



WHITENESS OF A
DIFFERENT COLOR

*European Immigrants and the
Alchemy of Race*

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*Harvard University Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England*

meant not only to illustrate the changeable character of race, but also to trace the circuitry of race from the various historic encounters that generate this mode of ascribing "difference" to the uneven patterns of racial recognition which such encounters leave in their wake; and to the localized, even individualized experience of literally seeing, or not seeing, racial "difference" where such difference depends upon the play between social consciousness and literal vision. Whereas Chapter 4 focuses upon the power of history in the formation of race, Chapter 5 bears down more directly upon social consciousness and observable racial "fact"—upon the vagaries of race and the eye of the beholder.

Part one has sketched a succession from one racial paradigm to another across 175 years of American history; part two now examines the resulting discrepancies and the symptoms of uncertainty in the seeming fixity of race, as one regime gives way only imperfectly to the next. ~~Competing discourses of race rise and fall in salience. Each is keyed to a different aspect of the unfolding national epic of encounter, conquest, enslavement, and emancipation, and immigration, each offers a different version of the polity and its divisions; and each is subject to the concerns of the moment. One's view and interpretation of various real-life bodies, then—the bodies of Hebrews or of Celts or of Caucasians, for instance—is thus intimately aligned with one's comprehension of the body politic.~~

"Have you any objections to a foreigner?" [Mrs. Tristram] continued, addressing Newman. . .

"No Irish need apply," said Tristram.

Newman meditated awhile. "As a foreigner, no," he said at last; "I have no prejudices."

"My dear fellow, you have no suspicions!" cried Tristram. "You don't know what terrible customers these foreign women are; especially the 'magnificent' ones. How should you like a fair Circassian, with a dagger in her belt?"

Newman administered a vigorous slap to his knee. "I would marry a Japanese, if she pleased me," he affirmed.

"We had better confine ourselves to Europe," said Mrs. Tristram.

—Henry James, *The American* (1877)

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1877: *The Instability of Race*

Midway through *The American*, Valentin de Bellegard introduces his brother to James's prototypical American, remarking, "My brother is a great ethnologist." "An ethnologist? Ah," the American returns, "you collect negroes' skulls, and that sort of thing."¹ Although the reference to ethnology passes fleetingly as a textual oddity, James's concern throughout the novel is fundamentally "ethnological," and his ethnology is fundamentally racial. As the American makes his way through a maze of bewildering European social codes, he scans every face for clues as to proper bearing and deeper meaning. Likewise, as he seeks, then woos, and ultimately loses an aristocratic bride, the question of "pedigree"—his and hers—overwhelms the text. James becomes quietly preoccupied with race, and the narrative proceeds according to a kind of physiognomical surveillance by which every human face is made to tell. Of Lord Deepmere, for instance, the narrator remarks, "His physiognomy denoted great simplicity, a certain amount of brutishness, and a probable failure in the past to profit by rare educational advantages." ("Is he Irish?" Christopher Newman wants to know.)²

The racist tensions within *The American*—the tension, for instance, between the sentiments “No Irish need apply” and “We had better confine ourselves to Europe” in Newman and the Tristrams’ conversation about a suitable bride for the American—along with other cultural articulations from 1877, illuminate the instability of race as both an idiom of power and a category of perception. Not only do certain groups undergo a process of racial redefinition as shifting social and political circumstances require, but varying systems of “difference” can coexist and compete with one another at a given moment. ~~One set of racial perceptions does not clearly give way to the next.~~ This was evident in the discussion of “Celtic” savagery and “Caucasian” entitlements during the draft riots of 1863; it was reflected in various court battles between the 1870s and the 1930s over who qualified as “free white persons” in naturalization law; and it was reflected in George Schuyler’s deliberate dismantling of the Caucasian race in *Black No More* and in Laura Z. Hobson’s conflicted view of racial Jewishness in *Gentleman’s Agreement*.

There is nothing singular about the year 1877 when it comes to the discrepancy in racial classification, in other words. But given the problems of excavating archaic ways of seeing races, 1877 does provide an apt focal point for investigation. During that year race questions surfaced in every region of the country (and much of the wider world as well); the discourse of race addressed a range of pressing social and political questions; and the systems of race framing one debate did not necessarily suit the contours of the next. The Caucasians in one political context or in one locale might reappear, deeply divided, as Anglo-Saxons, Celts, and Hebrews in another.

~~Here is some of what was attracting racial attention in 1877: Reconstruction collapsed in the South, raising new questions about the relations among whites and blacks in an era of black Emancipation and the re-integration of the South into national political life. In the aftermath of Custer’s demise the year before, the Great Sioux Wars ended with the defeat of the Minneconjou Sioux, Sitting Bull escaped to Canada, and Crazy Horse surrendered to federal troops. A vocal and often violent anti-Chinese movement coalesced in the West, particularly in California, where white workers decried the labor competition of “Mongolians” and insisted upon a “white man’s republic.” The East and Midwest, meanwhile, were wracked by labor unrest which raised questions in some quarters about the white immigrant working class itself. Members of the radical Irish Molly Maguires were on trial for murder in Pennsylvania; and~~

copying system of Ireland

reverberations of the Tweed scandal in New York continued to raise doubts about the Celtic proletariat there. Jewishness became a matter of intense debate following a Saratoga hotel’s decision to bar Joseph Seligman, a prominent Jewish banker. A series of skirmishes (variously called “riots” and “raids”) erupted between Mexicans and Americans along the nation’s southwestern border. And, on the international scene, the Russo-Turkish war in the Caucasus (“the traditional cradle of the race,” as *Harper’s* put it) produced a rash of commentary on the “races of the Danube,” while Henry Stanley’s reports from Africa aroused tremendous popular enthusiasm for the white-over-black adventure of taming “the dark continent.”³

In a discussion of the ideological power of travel writing as a genre, the sociologist Howard Winant has aptly noted, “We might usefully think of a racial *longue duree* in which the slow inscription of phenotypical signification took place upon the human body, in and through conquest and enslavement, to be sure, but also as an enormous act of expression, of narration.”⁴ As should be clear from this quick catalogue of the year’s events, this glacial process has left in play multiple, contradictory racial understandings of who is who: competing “phenotypical significations” are etched upon the body (and the body politic) not only by the residual power of prior events and renewing acts of their cultural representation, but also by the untidiness of history itself.

A range of social, political, and economic encounters have been racially comprehended in U.S. history, and they carry, in their turn, a ~~power to further define U.S. history in terms of race.~~ These include European exploration (which generated and sustained a division between the white Christians of Europe and the nonwhite “heathens” of Africa, Asia, and the Americas); the conquest of North America (which similarly divided “white” rulers from subjugated “nonwhites,” and “civilized” Europeans from “savage” Indians and “mongrelized” Mexicans); slavery and Emancipation (which divided white self-possessed citizens from black chattel, whites who were “fit” from blacks “unfit” for self-government); and immigration (which generated and sustained a division between those North and West Europeans who represented good material for citizenship from those South and East Europeans and Asians whose republican credentials were suspect).

Although these racial encounters do generally trace the nation’s history as it unfolded across time in some semblance of succession, one phase never smoothly gave way to the next. Like any narrow sliver of time,

initial contact & otherness

then, the year 1877 is not simply a one-dimensional, static moment during the period of America's rapid industrialization. Rather, it embodies Winant's "slow inscription of phenotypical signification" in its entirety—European exploration (Stanley in Africa) and conquest (Miles and the Sioux, the Mexican border skirmishes) and slavery-Emancipation debates (the "redemption" of the South) and immigration (California's anti-Chinese agitation, the troubles with the Mollies, the flap over Seligman, the dramatic strike of "white" laborers in cities from Baltimore to St. Louis), all in the encompassing framework of capitalist development. And each of these historical stages, now contending at a single instant, produced its own particular patterns for seeing and understanding the world racially—its own racial mythologies, its own rivalries, and its own categories.

If race as a conceptual category is indeed a theory of history, then race as a *perceptual* category embodies that history in all its complexity and contradiction.⁵ The racial conceptions of peoplehood generated during conquest—in California, say—may be partially effaced by secondary and tertiary inscriptions created by the anti-Chinese campaign or by the question of black-white segregation; but so may the initial inscription be reinforced by traditional narrations and ritual repetitions of the history of conquest, or rejuvenated by similar conquests in later periods. The "degenerate Mexicans" of 1840s imagery might become honorary "Caucasians" in the context of school segregation later in the century, only to be reinscribed as a dangerously shiftless and unassimilable element when Pancho Villa rides (or when intolerance of undocumented immigrants mounts in Pete Wilson's California).

Race is a palimpsest, a tablet whose most recent inscriptions only imperfectly cover those that had come before, and whose inscriptions can never be regarded as final. Contradictory racial identities come to coexist at the same moment in the same body in unstable combinations, as the specific histories that generated them linger in various cultural forms or in the social and political relationships that are their legacies. Thus it was, for instance, that Henry James drew his fateful racial line of exclusion both *within* and *around* Europe in his quest for a proper bride for the American: "No Irish need apply," "We had better confine ourselves to Europe."

Through the Lens of Race

Among the most telling snapshots of the complex, overlapping systems of racial differentiation at this moment is Charles Dudley Warner's two-

volume sequence recounting his journey through northern Africa and the Near East, *Mummies and Moslems* (1876) and *In the Levant* (1877). Although Warner is now remembered almost exclusively for his collaboration with Mark Twain on *The Gilded Age*, his travel writings were widely read and frequently commented upon in the press at the time. Although the narrative is far removed from the American scene, Warner deployed a distinctly American—which is to say, racial—understanding of "difference," of the relationship among the world's peoples, of history and human progress, and of power, potentiality, and merit.

Warner's narrative is a rich, protracted musing on "difference." Like James's prototypical American, Warner himself is ceaselessly scanning the human landscape, and both *Mummies and Moslems* and *In the Levant* become not geographical travelogues merely, but physiognomical tours of the region's "shifting kaleidoscope of races, colors, and graceful attitudes."⁶ Indeed, Warner's fascination with skin color, features, physiognomy, and body type is tireless, "such a display of bare legs and swarthy figures" does this part of the world offer up. "Look! that's an East Indian, that's a Greek, that's a Turk, that's a Syrian-Jew? No, he's Egyptian, the crooked nose is not uncommon to Egyptians." *Ἰβν ἑσὲδ ἰσλαμ*

And what a cosmopolitan place [Alexandria] is. We meet Turks, Greeks, Copts, Egyptians, Nubians, Syrians, Armenians, Italians; tattered derweeshes, "weelies" or holy Moslems, nearly naked, presenting the appearance of men who have been buried a long time and recently dug up; Greek priests, Jews, Persian Parsees, Algerines, Hindoos, negroes from Darfoor, and flat-nosed blacks from beyond Khartoum.

"The complexions exhaust the possibilities of human color," Warner exclaims.⁷

Warner thus offers a remarkably unself-conscious portrait of an American racial sensibility. From the opening pages onward any discussion is apt to come to rest on the image of "a stalwart, wild-eyed son of the sand, coal-black," "a yellow-skinned, cunning-eyed conjurer," "a fat negress . . . whose jet face has taken an incredible polish; only the most accomplished bootblack could raise such a shine on a shoe," a "pathetic-eyed little Jew [who] makes me feel that I am oppressing his race," "a negro, who puts all the fervor of the tropics into his [praying] . . . his black skin shines with moisture; there is, too, in his swaying and bowing, an *abandon*, a laxity of muscles, and a sort of jerk that belong only to his sympathetic race," "a perfect Congo negro in features and texture of skin—lips pro-

truding and nose absolutely level with his cheeks; as faithful and affectionate as a Newfoundland dog," "antic crews of Nubians whose ebony bodies shine in the sun," "a company of Arab acrobats and pyramid-builders, their swarthy bodies shining in the white sunlight," "sharp-faced Greeks, impudent Jews, fair-faced women from Bethlehem, sleek Armenians," "light-haired barbarians from the Caucasus, dark-skinned men and women from Moscow . . . simple, rude, honest, clumsy boors," or "[Albanian Gypsy women, who] preserve, in their swarthy complexions, burning black eyes, and jet black hair, the characteristics of some savage Oriental tribe . . . it was a wild beauty which woman sometimes shares with the panther."⁸ Warner's judgment concerning Jerusalem fairly captures his overall assessment of the peoples encountered throughout his trek: "Now and then . . . we saw a good face, a noble countenance . . . but the most whom we met were debased, misbegotten, the remnants of sin, squalor, and bad living."⁹

Undergirding these observations all along is a tacit theory of history by which physical facts presumably reflect underlying principles and grand historical forces. The glistening dark skins, hooked noses, and jet black eyes of Africa and the Levant all offer eloquent, indisputable comment on larger themes of civilization, barbarism, and savagery. To be "debased" is to be "misbegotten," in Warner's view, and "begetting" always denotes lineage-as-race. Race thus provides the necessary legend for mapping human history, even as it provides the physical proof that, when it comes to questions of relative merit of the world's peoples, history does not lie. That the inhabitants of modern Egypt suffer from a profound social and cultural stasis, for example, is intimately related to the "facts" attending their lineage: "Here the mongrel subjects of the Khedive, a mixture of ancient Egyptian, conquering Arabian, subject Nubian, enslaved Soudan, inheritors of all civilizations and appropriators of none, kennel amid these historic ash-heaps, caring for neither their past nor their future." The modern Greeks, too, are but "mongrel inheritors of the ancient [Greek] soil," "unappreciative possessors" of the ruins of what was once a "splendid civilization."¹⁰ There is perhaps no worse crime than to be a "mongrel"—or to be, in Warner's own recurring phrase, "hopelessly mixed"—but, conveniently, to be a mongrel entails its own harsh historical punishments.

Ultimately, all racial logic leads back to the United States. If Warner himself seems most interested in "Oriental" physiognomy as a reflection of "Oriental" debasement, the text continuously evokes narrator and reader as a collective Euro-American "we" whose own physiognomy and

history are normalized through the constant measurement of Levantine and African "difference." Significantly, though, this "we" is itself unstable, sometimes "white," sometimes "Caucasian," sometimes "English." Warner renders the Levant *through* the multiple lenses of American racial thinking, in other words; and in doing so he recreates his ("white") narrator-reader as precisely the racial palimpsest which is a product of the race-inscribing process of American conquest, enslavement, emancipation, and immigration.

~~The central reference point in Warner's cosmology of "difference," not surprisingly, is the distinction between "civilization" on the one hand and "barbarism" or "savagery" on the other, always keyed to whiteness and its Others.~~ Upon meeting a certain European on his travels, Warner comments, "We were civilized beings, met by chance in a barbarous place." He renders the rhythmic chant of Nubian oarsmen as a "weird, barbarous refrain." At a certain African marketplace "the crowd hustles about us in a troublesome manner, showing special curiosity about the ladies, as if they had rarely seen white women . . . we learn that the natives 'not like you.' The feeling is mutual, though it is discouraging to our pride to be despised by such barbarous half-clad folk."¹¹

Layered atop this general concern for shades of skin color and shades of "civilization" is an attention to lineage—musings upon the relative authenticity, purity, or contamination of a given people, linked to their racial history (most often a history of decline) and to their current moral or social condition (usually a condition of abjection). Thus some dancers encountered in Egypt "claim to be an unmixed race of ancient lineage; but I suspect their blood is no purer than their morals. There is not much in Egypt that is *not* hopelessly mixed." The "Levantines" of Smyrna are "descendants of the marriage of Europeans with Greek and Jewish women . . . But the race is said to be not self-sustaining, and is yielding to the original types."¹² In this vein, as noted above, the population of modern Greece comes in for harsh treatment, as mongrelized squanderers of a rich tradition.

Another tier in Warner's ideological edifice consists of a web of exegesis by which the human spectacle of Africa and the Levant seems to exist solely for the comment it offers upon the United States—upon its innate superiority as a civilization, and upon the troubling inferiority of some of its inhabitants. Observing a group of Bedouin dancers, for instance, Warner remarks that "their eyes shine with animal wildness." "It seems to be precisely the dance of North American Indians," he concludes. On

a group of Moslem mourners, again, "You would not see in farthest Nubia a more barbarous assemblage, and not so fierce an one. In the presence of these wild mourners the term 'gentler sex' has a ludicrous sound . . . most of them were flamingly ugly, and—to liken them to what they most resembled—physically and mentally the type of the North American squaws." On another encounter down the Nile, "This group composes as barbaric a picture as one can anywhere see. I need not have gone so far to see such a miserable group; I could have found one as wretched in Pigville (every city has its Pigville?). Yes, but this is characteristic of the country. These people are as good as anyone here."¹³

Peoples encountered along the way thus highlight the incomparable civilization of the United States by their stunning contrast to it, or they evoke the few truly unfortunate elements within the United States ("North American squaws," the people of "Pigville"). But in conjuring the image of America's "savages," the sight of the Bedouin or Moslem yet again redoubles the overall sense of U.S. superiority, for *here* in the region of the Nile such a wretched level of existence "is characteristic of the country." Warner looks upon Africa and the Levant with a racial gaze that is distinctly American, then offers up a narrative version of these regions as objective proof of the very "truths" of American life that had created his racial gaze in the first place.

Most telling in the present connection are Warner's remarks not about "squaws" or "savages" but about those populations who by custom (and law) were "white" in the United States. His brief reflection on the Irish in the United States as he observes a street scene in Cairo is symptomatic. After describing at some length the physique and the occupation of a *sais*—a "slender handsome black fellow, probably a Nubian," who runs before carriages in order to clear the way through the busy thoroughfares—he pauses to consider whether such a custom could be established back home. "If they could not be naturalized in Central Park," he muses, "it might fill some of the requirements of luxury to train a patriot from the Green Isle to run before the horses, in knee breeches, flourishing a shillalah. Faith, I think he would clear the way."¹⁴ The turn of mind by which Warner so effortlessly moves from the body of the "Nubian" to the "patriot of the Green Isle" underscores the racial niche the Irish occupy in his thinking, just as the simplicity with which he "naturalizes" the Irish *in place of* the "Nubian" for duty in Central Park underscores his overarching sense that "whiteness" and "Americanness" are inextricably entwined.

As are "whiteness" and Christianity. This becomes clear in Warner's lengthy passages on the Jews of the Levant. Seeking a glimpse of "real Jews of the type that inhabited [Jerusalem] at the time of our Lord," for instance, Warner discovered that "the persons whom we are accustomed to call Jews . . . have the Assyrian features, the hook nose, dark hair and eyes, and not at all the faces of the fair-haired race from which our Savior is supposed to have sprung."¹⁵ One member of the "tribe of Benjamin," as Warner identifies him, is "the most unpleasant human being I have ever encountered . . . a dark, corkscrew, stringy curl hanging down each side of his face, and the appearance of nasty effeminacy which this gives cannot be described." "If this is a specimen of the restoration of the Jews," he concludes, "they had better not be restored any more." Simply put, "we find it easier to feel that Christ was born in New England than in Judea."¹⁶

His mercurial assessment of Greeks, too, hints at the instability of whiteness within this overarching framework of "civilization" and "savagery." On the one hand, "it would puzzle one to say of what race the person calling himself a modern Greek is." Judging by "types of face" alone, modern Greeks' relation to ancient Athenians seemed "no stronger than that of Englishmen to the ancient Britons." (Here he goes on to pass judgment on their mongrelization.) But on the other hand, when the context shifts the Greek can stand in for an unalloyed white "purity" worthy of D. W. Griffith or Louisiana's White League. Upon meeting the Greek wife of a Syrian merchant, Warner gushes, "Her fair complexion was touched by the sun and radiant with health. Her blue eyes danced with the pleasure of living . . . After our long regimen of the hideous women of the Nile, plastered with dirt, soaked in oil, and hung with tawdry ornaments, it may be imagined how welcome was this vision of a woman, handsome, natural, and clean, with neither the shyness of an animal nor the brazenness of a Ghawazee."¹⁷

As the Irish, Jews, and Greeks pass through their vicissitudes in the kaleidoscopic racial setting of Africa and the Near East, so, too, do Warner's idealized, disembodied readers—his imagined community of narrative fellow-travelers. Who is the "we" constituted by the racial syntax of Warner's narrative? "In the vales of the Caucasus, we are taught," he remarks, "our race has attained its most perfect form; in other days its men were as renowned for strength and valor as its women for beauty."¹⁸ Elsewhere, however, he finds local anti-English sentiment to be "rather humiliating to us Americans, who are, after all, almost blood-relations of

American
people

excluded
and

the English; . . . we are often taken for *Inglese*, in the villages where few strangers go."¹⁹ "We" refers, by turns, to men who are "white" and who are jealous of "our" white women; to Europeans and Euro-Americans *excluding Jews, Greeks, and Irish*; to "Caucasians" who find their perfect form attained "in the vales of the Caucasus"; or to those who are "almost blood-relatives" of the English and are often mistaken for "Inglese." Such discrepancies throughout *Mummies and Moslems* and *In the Levant* are not inconsistencies, exactly: they faithfully replicate the palimpsestic inscriptions of race upon both the body and the imagination in American culture at large, as year upon year of exploration, conquest, slavery, emancipation, and immigration has multiplied the meanings of race.

The Encounter with Africans on Two Continents

A satirical piece entitled "The Origin of Man, by Darwin" that appeared in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in September 1877 exposes the bedrock, white-over-nonwhite assumptions undergirding the various American schemes of "difference" and differentiation. In response to her daughter's lament that their family was different from everyone else in the "tribe," a chimpanzee mother explains with great portent that this "difference" is not a mark of shame but a badge of pride. "It is a distinction. We are a higher race," she explains. "We are advancing, my dear. *You are whiter than I am.*"²⁰ The crude Darwinism and the blatant white supremacy of this piece were common enough in far more serious venues. According to an early *Visitor's Guide* to the newly opened American Museum of Natural History, for instance, the text of the Hall of Mammals began with this brief lesson in biology: "In deference to Man's superior estate he may well be left free from classification. It is, however, well to observe in this connection some of the lower examples of the human race." Casing number one exhibited "the Australians, represented by several skeletons." (The next several cases contained gorillas, orang-outans, and gibbons.)²¹ Anthropologists at the time likewise reported fresh research comparing the surfaces of the brain among the "Gorilla," "Chimpanzee," "Orang," "Bush-woman," and the "European."²² ~~And in a section entitled "The Races of Man," *Intermediate Geography* (1877), a text for grade school children, reported rather matter-of-factly that "the white race is superior to all others"; "the nations of western Europe, and their descendants in all parts of the world, are the most highly civilized."²³ ~~The fundamental distinction between civilization as whiteness and savagery~~~~

~~as nonwhiteness retained tremendous power~~, even centuries after the original encounter.

Americans in 1877 could vicariously participate in the original phase of encounter through heavily romantic popular accounts of white explorations around the globe—in the Caribbean and the Pacific, in South America, and particularly in Africa. In March the *New York Herald* recounted a fierce conflict between "natives" and "white men" aboard a New York schooner in the Congo. The violence ended when the agent of a Dutch trading house "and about ten other Europeans or white men, all well armed, came over with about a hundred Kroomen and drove the natives out of the ship."²⁴ Whereas scholars like David Spurr and Michael Hunt have illuminated the influence of race thinking on colonial power, I am most interested here in the secondary power of imperialism to generate and regenerate races themselves. If imperial power and imperial wealth were the work of such expeditions, the manufacture of "Europeans or white men" (as consanguine with one another and as superior to the rest) was the central ideological work of popular journalistic accounts of them.

In this vein Colonel C. Chaille Long's *Central Africa* promised to deliver the "naked truths of a naked people." As one reviewer noted of "the dismal repulsiveness of the people" described in Long's account, "The hope of evangelizing Africa which Livingstone had awakened is dimmed by reading of the barbaric hospitality of M'Tse."²⁵ Similarly, middle-class journals like *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's* took readers on periodic excursions to "Barbadoes," "Among the Atlantic Islands," or "Across Africa." Here readers learned, for example, that "the Barbadian negro is *sui generis*; there is nothing like him on earth, above it, or under it. He will lie, cheat, and steal beyond all comprehension. He is impudent to a degree hardly to be understood by an American"; the Azores are characterized by "spectacles of human degradation and misery"; and the "men of Man-yuema" in Africa, "although endowed with many good qualities . . . are cannibals, and most filthy cannibals."²⁶

The most avidly followed accounts of the era were the dispatches from Henry Stanley in Africa to the *New York Herald*. Here, under subheads such as "Stanley the First White Man on the Ubwari Hills," *Herald* readers could enjoy descriptions of the "impenetrably savage countries west of the Burton Gulf."²⁷ Though focusing primarily upon the geographical "mysteries" of the region, Stanley's accounts and other dispatches from the Congo did offer American readers access to the peoples of "dark Africa": in Stanley's case, a prolonged history of European attempts to dis-

cover the source of the Nile led to a meditation on the comparative epistemologies of Europeans and Africans, as he found himself so much at the mercy of local knowledge. As Stanley explained, "native and Arab" statements were "not to be understood, by any means, as conveying accurate and exact information. Even the most intelligent of Arabs, Wau-guana, Wasawhili, and Central Africa natives, as if they were originally taken out of the same matrix, have a prurient palate for exaggeration." This discussion (which appeared under the telling subhead "Native Statements and Explorer's Facts") ended with the sober judgment, "The best weapon an explorer can arm himself with is distrust."²⁸

But distrust was decidedly *not* the "best weapon" an explorer might carry, according to these same accounts—indeed, actual warfare and the weapons required became the point of most dispatches. (The very page of the *Herald* that contained Stanley's musings on European and African regimes of knowledge also contained a spectacular report under the heading "New York Schooner Plundered and Burned by Savages on the Congo River.") Stanley's dispatches later in the year dramatically raised the specter of "Terrible Tribes of Cannibals." Commenting upon Livingstone's earlier confusion over whether a certain stretch of the Lualaba (Congo) River had been the Nile, Stanley asserted that an explorer of Livingstone's reputation "certainly wouldn't attempt the foolhardy feat of following it in canoes, and risk becoming black man's meat," unless he had thought it as grand a discovery as the Nile itself. The sensational prospect of becoming "black man's meat" was among the recurring motifs in *Herald* reportage. On the Wabroire tribe and the "warlike Bakusu," Stanley surmised that "the approaches of a whole congress of bishops and missionaries could have no effect, except as native 'roast beef.'" Or again, the *Herald's* favorite quotation attributed to Livingstone, "You may say there are cannibals who will eat me. It may be true; but I have one comfort, they cannot eat me before they kill me. Can they?"²⁹

Cannibalism is but one recurring image in a broader theme of irreconcilable human differences. As Stanley renders this "region of fable and mystery—a continent of dwarfs and cannibals and gorillas" for readers in Europe and the United States, his subtext becomes the tremendous gulf separating whites from the rest of the world's peoples. This gulf is evoked by the specter of cannibalism, and by the degree of immutable "difference" implied by the very language of description—the Wenya, for instance, are "singularly cowardly, but also singularly treacherous and crafty." Further, when Stanley tallies the losses incurred by the expedition,

he reports, "Our losses in men are one European and thirty-four Wanguana." (Here and elsewhere he launches into a prolonged obituary of that "one European.") Or again, "difference" is evoked by the Europeans' own "curious" appearance, reflected back to them in the "natives'" reactions: "We were allowed to proceed without violence, more as strange curiosities than anything else," Stanley reports, perhaps because they had come from the direction of "wild lands whither the white people had never ventured before." In a later encounter with "ferocious savages," "the natives had never heard of white men . . . neither could they possibly understand what advantage white men or black men could gain by attempting to begin an acquaintance."³⁰ The impassable gulf separating white from black became starker still in November, under the *Herald* banner, "Desperate Encounters with Swarms of Cannibals . . . A Picture of Savage Warfare." "We soon became acquainted with the worst side of the natives," reported Stanley, "and they presently demonstrated their wildness." This was to be the explorers' "initiation to savage warfare": "They came to fight. The cruel faces, the loudly triumphant drums, the deafening horns, the launched spears, the swaying bodies, all proved it." Stanley's men defeated these tribes and then plundered their temple for ivory.³¹

The original phase of Winant's long-enduring process of racial inscription—exploration and encounter—left as its legacy certain social relations pertaining to slavery on the one hand and conquest on the other, and in the United States these social relations were now perpetually buttressed by the ideological framework of "civilization" and "savagery," whiteness and its Others. Popular accounts like Henry Stanley's thus participated in live questions of political economy in significant ways. It is not merely a passing curiosity, for instance, that the *Herald's* rendition of Stanley's "Picture of Savage Warfare" was directly adjacent to an article on Sitting Bull and the Sioux Wars. Nor is it of small consequence that explorers' depictions of "darkest Africa" appeared at a moment when the question of Negro citizenship in the United States was so hotly contested. ~~Within the context of contemporary American political culture, the unstated but obvious ideological portent in these travel accounts was their comment upon African-Americans' fitness for self-government, or the "proof" they offered of how much better off Africans were in America, centuries of slavery notwithstanding.~~

~~Domestically, the white-over-black dynamic of racial inscription that animated Stanley's African adventures was most pressing as the Reconstruction South rapidly became the post-Reconstruction South upon the~~

withdrawal of Northern troops and amid a rising national rhetoric of conciliation and reunion. "With respect to the two distinct races whose peculiar relations to each other have brought upon us the deplorable complications and perplexities which exist in those [Southern] states," intoned Rutherford B. Hayes in his inaugural address in March, "[ours] must be a government which guards the interests of both races carefully and equally." "It is my earnest desire to regard and promote . . . the interests of the white and of the colored people, both equally," he reiterated, ". . . and to put forth my best efforts on behalf of a civil policy which will forever wipe out in our political affairs the color line and the distinctions between North and South."³² As we now know, over time the effacement of "distinctions between North and South" was accomplished in part through a *perpetuation* of the "color line," despite Hayes's plea for "the united and harmonious efforts of both races."³³ Political alignment and conduct in the South in 1877, and the fractious contests over the region's political fate, demonstrate the power of the white-black dyad to frame social relations and to determine Americans' social imagination.

Among the more painstaking contemporary examinations of Reconstruction, its legacies for the Southern polity, and its collapse—and thus among the more complete accounts of race as the enduring organizing principle of the New South—was the 1877 congressional investigation of fraud in Louisiana's 1876 elections. The Democrat Tilden had won Louisiana by a margin of 80,831 to Hayes's 74,426 (even though Republicans claimed that "the excess colored over white voters in Louisiana is one thousand"), and so questions arose concerning the integrity of the election supervision and the real political freedom of the state's "colored" voters. As one legislator put it, "Long years of misgovernment, such as that which has existed in Louisiana, with the disorder growing out of the late war, left many reckless and evil-disposed persons in the State, who have little regard for the rights of white and still less for the rights of black men."³⁴ The binary logic of a polity thus divided into "white" and "black" would have a greater and greater purchase on the nation's political life from the post-Reconstruction era on; and obviously this was of no little consequence for those "whites" who, like Charles Dudley Warner's Jews, were said in other contexts to have "not at all the faces of the fair-haired race from which our Savior is supposed to have sprung."³⁵

The majority and minority reports of the House Special Committee on the Louisiana Elections present a tapestry of election-time violence. Taken together, the reports testify to "whipping and other violence"; "intimi-

dation"; acts of "unjustifiable mischief" (including whites' "firing several shots in the evening against a colored church"); the organization of rifle clubs; and the nightriding activities of white-supremacist "bulldozers" and "regulators" carrying out "bloody and cowardly massacres," "whipping, hanging, shooting, and driving off colored Republicans."³⁶

More telling still, however, are these reports' competing, race-based theories of the workings of the Southern polity in the wake of the Civil War. ~~Even more than the descriptions of racial violence contained within them, the reports' interpretations of that violence demonstrate the power of race in framing the political life of the post-Reconstruction South.~~ The majority report, highly sympathetic with the Louisiana Democrats (and thus with the agenda of white supremacy), ~~interpreted the election-time violence as either black assaults on white Democrats, or, more often, white Republicans' assaults on black Democrats.~~ According to this version, blacks' initial postwar "delusion of '40 acres and a mule'" had given way to "stern realities"; and thus, quite rightly, through disenchantment and impatience many blacks were now simply "no longer Republicans." The villains of this story of intimidation, then, are white Republican leaders who claimed a "proprietary right in the vote of the colored man. They regarded him as a mere political machine of their own invention." Black voters had properly rebelled against such political subservience. In this scenario, recent violence could be attributed to a cynical and rapacious Republican party: "Prominent Republicans considered the killing of a black man in Louisiana as equivalent to fifty thousand dollars of a campaign fund for the party . . . Every homicide in which a colored man chanced to be the victim was seized upon with avidity, telegraphed over the North, and reckoned as a substantial addition to their party strength." Thus the House committee held white—and some black—Republicans accountable for "intimidation" practiced against "the inoffensive colored man" who had merely tried to break a vicious, Reconstruction-era Republican monopoly.³⁷

The committee's minority report, by contrast, set election-time violence in a context of white-supremacist resistance to the aims of Reconstruction, stressing white-supremacist terror for (Democratic) political purposes. The minority recalled the rise of the Knights of the White Camelia in 1868, and their "distinctly bloody and cowardly massacres of colored people . . . for political purposes and political effect," violent antiblack outbreaks at Saint Landrey, Bossier, Caddo, Jefferson, and Saint Bernard resulting in more than seven hundred Negro deaths. It recounted as well