Brands, *The Reckless Decade: America in the 1890's* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1995): 24.

<sup>93</sup> Robert Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898-1900* (New York, N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1968): 69.

<sup>94</sup> Address delivered at the Philadelphia Anti-Imperialistic Conference, quoted in *ibid.*, 29.

itself.<sup>95</sup> Amid this period of soul-searching and as a response to the frenetic contemporary environment of immigration, corruption, exploitation, unrest and avarice, the years leading up to 1900 also incubated what today is known as the Progressive Movement. Indeed, the emerging progressive vanguard would have much to say regarding America's duty towards southern Africa. Before exploring such things however, this chapter must briefly introduce two further phenomena: imperialism and Anglo-Saxonism.

It is not by accident that previous historiographical work on America and the South African War has focused so heavily on Anglo-American relations: the ties of affinity between the United States and Britain during the period were not merely diplomatic, but cultural, racial, and quite self-conscious. Influenced by social Darwinism and the Spencerian notion of "survival of the fittest," in the late nineteenth century the paternalistic rhetoric of racism in previous decades was superseded by a racialist vitalism that was vehement, narrow, and combative, clustered around the articulation of a mythic "Anglo-Saxon" identity. Writers and commentators repeatedly extolled the virtues of a refined and fictive Anglo-Saxon civilization, while developing at the same time a kind of fetish for "primitive," primal vitality, the necessity of war as an "instrument of natural selection," and racial suffering as "the fiery crucible out of which comes the finer metal" (to appropriate in the words of Karl Pearson, a popular British Anglo-Saxonist).<sup>96</sup> Geopolitical life through a vitalist lens was an unceasing struggle between racial-national organisms, and the Anglo-Saxon race—with its history of world leadership in conquest,

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<sup>95</sup> Brands, *American Colossus*, 365-378.

<sup>96</sup> Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 34-36; Stuart Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981): 32.

commerce, religion, and civic thought—was destined inevitably to increase and expand until, as the historian John Fiske prophesied in 1880, “four-fifths of the human race will trace its pedigree to English forefathers, just as four-fifths of the white people in the United States trace their pedigree today.”<sup>97</sup> Despite complicating elements—such as the American Revolution, the War of 1812, unhappiness with Britain’s posture during the Civil War, and disputes with Britain over land and borders in both Venezuela, Alaska, and the Pacific—by the 1890’s many on both sides of the Atlantic began to see cooperation as an obvious and natural response to an intuitively inferior but increasingly hostile and dangerous European continent.

According to Frederick Jackson Turner’s famous 1893 essay, 1890 marked the closing of the great frontier and “the closing of a great historic movement.”<sup>98</sup> American military expansion, however, was only gearing up. Attending the new vitalist and Anglo-Saxonist discourses, the 1890’s saw the growth of a new and more positive understanding of what overseas imperialism was and could be for Americans. Though hotly contested and debated every step of the way (opposed most vehemently by Mugwumps and Progressives—for different reasons), America expanded beyond its coastlines. In 1893 American businessmen participated in the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy; by 1898 Hawaii had become a territory of the United States. After interventions early in the decade in Nicaragua and Chile, 1898 was also the year the McKinley administration with tacit British support waged its “splendid little war” against Spain, seizing Cuba, Puerto

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<sup>97</sup> John Fiske, *American Political Ideas Viewed from the Standpoint of Universal History: Three Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in May 1880* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1880), quoted in Brands, *The Reckless Decade*, 288.

<sup>98</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *ibid.*, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1921): 1.

Rico, and (at considerably greater cost) the Philippines for what seemed to many to be a new American empire.<sup>99</sup> Following Rudyard Kipling's passionate appeal (published just a few months prior to the outbreak of hostilities in southern Africa), by 1899 America was boldly taking up the white man's burden in ways it never had before—but to what end? It was amid this exhilarating, disorienting atmosphere, marked as much by bravado as by ambivalence that Americans would find their attention riveted to a far-off southern land whose peoples and struggles in many ways seemed suggestive for their own past and present.

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<sup>99</sup> For more on American affairs in Latin America during this period see LaFeber, *The New Empire*, 102-149; 218-229. The significance of British support for the American cause against Spain had enormous resonance for many Americans who later took a pro-British stance in the 1899-1902 war; for more on the U.K.'s specific posture see Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy*, 68-69.

## Chapter II: Uncivilized Whiteness

### Race, Civilization, and Initial American Discourses on the South African Question

"Taxation without representation was cause revolution. Twenty thousand burghers established oligarchy denying all rights citizenship to two hundred fifty thousand aliens. Remonstrances and petitions to Volksraad ignored. Reform Committee of many nationalities sought reconstruction government on lines truer democracy...No bloodshed was general sentiment Americans..."

—Consular Agent J.C. Manion to the *New York Journal*, telegram, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1896, from Johannesburg, South African Republic.<sup>100</sup>

"Then...we were in a continual state of excitement caused by the wars & rumors of war in the Transvaal. We never knew what a day would bring forth...Everything is rather quiet now. The Matabeles are being overcome & everybody is anxiously awaiting the news as to the Reform Prisoners, many of whom have been...released. The sentence of the four leaders has not been decided upon. One of them is a countryman of ours, as you know. He is in very poor health just now but is kept safely in jail."

—Ella Graham Agnew to her sister Mattie, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1896, from Wellington, Cape Colony.<sup>101</sup>

Born in San Francisco in 1855, just a few years removed from the time when the city was "no more than a heterogenous collection of huts and canvas shelters," John Hays Hammond was a child of the frontier.<sup>102</sup> His father, Major Richard Pindell Hammond, had been ordered to the fledgling city's artillery garrison in 1849—at the leading edge of the Gold Rush—and his mother Sarah Lea, recently widowed and with a daughter in tow, followed soon after by ship across "the pestilential jungles" of Panama.<sup>103</sup> Though the city of Hammond's childhood had refined itself significantly by his adolescence (helped along the way by frequent fires) it was still very much a rough and tumble mining town. In his memoirs he had many reasons not to draw comparisons with Johannesburg and his

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<sup>100</sup> J.C. Manion to the *New York Journal*, telegram, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1896, U.S. Consular Records: Johannesburg, South African Republic, v. 40, National Archives and Records Administration, Adelphi, Md.

<sup>101</sup> Ella Graham Agnew to Martha Agnew Hughes, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1896, Ella Graham Agnew Papers (Acc. 42285), subseries I.I, folder 2, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

<sup>102</sup> Hammond, *The Autobiography of John Hays Hammond*, v. 1, 4

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

experiences in the Witwatersrand mining area; nevertheless San Francisco's bustle, diversity, and youth clearly played a role in shaping Hammond's future sympathies.<sup>104</sup>

Immersed in stories of adventurous ancestors—particular those of his uncle, the Texas Ranger Colonel Jack Hays—he and his siblings became obsessed early on with charting new territories. "Explorers' blood was so strong in my brothers and myself," Hammond would later explain, "that there was always a rivalry as to which of us had been in the greatest number of counties in California...The entrance into each new county provided us with a thrill as great as that...[of]...Balboa...when from the heights of Darien he first saw the great Pacific."<sup>105</sup> His interest in mining was first piqued by watching Chinese workers near his home, and was cultivated by his well-to-do parents. He was sent to Yale for an education, and then to the Königliche Sächsische Bergakademie in Freiburg, Germany where he received a first-class education in the principles of mine engineering. It was also in Freiburg that he first met Gardner F. Williams, another ambitious young American destined to make a fortune in the diamond fields of Kimberly.

Hammond went home the American West immediately after graduating to begin his mining career. Shortly after his return, his autobiography recalls a remarkable moment: a childhood sighting of John Sutter in San Francisco, the pioneer on whose land in 1849 the California "mother lode" had originally been discovered. Hammond remembers his feelings of pity for the defeated old man whose intention had always been to farm:

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<sup>104</sup> Here his own description seems most instructive: "The sidewalks were constantly crowded with human beings of every class and description. Sunday was a gala day, with gambling halls, theatres, and saloons wide open and crowded. Sailors of every nationality rolled arm in arm along the streets, miners lounged in saloon doorways, Chinese in native costume, with pigtailed swinging, padded along unobtrusively, dark-skinned hacendados wearing broad sombreros clattered in from their great ranchos. Noticeable among the crowd, by virtue of the great diamonds glittering in their cravats and on their conspicuously white hands, were the gamblers. The black felt hat, the Prince Albert coat, and the golden cable looped across the waistcoat was the exaggerated uniform of their trade" (Ibid., 6-7.).

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 27.



He was a broken man, although in Forty-nine he had owned two Mexican grants of land, comprising six hundred thousand acres of fields and vineyards, together with mills, workshops, stock, and fine horses. Though he himself had no interest in the gold, he had been kind and generous in his hospitality to the ruthless gold-seekers. They had swept in upon him like swarming locusts laying waste his beautiful estate. He was now without an acre, although the recipient of a pension of three thousand dollars a year from the state. All he wanted, however, was his land; and his land he never recovered.<sup>106</sup>

Despite the pathos of this brief interlude, Hammond's convictions are clear: such was the grim future in store for any hapless agriculturalist—American or African—whose fields happened to lie atop precious minerals. Progress would inevitably claim its victims. However pitiful Sutter's fate, it did nothing to deter Hammond in his quest to become one of the Western hemisphere's most prominent mining engineers. And that is precisely what he did; in Minas Nuevas, Mexico, Colombia, British Honduras, and Idaho inspecting possible mineral fields and working to prevent strikes, he built up a fine reputation. The Randlords took notice. Disillusioned by the election of the Democrat Grover Cleveland to the presidency in 1892, Hammond first traveled to southern Africa at the behest of Barney Barnato, who offered him the chance to oversee his properties on the Rand.<sup>107</sup> Hammond and his family arrived in the South African Republic in the fall of 1893, and found it an agreeable, if expensive assignment. Johannesburg was a curious place, but Hammond was eager to commend its good order and relative civilization. As Hammond's memoirs explain, "the majority of the Uitlanders—as we foreigners were called—were law abiding substantial citizens by temperament, and most of us were accompanied by our families."<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-94.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

It was not long before Hammond made his first contact with Cecil Rhodes at his famous Cape estate, Groote Schuur, and it was not long before he was hired as the chief consulting engineer for the Consolidated Gold Fields of South Africa, reporting directly to the man himself. He became a close friend and associate of Rhodes, and occupied his time in drafting mining regulations for the British South Africa Company (also known as the Chartered Company), Rhodes's enterprise for the exploration and exploitation of the land north of the Transvaal. This was terrifically important to Rhodes, for if colonizing "Rhodesia" was a success (and Rhodes hoped would yield even greater wealth than the Rand) the deepening rivalry between burgher and Uitlander in the South African Republic could be made irrelevant. In the autumn of 1894 Hammond joined Rhodes, Dr. Leander Starr Jameson (of coming infamy), and the soon-to-be famous American scout Frederick Russell Burnham in surveying Rhodesian lands recently opened up as a result of a recent war against the Mashona. Hammond adopted a decidedly pessimistic attitude and warned Rhodes not to harbor any illusions about Rhodesia's potential—hardly what his boss wanted to hear—but was kept on as a trusted associate. In 1895 he devoted most of his time to an innovative and successful deep-level mining initiative. "Little of my time had been devoted to politics," as Hammond later explained it. "I had been listening to the Uitlander grievances—they were the inevitable topic of conversation at every dinner table. I was sympathetic, of course, but not actively interested."<sup>109</sup> Soon, however, all of that would change.

Hammond was by no means an everyman, but his pre-Jameson Raid story exemplifies in many ways the experience of white Americans in South Africa during the 1890's.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 307.

Americans had an vastly outsized influence on the British mining enterprise; they were small in number, but greatly sought after for their skills honed in the American West. Indeed, if the old West could no longer be found within the United States, one could argue that it still existed on the Rand. Many of the Americans who became fighters in the South African War—whether for Britain or the Republics—carried like Hammond a particular understanding of the American frontier experience. Keenly aware, of the apparent closing of the American frontier, they understood frontier expansion as a positive (though sometimes cruel) necessity. Growing up alongside remnant communities of Californios, Tejanos, and Native Americans, they romanticized the past but saw United States migration and settlement as inevitable and ultimately for the best. Ultimately, then, for these frontier folk a great deal hinged on the identity of the Republikeinse “Boers,” sparking a debate that would rage both in Africa and at home. For if southern Africa was a new frontier, who were the Republikeinse? Were they cowboys, Indians, or something in between? Did British enterprise and cosmopolitanism threaten their rugged, wholesome spirit, or did they offer a badly-needed corrective to their degeneration? As Americans witnessed the Jameson Raid and South African War transpire far away, they encountered and wrestled with this difficult question in a variety of ways, for to many it seemed to represent as much a challenge to the American as the African status quo.

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As early as 1891, American newspapers were picking up isolated tidbits about goings-on in far off southern Africa. Drawing attention to President Kruger's austere Calvinism (he was a working Dutch Reformed pastor in addition to his duties as

Transvaal chief executive), the *Omaha World Herald* printed an item in August lampooning his opposition to dancing as a pagan practice and requesting the organizers of a Johannesburg ball to remove his name from a list of patrons.<sup>110</sup> In April 1895 an African-American newspaper in Cleveland recounted a similar episode in which he compared "one of the most gifted singers of Bloemfontein" to a "she-wolf."<sup>111</sup> Would that tensions between burghers and Uitlanders on the Rand were limited to such frivolities: by the middle of the decade American newspapers were beginning to catch on to the storm clouds darkening the land in that part of the world. In May 1895 the *New York Herald* reported in some depth on the international outcry over Britain's plans to annex Tongaland, effectively stifling any hope that the South African Republic would ever extend to the sea. British methods, according to the *Herald*, were explicitly punitive, and the report quoted a London paper in stating that "if the Boer chose to treat the Uitlander—the immigrant alien—with common fairness we should have no reason to check his seaward aspirations," but, as it is, "a Boer port...would only be an engine for harassing and squeezing the trade of the Uitlander."<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, the United States was becoming increasingly irritated by an ongoing border dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana, a crisis situation that bore a striking resemblance in some ways to that of the Rand. At the time, just across the Caribbean from Cuba, an unstable and indebted Venezuelan government was contending with the British Empire for, among other things, the Yuruari goldfields—"one of the

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<sup>110</sup> "Boer President on Dancing," *Omaha World Herald*, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1891.

<sup>111</sup> "Men in Public Life," *Cleveland Gazette*, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1895.

<sup>112</sup> "Germany is Opposed; Britain's Latest Acquisition in Africa Does Not Meet with Approval in Berlin," *New York Herald*, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1895.

wealthiest gold stores on the continent” according to Walter LaFeber.<sup>113</sup> Secretary of State Richard Olney, a vigorous believer in America’s expansionist destiny, acted decisively to insure America’s continued access to South American markets in the face of unwelcome British intrusion into the hemisphere, a hard line that resulted in President Cleveland’s famous message of December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1895 (just a few days before the Jameson Raid’s ignominious unfolding). Any illegitimate territory held by the British in Venezuela, according to Cleveland’s statement, constituted “willful aggression” upon America’s own “rights and interests,” implying that the administration would not shrink from war in the cause of defending its expansive interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>114</sup> Unwilling to escalate the situation (indeed, mindful of the potential consequences of American ill-will for other imperial initiatives), the British submitted to arbitration and eventually about ninety per cent of their claim was upheld.

In early 1895 a group of disgruntled Uitlanders in on the Rand had organized the Johannesburg Reform Committee, electing John Hays Hammond as its chairman. Notwithstanding the paucity of Americans on the Transvaal at the time (only 1,500 by Noer’s estimate; just two per cent of the total white population), their outsized influence on the mines themselves translated over into outsized political stature.<sup>115</sup> It was not the first effort at Uitlander organization to be undertaken in the South African Republic (the working class Transvaal National Union of J.W. Leonard had existed since 1892), but it enjoyed the powerful patronage of Cecil Rhodes and the British Colonial Office, who by

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<sup>113</sup> LaFeber, *The New Empire*, 244.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 268.

<sup>115</sup> Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 44; Keto, “The Aftermath of the Jameson Raid and American Decision-Making in Foreign Affairs, 1896,” 15.

the summer had decided on covert military intervention in the Transvaal.<sup>116</sup> Pro-Reform Uitlanders and their burgher allies organized primarily to protest suffrage policies (the Transvaal after 1890 required a full seventeen years of residency for the privilege of voting for the First Volksraad), as well as Dutch-only education laws and attempts to conscript foreign nationals in wars against native peoples. For their leaders the creation of a favorable money-making environment on the Rand was always the ultimate objective in mind—political stability, low taxes, and secure access to unskilled black labour.<sup>117</sup>

Increasingly convinced negotiation with Kruger's government was useless, through the fall of 1895 Hammond, Gardner Williams, and their British patrons oversaw the shipment of arms to the Witwatersrand, providing "insurance" for what they hoped would be a bloodless revolution. After first rising up to occupy their urban stronghold of Johannesburg, the Uitlanders would subsequently request aid from Dr. Jameson, who would already be waiting in the Bechuanaland Protectorate just to the west with a party of troops. The only disagreement among the Reformers was the serious dilemma of whether the Transvaal Republic should be merely reformed or abolished altogether—the tricky question of whether the Union Jack should be raised in Pretoria or not. Hammond and his American fellows, though supportive of the rest of the plan, balked at its occurring under explicitly British auspices. In the words of the American mining

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>117</sup> The South African Republic's Volksraad (parliament) after 1890 created a "Second Volksraad" to oversee municipal affairs in the mining areas where Uitlanders were a majority of the white population. An oath of allegiance and a five year residence period empowered male Uitlanders to vote for that body, while to stand as a candidate one had to be thirty years old and a seven year resident. The more stringent seventeen year requirement applied to the First Volksraad, which was responsible for the whole country (*ibid.*, 9). For more on conscription and the role native wars played in feeding Uitlander discontent, see Tlou John Makhura, "Another Road to the Raid: The Neglected Role of the Boer-Bagananwa War as a Factor in the Coming of the Jameson Raid, 1894-1895," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21.2 (1995), 257-267.

engineer Thomas Mein, "if this is a case of England gobbling this country up, I am not in it. Otherwise, I am up to my neck in it."<sup>118</sup> It was only upon receiving disingenuous assurances from Rhodes that the British flag would not be flown that the Americans acquiesced. Rhodes was neither honest nor very pleased with his pledges—he secretly feared America as a potential competitor for influence over southern Africa in the long run—but he did what he felt he had to for the "aid expedition" to be a success.

The uprising did not go as planned, and ended up an utter disaster. British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, keen to avoid offending the United States in the wake of Cleveland's December 17<sup>th</sup> message, instructed Rhodes to call off the whole thing, but his words were unable to reach Jameson in time, who, having cut all the telegraph lines in his area, burst forth from Bechuanaland on December 29<sup>th</sup>. The Reformers in Johannesburg, though quite surprised, dutifully upheld their end of the bargain. "You can rely on me to shoot any man who hoists any flag but the Boer flag," Hammond blustered with *faux* Transvaal patriotism, and on December 31<sup>st</sup> a meeting of Americans at Johannesburg voted 495 to five to support Jameson and organize a "George Washington Corps" to help seize the city.<sup>119</sup> The Transvaal government had risen to the occasion, however, and on January 2<sup>nd</sup> Jameson and his men were apprehended at Doornkop, about twenty miles southwest of Johannesburg. With Jameson's capture, the plot was thwarted, and the whole Uitlander community was in uproar over the future of the Rand; Hammond reports that, in the unsettled atmosphere following Doornkop, the

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<sup>118</sup> Keto, "The Aftermath of the Jameson Raid and American Decision-Making in Foreign Affairs, 1896," 13.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 15; Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 49. The deployment of patriotic rhetoric among the America Uitlanders served the argument that they were fighting for a cause worthy of the Founding Fathers. As this study will explore in even greater depth later on in this chapter and in the next chapter, the liberal use of metaphor drawn from various eras of American history connected affairs in southern Africa to the homeland and broad, contested discourses about virtue, justice, and the legacy of the American past.

condition of the Johannesburg reformers was "a combination of Armageddon and a psychopathic ward." In due course Transvaal soldiers reoccupied the region.<sup>120</sup> On January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1896, Hammond and six other Johannesburg Reformers were arrested as "chief offenders, ringleaders, leaders [and] instigators" of "the rebellion at Johannesburg and suburbs."<sup>121</sup> Information on the Raid and Hammond's arrest burst on to the American scene as quickly as news could travel.

"No Wonder There's Trouble," *The Minneapolis Journal* trumpeted on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1895: "colonial Englishmen now realize why Washington and his pals refused to pay taxes to England."<sup>122</sup> Yet despite the attempts of some to frame Hammond's actions and those of his accomplices as indicative of strong Washingtonian values, the preponderance of American newspapers responded negatively to news of Britain's blunder in the South African Republic. Reporting that "the Americans and Germans are siding with the Transvaal government in the controversy over ceding rights to foreigners," on the same day, *The Wheeling Register*—another heartland paper—took the opposite tack.<sup>123</sup> "Sweet Revenge!" cried *The Knoxville Journal*, lauding the Transvaal's victory, while the *Daily Inter-Ocean* of Chicago took space to print the words of a Mr. Van Luven of Oakland, California, who claimed to have lived in the Transvaal; a defender of Republikeinse policies with a decidedly progressive slant. In the Cape Colony, Mr. Van Luven explained, "they have little use for Americans."

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<sup>120</sup> Hammond, *The Autobiography of John Hays Hammond*, 349.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>122</sup> "No Wonder There's Trouble; A Very Severe Case of Taxation Without Representation," *The Minneapolis Journal*, December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1895

<sup>123</sup> "England's Old Grab Game in the Transvaal Apparently Being Resumed," *The Wheeling [West Virginia] Register*, December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1895.



In Cape Town if an American applies for work they smilingly tell him that his services are not needed.

It is different in the Transvaal. The Dutch welcome an American and have little use for an Englishman. The little republic has good reason for this hatred, as history shows. The Dutch government protects and looks out for a workingman. In sickness the contractor is forced by the republic to care for the workman, and there is quick punishment meted out to any who attempts to defraud a workman.<sup>124</sup>

Predictably, many papers sought to connect the Raid with the Anglo-Venezuelan crisis. *The Knoxville Journal* wondered whether German's inflammatory "Kruger Telegram," congratulating the Transvaal president for his conduct, suggested an African Monroe Doctrine was in play.<sup>125</sup> A war between Germany and Great Britain would be in many ways just as frightening as a war between Great Britain and the United States.

C. Tsehloane Keto estimates that two thirds of American newspapers disapproved of the Jameson Raid, but their reasons for doing so varied quite a bit.<sup>126</sup> Most were more concerned with British expansion than they were with South African Republic for its own sake, and appraisals of Uitlander demands were often merely parenthetical to the greater story regarding the far reaching geopolitical implications of the Raid. Hammond was extremely well-connected in Republican circles, but even after news broke of his arrest public opinion remained broadly hostile to Britain.<sup>127</sup> At the time the arrest was first reported, seventy-one per cent of Republican newspapers, forty-four per cent of

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<sup>124</sup> "Sweet Revenge! Boers in South Africa May Turn on England," *The Knoxville [Tennessee] Journal*, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1896; "A Californian in South Africa; He Doesn't Like the Country—It's No Place for a Poor Man," *Daily Inter-Ocean [Chicago, Illinois]*, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1896.

<sup>125</sup> "Parallel Case; Monroe Doctrine Applies to South Africa," *The Knoxville [Tennessee] Journal*, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1896. The Kruger telegram was sent to Pretoria on the 3rd of January by the German Emperor. It commended Kruger's struggle "to maintain the independence" of the Transvaal "from attack from without," and suggested that Germany might have responded to a plea for aid had it been made. See Jean van der Poel, *The Jameson Raid* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1951): 132-137.

<sup>126</sup> Keto, "The Aftermath of the Jameson Raid and American Decision Making in Foreign Affairs," 16.

<sup>127</sup> Noer notes that Hammond's father was President of the California Assembly and a member of the elite Aztec Club of Mexican War veterans (almost one third of the membership were generals or admirals); see Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 22.

Democratic papers, and twenty per cent of independent papers (probably Mugwump dominated) disapproved of the Transvaal's action. Yet in the intervening months, as Hammond's health failed and the Transvaal court handed him a death sentence, pro-British sentiment increased, and—on the testimony of people who claimed to know southern Africa like the Reverend W. Douglas Mackenzie and the Reverend Francis W. Bates—public opinion began to move in a less Anglophobic direction.<sup>128</sup> Over the voices of those who blamed the Americans for the Raid's failure and raged against British perfidy, for others it was clear Hammond had led "an entirely peaceful" revolution, "the only motive for it...[being]... the protection of lives and property of the people of that city."<sup>129</sup> A charm offensive by British diplomatic authorities eager to rebuild American trust coming out of the Venezuela crisis also contributed significantly to a pro-British revival. Indeed, they were quite necessary: Hammond was a prominent American sentenced, perhaps unfairly, to death, and the United States would not have a consul in Pretoria up and running until 1898.<sup>130</sup>

So much for the broad contours of public opinion. Through a more nuanced lens, however, it is clear that American opinion on the Jameson Raid was both unstable and divided. Americans were interested in the crisis, and certainly the Hammond trial, but approached it with a woefully incomplete picture of what southern Africa was actually like, and, most importantly, who the Republikeinse were. The British were a familiar

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<sup>128</sup> Keto, "The Aftermath of the Jameson Raid and American Decision Making in Foreign Affairs," 18; 19; "Talks of Transvaal; Rev. W. Douglas Mackenzie Gives His View of The Matter," *Daily Inter-Ocean* [Chicago, Illinois], January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1896.

<sup>129</sup> "In No Danger; a Peaceful Revolution in South Africa," *The Evening News* [San José, California], January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1896.

<sup>130</sup> For evidence of this see "Era of Good Feeling; It Is Revived by the British Action in the Transvaal," *The Denver Evening Post*, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1896, or "England and America: Suggestions Why Amicability of Sentiment Should Prevail," *Morning Oregonian* [Portland, Oregon], January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1896.

quantity, if not always so predictable; the black and mixed-race inhabitants of the country did not figure prominently in the debate. But the "Boers" seemed full of contradictions. White—yet living in Africa, wild—yet austere, savage and yet Christian, strong and yet degenerate, nimble and yet lazy; these are but a few of the paradoxes that in intervening years would feature prominently in newspaper editorials, pamphlets, private letters and everyday conversations. In Theodore Roosevelt's oft-quoted phrase, the Republikeinse were "belated Cromwellians" adrift in the unfamiliar nineteenth century, and yet in the opinion of the *Broad Axe*, a black newspaper from St. Paul, Minnesota, they were true socialists, a *cause célèbre*:

The Transvaal is the nearest approach to a socialist commonwealth that the world, so far as history can tell, has ever seen. There is no such thing as poverty in the Transvaal; or, to be correct, there was no such thing before the Uitlanders came pouring in after gold and the wealth that lay in the mines...They want to see "teeming hives of industry" in the land; in a word the greedy ruffians who entered the Transvaal like lions and tried to leave it like hares essayed to establish the rotten system of civilization that prevails in London, Paris, and New York, in South Africa.<sup>131</sup>

With firsthand knowledge about their customs, sympathies and natures concentrated in the hands of a very few, the Republikeinse burgher in the United States was constructed as an almost mythic other, with attributes as perplexing as they were mutable, onto whose unknown visage one could project any number of debates and historical metaphors. In the candid words of *The Friend*, a Quaker journal, the Transvaal Boers were "the nearest modern approach to the old Hebrew patriarchs[;]...the average Boer is according to his lights, a citizen pioneer, and a rough, God-fearing, honest,

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<sup>131</sup> Roosevelt to Cecil Spring Rice, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1899; quoted in Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, 145; "The Boers," *Broad Axe* [St. Paul, Minnesota], January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1896.

homely, uneducated philistine."<sup>132</sup> Indeed, paradoxically, it would be as both Israelite and Philistine that the burghers of the Transvaal and Orange Free State would live out the next several years in the American mind.

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The Boer-as-construct was born in America at a time when racial ideas were in a unique state of flux. As C. Vann Woodward argued over half a century ago, it is no accident that America's acceptance of "the white man's burden" coincided with a revolution in race relations—as southern black Americans were legally disfranchised, subordinated, and segregated within society by a rapid volley of new laws and reactionary court decisions in the 1890's.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, "if the stronger and cleverer race is free to impose its will upon 'new-caught, sullen peoples' on the other side of the globe," *The Atlantic Monthly* asked in 1901, "why not in South Carolina or Mississippi?"<sup>134</sup> And why stop with African-Americans? According the U.S. census, in 1890 over 9.2 million people in America were reported to be foreign born; at 14.7 per cent of the population, this was the highest figure since at least 1790. By 1900 the percentage had fallen slightly—to 13.6 per cent—but with so many of the new immigrants coming from unfamiliar and impoverished countries in eastern and southern Europe, "Anglo-Saxon"

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<sup>132</sup> "The Boers of South Africa," *The Friend: A Religious and Literary Journal* [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania], December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1892.

<sup>133</sup> See C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1974). Opponents of Woodward's thesis are legion (see Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy*, 82-170 for an early but useful critical appraisal), but his basic premise that the unique aspects of the Jim Crow legal edifice were erected with astonishing speed in the 1890's still holds. As an example, Woodward reproduces some nauseating statistics over a mere eight years of voter registration in Louisiana—while there were 130,334 black registered voters in that state in 1896; by 1904, after the passage of various disfranchisement statutes, only 1,342 remained on the rolls (Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 85).

<sup>134</sup> "Reconstruction and Disfranchisement," *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 1901, quoted in Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 72.

pundits saw a cause for deep concern, particularly those living in the crowded cities of the east coast.<sup>135</sup>

The whiteness scholar Matthew Frye Jacobson places the turn of the twentieth century within a paradigm of American racial thought that he refers to as "variegated whiteness," marked native-born Euro-Americans' struggle to categorize immigrant groups in a way that asserted native privilege while maintaining a degree of intellectual coherence.<sup>136</sup> This "regime of racial understanding" that entailed an "increasing fragmentation and hierarchical ordering of distinct white *races* (now in the plural)" was not the obscure province of racial pseudo-scientists. It found wide currency in the discourse of the era and as such is reflected in the debates of the time over the true nature of the crises in southern Africa.<sup>137</sup> The Republikeinse may not have been immigrants at America's gates (though after the war several pro-Republikeinse advocates sought to grant them American land), but the air of novelty and mystery surrounding them invited racialization. While only a few writers openly questioned the whiteness of Republikeinse burghers, the frequency their physical and mental features were described in chiefly racial terms, alongside comparisons to various "uncivilized," "barbaric" groups is a significant part of the South African War in the U.S. Though not as dangerous to the American body politic as Italians and Slavs, they were, many suggested, just as unpleasant, primitive, and probably irredeemable.

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<sup>135</sup> Paul Spickard, *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History and Identity* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2007): 510.

<sup>136</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Colour: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998): 40.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 14; 41.

Others felt quite strongly otherwise. "The Boers are not niggers," the veteran John Y. Fillmore Blake bluntly put it, "notwithstanding the fact that the whole British press labored hard during the year preceding the war to make the world believe they were niggers, and savage ones, too."<sup>138</sup> On the other side of the rhetorical trenches, pro-Republikeinse activists responded to pro-British writers by striking strong contrasts and painting the Republikeinse as what Julia Spicher Kasdorf has called "ultra-white." Having coined the term to describe portrayals of the Amish in American popular culture, Kasdorf's insight is rooted in the idea that while whiteness positions itself favorably on a continuum with "non-whiteness" or "blackness," it cannot occupy the positive extreme of that continuum, since to do so would threaten the air of normativity so critical to its power. Blackness and whiteness, then, are not exactly polar opposites. Ultra-whiteness is unevenly but naturally and necessarily imagined as the white fantasy that directly opposes the nightmare of blackness; in Spicher's words "both nonwhite and ultra-white aspects must be projected outside to maintain the illusion of neutrality and rationality associated with the normalized 'we' that is whiteness."<sup>139</sup> Like the Amish of the 1950's, the Republikeinse seemed to many to represent a utopian American past, one that was gone in the modern United States, but that still existed, under great threat, in Africa. One might say that for pro-British writers the Republikeinse were like so many unintelligent, uncouth Italians; yet for pro-Republikeinse groups the burghers of Pretoria really were the last of the Romans.

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<sup>138</sup> John Y. Fillmore Blake, *A West Pointer with the Boers* (Boston, Mass.: Angel Guardian Press, 1903): 83

<sup>139</sup> Julia Spicher Kasdorf, "'Why We Fear the Amish': Whiter-than-White Figures in Contemporary American Poetry," in *The Amish and the Media*, eds. Diane Zimmerman Umble and David L. Weaver-Zerchler (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008): 69.

Furthermore, since the proper treatment of new immigrants was a major point of Anglo-Republikeinse conflict, the nativist movement towards "restrictionism" involved itself in the debate. American pro-Republikeinse activists criticized advocates for Uitlander rights for their hypocrisy regarding Chinese exclusion, while many pro-Republikeinse advocates, like the pamphleteer Sydney George Fisher, vocally supported ending large-scale immigration.<sup>140</sup> Surely it was one of the basic rights of independent nations to regulate immigration. But were the southern African republics independent? More to the point, should they be? Curious Americans turned to books, pamphlets and periodicals for answers to these questions.

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Born on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1871 in the south-central Virginian county of Prince Edward, Ella Graham Agnew always had an adventurous spirit. Coming of age in the decades following the Civil War, Agnew grew up amid "a generation of women without men," to quote Anne Firor Scott.<sup>141</sup> After developing her stenographic skills, in her early twenties Agnew took secretarial jobs that steadily widened her horizons: first in the small southwestern Virginia town of Abingdon, and then at a publishing house in Northport, on Long Island.<sup>142</sup> It was at Northport in 1894 that she happened upon Virginia Pride, the principal of the Huguenot Seminary in Wellington, Cape Colony—a women's high school supported through American missionary funding and "a show place for American

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<sup>140</sup> As the writer of "The American Revolution and the Boer War," more on Fisher is presented in Chapter III. See D.G. Brinton Thompson, "Sydney George Fisher, Son of the Diarist," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 91.2 (1967): 186-187 for more on his restrictionist tendencies.

<sup>141</sup> Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1970): 106.

<sup>142</sup> Ella Graham Agnew, "Ella Graham Agnew," in *Adventures in Teaching: Pioneer Women Educators and Influential Teachers*, eds. Mary M. Council and Fannie B. Strauss (Richmond, Va.: Virginia Iota State Organization, 1963), 113-126.

and British visitors."<sup>143</sup> Departing alone for the Cape Colony in 1895 to begin work at the school, her letters to her sisters are a treasure trove of insight into southern African life through the eyes of an unmarried young white woman from America. "In Cape Town," she reported in September 1895, "they are building a very pretty P.O. [post office] on the American plan and the people that *very, very* high. Some of the houses even have thatched roofs."<sup>144</sup> Coming from rural Virginia, Agnew was amused to be suddenly considered a model of cosmopolitan urbanity, but it was an identity that she nevertheless embraced, at one point even dressing as Martha Washington for a Whitmonday costume party. "Whenever there is to be an entertainment," she commented demurely,

I am in demand to arrange the hair of more than a dozen people. I must also select dresses for all the girls [of the school] and the way in which they are to be made. This is *expected of me* and you know just how much taste I have and you also know that I can hardly manage my own hair, not to mention anyone else's [emphasis hers].<sup>145</sup>

But Agnew's comments on southern African society were not always so lighthearted or amusing. The latter half of her five years abroad was spent as a stenography teacher at Amajuba Seminarium in the small Transvaal town of Wakkerstroom, where she got her first introduction to Republikeinse culture. She undoubtedly liked and respected the Transvaalers she met, but objected passionately to the austere patriarchal norms of burgher society. Answering the common British

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<sup>143</sup> Clipping from the *Richmond* [Virginia] *Times-Dispatch*, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1944, in the Ella Graham Agnew Papers, series II, folder 6.

<sup>144</sup> Ella Graham Agnew to Martha Agnew Hughes, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1895 in *ibid.*, subseries I.I, folder 2. Emphasis hers.

<sup>145</sup> Ella Graham Agnew to Martha Agnew Hughes, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1896, in *ibid.*



accusation that the Dutch race was incurably lethargic, she detailed her frustration in an 1897 letter:

I wonder if America would have been so slow developing if it had such a large Dutch element. I don't believe it would, of course, we are more accessible than So. Africa, which would make a great deal of difference. So many things here are against all my former ideas. In the Dutch Ref[ormed] Church, for instance, on communion Sunday all the women must dress in black and they may not go to the table until the men have finished and in everything men must come first. In a way, they are very good to their women folk but as for me, I don't care for their way for they have [a] superior air when discussing a thing with a woman and they do not hesitate to say that man is by far woman's superior in every way.<sup>146</sup>

And again, in August 1899, on the very eve of war:

I fear I will horrify the good people here if I go out with a hoe, they think we poor women may do as we please inside the house, but outside, where people can see us, we must not attempt any man's real labor.<sup>147</sup>

Ella Graham Agnew, as an unmarried American woman in southern Africa, was a definite rarity. For that reason her insights are all the more valuable. A committed Transvaal sympathizer in the conflict with Britain, in 1899 when the war finally broke out and her school closed she records dutifully seeing off Republikeinse commandoes to war and tending to prisoners (at one point even meeting Winston Churchill) before becoming an "Interpreter of the Language and Feelings of the Nations" for the American Consulate in Pretoria.<sup>148</sup> She finally returned to the United States in mid-1900, where she would start a long and successful career in civic affairs until her death in 1958. But for all she admired about southern Africa, it was the stifling conservatism of the Dutch-speaking whites that stuck with her for life. Though she sided with them over the British, it was in "watching a small group of intelligent, devoted women bring about the repeal of

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<sup>146</sup> Ella Graham Agnew to Martha Agnew Hughes, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1897, in *ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Ella Graham Agnew to Martha Agnew Hughes, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1899, in *ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> Short biographical sketch in Ella Graham Agnew Papers, series II, folder 6, Library of Virginia.

certain...vicious laws[,]...she had a glimpse of what value women could be if they were acknowledged citizens.”<sup>149</sup> Though her personal circumstances were unique, her simultaneous attraction to Dutch-speaking southern African life and repulsion from some of its norms was a dilemma that many other Americans would process in less satisfying ways.

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Just as not all American visitors to southern Africa were men, not all were white either, a truth regrettably unacknowledged in Louis Changuion's otherwise excellent account of American opinion in the late 1890's. In fact, few Americans knew southern Africa better, or were more interested in it, than the clergy and involved laity of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church and certain African American Baptist groups, whose missionary interest in the black population of southern Africa was burgeoning at the time. Concurrently, Orpheus McAdoo's collegiate singing group, the Virginia Jubilee Singers (later renamed the High Class Colored American Minstrel Company), spent in total about five years performing to standing room-only crowds in southern Africa between 1890 and 1898, closely followed by the African-American newspapers in the United States with whom McAdoo corresponded and who often reproduced articles from the Cape Colony's nascent black press.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Agnew, *Adventures in Teaching*, 116.

<sup>150</sup> Veit Erlmann, "A Feeling of Prejudice': Orpheus M. MacAdoo and the Virginia Jubilee Singers in South Africa 1890-1898," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14.3 (1988): 331; see also Chinua Akimaro Thelwell, "Toward a 'Modernizing' Hybridity: McAdoo's Jubilee Singers, McAdoo's Minstrels, and Racial Uplift Politics in South Africa, 1890-1898," *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*, 15.1 (2014), 3-28.

When his troupe came to Pretoria in 1891 "every item was encored and the greatest enthusiasm prevailed."<sup>151</sup> McAdoo was lauded for "drawing his honor, President Kruger, out of his shell"—the strict Calvinist claimed never to have entered a theatre before—and, according to the *Cleveland Gazette*, "tears could be seen streaming down the rugged features of the President" when the singers struck up "Nobody Knows the Trouble I Have Seen."<sup>152</sup> "I have met with financial success far and away beyond my wildest dreams and anticipations," McAdoo told *The Star*, a Johannesburg paper, shortly afterwards, for "in all my travels I have met with the most flattering receptions, and the press, generally, have been unanimous in their kind expressions of praise."<sup>153</sup> Though ultimately a friend of the British cause, McAdoo's excellent sense of his audiences endeared him even to the hardest-shelled of Transvaal burghers, and despite the fact that he and his troupe were arrested and harassed from time to time, his reception by Kruger and legal acceptance as an American citizen first and foremost, regardless of color, perhaps did something to endear American blacks to the white Transvaalers, who despite their explicit rejection of black equality were at least opposed to inhumane British mining practices. In the words of one black newspaper, "although no parliaments have been interpellated about the matter and no raid is organized to assist them...at most of the mines the negroes are treated simply as beasts."<sup>154</sup> Though the Republikeinse had hard shells, perhaps they were as utterly impregnable as feared.

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<sup>151</sup> "The M'Adoo Jubilee Singers," *Cleveland Gazette*, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1891.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*; for a discussion of this peculiar incident and its possible meaning see Erlmann, "'A Feeling of Prejudice,'" 341-342.

<sup>153</sup> "A Colored Opera Company; The Success of the Virginia Jubilee Singers in Africa," *Cleveland Gazette*, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1891.

<sup>154</sup> "Negro Life in the Transvaal Mines," *The Washington [D.C.] Bee*, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1896.

Yet the honor of being, by Kruger's own reckoning, "the first black man whose hand I have ever shaken," was not McAdoo's. Instead, it was that of the fiery and controversial Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the A.M.E. Church, who visited South Africa in 1898 to ordain 65 black ministers.<sup>155</sup> A staunch advocate of black American emigration "back-to-Africa," Turner took the words of Psalm 68 ("princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God") quite literally, and many black American Christians agreed. As the racial nadir of the post-Reconstruction era was circumscribing opportunities for black advancement in the United States, black African Christians educated in southern African mission schools found themselves beginning to chafe under their white leadership.<sup>156</sup>

Ironically, the very success of Christian mission work in certain sectors of black African society became a dilemma for white missionaries as the nineteenth century wore on and the ideas of scientific racism took deeper root. According to James T. Campbell, "As late as 1875 an ordained African minister represented the pinnacle of missionary achievement, a flesh-and-blood vindication of evangelical enterprise and of Africans' innate potential. A quarter century later, the same figure was a changeling, whose very existence menaced social order"<sup>157</sup> As Campbell and J. Mutero Chirenje both have traced in their excellent studies, this led in the final decades of the century to a series of schisms within the African missions, as black pastors set out to create their own (for whites,

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<sup>155</sup> Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 59.

<sup>156</sup> Psalm 68:31, Authorized (King James) version.

<sup>157</sup> James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and Southern Africa* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1995): 113.

potentially subversive) "Ethiopian" churches.<sup>158</sup> In 1892 Mangena Mokone's congregation at Marabastad, near Pretoria, broke away from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in one of the highest profile splits, outlining its problems with the Society in a gripping manifesto. Having likely learned of the A.M.E. church through, among other things, contact with American seamen (one third of whom were black), in 1896 they sent one of their number, James Dwane, to the United States to recruit black missionaries. Though the development of the A.M.E. Church in southern Africa was conducted largely without direct American help, the influence of figures like Bishop Turner and the institutional strength of the denomination in the United States had a powerful effect on southern African Christians. Even under the burden of wartime travel restrictions (a cumbersome addition to the normal difficulties of traveling while black in southern Africa), preachers combed the land and gathered 40,000 members for the flock. It was only after 1902 when the victorious British acted to quell what they feared were the seeds of a rebellious "Africa for the Africans" movement—Kruger, for his part, preferred to remain aloof and probably saw the movement as a useful short-term counterweight to the missionary societies he despised.<sup>159</sup>

It is perhaps owing to this missionary effort that there is a decided paucity of data on the true nature of domestic African American opinion truly was during the South African War. In the field, however, the issue of the so-called "white man's war" could not be ignored. A.M.E. (and later Baptist) clergy and missionaries active in the region had no illusions regarding Republikeinse opinion of native black people, and most of

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<sup>158</sup> See *ibid*; J. Mutero Chirenje, *Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa, 1883-1916* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

<sup>159</sup> Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 150.

them hoped that with a British victory over the Republics would facilitate the enactment of more liberal policies towards economic and political participation such as those already in force at the Cape (hopes that again, ultimately, would come to very little). What many of them did not foresee was that African Ethiopianists were not interested in simply exchanging their white leaders for African American ones, many of whom combined the same prejudices with an even more rudimentary understanding of African society. In the words of a 1903 letter of protest signed by several prominent black ministers, a plan to bring African-American "supervisors" to southern Africa,

places us under the same conditions that forced us to leave the white churches, to be placed under the superintendency of men who are ignorant of the people, their customs, traditions, and life in general; these men will have to require interpreters wherever they go, and they do not always seem to have sympathy with the people, having been disappointed with the state in which they found them.<sup>160</sup>

Hopes for a cooperative black future would not die with the postwar fragmentation of the Ethiopianist churches, but, as Robert T. Vinson argues in his study of South African Garveyism, "African Americans and Africans had profound cultural, linguistic, educational, and other differences that often led to misunderstandings, misplaced expectations, and mutual disappointment."<sup>161</sup> Black American opinion regarding the events of a war that so many white Americans still constitutes a significant lacuna in the study of the period, all the more so because their interest and actions in southern Africa are absolutely essential to the story. More will be said about this dilemma in the next chapter.

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<sup>160</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 239.

<sup>161</sup> Robert Trent Vinson, *The Americans Are Coming! Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Press, 2012): 3.

Following the Jameson Raid, the need for better information about southern African events became apparent to the American press, which dispatched correspondents to report back to a confused nation the nature of the realities on the ground in the region. Poultney Bigelow was one such writer. In the summer of 1896—with John Hays Hammond's fate still quite unresolved—Bigelow conducted a comprehensive tour of the area for *Harper's New Monthly* magazine, a body of work published soon afterwards as a book under the name *White Man's Africa*. As a narrative it exemplifies the model that a number of later writers would follow in compiling books about the southern African situation.

The book makes no bones about its sympathies from the outset, opening with an elaborate dedication to Marthinus Steyn, the president of the Orange Free State (commonly viewed as more cosmopolitan than the Transvaal). Bigelow also forcefully advocates a South African union, for "as in my country the citizens of Virginia and New York call themselves Americans, so in South Africa the Transvaal Dutchman and the Cape Englishman must in future think less of what each is giving up and more of what all are gaining in common by a United Fatherland."<sup>162</sup> In fact, Bigelow was an ardent nationalist and a Germanophile, whose previous notable published work, *History of the German Struggle for Liberty*, waxed rhapsodic upon the consolidation of the German empire (he was also a personal friend of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and responded favorably, at least early on, to the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany).<sup>163</sup> Bigelow, exemplifying a common trend among American writers, continually voices his desire to see southern Africa remade along American lines, and for the (white) people of South Africa to

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<sup>162</sup> Poultney Bigelow, *White Man's Africa* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Brothers., 1898): iii.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, *History of the German Struggle for Liberty* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Brothers, 1896).

discover a new identity as "Afrikanders." Moreover, frequent references to American history, life and principles of government help to render southern Africa intelligible to uneducated readers. For Bigelow, the Jameson Raid was a mistake and an impediment to southern Africa's progress, but so were the laws against which the Uitlanders justly rebelled, for "the Transvaal has grown rich by the earnings of an alien population to which she has made no adequate return."<sup>164</sup>

Assessing America's ability to represent its interests overseas, Bigelow had little positive to say about the state of the American foreign service. "In the memory of the oldest inhabitant of Cape Town," Bigelow writes, "such a thing as an American consul who could keep sober after twelve o'clock noon was too seldom known"—"Uncle Sam offers such a man the wages of a second-rate mechanic or baseball-player."<sup>165</sup> But he did have a great deal to say that was of American interest—comparative interest. Almost everything southern African had an American equivalent. Voortrekkers, in his view, were analogues of "the American cowboy of New Mexico or Wyoming," while "the coolie of Natal" corresponded to "the Chinaman...of our Pacific coast," and the respective black populations languished mutually, the two living equally deficient in virtue.<sup>166</sup> Never a fan of the Transvaal burghers, with an independent but civilized administration along the lines already established in the Orange Free State under President Steyn, Bigelow hoped all members of a new "United States of South Africa,"

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., *White Man's Africa*, 267-268.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 219; 239; 107.



could flourish, confident of their autonomy and national destiny.<sup>167</sup> Americanness was the clear answer to South Africa's woes.

Like so many other American writers, for Bigelow the mythical racial essence of the Transvaal burgher was most clearly to be found in the forbidding personality of President Paul Kruger, a man whose eyes Bigelow describes as "close together and small, resembling those of a North American Indian," in stark contrast to the "frank as well as fearless" visage of President Steyn.<sup>168</sup> While Bigelow praises the burghers for certain elements of their lifestyle—particularly their Christian attitudes towards their foes in the wake of the 1881 battle of Majuba Hill—and revels in retelling apocryphal tales of Kruger's life (he famously self-amputated his own infected thumb in order to continue using a rifle), "Oom Paul" and his world ultimately were outmoded relics on the cusp of the new century, long since superseded by a greater phase of southern African civilization, a situation with clear American antecedents, for just as

The blacks held that [the land] was theirs because from time out of mind blacks had peopled all th[e] neighborhood...the Boers argued, on the other side, that the blacks were, after all, merely heathen, and did not make good use of their property. The white man argued in South Africa much as he did in New England when he landed on Plymouth Rock, and cheerfully expelled the heathen who set up prescriptive claims to Massachusetts. Such arguments as these were of great assistance to the pioneers who crossed the Mississippi, scaled the Rocky Mountains, and astonished the Spanish Americans who then claimed California, New Mexico, and a great deal more. In fact, it is in human nature that even God-fearing and law-abiding men accept readily the doctrine that the earth belongs to those who make best use of it. Indeed, the philosophy which cheered the Boers who weeded out the blacks fifty years ago differs not much from the philosophy of the Anglo-Saxons now occupying the gold-fields of the Transvaal.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 79. It is important to note lest there be misunderstanding that Bigelow earlier compares Kruger to a multitude of other European figures, including Ulysses (Odysseus), Oliver Cromwell, Field Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, and the Tyrolean rebel Andreas Hofer, and the German nationalist Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (*ibid.*, 44-45). What he confers on Kruger by comparing him to a native American is not black- or nonwhite-ness, but ambiguity.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-107.

In this way Poultney Bigelow was able to render a complex situation and hitherto barely understood situation in South Africa comprehensible to the American public, along with all the prestige according to that accomplishment. Whatever subsequent American writers believed about southern Africa, their analyses usually conformed to the same schema, with Kruger himself, the Boer generally, and the "native question" comprising the major concerns. As attested by the notes in his journals, Bigelow's field work was carried out in an environment of near-constant comparison, as the minutest details of southern African life were juxtaposed with diverse aspects of the United States. Bigelow's jotted notes for Johannesburg, for example, read thus (note the marked contrast to Hammond's genteel description of the city):

a moral Monte Carlo—Virginia City in Africa—no moral standards—costliest silks & velvets trailing in the dirty streets—big dusty. Windswept road—no water, no sprinkling—mass of Jews talking German English...Rand Club lobby like a Jew stock Exchange—house saturated with whisky & German.

Medley of Virginia City—San Antonio—Bowery—great market square—loads of dust—rough people—gaudy women—blacks &c.<sup>170</sup>

As the storm clouds of all-out war gathered in the tense period between 1896 and the late (northern hemisphere) summer of 1899, the fragmented understandings Americans had already constructed in a bid to make sense of the southern African situation became deeper and more complex and, as one can already discern in *White Man's Africa*, they began to be rearrange into broader historical comparisons that said at least as much about the United States as about the Transvaal. Having established ways to answer the question "Who are the Boers?" (albeit only sketchily), Americans had cause to cultivate and deepen their understanding of the conflict, and in many cases, were

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<sup>170</sup> Diary no. 5, unpaginated, box 48, Poultney Bigelow Papers (MssCol 302), series III.B.10, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.

spurred to extraordinary action. Against the backdrop of an unashamedly pro-British Republican administration, a scattered corps of male and female activists sought to use new comparative rhetoric to guide and galvanize American opinion further in favor of the Republican cause, chiefly by engendering a sense of republican brotherhood. Though ultimately unsuccessful in bringing about meaningful change, their struggle to calm the seas of historical metaphor and partisan politics while at the same time recounting imperfect information about the war produced by an elite and incestuous clique of travelers and analysts is a crucial aspect of the story this paper intends to lay out, and it is the subject of the following chapter.

**Chapter III: Vicksburg, Valley Forge, and Vaal Krantz  
Historical Metaphor and American Opinion on the South African War, 1899-1902**

"As long as I stay here no action shall be taken contrary to my conviction that the one indispensable feature of our foreign policy should be a friendly understanding with England. But an alliance must remain, in the present state of things, an unattainable dream.

Have you seen Bourke Cockran's foul letter to the President demanding that we shall side with the Boers against England? I declined to answer it, except by acknowledging receipt, and then he printed it. All the Irish, and many Germans, take the same attitude. But of course we shall do nothing of the kind. I hope, if it comes to blows, that England will make short work of Uncle Paul. Sooner or later, her influence must be dominant there, and the sooner the better"

—Secretary of State John Hay to Henry White, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1899.<sup>171</sup>

"Have our friends lost their heads completely? Has everybody over there been carried away with this sickly sentimentality over our new-found friendship with Great Britain? What is the meaning of it all? It is bad enough to have a lot of amiable ladies, in hopes or possession of English husbands, or those ambitious statesmen whose eyes are set on the Court of St. James siding against the Boers, but to find sensible people, whose forefathers fought at Lexington, hurling their hats in the air because this big Empire, taking leave of its conscience, has set about to wipe a couple of little Republics from the face of the earth is enough to make George Washington's ghost turn handsprings around the green, flowery slopes of Mt. Vernon."

—John Elmer Milholland to John Hay, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1899.<sup>172</sup>

The Jameson conspiracy and subsequent fiasco may have been clear victories for Paul Kruger and the Transvaal burghers in the short term, but it was clear to all observers by the end of 1896 that matters in southern Africa were going to get worse before getting better. Immediately after the raid, the German government reportedly offered to send marines to Pretoria, and dispatched a warship to the Portuguese port of Delagoa Bay, close to the Transvaal border, in the hope of expanding its influence in southern Africa and checking the British in their ongoing Cape to Cairo territorial push.<sup>173</sup> Rhodes was

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<sup>171</sup> Excerpted in William Roscoe Thayer, *The Life and Letters of John Hay*, v. 2 (Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1915): 221.

<sup>172</sup> John Elmer Milholland to John Hay, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1899, reel 12, John Hay Papers (MSS25379), series VII, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>173</sup> Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 49-50.

soon forced to resign his post as premier of the Cape Colony, and Jameson was arrested and imprisoned by British authorities for several months for a breach of the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1870.<sup>174</sup> Tempers continued to flare between the Transvaal and the British Government as American writers continued trying to make sense of the situation. Expert opinion was elastic. Contrasting his account against the "many popular misconceptions concerning [the Boers]," "discolored with London additions," Howard Hillegas's 1899 *Oom Paul's People* is an early example of pro-Republicinse American writing, yet even Hillegas is somewhat circumspect in his estimation of Uitlander woes, conceding in the preface that "the alleged grievances of the Uitlanders are so complex and multitudinous that a mere enumeration of them would necessitate a second volume."<sup>175</sup> The prominent American writer and journalist Richard Harding Davis, who was soon to become one of the most important American authorities on the southern African situation, candidly describes changing his mind about John Hays Hammond's culpability in the Jameson Raid after hearing his side of the story in his first ever article about the region.<sup>176</sup>

As has been seen in the above chapter, the earliest prewar American writing on the southern African situation established tropes that would remain dominant as the conflict raged on, hoisting aloft the mythic persona of Paul Kruger as the fundamental

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<sup>174</sup> This Act, which is famously difficult to enforce, prohibits the military enlistment of a British citizen in war against any power with which the United Kingdom is at peace. Since Jameson was conducting unofficial military action against the South African Republic, which was otherwise officially at peace with Great Britain, he was liable to its provisions. See "Foreign Enlistment Act 1870," The National Archives (U.K.), accessed November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/33-34/90>>.

<sup>175</sup> Howard C. Hillegas, *Oom Paul's People: A Narrative of the British-Boer Troubles in South Africa, with a History of the Boers, the Country, and its Institutions* (New York, N.Y.: D. Appleton and Company, 1899): v; 90.

<sup>176</sup> Richard Harding Davis, *Dr. Jameson's Raiders vs. the Johannesburg Reformers* (New York, N.Y.: Richard Howard Russell, 1897): 7-8.

Boer, and offering up increasingly elaborate American points of comparison. Crucially important was the debate surrounding the 'true' nature of the Republikeinse Americans knew so little of—were they barbarous relics, barely even white, or ultra-white racial exemplars? Americans were not nearly so interested in what the war meant for Britain as in what it meant about the burgher Republics and about American identity. Justice, citizenship, race, immigration, the merits of capitalism, and the merits of civilization would all be debated in heated, extravagant and comparison-rich Victorian language by Americans who felt passionate solidarity with both sides. And yet, for all its efforts, the American pro-Republikeinse movement was ultimately unable either to shift the Republican administration's pro-British policies or to rouse large numbers of Americans to popular revolt against what they saw as a fundamental betrayal of all America claimed to stand for. The progress of all their efforts is the focus of the following discussion.

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On June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1899, the staff of a Philadelphia newspaper, *The North American*, minced no words towards Uncle Paul in an editorial entitled "The Lesson of the Boer":

The Boer must go. English power has driven him from pillar to post, appropriating what was his when he fled; and now that he has been again overtaken in the wilderness, which he sought as a safe refuge, he must yield once more or die.

It is hard on the Boer, but in the end it will be good for mankind.<sup>177</sup>

*The North American's* article is remarkable, not only for the strength of its convictions, but also for the avowedly vitalist position it takes on the affairs of nations. There is no expression at all of republican fellow feeling with the burghers of the Transvaal; in the editors' view, their true state is well beyond the pale of worthy civilization. Indeed, by

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<sup>177</sup> "The Lesson of the Boer," *The North American* [Philadelphia, Penn.], June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1899.

their own admission, in order to take a pro-British view of the situation, the Republikeinse way must be barbaric. In true Spencerian fashion, the piece continues,

Naturally, the African Dutchman does not see things in this light. Indeed, his case, as he presents it in the court of morals, is unassailable, except upon the evolutionary principle. Evolution takes small account of the moral rights of its victims. The doctrine of survival of the fittest, which in large human affairs is the doctrine of the better use, dooms the Boer to extirpation, with the alternative, scarcely more kind, of harmonizing himself with his new environment.<sup>178</sup>

But these hard truths are not all readers of *The North American* had to chew on. The coming war in Africa held much more direct lessons for Americans than that. "The Boer's fate," according to the editors,

is an anticipation of what we shall see on this continent. When the population of the United States has grown to 200,000,000, or perhaps before that, our neighbors to the South and North, unless meanwhile they shall have become much more like ourselves than they are at present in their industries and ideals, will surely undergo what the Boer is about to experience. We shall swarm upon their lands, first as humble and ingratiating Outlanders, then as injured and protesting capitalists and free men denied a voice in the laws which govern person and property.

...

There is no escape for the Boer. He is the farm up to which the city has grown, and his fields are needed for town lots. The injustice done him—and there is no blinking in the injustice—is part of the price which is paid for national expansion. Through his removal or absorption into the new mass, a hundred human beings will be given a livelihood where one now exists; for a Boer, like an Indian, requires much land in order that he may live in the archaic fashion which he loves.

Mexico and Canada—and especially Mexico—will grieve for the disappearing Boer with a sorrow that cannot be free from apprehension.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.; Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), was a British philosopher noted for coining the phrase "survival of the fittest" and laying much of the intellectual groundwork for nineteenth and twentieth century social Darwinism. It is worth noting here as well that four months later, just as war was breaking out in earnest, *The North American's* editors turned their pen against British motives in Africa, denouncing the U.K. for "buccaneering," and "the revolting cant with which the British seek to disguise their robber purpose" ("British Hypocrisy," *The North American* [Philadelphia, Penn.], October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1899). Newspaper opinion, it must be remembered, is always a transient thing, influenced by and developing alongside a myriad of factors and institutions.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. According to LaFeber, a few decades before 1900, post-Civil War frustration with Britain's permissive attitude towards the Confederacy, along with the *C.S.S. Alabama* claims dispute, inspired the last major eruption of American sentiment in favor of annexing Canada. Secretary of State William

Not only does "The Lesson of the Boer" put forward a vitalist vision of future American expansion, it casts both the Uitlanders and the Republikeinse as familiar caricatures from America's past, present and future. While the history of past American expansion south and west is only implicitly referenced in the editorial, it necessarily influences the comparison of the Republikeinse with Indians and Mexicans, two groups whose "removal or absorption" was seen as necessary to the progress of the United States. There is no use in cheering for the underdog, according to *The North American*, weakness is no virtue. As the article explains, "strength is never at a loss for excellent reasons for exerting and enriching itself."<sup>180</sup> Echoing the words of a *New York Times* editorial from the previous month, there was no use in fretting over the moral dimension of the unequal Anglo-Republikeinse struggle, for after all

It is not the machinations of Cecil Rhodes or any other individual with which the Boers are contending...It is the 'Zeitgeist,' the 'spirit of the age'...There is no room in the world for 'peculiar people' who insist on non-conformity, and upon taking up more room than belongs to them or then they can use to the utmost advantage...They must conform, like the Mormon, or be extinguished like the North American Indian<sup>181</sup>

Native Americans were a popular referent for pro-British pundits. Writing for *The Arena* in May 1900, the Danish-American Johannes Hrolf Wisby engaged in an extended comparison of Boers to native Americans, critiquing the appeals for justice common in pro-Republikeinse rhetoric, appeals he regarded as naïve. America's Indian

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Seward supported the idea, and assumed, not unlike *The North American*, that even if war never came America would quietly absorb Canada and Mexico in due course as the inevitable result of population growth (LaFeber, *The New Empire*, 27-28; 32-34). During the heat of the Anglo-Venezuelan dispute both the prominent Republican (later pro-British) senator Henry Cabot Lodge and future president Theodore Roosevelt openly welcomed an invasion of Canada (Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement*, 79; 96-97).

<sup>180</sup> "The Lesson of the Boer."

<sup>181</sup> "The British and the Boers," *The New York Times*, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1899, quoted in Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 64.



wars, according to Wisby, were "criticized abroad in very much the same stupid manner...We were branded as the rude and selfish exterminators of a brave aboriginal race. We were the money-mad sharks of a superior race who swooped upon the poor Indian"; yet history attests to a quite different version of events. "The governing policy of the United States" in Wisby's estimation, "was and still is based on equity, liberality, and magnanimity."<sup>182</sup> In southern Africa, "the prototype of these conditions exists approximately," because "the British, too, have found they can do nothing with the Boer." "He is not a savage," Wisby admitted, "but he is as hostile to civilization as the red man."<sup>183</sup> Again one sees the Republikeinse burgher racialized in a striking and precise way. While apparently retaining his whiteness, the "Boer" is attacked branded primitive, aboriginal, and savage. He is an embarrassing paradox, a contemptible relic with whom the British must swiftly deal. In a unique riff on the rhetoric surrounding what James Barrett and David Roediger call "inbetween peoples"—the impoverished "new" immigrants entering the United States from southern and eastern Europe at the time—Wisby suggests that it was the migration of superior Uitlanders that exposed the degraded racial status of the Boer, for "only when brought into contact with people not of his faith and blood does the Boer show the grim, repulsive qualities of his nature."<sup>184</sup> Ironically for a writer so wholeheartedly committed himself to the imperialist master narrative of "civilization," Wisby identifies the burgher's chief problem as stubbornness, his insistence on conformity to his own norms. "Be like him in everything that appertains

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<sup>182</sup> John Hrolf Wisby, "The South African War of Races," *The Arena* [Philadelphia, Penn.], May 1900: 472.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 472-473.

<sup>184</sup> See James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16.3 (1997), 3-44; Wisby, "The South African War of Races," 477

to life—and you will notice his native charms and homely graces,” Wisby suggests, “but dare not be otherwise!”<sup>185</sup>

Other pro-British writers avoided such strident and racially-charged expressions of disdain for the Republikeinse cause. If pro-British writers could show that the so-called Boer republics were, in fact, not republics at all, but “narrow oligarch[ies],” traditional American support for republics need not be tossed aside so cavalierly; the ensuing debate could be civic rather than racial.<sup>186</sup> As *The Outlook* explained in an editorial of October 1899, “the war in South Africa is an unnecessary war,” yet

It is a war between progress and inertia, republicanism and oligarchy, civilization and—not barbarism, but intellectual sloth.

Let us not be confused because the Transvaal is called a Republic and Great Britain is called an Empire.<sup>187</sup>

After enumerating the South African Republic’s many legal and governmental sins, the article quotes a former U.S. Consul to Cairo predicting British victory and a positive “deluge of business in South Africa” after the war’s inevitable conclusion. Ultimately, according to the article, the demands of constitutionalism and the moral law of capitalism converge as one, for

What rights do priority of occupancy give a people? Have they a moral right to retain a territory undeveloped against the rest of the world, because they have got there first? Have half a million of North American Indians a right to a continent that can support a hundred million? Have a community of Boers a right to a country rich in mines which they either will not or cannot develop? Has the dog a right to keep the ox out of the manger?

We think not. And while we believe that a true statesman in Mr. Chamberlain’s place [Joseph Chamberlain was the British Colonial Secretary at the time] would have won without war all that he will win by war...we believe

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 477-478.

<sup>186</sup> John Hays Hammond and Alleyne Ireland, *The Truth About the Jameson Raid* (Boston, Mass.: Marshall Jones Company, 1898): 4.

<sup>187</sup> “The South African War,” *The Outlook* [New York, N.Y.], October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1899.

that neither justice, liberty, nor civilization would be favored by the victory of the Boers, and all three will be at the last the gainers in the victory of the British.<sup>188</sup>

While a preponderance of the American public likely professed pro-Republicaine sympathies, it is important to recall that there were others in America, unaffiliated with the government, whose support for the British cause was quite sincere. Of this pro-British lobby, no figure was more important to the war and the course of American diplomacy than the U.S. Secretary of State, John Milton Hay.

Born in 1838 in Salem, Indiana, Hay became Secretary of State in late September 1898, a few months after the Spanish-American War, having already made a worthy name for himself in American politics. As a young man, he had been Abraham Lincoln's private secretary, and was present in the room when the Surgeon General pronounced the President dead in April 1865. From 1879 to 1881 he was Assistant Secretary of State under Rutherford Hayes, and immediately before his appointment to head the State Department, he served as American Ambassador to the Court of St. James's—a posting that, though brief, brought his pro-British sympathies into full focus. A firm believer in and booster for Anglo-Saxon brotherhood, in April 1898 Ambassador Hay expressed his true convictions when he remarked to an English audience that "all the nations of the world will profit more or less directly by every extension of British commerce and the enterprise and enlightenment that go with it."<sup>189</sup> His Anglophilic posture during the South African War surprised few, for, in the words of Tyler Dennett, he "was not what might be called an 'under-dog' man."<sup>190</sup> His conspicuous love for Great Britain

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> John Hay, "A Partnership in Beneficence," speech given April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1898, quoted in Kenton J. Clymer, *John Hay: The Gentleman as Diplomat* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1975): 121.

<sup>190</sup> Dennett, *John Hay*, 240

ultimately served him well. Amid the excitement of the Spanish-American War he was able to set the stage for Anglo-American rapprochement, an effort that he maintained through the South African War, ultimately culminating in the November 1901 signing of the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, which cleared a legal path for the construction of the Panama Canal.

After months of bitter exchanges and failed negotiation between the two sides, on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1899, the British cabinet issued an ultimatum to the South African Republic to fully enfranchise the Uitlanders or face military intervention. On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, Orange Free State President Steyn's appeal to Secretary Hay for intervention was rebuffed.<sup>191</sup> On October 8<sup>th</sup>, the British Ambassador to the United States requested the State Department's good offices to protect British citizens in the Transvaal in the event of armed conflict.<sup>192</sup> The next day the Republikeinse governments released a counter-ultimatum demanding Britain withdraw its troops from their borders, and by October 11<sup>th</sup> war had broken out at last. In the words of a young Jan Smuts, future South African prime minister and international statesman, the conflict promised to be "a fight that will stagger humanity."<sup>193</sup>

Firsthand information to help distinguish facts and allegations was always scarce. Brandishing what little intellectual grist they could muster by correspondence and the reports of Americans who had been to southern Africa, newspapers struggled to deepen their treatment of the southern African crisis. Ultimately, though, it was always easier to talk about America than southern Africa. Regarding Uitlander rights, the pro-

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<sup>191</sup> Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 67.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Quoted in Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, 46.

Republikeinse activist George W. Van Siclen (a prominent Dutch American) argued that if the United States were being forced to accede to the demands Britain was placing on the Transvaal everyone would be up in arms over the prospect of "national suicide." The Republikeinse were firmly in the right, in keeping with their proud heritage and ties to the American past, for "these South African republicans are of the same blood with the...Americans of Holland or Dutch-Huguenot descent, who fought England in the American Revolution, and again in 1812 when England still claimed a suzerainty right to search American vessels."<sup>194</sup> Louise Vescelius-Shelton, who had written a children's book called *Yankee Girls in Zululand* in 1888, darkly compared the struggle to the recent Cuban War of Independence, "where...a seemingly overwhelming army [the detested Spanish]...proved impotent to cope with its foe."<sup>195</sup>

As 1899 wore into 1900, the staunch assurances of the pro-British press that the war would be short and easy were challenged in stunning fashion by a string of Republikeinse victories. "There is not quite so much certainty as has been supposed," conceded *The North American* of December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1899, with respect to how the war would end. Coverage of pro-Boer meetings and remarks in Congress became more frequent as reports of British military blunders (often patchy and subject to censorship) trickled in from the other side of the world. The new developments could be interpreted in any number of ways. "Although the situation is in some respects similar to the situation in the Philippines," reported the African-American Exoduster *State Ledger* of Topeka, Kansas, "the sympathy of at least a majority of Americans cannot but go out to the

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<sup>194</sup> "England's Demand Upon the Boer Republics," *The Milwaukee Journal*, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1899.

<sup>195</sup> "War with the Boers; Louise Veskeliuss-Sheldon on the Transvaal Situation," *The Atchison [Kan.] Daily Globe*, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1899.

plucky and patriotic Boers."<sup>196</sup> "The less the Boers need sympathy," Hay lamented to the U.S. Ambassador in London, "the more they get. If England had no reverses she might have done as she pleased with South Africa."<sup>197</sup> Following the events of the war from the comfort of his Richmond, Virginia home, a rank-and-file life insurance clerk named Theron Hart Brown provided pithy commentary in his diary throughout early 1900. "The English carry the Bible in one hand & the sword in the other; but Kruger, it seemed, carries the Bible in his head, thus leaving both hands free for the sword," he remarked on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1900.<sup>198</sup> On February 8<sup>th</sup>, as the tide in southern Africa finally began to turn in Britain's favor, he opined with characteristic candor that "the only safe prediction about the Boer war is that it will last until it is over."<sup>199</sup> Wise words as they were, the public continued to thirst for certainties that workaday reports of the war could not provide. American coverage of an faraway war continued its inward turn.

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African Americans during this period regarded the conflict with significantly more ambivalence than the white press—the same way they approached the whole notion of overseas colonialism in general. The past few years had been terribly chaotic for the black community—not only were Jim Crow and lynch law on the rise, becoming entrenched fixtures of the Southern landscape, but blacks' position as even second-class citizens of the United States was appearing shaky. Just over a year before Transvaal commandoes invaded the Cape Colony, thousands of African Americans had served in the Spanish American War, often with great valor. Many prominent voices (particularly

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<sup>196</sup> "Our Opinion," *State Ledger* [Topeka, Kan.], December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1899.

<sup>197</sup> Hay to Joseph H. Choate, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1900, quoted in Dennett, *John Hay*, 241.

<sup>198</sup> Entry for January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1900, Theron Hart Brown diary (37034), Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1900.

those opposed to the "Back to Africa" movement spearheaded at the time by Bishop Henry Turner) believed the participation of black troops in the field would give them an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and earn them the full enjoyment of American citizenship. Proud of the heroism of the "buffalo soldiers" in the American West but frustrated by whites' ignorance of their exploits, prominent African American pundits like T. Thomas Fortune advocated the formation of a black artillery unit in the East, for maximum visibility.<sup>200</sup> This turned to further frustration when reports of racial tensions within the army came to light, such as the Tampa race riot, in which twenty-seven black soldiers were seriously wounded.<sup>201</sup> Yet the white press chose to ignore the significant black contribution to the war effort, including the Rough Riders' famous victory at San Juan Hill—where, according to one of Theodore Roosevelt's white corporals, "if it had not been for the Negro cavalry, [they] would have been exterminated."<sup>202</sup> Yet in April 1899 Theodore Roosevelt wrote an article for *Scribner's* charging black soldiers with cowardice at the very same battle, charging them with being "peculiarly dependent on their white officers."<sup>203</sup> Patriotic service had failed to reap the benefits many black leaders had hoped for.

On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1898, a few days after the election of a white mayor on a biracial Republican-Populist Fusion ticket, the city of Wilmington, North Carolina erupted in an orgy of violence that left an unclear but substantial number of black Americans dead. According to H. Leon Prather, it was "the most ghastly racial massacre

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<sup>200</sup> Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., *Black Americans and the White Man's Burden, 1898-1903* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1975): 43.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>203</sup> "Rough Riders," *Scribner's Magazine*, April 1899, quoted in *ibid.*, 201.

of the Progressive era...one of the most brutal and ruthless riots in the nation's history." Not quite three years after the Jameson Raid, it was also America's first *coup d'etat*, as white supremacist Democratic "Red Shirts" seized the city by force and precipitating an exodus of over two thousand blacks from Wilmington.<sup>204</sup> For blacks like Turner who were feeling distinctly unwelcome at home, the prospect of American colonies in the tropics like Cuba and the Philippines offered potential opportunities for mass resettlement and the erection of a "black man's paradise," far from white oppression.<sup>205</sup>

Colonialism was a complex issue for black Americans in the 1890's. On the one hand, they could feel a solidarity with exploited peoples around the world that the white community could not. They had a keen appreciation of the hardship of living on the wrong side of race prejudice and the global color line. However little they knew about the experiences of black southern Africans, they understood that continued white minority rule was the only sure outcome, and this muted reactions to the conflict. Most black newspapers correctly believed the British to be the more enlightened side on the race question, and supported them accordingly against those "whose policy has been repressive, exclusive, ungenerous, and tyrannical" towards black Americans, in the words of William Calvin Chase.<sup>206</sup> In the very same editorial, Chase admitted that the Briton was almost as feckless himself, crying out for Uitlander justice while really seeking "to dominate the world under his hypocritical pretense of civilizing and 87rahmin87nizing

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<sup>204</sup> H. Leon Prather, Sr., *We Have Taken a City: Wilmington Racial Massacre and the Coup of 1898* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984): 10-11; 148

<sup>205</sup> Gatewood, *Black Americans and the White Man's Burden*, 164.

<sup>206</sup> "The Boers and the English," *The Washington [D.C.] Bee*, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1899, quoted in Jacobs, *The African Nexus*, 135.



it."<sup>207</sup> At least two African Americans (H.A. Smith and Horatio L. Scott) fought for the British army during the war; some newspapers (like the *Broad Ax* of Chicago and the *Parsons Weekly Blade*, an Exoduster paper based in Kansas) took pro-Republican editorial positions, but almost all were resigned to the basic injustice of a war for white supremacy fought on African soil.<sup>208</sup> "Ah, South Africa, land of villainy, blood, and tears," the enigmatic black seaman Harry Dean recalled lamenting, "I am fully convinced that the Boers and English have the same attitude towards the natives."<sup>209</sup>

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With eyewitness knowledge of southern Africa so exotic and scarce and opinion so fluid, the reports that did make it back to America were laden with intrigue and rumors of varying credibility. Probably the highest profile American visitor to South Africa in 1899 was the Assistant Secretary of the Interior, a Republican politician from Missouri named Webster Davis, "a popular figure in Washington, a personal friend of the President and a well-known surrogate for McKinley in his political campaign." In addition to his other talents, Davis was "easily the finest orator in the United States" according to *The Atchison (Kansas) Daily Globe*, a political rising star.<sup>210</sup> In December 1899 his intention to travel to South Africa sparked widespread speculation. Despite his insistence that "after a hard campaign tour...I was on the verge of nervous prostration...[and] it seemed to me that I was entitled to a good, long vacation," visiting

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>208</sup> Gatewood, "Black Americans and the Boer War," 236; Jacobs, *The African Nexus*, 150.

<sup>209</sup> Harry Dean and Sterling North, *The Pedro Gorino: The Adventures of a Negro Sea-Captain in Africa and on the Seven Seas in His Attempts to Found an Ethiopian Empire* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1929): 252; 233. See also John S. Burger, "Captain Harry Dean: Pan-Negro-Nationalist in South Africa," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 9.1 (1976), 83-90; Jacobs, *The African Nexus*, 122-123; 152-153

<sup>210</sup> Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*, 90; "News and Comment," *The Atchison [Kan.] Daily Globe*, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1899.

"my old friend and neighbor, Colonel J.G. Stowe," U.S. Consul General at Cape Town, the newspapers delighted in speculation over his real purposes.<sup>211</sup> While press interest initially surrounded his troubled relationship with the Secretary of the Interior, Ethan Hitchcock—claiming that he planned to resign his post upon returning to the U.S. and inaugurate a lecture tour—by January rumors were circulating that he was being sent with secret instructions by the President "to keep the Administration advised as to the political status of the situation." This theory was bolstered by the testimony of Davis's brother Walter, who played up the possibility of Davis's nomination for vice president in the 1900 election.<sup>212</sup> "If he should make a diplomatic stroke in South Africa," predicted Walter, "he would spring into immediate prominence. Already the mystery of his mission has put his name into the mouth of every politician and in every newspaper in this country. Watch him."<sup>213</sup>

Webster Davis spent three months in southern Africa at the start of the war, incorporating visits to the Cape Colony, the Orange Free State, and the South African Republic alike. When he returned to the United States, he did indeed begin a lecture tour, and scandalized many of his fellow Republicans (not least the administration) by his full-throated endorsement of the Republikeinse cause, sentiments that he soon committed to paper in his book *John Bull's Crime, or Assaults on Republics*, published a few months after his return.

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<sup>211</sup> "Introduction" [unpaginated] in Webster Davis, *John Bull's Crime, or, Assaults on Republics* (New York, N.Y.: Abbey Press, 1901).

<sup>212</sup> "Webster Davis an Envoy; Real Mission of Missouri Statesman is to Watch Transvaal Situation," *Omaha [Neb.] World-Herald*, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1900.

<sup>213</sup> "Webster Davis in Africa; Politicians Discuss the Purpose of His Mission There," *The Kansas City [Mo.] Star*, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1900.

*John Bull's Crime* examines southern African subjects through self-consciously American eyes, even to the point of communicating insecurity. A biographical note at the beginning states that "in addition to being American-born, [Webster Davis] was born an American, that is, with a heart that pulsates with pure American blood and quickens to the inspiration of American sentiment."<sup>214</sup> Eager to avoid charges that Davis was a traitor or a tool of American immigrant constituencies, the note emphasizes his Americanness above all else. "An adherent of the doctrine that all men are created equal and that no government is good enough to govern another without the other's consent," the publishers continue,

it was natural that he should lift his eloquent voice and pen in behalf of the mighty farmers of South Africa, who have been making the same fight and against the same power that our Revolutionary sires made for America a century and a quarter ago.<sup>215</sup>

As detailed and eloquent as Davis's account was, it was much more than an opinionated analysis of a foreign conflict. It is a work concerned with fundamentally domestic goals, not least of which being Davis's own political future—his African trip forced him to switch partisan allegiance from the Republican to the Democratic Party. The foremost these goals, however, was the spread of Anglophilia and capitalism in the United States. To Webster Davis, the Republikeinse possessed "the very characteristics we most admire in our own people, namely, the good nature, the generous spirit, the kindheartedness, the affection for their families and their frank and manly independence."<sup>216</sup> The Republikeinse, in his estimation, were upstanding but firm—liberty-lovers fighting for a cause that too many Americans had lost sight of since 1776.

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<sup>214</sup> "Biographical Note" [unpaginated] in Davis, *John Bull's Crime*.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 33.

Davis's concern for America is vividly illustrated by two contrasting images of American martial patriotism: the first in a London theatre before departing for Cape Town, and the second in Pretoria with members of the Irish Brigade, one of a handful of American-led commandoes with the Republikeinse forces. In the first tableau Anglo-American rapprochement is literally performed on stage, as Davis looks on in with an appropriately theatrical horror:

An American actress, who seemed to be quite well known to the English nobility, was requested to recite "The Absent Minded Beggar."<sup>217</sup> On the stage, standing immediately behind her, were two squads of soldiers, one in the American uniform, the other in the British uniform. At the head of one squad was the British flag, at the head of the other was the American flag. At the close of her recitation the actress stepped back behind the two flags and tied their corners into a knot, while the audience arose to their feet and, led by the orchestra, sang with great enthusiasm "God Save the Queen" and "Rule Britannia."

To me that scene was not an inspiring one. For, when I remembered that my ancestors fought and died to make my flag the flag of the greatest republic in all the world, and fought against the same monarchy that endeavored to make that Union Jack, which appeared on this occasion tied to my flag, rule triumphantly over my republic as a British colony; and when I remembered that this American flag, now joined with the British flag, the symbol of tyranny and oppression, had always been regarded heretofore as the emblem of freedom and as the banner of a "government of the people, by the people and for the people," and that to liberty-loving people everywhere its stars had always appeared as the morning stars of God and its stripes as beams of morning light, it seemed to me that it had a tendency to make it appear that the people of our republic were in sympathy with a monarchy in its efforts to crush two little republics modeled and patterned after our own republic, and which was endeavoring to rob and murder the men and women and children of those two little republics, who were making the same fight for liberty, for home, for justice and for equality, and for republican form of government, as our fathers made in the time of the Revolution, when in 1776 they performed deeds of valor that wedded their names to glory and undying fame.<sup>218</sup>

All this in spite of the fact that "notwithstanding that [sympathetic] feeling toward Americans," the British were

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<sup>217</sup> "The Absent-Minded Beggar" is an 1899 poem by Rudyard Kipling, whose repeated injunction to support and "pay—pay—pay!" for the war effort in southern Africa won it both fame and derision.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

so egotistical and overbearing that an American could not converse with them more than a few minutes at a time without being insulted by them, because of their domineering ways. Unconsciously they would refer to the United States and its people as inferior. In fact, you would think, listening to their references to certain parts of our own country and its people, that we were more or less in a savage state, and that we were scarcely superior to the Boers.<sup>219</sup>

For Webster Davis, the fight that the Thirteen Colonies began in 1775 at Lexington and Concord was not yet resolved, notwithstanding present Anglo-American "friendship." The haughtiness and despotism that marked Britain's approach to the rest of the world in the eighteenth century for Davis had not subsided, though many in the United States and particularly within the Republican Party argued that a new era had dawned. In Davis's view, the *true* legacy of the Revolution did not reside at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue with President McKinley but rather in Pretoria with President Kruger ("like Abraham Lincoln...a plain, homely, kind-hearted man"), where both Dutch-speakers and their sympathetic American comrades still held fast to their republican values.<sup>220</sup> That the soul of America was perhaps easier to find abroad than at home is suggested by Davis's emotional meeting with the Irish Brigade:

It is impossible for me to describe the warmth of the welcome extended to me by these fellow countrymen. Their enthusiasm was boundless. Some of them laughed and some cried like children, and some shouted like Comanche Indians, when they realized that an American was in their camp direct from home. They were heart and soul in sympathy with the Boers, and begged me upon my return home to do everything possible to acquaint our countrymen of their stand taken on the side of right. Before leaving their camp I was forced to stand with them in a group and have our picture taken beneath their only flag, and that was a faded banner of the Stars and Stripes. Of the many pathetic incidents of my trip to South Africa none was more affecting to me than the separation from these American boys, who, I believe, should be enrolled among the world's greatest heroes, for they were not risking life for their own country and their own liberties, but for the salvation and perpetuity of free institutions of other lands and for the liberties of

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<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

other peoples. Those of that little band who still live will be honored by all who love liberty, and the names of those who died shall never be forgotten.<sup>221</sup>

For all its descriptions of the southern African landscape and the nuts and bolts of the situation there, *John Bull's Crime* at least as much about America as it is about the Transvaal or even Paul Kruger. For Davis, the war and the way pro-British Americans have regarded the war bespeak a deeply troubling turn towards the capitalistic and anti-republican values of the Old World. According to Davis, the America of the Revolution remains the ideal America, and with 1776 in mind the misguided spirit of Anglo-Saxon cooperation can be properly discarded.<sup>222</sup> *John Bull's Crime* exemplifies the preoccupation with historical Americanness that would pervade the rhetoric of the pro-Boer movement, not always going so far as to vilify, with Webster Davis, a "haughty, blood-stained" British elite, but always ascribing fault for the tragedy of the war in solemn tones to backward and perfidious British values—social, moral, and civic.<sup>223</sup>

Reframing the southern African story in terms of the American story was an effective rhetorical tactic for both the pro-British and pro-Repulikeinse writers that employed it. By doing so, as this chapter has already shown in the writing of Johannes Hrolf Wisby and others, the arena of debate surrounding the war could be widened beyond those who could claim any firsthand understanding of the conflict between Briton and burgher, and America's thirst for information on southern Africa could be sated, however imperfectly. American history was fertile ground for a war of metaphors, and

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 143-144.

<sup>222</sup> America's essence, the content and nature of the "real America" is and has always been socially constructed and contested. In the words of George Sánchez, himself channeling David M. Potter, "Americans feel deprived of an organic connection to the past, especially when confronted with their diverse religious, linguistic, and political heritage. The result has been an obsessive fixation on the elusive tenets of 'Americanism,'" from George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican-American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1993): 4.

<sup>223</sup> Davis, *John Bull's Crime*, 110.

indeed, in the case of Webster Davis, critics wasted no time occupying the new landscape. Robert Hutcheson, a former Ohio state senator, was the one of the first pro-British writers to respond to Davis, releasing a pamphlet entitled *An American View of the Transvaal Question* in late April 1900.<sup>224</sup> He was joined a few months later—as the presidential election season heated up—by the retired Colonel W.F. Cloud, whose pamphlet, *Webster Davis on Toast*, also aimed to defeat Davis on his own patriotic turf.<sup>225</sup>

Hutcheson and Cloud endeavor to do this by inverting Davis's dichotomy that presents the Republikeinse burghers as symbols of ancient American liberty. "Our people naturally and properly sympathize with struggles for liberty the world over," Hutcheson admits, citing American support for the Greek, Hungarian, and Cuban independence movements, but the Republikeinse "are not at all in the same category," for contrary to the purposes of liberty, they are engaged in "an unjustifiable revolt."<sup>226</sup> Cloud goes even further in assailing the Republics' republican credentials, contrasting the racial regime of the the Transvaal unfavorably to the United States in a possible bid to attract black Republican votes away from the ostensibly pro-Republikeinse Democratic ticket:

Mr. Davis, while I write, music in the street attracts my attention. I look out and see a band composed of colored musicians. Negroes in regalia as members of a secret and social order, in column, are on parade. At their own sweet will they fill the streets, while colored men and women keeping step are walking on the sidewalk. They are enjoying liberty, sweet liberty, and have equal rights under the laws of this Republic.

This they could not do in the Transvaal where you find the model republics, the republic of that "rugged old burgher, Oom Paul." If they attempted

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<sup>224</sup> Robert Hutcheson, *An American View of the Transvaal Question* (Washington, D.C.: British-American Association of Columbus, 1900).

<sup>225</sup> W.F. Cloud, *Webster Davis on Toast* (Kansas City, Mo.: W.F. Cloud, 1900).

<sup>226</sup> Hutcheson, *An American View of the Transvaal Question*, 7-8.

to do so they would all be flogged and at the end of the punishment receive another lash, if they did not say, "thank you."<sup>227</sup>

In both pamphlets the enumerated facts of the situation in southern Africa become a means of talking about what "republicanism" means. Surely it means freedom, but whose freedom? Whom should it protect and whom should it exclude as dangerous to the body politic? Perhaps most importantly, how might America's new importance on the world stage alter America's answers to these questions? As Hutcheson argues, America's growing clout should inspire more and not less solicitude in what its citizens do and say. "As citizens of the world," according to Hutcheson,

it is a breach of national etiquette for any citizen, high or low, to attempt to array our people in favor of one and against another of two belligerents. If Mr. Davis' talk should develop into action by any of his deluded followers, he and they would be liable to arrest for violation of our neutrality laws.<sup>228</sup>

Republicans like Cloud drew attention to the increasing stridency of Democratic rhetoric over the Transvaal issue as the 1900 election drew closer; Cloud quotes one Democratic orator as remarking that a simple expression of displeasure by the American president "clothed with the power of eighty millions of people, when he grasps the scepter of power and reigns as the people's Tribune at Washington," will be suffice to immediately stop the British war effort.<sup>229</sup> In this new century, according to some, "the *ipse dixit*, the word of America, will be enough."<sup>230</sup> Yet according to Cloud, more prudent Americans understood that the careless advocacy of foreign causes in an era of mass culture could have grave geopolitical consequences. Natural-born Americans must not be tempted to

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<sup>227</sup> Cloud, *Webster Davis on Toast*, 5-6.

<sup>228</sup> Hutcheson, *An American View of the Transvaal Question*, 6-7.

<sup>229</sup> The words of John H. Atwood, a lawyer from Fort Leavenworth, Kan., quoted in Cloud, *Webster Davis on Toast*, 2.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*



join their immigrant brethren in disturbing the subdued decorum essential to successful geopolitical balance:

Talk about foreign "entanglements." It could take no worse shape than for our citizens—native or foreign-born—to unite and divide for party purposes on the affairs of outside nations. For writing a letter to a former British subject a few years ago advising him how to vote in a presidential election, a British Minister had to quit the country. But the Anglo-American citizen himself would not have been justified if he had voted, or persuaded other citizens of British birth to vote in the supposed interest of Great Britain. Such a policy might lead to the total absorption of one country by another, or foment faction and civil war.<sup>231</sup>

The story of Webster Davis ended not with a bang but a whimper. Less than a week after returning to the United States he quit his post as Assistant Secretary of the Interior and announced his partisan switch. Thereafter he devoted his considerable oratorical talent to campaigning for the Republikeinse cause and the Democratic presidential nominee, William Jennings Bryan. After some initial successes—an anti-war petition he supported amassed an impressive 212,604 signatures (the equivalent of almost 900,000 signatures in today's America)—but rumors began to plague his speaking tour. In April 1900, a man named Oscar Epstein alleged in the pages of *The New York Times* that Davis was in fact a paid agent of President Kruger, who "would consider \$50,000 a cheap price for the intervention of the United States."<sup>232</sup> The allegations persisted, and in 1904, two years after the war, Davis was arrested along with C.W. van der Hoogt and Samuel Pearson, two other pro-Republikeinse propagandists, for accepting money in secret from the South African Republic. Davis, however, was soon released for health reasons (though he lived until 1923), and the true facts of the case would not be known until 1946, when the recollections of Transvaal State Secretary F.W. Reitz were finally

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<sup>231</sup> Hutcheson, *An American View of the Transvaal Question*, 7. The irony of this statement, coming so soon after America's war with Spain over the latter's atrocities in Cuba, is apparently lost on the author.

<sup>232</sup> "Mr. Webster Davis as a Boer Agent," *The New York Times*, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1900.

published. In his memoirs Reitz admitted Davis had in fact received advance payment in gold bars while visiting Pretoria almost a half-century earlier.<sup>233</sup> The possibility of foreign influence in American politics was not such a crackpot theory after all.

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Unsurprisingly, among the boldest expressions of metaphorical appropriation during the South African War were the province of writers who would never go to Africa and who had no firsthand information on the circumstances of the conflict. Once again fixating on the thorny debates over American republicanism and identity that the war inspired, Charles Francis Adams, Jr.'s late 1901 lecture to the American Antiquarian Society, entitled "The Confederacy and the Transvaal: A People's Obligation to Robert E. Lee," is a prime example.<sup>234</sup> Delivered over a year after Britain's capture of Pretoria, by which time the war had fully shifted into its ugly guerrilla chapter, Adams appropriated American history to construct a counter-narrative to the popular pro-Republikeinse refrain that the war being fought was a reflection of the American Revolution. Yet the primary goal of the work, as suggested by its title, was not to make sense of southern African nuances at all. Instead, "The Confederacy and the Transvaal" was out to serve the cause of post-Civil War white reconciliation—an important cause in which a Boston 97rahmin like Adams felt he could have a helpful impact.<sup>235</sup>

It should be noted that while Adams was not the first to compare the war in southern Africa to the American Civil War, he was probably the most effective to do so

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<sup>233</sup> Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*, 95-96.

<sup>234</sup> Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *The Confederacy and the Transvaal: A People's Obligation to Robert E. Lee* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1901). The lecture was originally delivered on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1901.

<sup>235</sup> See Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

in print. Earlier that year the Pan-German League of New York had released a pamphlet by the Reverend Diedrich von Slooten, "late a predikant in the South African Republic," entitled "The Boer War; Its Parallel with America's Great Struggle, an Appeal to Christian Americans."<sup>236</sup> Displaying an inexcusable misunderstanding of the facts (and, quite possibly, the outcome) of the American Civil War, von Slooten recalls how "the Christian ministers of America appealed to Christians all over the world to raise their voices for suffering humanity and stop the war."<sup>237</sup> The pamphlet ends by reprinting a Civil War era petition "from a conference of ministers of the Gospel in the city of Richmond," protesting the "indefensible acts" of the Union army, complete with subtitles: "Permanent [Confederate] Independence a Certainty—the Same with the Boer Republics."<sup>238</sup> A few less embarrassing attempts are also worth noting: the writings of the British military commentator H. Spenser Wilkinson, which compared the Republikeinse zeal for independence to the Southern "Lost Cause," and the journalist James F.J. Archibald's *Blue Shirt and Khaki: A Comparison*, in which the Civil War, not unexpectedly, looms large in the book's understanding of the American military.<sup>239</sup>

A scion of the same Adams family that produced two early presidents, Charles Francis Adams, Jr. was a consummate Massachusetts patrician. The brother of the famous memoirist Henry Adams, and the son of a congressman and distinguished wartime diplomat, Charles Jr. had large shoes to fill, and has been regarded by many

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<sup>236</sup> Rev. Diedrich von Slooten, *The Boer War; Its Parallel with America's Great Struggle, an Appeal to Christian Americans* (New York, N.Y.: Pan-German League, 1901).

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 10; 9.

<sup>239</sup> See Andrew Offenburger, "Applied Comparisons: The South African War Through the Prism of American History," *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 8.3 (2007): 292-293; James F.J. Archibald, *Blue Shirt and Khaki: A Comparison* (New York, N.Y.: Silver, Burdett, and Co., 1901).

historians as a mediocre figure, whose sojourns into business, the military, and government never amounted to much. The writing of local history, however, was a kinder to Adams as a vocation, and in 1895 he was elected president of the Massachusetts Historical Society.<sup>240</sup> From 1900 to 1901 he served a term as the president of the American Historical Society, just as his views of the Transvaal crisis were crystallizing. Mediocre as he may have been, when Adams rose to speak on matters of national interest, he found an attentive audience.

In *The Confederacy and the Transvaal*, Adams used the awful news of destruction and famine coming out of southern Africa to shore up the legacy of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee as an American hero. According to Adams, Lee was the mastermind of “the hair-breadth escape we ourselves had from a similar experience”—his 1865 decision to surrender to Ulysses S. Grant instead of scattering his troops and attempting to mount a feeble resistance in the wilderness.<sup>241</sup> In Adams’s view, the success of efforts at national reconciliation since the war must not be allowed to obscure the terrific consequences that would have followed a decision not to surrender at Appomattox, for some at the time believed that the loss of Richmond “would be but the close of one phase of the war and the opening of another”:<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> John F. Stover, “Charles Francis Adams,” *American National Biography Online*, American Council of Learned Societies, last updated February 2000, accessed November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013, <<http://www.anb.org/articles/14/14-00004.html>>.

<sup>241</sup> Adams, *The Confederacy and the Transvaal*, 3.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. Adams said as much in a letter he wrote to Secretary Hay over a year earlier in reference to the latter’s unofficial reception of emissaries from the Republics: “The recent Spanish ‘scrap’ seems to have obliterated all recollection of the earlier, and much graver, crisis...The position taken by us towards England, you will remember, during that struggle, was that the English ministry should not even admit the Confederate emissaries to an ‘unofficial’ interview...Imagine the feelings of the citizens of this great and free and humanitarian republic if it were tomorrow announced that [British Prime Minister] Lord Salisbury had received emissaries of Aguinaldo, and expressed deep sympathy for the cause of the suffering but gallant Filipinos!” (Charles Francis Adams to John Hay, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1900, reel 13, John Hay Papers, series VII).

[R]ecalling the circumstances of that time, it is fairly appalling to consider what in 1865 must have occurred, had Robert E. Lee then been of the same turn of mind as was [Confederate President] Jefferson Davis, or as implacable and unyielding in disposition as Kruger or [Republikeinse General Louis] Botha have more recently proved. The national government had in arms a million men, inured to the hardships and accustomed to the brutalities of war; Lincoln had been freshly assassinated; the temper of the North was thoroughly aroused, while its patience was exhausted. An irregular warfare would inevitably have resulted, a warfare without quarter. The Confederacy would have been reduced to a smoldering wilderness,—to what South Africa to-day is. In such a death grapple, the North, both in morale and in means, would have suffered only less than the South. From both sections that fate was averted.<sup>243</sup>

In the same way one might take issue with W.F. Cloud's optimistic assessment of the position of African Americans in the post-Civil War United States, it could easily be argued (then as now) that large swathes of the Confederacy *were*, in fact, reduced to a smoldering wilderness, and that, particularly in the border states, the conflict *was* warfare without quarter. "The Confederacy and the Transvaal," with its balanced posture of mutual culpability and mutual honor for both Northern and Southern whites, embodies well the historically suspect but rhetorically powerful message of reconciliation literature. Indeed, by setting the Civil War against the backdrop of Africa (as a moral example, no less), what might otherwise be considered America's greatest tragedy—a sign of the implicit contradictions in American republicanism—became yet another sign of American greatness. "Isolationism," for Adams and other pro-British writers, did not mean full American withdrawal from world affairs, but rather leadership by moral example rather than aggressive diplomacy.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>244</sup> Adams was a mugwump, and, broadly speaking, an anti-imperialist (along with many in the pro-Republikeinse movement), but broke from the movement for his acceptance of American sovereignty in the Philippines following their 1899 annexation. According to Beisner, Adams was unique among the mugwumps for his presentist outlook, criticising his historian colleagues' attachment to the virtue of the past as "filiopietistic." See Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire*, 107-132.

It was hardly a surprise that Adams's lecture provoked the progressive historian Sydney George Fisher, who fired back on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1902 with a long letter to the *Philadelphia Sunday Times*, later published as a pamphlet under the title *The American Revolution and the Boer War*.<sup>245</sup> Fisher was the Pennsylvania-born son of a prominent essayist and diarist (named, confusingly, Sidney George Fisher), and had followed his father's path, writing extensively in favor of various progressive causes such as immigration restriction and civil service reform, as well as publishing several works on colonial history and the American Revolution—so-called “muckraking histories” that challenged celebratory interpretations of the American past.<sup>246</sup> Just a few months after writing his letter to Charles Francis Adams, Fisher published his most comprehensive work yet, *The True History of the American Revolution*, a tome whose introduction accused orthodox historians of seeking “to build up nationality, and to check sectionalism and rebellion” as opposed to pursuing historical truth, and countering them with the assertion that “the Revolution was a much more ugly and unpleasant affair than most of us imagine.”<sup>247</sup>

Fisher in *The American Revolution and the Boer War* energetically exposed the inconsistency implicit in Adams's honor focused theory of the American Civil War, sarcastically raising the specter of Adams's famous patriot forebears:

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<sup>245</sup> Sydney George Fisher, *The American Revolution and the Boer War: An Open Letter to Mr. Charles Francis Adams on His Pamphlet, "The Confederacy and the Transvaal"* (Philadelphia, Penn.: G.H. Buchanan & Co., 1902).

<sup>246</sup> Clyde W. Barrow, “Sydney George Fisher,” *American National Biography Online*, American Council of Learned Societies, last updated February 2000, accessed November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <<http://www.anb.org/articles/14/14-00191.html?a=1&n=fisher%2C%20sydney%20george&d=10&ss=0&q=1>>.

<sup>247</sup> Sydney George Fisher, *The True History of the American Revolution* (1902), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia, Penn.: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1911): 8; 9.

In other words, you go so far as to say that when a people are fighting for their political integrity and independence, a hopeless struggle for it ought not to be prolonged beyond what may be called the point of scientific defeat. Rather than prolong it to desperation and death in the last ditch it is much better and more sensible to accept a dependent position of some sort, the position of a crown colony, or a charter colony with more or less varying degrees of colonial control, all of which your very unwise and altogether reckless great grandfather John Adams, and some of his friends used to describe as "political slavery."<sup>248</sup>

Modern American society, according to Fisher, was controlled by moneyed corporate interests and corrupt political bosses, and Adams exemplified both as a former government official and erstwhile president of the Union Pacific Railroad. At any rate, far from discouraging discord and foreign entanglement as promised, Adams's doctrine of "yielding at once to overwhelming power" had the actual consequence of inviting the tyranny of the strong over the weak in the interest of stability.<sup>249</sup> Turning the question of outnumbered resistance back onto the United States, Fisher submitted a pointed question:

If the European powers, disgusted with the success of our protective tariff and rising commercial supremacy, should unite to abolish our lynch law, burning of negroes at the stake, municipal corruption and some other matters, their armies and fleets would outnumber us even more than the English outnumber the Boers; and I suppose if you are really as much of a "quitter" as you profess to be you would then still preach your doctrine of submission.<sup>250</sup>

Fisher's aim was to turn Adams's metaphor on its head: rather than the American Civil War providing a moral example for the Republikeinse, it is the South African War—even in its ugly guerrilla phase—that is truly exemplary. For Lee's honor, according to Fisher, was not the key factor in the end of the Civil War (his devotion to the cause, Fisher explains, was lukewarm at best), but rather it was the liberal terms offered by General Grant that effected the miracle of Appomattox. If a true

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<sup>248</sup> Fisher, *The American Revolution and the Boer War*, 3.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

Revolutionary spirit had truly guided Southerners, Fisher argued, "the eleven southern states would be now either independent or in the condition of Ireland."<sup>251</sup> In the frank spirit of progressive polemic, the Republikeinse guerrillas, and not Americans like Adams, in Fisher's view acted as the *true* standard-bearers of the American Revolution—warts and all, for

Now that we have settled down and become a great nation all this seems like very foolish business to some of us who cut off coupons or sit at roll top desks endorsing the backs of documents until we have lost the natural feeling of vigorous manhood so characteristic of the Boers and the followers of Washington. We have forgotten our revolution. Our own acts in it now seem too heroic for our stomachs when we see others practicing them.<sup>252</sup>

When the historical record is actually examined closely, Fisher explained that the patriots of old "created by means of tar and feathers...a reign of terror throughout the whole land." General Washington, for his part, "was prepared to become the worst kind of a guerrilla," yet "the moral position of the Boers was vastly stronger than was ours." Furthermore "though receiving far greater provocation than we received," Fisher insisted that actually the Republikeinse "have behaved much better."<sup>253</sup> The pig-headed American patriots of the eighteenth century had stopped at nothing to secure their "absolute independence," rejecting several gracious British proposals for peace throughout the 1770s. "Your great grandfather was a Kruger," Fisher gleefully explained.<sup>254</sup> In its final section, *The American Revolution and the Boer War* returned to the lessons America has for the world—and argued that the U.S. had always been instrumental in nudging Britain towards liberalism in its institutions and practices:

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 7; 15; 11; 8.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.



If [Great Britain] had the courage of her convictions and intentions and was not afraid of the outcry of the civilized world, she would be much shorter and quicker in her work with the Boers. She would surround the concentration camps of Boer women and children with machine guns and pump into the mass of humanity until that heroic race was extinct. But she prefers the safer and more veiled, but equally infamous, method of slow starvation and disease, of banishment and imprisonment in distant countries to extinguish a race which she hates because she knows she has always done them evil and wrong and because they excel her own people in morals, military intelligence and courage.

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Real liberty and free government, the rights of the laboring man, have grown during the last century in England out of American precept and example.

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It remains for us to teach her to be just to the Boers.<sup>255</sup>

In the work of both Adams and Fisher the facts and subtleties of the situation in southern Africa are clearly subordinated to the authors' views of American identity and meaning—the real stars of the show. What might initially appear simply to be the use of historical metaphor to elucidate a contemporary situation in Africa soon shows itself to be, if anything, the reverse: in the work of Adams and Fisher it is the real event, the South African War, that is called upon as an object lesson and prism to aid in illuminating the American story and determining the ever elusive nature of "real Americanness." For Adams, real Americanness lay in chivalry and pragmatism, grounded in principle but finding its best manifestation in compromise and republican civic virtue—a sense of virtue the Republikeinse lack who insist on fighting the British past all possibility of victory, allowing their own land to be torched and their women and children interned. For Fisher, compromise meant compromise with corruption—a pernicious quality of British governance since at least 1763. Fisher's choice for the true American virtue was dogged determination, an ancestral and uncompromising attachment to liberty that saw its way through the messy years of the Revolution and was now

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 30; 32; 33.

threatened by the equally malign forces of latter-day Anglophilia. For both, American history not so much a lens through which Americans might better understand a faraway conflict, but rather the subject itself. The egocentric cry, "if only the belligerents could follow our example," rang out loudly from both, but the real truth was that that example was the real topic of debate. If America was to grow into its status as one of the world's foremost nations, the Revolution and the Civil War had to be dealt with in a productive way, and soon. If, as Tyler Dennett has argued, "the emergence of the United States as a world power" did not occur until the South African War, such strident writing on both sides of the issue anticipated the idea of American indispensability in global affairs that would persist into the twentieth century.<sup>256</sup>

Outside official American diplomatic history, with a few exceptions, it is relatively uncommon to encounter detailed analyses of international events as they were seen through American eyes. There is, in a great deal of mainstream historiography, a construction of American history in two phases—a provincial-isolationist phase starting with the American Revolution and a cosmopolitan-activist phase following after it at some point, providing perhaps for a roughly fifty year window of contestation between 1900 and the end of World War II in which the isolationist and activist phases of American history could be contested. In the provincial-isolationist phase, international events are cast as mostly irrelevant to Americans, who prided themselves on their separation from Old World intrigues. By contrast, in the cosmopolitan-activist phase no international event occurs without the United States playing a central, if not essential role. Consequently one finds few examples of a major overseas event in which

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<sup>256</sup> Dennett, *John Hay*, 240.

Americans were deeply interested without eventually intervening. The South African War is an important case study for those interested in disrupting this crude schema, which is deeply and fundamentally flawed. Already within the context of this paper the range and importance of American trade and the missionary impulse of both white and African-American groups give the lie to the notion that nineteenth century Americans were unconcerned with what went on outside their frontiers. Indeed, as the United States reached its zenith of power in the late twentieth century, Francis Fukuyama's infamous thesis that history had reached its triumphal endpoint barely left the presses before rapidly disintegrating in the face of events to which the United States neglected to pay attention and could scarcely control.<sup>257</sup> Studying the South African War can be uniquely helpful in rectifying this issue because of its paradoxical isolation from and importance to late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. Unlike, for example, the gruesome Philippine-American War that raged alongside the conflict in southern Africa, the United States was not involved militarily—one's patriotism in the traditional civic-martial sense was not generally at issue simply by opposing the war. Yet patriotism in a broader sense—as a need to express and stand up for what was authentically "American"—was absolutely at the heart of the struggle. The South African War brought to light deep cleavages that existed among Americans in discussing what were theoretically mutually understood concepts like the nature of Americanness. By shining more light on the actions, rhetoric, and ultimate failure of the American pro-Republikeinse movement, these cleavages will be further interrogated and exposed.

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<sup>257</sup> Fukuyama's thesis, like Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations," is a favorite object of derision by modern scholars, to the point where one feels somewhat guilty in citing and further belaboring it. Nevertheless, see Francis Fukuyama, *Have We Reached the End of History?* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1989).

#### Chapter IV: "Pro-Boers" At Bay The American Pro-Republiceinse and the Challenges of Domestic Activism

"As in 1776 so today, the laying of the farms and homes of the South Africans desolate by fire and sword, declaring war against the national rights of all mankind and extirpating the defenders of liberty there, is the concern of every right minded and honest-hearted American citizen, and if we stand by tamely permitting 'Liberty to be assassinated,' we must expect American to suffer the same humiliation and degradation which has befallen Greece and Rome, which has befallen Venice and Genoa, for they all exist today only in name."

—Jan Krige, South African Republic Police Commandant, speaking in Detroit, Michigan, December 1901.<sup>258</sup>

"By the way, do you remember one night in the 'Scott' when I gave you my version of Hammond's share in the Jameson Raid, and your saying how glad you were to get the truth about him, as you had always wanted to like him, and that now knowing the truth, you could. It is funny to think you now are friends. He is one of the Best Ever, and, so are you."

—Richard Harding Davis to Frederick Russell Burnham, Minnesota native and former Chief of Scouts for the British Army in southern Africa, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1906.<sup>259</sup>

The story of how pro-Republiceinse rhetoric and activism in the United States both did and did not translate into concrete action during the South African War is in many ways a difficult to tell, for to do justice to it requires an understanding of diverse segments in American society, from the women who provided the "feet on the ground" for most organizations, to individuals in the employ of the Republiceinse governments, right up to the U.S. State Department and the presidency. Of all these relevant categories however, it is the nuts and bolts level of "pro-Boer" organizing that has been the most neglected by scholars and is most worthy of this investigation's attention.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Jan Krige, *American Sympathy in the Boer War* (Pinedene, South Africa: Automatic Printing Press, 1933): 151.

<sup>259</sup> Richard Harding Davis to Frederick Russell Burnham, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1906, Frederick Russell Burnham Papers (MS 115), series I, box 5, folder 55, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

<sup>260</sup> Curiously, the study of pro-Republiceinse propaganda and activism in Europe has received much more attention from historians. For a concise discussion of European opinion, see Donal Lowry, "'The Boers Were the Beginning of the End?'" in *ibid.*, *The South African War Reappraised*, 215-218; for a description of actual European participation in the war see Roy Macnab, *The French Colonel: Villebois-Mareuil and*

During the Transvaal War of 1881—accompanying angry headlines about British imperialism—press reports indicate that some limited pro-Boer organizing did occur, though on a small scale and along largely ethnic (Dutch-American) lines. A report in *The Washington Post* of February 17<sup>th</sup> describes a meeting in a private home, where attendees were urged “to make the voice of the Dutchmen of New York heard by the British government.”<sup>261</sup> “The attendance was not large,” however, and nothing much came of it. The next year a lecture by the prominent Irish-American Republikeinse fighter Alfred Aylward only half-filled the Cooper Union building in New York.<sup>262</sup> When war broke out in 1899, the Orange Free State boasted an consul in Philadelphia—Charles Pierce—and Gen. James O’Beirne, a Civil War veteran, claimed to the Transvaal’s official representative in the U.S., but since both were American citizens (Pierce had never been to Africa at all) the State Department recognized neither officially.<sup>263</sup>

Pro-Republikeinse activism in the United States waxed and waned through roughly four phases. Widespread interest in the early Republikeinse successes and the novelty of the war buoyed the movement through its first several months, but trailed off through the spring of 1900 as the Republikeinse commandoes began to retreat and abandon their capitals. William Jennings Bryan’s defeat in the election of 1900 was a

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*the Boers, 1899-1900* (Cape Town, South Africa: Oxford University Press, 1975: 161-172. For a fine volume on antiwar activism in Britain itself, including many pamphlets and propaganda material, see *The Pro-Boers: The Anatomy of an Antiwar Movement*, Stephen Koss, ed. (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1973).

<sup>261</sup> “Sympathy for the Boers; The Dutch-Americans of New York Extending their Assistance,” *The Washington [D.C.] Post*, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1881.

<sup>262</sup> “The Boers in South Africa; Alfred Aylward on British Aggression—A Sympathizing Audience,” *The New York Times*, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1882. Aylward was actually the leader of his own anti-British revolt, the “Black Flag Rebellion,” of American miners at Kimberly prior to the war (Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*, 5).

<sup>263</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Inquiry as to Representative from South African Republic*, 55<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1900, S. Doc. 113, serial 3851.

further blow to the movement. Between the spring of 1900 and the fall of 1901 the most committed activists continued to press for action to stop the war, and the writings of journalists and participants kept the conflict on the minds of many, but the expectation of imminent Republikeinse defeat hamstrung efforts at organization. Yet from the fall of 1901 through the end of the war in mid-1902, the pro-Republikeinse movement underwent a partial rejuvenation, as guerrilla successes and the unfolding horror of British humanitarian atrocities came to light. A push to end mule transit between Louisiana and South Africa was just gaining steam by the time the war abruptly ended in mid-1902. The postwar phase of the pro-Republikeinse movement played itself out in the years afterwards, as humanitarian organizations saw to the welfare of Republikeinse prisoners of war, and some die-hard organizers pressed for opening the United States to subsidized Republikeinse settlement.

In October 1899 the Oval Office released a statement acknowledging the great number of petitions President McKinley had already received imploring him (variously) to admonish Great Britain, admonish the Republics, offer arbitration, or offer mediation between the two sides, possibly as part of an international initiative.<sup>264</sup> Its response to these calls (despite Secretary of State Hay's marked pro-British leanings), the administration issued a statement of strict neutrality. Neutrality, however, was not as simple as it sounded. American businesses that lacked any means of trading with the landlocked Republikeinse continued to trade with the British government, who were deeply interested in purchasing mules, horses, and basic provisions in the United States—much to the chagrin of pro-Republikeinse activists. Indeed, the American contributions

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<sup>264</sup> For the text of the statement see Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*, 65.

to the British war effort are well-remembered even today in south Africa "The first wagon into Ladysmith [the site of a months-long Republikeinse siege] was loaded with Quaker Oats, Sunlight Soap, Armour Beef and Fairbanks Beef," observed the American war correspondent Richard Harding Davis, adding that "as a matter of fact almost everything in South Africa is of American make."<sup>265</sup> Louis Changuion chooses to end *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull* by waxing lyrically about the invasive yet beautiful cosmos flowers that bloom each autumn by South African roads, brought there originally by American beasts of burden during the war.<sup>266</sup>

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For many Americans, then, the administration's position was plainly unsatisfactory. The war was clearly being fought for the wrong reasons, pitting a strong, capitalist empire, against two weak states that seemed to share America's republican values and frontier ethos. But the pro-Republikeinse found it difficult to speak with a coherent voice. A number of factors account for this, the most obvious being the ludicrous profusion of organizations dedicated somehow to the Republikeinse cause. From the Morton House Group to the American Transvaal League, the Boer Independence Organisation, the Boer Relief Fund and the American Raad for the Relief of the South African Republics, the relatively small clique of pro-Republikeinse movement leaders found themselves frequently divided and at odds.

First of all, there was an ongoing debate over direction: what did activists *want*? Should the pro-Republikeinse press for an end to the war, with peace negotiations

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<sup>265</sup> Richard Harding Davis to Rebecca Harding Davis, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1900, Richard Harding Davis Papers (Acc. 6109), box 1, folder 29, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

<sup>266</sup> Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*, 198.

possibly resulting in a Anglophilic South African union, or should they press for total Republikeinse independence? Montagu White, the envoy broadly in charge of European and American pro-Republikeinse efforts, was criticised by many of the pro-Republikeinse Americans with whom he corresponded for his cautious, state-centered approach to lobbying, reluctant to support the Democratic ticket at the 1900 presidential election and adamant that President Kruger should not visit the United States. Organizations closely associated with him pitched their efforts as non-partisan and anti-war, lobbying for a brokered peace rather than British withdrawal. To native-born true believers like Edward Seymour Wilde, staunch Democrat and president of the New Jersey-based Boer Independence Association, such an approach smacked of cowardice. The manuscript of a letter to the editor he composed in March 1901 (near the mid-war doldrums of pro-Republikeinse activism) gives a sense not only of his contempt for White's oversight but also the general internecine bitterness prevailing in the movement:

I am sorry to state that it is said here that Mr. Montague White [sic.] has gone from here to Europe as a representative of what is said to be called, although I cannot locate it, The American Transvaal League, the object being to promote a compromise on the part of the Boers with Great Britain, other than on the basis of independence.

If this should unfortunately prove to be true, it seems to me that such notion should be regarded in the light of an impertinence, and that the consideration moving an advocacy of such a curse should be carefully investigated.<sup>267</sup>

Wilde goes on to compare the Republikeinse position to Washington's army at Valley Forge and declare Charles Pierce to be (in contrast to White) "one of the truest and best friends of the Boer cause in this Country."<sup>268</sup> It is highly unlikely that Wilde

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<sup>267</sup> Edward Seymour Wilde to an unspecified editor, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1901, Edward Seymour Wilde Papers (MG 250), box 1, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, N.J.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.



was unaware of the American Transvaal League. Under the leadership of Peter van Vlissingen, it was one of the most important pro-Republikeinse organizations, closely tied to Montagu White and the official propaganda effort. After all, just seven months later van Vlissingen and Wilde would be corresponding; in October 1901, as allegations of mismanagement of various widows' and orphans' relief funds began to dog Charles Pierce, van Vlissingen and White would beseech Wilde to extract "an itemized financial statement" from the would-be Free State consul.<sup>269</sup> The two had good reason to worry: just a year earlier, in July 1900, a similar scandal had been picked up by *The New York Times*, which reported giddily that the Boer Relief Fund under Patrick O'Farrell and W.A. Croffut had spent almost all of the money raised at pro-Republikeinse rallies to fund receptions and further meetings—all but eighteen dollars. "In other words," it sneered, "98<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> per cent of the money collected has been used in an unsuccessful effort to produce on American politics and effect harmful to the Administration, and 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> percent of it will—or may—go toward relieving the sufferings of wounded and hungry burghers."<sup>270</sup> And the infighting did not stop there. Charles Pierce, George Van Sieten and Samuel Pearson—three of the nation's most important pro-Republikeinse organizers—all despised each other, and when the patriotic Transvaal policeman Jan Krige arrived in Louisiana on his long American lecture tour, Pearson accused him of being a British agent.<sup>271</sup> All of this boded poorly for an activist movement.

The pro-Republikeinse movement as a whole fluctuated wildly between vehement anti-imperial polemic and earnest appeals to the British conscience, humanitarian concern

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<sup>269</sup> Peter van Vlissingen to Wilde, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1901, Edward Seymour Wilde Papers, box 1.

<sup>270</sup> *The New York Times*, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1900, quoted in Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul en John Bull*, 150.

<sup>271</sup> Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy*, 167.

for widows, orphans and prisoners of war, and hardline commitment to Republikeinse independence, non-partisan appeals to shared American values and ethnocentric anti-Republican invective. Little wonder, then, that the pro-Republikeinse opened themselves up to derision in the pro-British press, where they were characterized as vicious Anglophobes and tools of Democratic machine politics. Even on an individual level, activists' true goals were not always clear. This was particularly true for the respectable women who served as key foot soldiers for so many of the pro-Republikeinse organizations. Jessie Fara, who organized for both the Women's Auxiliary to the Boer Relief Fund in the New York area and served as secretary of the Women's South African League, devoted herself publicly to organizing genteel fundraisers and humanitarian initiatives on behalf of the Republikeinse while privately harboring a vehement hatred for the British:

The Boers are the only Christian people that are not savage. And they make me angry because they are *so good*. Why didn't they kill all of those monsters [British soldiers] they caught instead of letting them go? Don't they know every one of those creatures killed makes the earth just that much more pure?

You have made a just mistake about me. I'm not good. I don't want to be good. I'd love to furnish some of the oil to boil some of those missionaries in China [a reference to the Boxer Rebellion]. But of course the Chinese are like the Boers[;] they wouldn't use it<sup>272</sup>

In a similar position was a Mrs. Anna Lehlbach, who lamented in November 1900 that she was "not proud of being an American any longer."<sup>273</sup> Her husband, she complained, had too great a business interest in Britain to join the pro-Republikeinse cause himself, but she found ways to do her bit. Her drawings inspired by Emily Hobhouse's famous

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<sup>272</sup> Jessie Fara to Mrs. Lasher, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1900, Alice Donlevy Papers (MssCol 826), series IV, box 6, The New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.

<sup>273</sup> Anna L. Lehlbach to Jessie Fara, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1900, *ibid.*, box 6.

reportage on British concentration camps would grace the walls at pro-Republikeinse women's meetings Fara helped organize in the spring of 1902.<sup>274</sup>

Ethnicity also presented a challenge. It has already been seen how eager pro-Republikeinse writers were to stress their commitment to American-ness; this all the more because of the perception that pro-Boer movements were composed chiefly of immigrant elements, their professed love of American-style republicanism but concealing nothing but ancient "racial" feuds and geopolitical gamesmanship. This was certainly a concern of Mary B. Southall, whose January 1900 letter to the ardently pro-British navalist writer Alfred Mahan praised him "for so strongly speaking up for the many *real* Americans whose sympathies are with the British," adding that she did not "think because the Irish, and the German and the Dutchman in this county, stir up pro Boer movements all over the states, that Congress should pass any resolution of theirs, as coming from the American people."<sup>275</sup> While there certainly was no shortage native-born support for the Republikeinse cause, it was difficult to deny the importance of Irish-American activists like Rep. Bourke Cockran of New York, associating the movement with a radical fringe. As early as December 1899 rumors circulated that Irish radicals planned to invade Canada in retaliation for the war, and it was common knowledge that most of the few hundred Americans who actually went to the Transvaal to fight for the Republikeinse were of Irish descent.<sup>276</sup> Naturally the Dutch-American community also

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<sup>274</sup> Lehlbach to Alice Donlevy, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1902, *ibid.*, box 5.

<sup>275</sup> Mary B. Southall to Alfred T. Mahan, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1900, Alfred T. Mahan Papers (MSS31062), series II, reel 2, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>276</sup> "Clan-na-Gael Talk; The Society's Plans for an Attack on Canada," *The Morning Oregonian* [Portland, Oregon], December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1899. Americans participated in a small but notable capacity in Republikeinse commandoes during the war; the best firsthand account of their participation comes from Col. John Y. Fillmore Blake, commander of the Irish Brigade, composed of mostly Irish-American soldiers who had set off for southern Africa under the auspices of joining a Red Cross ambulance unit. See Blake, *A West*

played a prominent role in pro-Republikeinse activism, a fact underscored by a look at the names of prominent figures within organizations; George W. Van Siclen, founder of the National Boer Relief Fund and the American Raad for the Assistance of the South African Republics, was also a prominent member of the prestigious Holland Society of New York, as was his associate Tunis Bergen. Peter van Vlissingen, C.W. van der Hoogt, Herman van der Ploeg and retired Michigan state senator Sybrant Wesselius were just a few of the other prominent Dutch Americans involved with the Republikeinse cause.

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It should be clear by now that, rambunctious as they may have been, the group of men and women who led the alphabet soup of pro-Republikeinse organisations was not large, and despite their broad distaste for one another, they were all more or less on speaking terms. Their utter lack of discipline notwithstanding, they constituted an elite clique in that many of them had southern African contacts. Unlike most other Americans, many pro-Republikeinse leaders had firsthand access to information on southern Africa. They doubtless appreciated this a great deal, but in a way it signified a broader problem within pro-Republikeinse activism: the scarcity of people who could speak with authority on the situation in southern Africa, and the cliquishness of those who could.

Because southern Africa was so far from the United States and so unknown to most Americans before the war, the total set of people in America who had been to

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*Pointer with the Boers.* Richard Harding Davis, for his part, wrote after meeting them in 1900 that they "had no business to come out here as an ambulance corps and give us a black eye as liars, but now that they are here I have not the least doubt but that they will do a pretty fine stunt" (Richard Harding Davis to Rebecca Harding Davis, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1902, Richard Harding Davis Papers, box 1, folder 31.)

southern Africa was tiny, composed most notably of newspaper correspondents, mining engineers, former soldiers, diplomats and Republikeinse envoys (official and unofficial). Unsurprisingly, the prospect of writing about and lecturing on their prized insights was a powerful draw on such people. Illustrious pro-British figures like John Hays Hammond and Frederick Russell Burnham wrote articles and gave speeches outlining their perspectives. John Y. F. Blake, a West Point graduate from Arkansas who fought in commando with the Republikeinse at the beginning of the war, declared earnestly in *A West Pointer with The Boers* that "I do not believe that in the history of the world, one could find more acts of barbarity and brutality committed by any people in any land than by the English in the two little republics of the Transvaal and the Free State."<sup>277</sup> Charles Macrum, former U.S. Consul in Pretoria, returned from Africa a committed pro-Boer, like Webster Davis began his own speaking tour, lauding the Republikeinse and responding to their racializing critics by certifying them to be "the most magnificent specimens of physical manhood imaginable."<sup>278</sup> Yet the Americans coming back from southern Africa to educate their brethren and gain publicity for themselves were a clubby bunch, not as partisan as they may seem at first.

For one thing, most of them knew each other. Richard Harding Davis, one of the most famous journalists to travel to southern Africa during the war, was, for example, a consummate social butterfly. Even as he wrote books and articles celebrating the Republikeinse as the most unfairly maligned people in the world, he maintained energetic correspondence with both Transvaal State Secretary F.W. Reitz and Winston Churchill at the same time. While lamenting mismanaged the British war effort, he built up strong

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<sup>277</sup> Blake, *A West Pointer with the Boers*, 202.

<sup>278</sup> *The South African Republics* (New York, N.Y.: Boer Relief Fund, 1900): 37.

friendships with both Hammond and Burnham, despite having fundamental differences of opinion concerning the direction the war should ideally take. Davis would go on to profile Burnham for a book he would publish in 1906, *Real Soldiers of Fortune*, and his affection for the two men is clear; in one letter he refers to both Hammond and Burnham as "the Best Ever."<sup>279</sup> After leaving southern Africa Davis maintained ties to John Y. F. Blake (the same pugnacious man whose book derided Frederick Russell Burnham as an ignorant fraud), and it was not long before Davis had organized a new fraternal society, The Military Order of Pretoria, in order to maintain contact with American veterans of the South African War.<sup>280</sup> Open only to Americans who had fought for the Transvaal or Orange Free State, as well as any non-combatants embedded with that side, there is no reason to believe it ever expanded beyond fifteen to twenty members.<sup>281</sup>

For Richard Harding Davis, the South African War was about two things: making contacts, and paying the bills. His letters to his family from southern Africa make this clear. His moment of crisis came in March 1900 while waiting with Lord Roberts' army at Ladysmith—the British army was not about to move for two weeks, and Davis despaired over the fact that he had not quite collected enough material for the book he had been planning, *War and Peace in South Africa*. "I started in too late to do [much] with it and as it is I have seen a great deal," Davis confessed to his mother on March 15<sup>th</sup>—"it is neither an interesting country nor an interesting war."<sup>282</sup> By the 25<sup>th</sup> he was detailing his plans to return to America and make amends with his long-suffering wife

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<sup>279</sup> See note 240, above.

<sup>280</sup> Blake, *A West Pointer With the Boers*, 20; unpublished notebook, Richard Harding Davis Papers, box 13.

<sup>281</sup> Draft charter of the Military Order of Pretoria, unpublished, Richard Harding Davis Papers, box 13

<sup>282</sup> Richard Harding Davis to Rebecca Harding Davis, March 15<sup>th</sup> 1900, Richard Harding Davis Papers, box 1, folder 25.

whom he had left behind at a Cape Town hotel, even giving the name of the German steamer on which they were to return.<sup>283</sup> On April 14<sup>th</sup>, however, Davis sent another letter refuting everything he had said over the past month about returning to the United States and giddily announcing that the American consul had approved his request to visit Pretoria. "This will enable me to write a book from both sides giving my ideas of the English in the field and the Boer at home," Davis explained, "with the exception of Churchill who 'had to' I shall be the only correspondent who has been permitted to go on both sides."<sup>284</sup> That book was written and eventually published under the title *With Both Armies in South Africa*, and met with great success.

All of this is simply to show that Richard Harding Davis, like so many other opinion shapers during the war, was working on his own behalf, towards his own personal goals and not those of a larger movement. The same can be said of more outspoken figures like Macrum and Webster Davis, for though they stirred podiums all over the country, they did not involve themselves on a formal basis with the tangle of pro-Repulikeinse organizations attempting to benefit from their progress. This is even true for high profile Repulikeinse visitors to the United States. Marquis names like Daniel Wolmarans, Cornelius Wessels, Abraham Fischer, Jan Krige and the Rev. Herman D. van Broekhuizen (the first three men were members of an official deputation of Repulikeinse envoys who toured the United States twice, first in spring 1900 and then in early 1902) determined their movements either independently or at the direction of

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<sup>283</sup> Richard Harding Davis to the Davis and Clark Families, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1900, Richard Harding Davis Papers, box 1, folder 27.

<sup>284</sup> Richard Harding Davis to Rebecca Harding Davis, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1900, Richard Harding Davis Papers, box 1, folder 29.

Montagu White, whose relationship with grassroots activist groups was less than ideal to say the least.

The same disorganization that hobbled the pro-Republikeinse movement's ability to stand up to the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations opened it up to co-optation not only by the beneficiaries of the lecture circuit but also to political manipulation at the hands of the Democratic Party. Eager to exploit anti-imperialist feeling in the wake of America's controversial military entanglement in the Philippines, the 1900 Democratic electoral platform appeared to offer up a full-throated endorsement of the pro-Republikeinse movement:

[W]e especially condemn the ill-concealed Republican alliance with England, which must mean discrimination against other friendly nations, and which has already stifled the nation's voice while liberty is being strangled in Africa.

Believing in the principles of self-government and rejecting, as did our forefathers, the claim of monarchy, we view with indignation the purpose of England to overwhelm with force the South African Republics. Speaking, as we believe, for the entire American nation, except its Republican office-holders and for all freemen everywhere, we extend our sympathies to the heroic burghers in their unequal struggle to maintain their liberty and independence.<sup>285</sup>

Throughout 1900 there was a great deal of pressure on pro-Republikeinse activists to align with the Democratic Party, and, to be sure, many hoped for a Bryan victory. At the same time, though, many more circumspect observers felt a sense of unease. "How I hope your prognostics about the election may come true!" wrote Johanna Waszklewicz-van Schilfgaarde, a Dutch disarmament activist, in an August 1900 letter to Jessie Fara. "But even then I have a heavy heart in the future [sic.]. Has not much of the sympathy shown to the Boer Envoys been simply an election maneuver and will Mr. Bryan, when

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<sup>285</sup> "Democratic Party Platform of 1900," *The American Presidency Project*, Gerhard Peeters and John T. Woolley, accessed March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014, <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29587>>.



President, not be true to his Monroe principles and abstain from intervention?"<sup>286</sup> Montagu White agreed with that pessimistic assessment. "The Democrats have been warmly espousing the cause of the Boers," he wrote in a letter to a Transvaal minister, "but, from what I have seen, I think most of the professional politicians on their side have simply done so as a party move. The last thing they want the Republicans to do is to mediate, for that would take away the essence of their attacks."<sup>287</sup> Indeed, after the Democrats lost the 1900 election, the promising pro-Republikeinse overtures stopped. The movement, despite the efforts of people like White to rein it in, hobbled on weakened by the election and discredited as a craven political gimmick. It mattered little whether the higher-ups were envoys, war correspondents, or politicians: the grassroots of the pro-Republikeinse were never able to form strong and productive ties with the valuable people their cause depended upon.

One could argue that ultimately it was the Philippines that did the pro-Republikeinse movement in. The United States had acquired them through the Treaty of Paris that ended the war with Spain shortly before the South African War, causing a stir at home, and by the middle of 1899 the United States was once again facing full-blown war in the Philippines, this time not against the Spanish but against the Filipino people themselves, who did not wish to be yoked to the United States in a colonial relationship. As reports of American atrocities in the Philippines circulated in the following years, a vigorous anti-imperialist movement organized in the United States determined to expose examples of American barbarism and heavy-handedness. Many of the movement's

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<sup>286</sup> Johanna Maria Cornelia Bertha Waszklewicz-van Schilfgaard to Jessie Fara, August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1900, Alice Donlevy Papers, box 6.

<sup>287</sup> Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*, 104.

leaders, like historian and poet W.A. Croffut, were also active in the pro-Repulikeinse movement.

This was a problem. Men like Croffut were certainly convinced of the injustice of the southern African contest—that was never in doubt—but like the national Democratic Party they often saw it as a object lesson to point people towards the real scandal, which was much closer to home. How could the United States speak forcefully to the British on the Transvaal issue in light of the situation in the Pacific? Croffut wasted no time mincing words: "John Bull...who murdered two republics in South Africa—even he, accustomed to the reek of his own infamy, holds his sensitive nose to protect himself from the stench of your atrocities."<sup>288</sup> William Jennings Bryan himself, defending himself against allegations of bad faith, put it so:

Our refusal to recognize the rights of the Filipinos to self-government will embarrass us if we express sympathy with those in other lands who are struggling to follow the doctrines set forth in the Declaration of Independence...Suppose we sent our sympathy to the Boers? In an hour England would send back, 'What about the Filipinos?'<sup>289</sup>

The South African War was useful as a cudgel to bash the Republicans. It was useful as a prism on to which concerns about America's identity and position in the world could be introduced and debated. But as a political cause in which the United States should actually entangle itself? That was the least important of its three purposes. Despite the tireless efforts of the many Americans involved in pro-Repulikeinse activism between 1899 and 1902, the movement was unable to close that part of the deal.

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<sup>288</sup> Undated manuscript, W.A. Croffut, W.A. Croffut Papers (MSS17285), box 16, folder 2, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>289</sup> Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 87.

Of course, as pro-Republikeinse activists never tired of saying, America's choice in the South African War was not between acting and not acting. The American government's indirect impact on the South African War, by not making a fuss about it, was important to ultimate British success. Another key phenomenon, one that became one of the parting codas of the war, was America's economic support of the British along with the issue of the Chalmette depot, a scandal that never was.

By January 1901 76,632 horses and mules had been shipped from American ports to South Africa, and by early 1902 the pro-Republikeinse American Transvaal League estimated that over 150,000 had gone over, alongside hired American muleteers (many of whom, activists alleged, were pressed into service with the British army upon arrival in Africa, against the terms of their contracts).<sup>290</sup> At the port of Chalmette, Louisiana, near New Orleans, the British bought up "disused cotton sheds," and staffed them as depots for the mass transport of American livestock to South Africa.<sup>291</sup> Due to an astonishing mortality rate among horses and mules brought to Africa, the British army's need for both stock and caretakers was nearly insatiable. By April 1900 Consul Stowe at Cape Town estimated that there were several hundred American muleteers in southern Africa,

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<sup>290</sup> U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, Transmitting, in Reply to a Resolution of the House, a Statement as to the Exportation of Horses, Mules, and Supplies to South Africa*, 56<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1901, H.R. Doc. 498, serial 4167: 1; John C. Williams, "Is Our Government Violating the Treaty of Washington and Thus Giving Uncalled For Aid to Great Britain in its Unrighteous War Against the Boers?" U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Report and Accompanying Papers Concerning Shipments of Horses, Mules and Other Supplies from Louisiana to the Seat of War in South Africa*, 57<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1902, H.R. Doc. 568, serial 4377: 14. Wassermann gives a total of 143,755 mules shipped between September 1899 and June 1902; Changuion gives 191,402; Consul J.G. Stowe estimated that there were 500 American muleteers in southern Africa in April 1900. See Johan Wassermann, "A Tale of Two Port Cities: The Relationship Between New Orleans and Durban During the Boer War," *Historia* 49.1 (2004): 28; Changuion, *Uncle Sam, Oom Paul, en John Bull*, 191; Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy*, 93.

<sup>291</sup> Wassermann, "A Tale of Two Port Cities," 28.

most of whom were stationed at Durban, close to the front.<sup>292</sup> Since at least one caretaker was needed for every twenty mules (and every fifteen horses), British recruitment efforts for American muleteers were aggressive, and—in the eyes of critics—deeply suspicious. According to Johan Wassermann, British recruiters relied heavily on the victims of 1890's American industrialization: the "adventurers, drifters, petty criminals, troublemakers, corner boys, jailbirds and the 'dead brokes' of America."<sup>293</sup> Sometimes they were alleged to prey on innocents. In February 1902, the would-be Transvaal consul Samuel Pearson accused the British of running an illegal military base at Chalmette, and attempted to bring the issue to court to force the question. The effort seemed hopelessly quixotic, until the end of March, when the governor of Louisiana unexpectedly complained to Secretary Hay.<sup>294</sup> Pearson's efforts did not comfort everyone. In what is surely one of the strangest letters in the records of Cape Town's American consulate, Mrs. T.J. Turner expressed grave concern for her younger brother Fred, who

mysteriously disappeared the weeks before Christmas last and we have every reason to believe he was unduly influenced to join the British army, which was recruiting at or near N.O. La. He left Indianapolis about the last of August with another boy of his own age (16 years) to make the "grand tour" and we did not hear of him until December, when he wrote mama that he was in the employ of a Milwaukee Detective Association, locating Blind Tigers [illegal saloons] of which that part of the country abounds. He said furthermore this association was sending boys to England and South Africa....I see the U.S. is going to take steps to abolish the camp in La., but that does not help us in this case.<sup>295</sup>

What might have become a difficult moment for the Roosevelt administration was happily interrupted by the end of the war on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1902.

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<sup>292</sup> Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy*, 93; Wassermann, "A Tale of Two Port Cities," 30.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>294</sup> Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy*, 94-95.

<sup>295</sup> Mrs. T.J. Turner to Joe McHatton, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1902, Instructions from the Department of State: Cape Town, Cape Colony, v. 49, National Archives and Records Administration, Adelphi, Md.

The Treaty of Vereeniging, which ended the South African War, was a disappointment to Republikeinse boosters in the United States. In it, the Orange Free State and South African Republic were stripped of their sovereignty and placed on a track towards union with the Cape Colony and Natal. Africa south of the Zambezi was fully British, the landscape of the country was devastated, its people were in misery, and the sturdy Republikeinse burghers had been forced to yield to British might. The overall picture would seem grim for those who believed with Richard Harding Davis that the burghers embodied all the best and most threatened qualities of true-blue American stock.

In the long run, however, they had little reason to despair. British attempts to further inundate the former republics with English-speaking immigrants failed miserably, and to this day English-speakers have never constituted a majority of the white population in South Africa. The much anticipated Anglicization of the country never occurred. When the Union of South Africa was finally formed in 1910 as a dominion of the British Empire, its first prime minister was the former Free State general Louis Botha. Its second premier was the guerrilla fighter Jan Smuts.

African American leaders who suspected both Briton and burgher of fecklessness regarding the black population would regrettably find their suspicions confirmed. In many ways the treaty of Vereeniging was not so much a Republikeinse surrender as a blueprint for continued white supremacy. The liberal Cape Colony's franchise laws were not extended to the former republics, as many black Africans and African Americans had cautiously hoped. The foundations were being laid for something quite different. A little over a decade after the war, Maurice Evans, a Natal colonial official, took a fact-finding

trip to the American South, and returned excited by the opportunities for innovation a new Union of South Africa would offer to tackling the race question. His book *Black and White in the Southern States* makes for chilling reading in light of South Africa's subsequent development. "The wisest friends of the American Negro," according to Evans,

after all these years would welcome a separation of the races such as is still possible for us in South Africa...We still have black States...and yet short-sighted ones would break them up, and force the landless inhabitants to become vagabonds or industrial serfs, scattered throughout the length and breadth of the land.

To such the experience of the South should serve as a warning...I frankly recognize the difference of the races and believe we must accept this in our practice. I advocate territorial separation, the conservation of what is good in native life and custom, and the gradual teaching of what they can assimilate from our civilization...

Too late it may be for the South, but I feel that if some of her best men...could counsel us, they would say that on such lines and not in the way it was forced upon them by the conquering North, lies our hope for the future of South Africa.<sup>296</sup>

Certain questions were still a long way from being resolved.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, proposals flooded state legislatures across America proposing schemes from resettling defeated Republikeinse emigrants on American soil. Though Transvaal State Secretary F.W. Reitz exiled himself to the United States for a time, and a small burgher settlement in Patagonia would hang on for several decades, the anticipated Second Great Trek out of South Africa never occurred. The ever widening freedoms of dominion status meant that even former Republikeinse who despised the British had a reasonable expectation of one day taking full control of the state, just as they did, in relatively short order. The sky did not fall on southern Africa as

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<sup>296</sup> Maurice Smethurst Evans, *Black and White in the Southern States: A Study of the Race Problem in the United States from a South African Point of View* (London, U.K.: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1915): 269-270; see also Noer, *Briton, Boer and Yankee*, 120-130.

a result of the gruesome 1899-1902 war. Unfortunately, the sun did not exactly rise either.

As Thomas Noer, Richard Hull and others have effectively shown, American hopes of expansion into the southern African marketplace were largely disappointed over the coming years, as Britain licked its wounds in the region and acted to defend its imperial interests. One coda to this story, however, is worth mentioning: the South African War Exhibition, a "historical libretto" performed at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri. An ambitious and cumbersome project, the exhibition brought a dizzying array of actual veterans from both sides to the United States (including the famous Republikeinse generals Piet Cronjé and Ben Viljoen), in addition to Republikeinse women and children, and 40 black Africans. The event sought to recreate the spectacle of the war while it was still fresh in the minds of Americans, but it had a subtler purpose as well: the need to project an image of white reconciliation that would resonate with America's own post-Civil War project. Notwithstanding the decisions of the Colonial Office and the British Parliament, Jennie Sutton argues that the "Transvaal Spectacle" projected an image of stable white supremacy that organizers hoped would foster future ties between the two regions.<sup>297</sup> Both Briton and Reublikeinse were invited to relive their best days of valor (through re-enactments of Colenso and Paardeburg, respectively), and fly their flags together at the performance's conclusion. Echoes of the American Civil War pervaded the Exhibition. Just as writers and activists had worked tirelessly to fit the South African War to American templates while it was still raging, in its conclusion the organizers of the re-enactment staged a second Appomattox. "You

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<sup>297</sup> Jennie Sutton, "'Transvaal Spectacles': South African Visions at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair," *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 8.3 (2007), 271-287.

have made a gallant fight, sir!" a British re-enactor would say to the real General Cronjé, "I am glad to get so brave a man."<sup>298</sup> Given all that occurred in America between 1899 and 1902, it seems only fitting that the South African War, though so very foreign, should be made to end at home.

Because for most Americans the South African War was more of a mirror onto themselves than something demanding action for its own sake, the situation there did not remain on the minds of most Americans for long. A new century had dawned, and the fact that world power status had fundamentally changed America was slowly sinking in. The nation was soon off to bigger and better things. Within its own moment, though, the South African War remains a fascinating event in American history. Never before had Americans become interested so quickly in a conflict so unfamiliar. Perhaps never before had a wholly foreign conflict become such fertile metaphorical ground for discussing the anxieties and ambiguities of the American story. Perhaps never before had an activist movement both risen and fallen on such a ground. To be sure, the vast majority of Americans did not come anywhere close to experiencing the South African War as it was. But millions of people west of the Atlantic experienced America's South African War—a war of competing discourses, comparisons, metaphors and methods. A war that for a brief but significant historical moment, cradled the self-understood destiny of the twentieth century United States.

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 277.



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