

Beyond the Carpetbagger: The Emergence of Racialized Terms as a Political Weapon in the
Reconstruction Era South

by
Caprial Farrington

A THESIS

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The Reconstruction era, beginning in 1863, was a time of radical change and movement in American politics and society. A significant number of northern Republicans migrated southwards, for various purposes, including political involvement. To white Democratic southerners who believed they had just fought a war of northern aggression and now had to fight to protect their rights to self-determination, these northern interlopers posed a threat to the white southern way of life and governance. Thanks to the lack of journalistic ethics and the prominence of newspapers, southern Democratic newspaper editors created a myriad of terms that served to discredit and undermine the northerner Republican transplants.

Much of this language was racialized, and southerners did not hesitate to use words and qualities that described African-Americans to describe the white northern migrants. The well-known term “carpetbagger” was in a way the most palatable of southern Democrats’ new linguistic arsenal. This Thesis examines the emergence and use of terms such as “piebald”, “menagerie”, and “black-and-tan” in context of the media war against Reconstruction era northern Republican settlers, finding that their racialized roots held power in the post-bellum South.

Key Words: Reconstruction, Civil War, carpetbagger, integration, racism, miscegenation

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Caprial Farrington, Author

Introduction

Henry Warren moved to Mississippi to become a cotton farmer. His political career was largely an accident. Warren established himself as an upstanding man and earned an appointment to the state constitutional convention in 1867 after Congress passed the Reconstruction Acts. Warren had his first encounter with active resistance to Reconstruction in 1868, during the campaign for the ratification of Mississippi's new constitution. He was invited to speak in favor of its ratification at a Democratic-organized meeting, with two lawyers present to speak against ratification and, in Warren's words, "to do me up".¹ At this fateful meeting, Warren noticed a group of lower-class white men gathered in the front. Upon inquiring, Warren discovered a rumor that he was not to be allowed to speak at the meeting, and those men wanted to ensure this. While no harassment occurred, the Democrats at the meeting made it known publicly that Warren was not universally admired in Leake County. This would not be the last incidence of resistance to Warren's involvement in Mississippian politics. He became close with many Leake County officials and called the sheriff's attention to an incident in which several white men harassed a black man. When the white men saw that Warren was involved, they verbally abused him with the same strength and language directed at the black man, and the altercation escalated to a member of the crowd drawing a pistol on him.² The "poor whites" of Leake County were beginning to see the Yankee intruder as disruptor of tradition and peace, to the same extent as the freedpeople. Warren's political career took him all the way to the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Mississippi, which put him in direct conflict with the Democratic Governor. Finally, in 1871, he lost re-election, crediting the political ire of poor white men. Warren attributed these new political motivations to two factors: the "personal abuse" by Republican

¹ Henry Warren, *Reminiscences of a Mississippi Carpet-Bagger*, (Massachusetts: Davis, 1914): 37.

² Warren, *Reminiscences*, 46.

politicians, and the dominance of a Democratic paper, *The Carthaginian*, in Leake County. Warren quoted *The Carthaginian*, which blamed him for restricting the rights of white citizens and called him a member of the “Black-and-Tan Convention”.³

During the Reconstruction era, the concept of unbiased reporting did not exist in news media. Instead, newspapers usually aligned themselves with a political party (sometimes resulting in names that included “Democrat” and “Republican”).⁴ In Warren’s case, the population of Leake County’s only news source was *The Carthaginian*, meaning they were exposed only to a Democratic paradigm for news. Newspapers in the Reconstruction period were the primary method of circulating current information, and the average person was unlikely to read for biases in their daily news reports. News bias, then, had a massive impact on the political knowledge and leanings of its readers. Warren credits the white southern backlash against his political involvement partially to the influence of the Democratic newspaper, and he is certainly not alone in being attacked and undermined for his status as a northern settler⁵ in the Reconstruction South. One particularly intriguing aspect of the media attacks on Warren and other so-called carpetbaggers, a term coined by southern newspapers, is the use of racially influenced language. The southern Democratic media frequently referred to Warren as a “member of the Black-and-Tan Convention” and other northern settlers are called “piebald”⁶, “mongrel”⁷, and parts of a “menagerie”⁸, all terms which emphasize their connections to and

³ Warren, *Reminiscences*, 64.

⁴ “Printed Media and the American Civil War,” *Treasures of the McDonald Collection*, Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives.

⁵ The term “northern settler” is being used rather than “carpetbagger” (as Prince has used) because this paper examines terminology created in the media, and “carpetbagger” is one of those terms.

⁶ *Montgomery Daily Mail*, November 8, 1867.

⁷ *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, December 14, 1867.

⁸ *Augusta Constitutionalist*, November 13, 1867.

support of African-American enfranchisement, and serve to undermine their credibility in several ways.

This paper will examine the portrayal of northern settlers in the Reconstruction South, often called carpetbaggers, in Democratic newspapers, with attention to the use of racially inflected language. The term “carpetbagger” is the most well-known of many derogatory terms used in Democratic media to undermine the credibility of northern Republicans. While newspapers frequently referred to African-Americans with racial epithets during this time period, Democratic media applied those terms and created new ones to describe northern settlers, their perceived incompetence and evil motives, and involvement with African-Americans. This paper argues that southern Democratic media created powerful epithets based on their ideas about race order which suggested animalistic savagery, intimate pairings of black and white skin, a loss of whiteness for northern settlers, and a form of sexualized race mixing. Southern Democratic newspapers employed the terms “black-and-tan,” “piebald,” “menagerie,” and “mongrel” to discredit and vilify white northern settlers and spread anti-intervention sentiment.

Literature review

Until the revisionist period of the 1960s, historians largely dismissed northern settlers as being the overbearing interventionists that the southern Democratic media condemned.⁹ The southern sentiment of a living in a certain way, and one distinctly different than the northern way of life, was not imagined. The majority of the South lived more rurally and with fewer means than the average Northerner. Contributing to the mindset of the “southern lifestyle” during the Reconstruction period was a difference in perception of the role of the Federal Government, a

⁹ Perman, Michael, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879*, University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1984. xi.

perception that still exists today.¹⁰ The passage of the Thirteenth Amendment marked a departure from the previous content of the Constitution, being the first to increase, rather than limit, the power of the Federal Government.¹¹ The Democratic platform, in both the North and South, extolled the idea of a limited Federal Government.¹² In addition to an influx of northerner civilians, the presence of federal troops in the South to enforce Reconstruction policies was an ever-present reminder to southerners that their lifestyles were being forced to change with military power.¹³ A 1914 essay by C. Mildred Thompson entitled “Carpet-Baggers in the United States Senate” treated northern settlers harshly, calling them self-serving and intruding.¹⁴ While Thompson’s analysis is guilty of the historical bias of the time, she still establishes three significant themes present in newer historical literature on northern settlers: settlers’ opportunity-seeking activity, their political involvement, and their relationships with African-Americans. These themes were essential in building the southern Democratic media war against northern settlers. The media saw each of these themes as a further intrusion of interventionist policy into southern life.¹⁵

Opportunity seeking brought settlers to the South. Many were young northern men whose lives were disrupted by the Civil War, who came to the South for various reasons, including cotton farming like Warren. Thompson claims settlers were “tempted by the allurements of cheap land and high-priced cotton,¹⁶ while newer studies of settlers paint them as seekers of

¹⁰ Richardson, Heather Cox, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008. 2-3.

¹¹ Richardson, Heather Cox, *West from Appomattox*, 3.

¹² Richardson, Heather Cox, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. 9.

¹³ Foner, Eric, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, New York: Harper & Row, 1988. 42-47.

¹⁴ C. Mildred Thompson, “Carpet-Baggers in the United States Senate,” in *Studies in Southern History and Politics*, ed. William Dunning. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1914. 161-178.

¹⁵ K. Stephen Prince, “Legitimacy and Interventionism: Northern Republicans, the “Terrible Carpetbagger,” and the Retreat from Reconstruction,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2, no. 4 (2012): 540.

¹⁶ C. Mildred Thompson, “Carpet-Baggers,” 161.

opportunity, no different than settlers of the West.¹⁷ One prominent settler, Louis Post, had previously moved around the country seeking opportunity without any local outcry, and did not expect the negative reaction he received to his settlement in South Carolina.¹⁸ Some northern media outlets like the *Philadelphia Inquirer* promoted the settlement of the South by northerners on the premise that northerners would facilitate its transition to wage labor capitalism simply because that “hardy race of settlers” was more inclined to work.¹⁹ Modern historical literature, including works by Dominic Candeloro, K. Stephen Prince, and Theodore Tunnell, agrees that most settlers moved to the South for the broad promise of opportunity, rather than seeking to exploit the postwar South.

Political activity is the next theme consistent in historical literature. Henry Warren and some settlers might have fallen into politics, but some northern settlers moved south specifically for work in the newly established Freedmen’s Bureau, created to execute the transition from slave labor to free labor.²⁰ While the Freedmen’s Bureau was a good source of jobs for enterprising northerners, northern settlers as a whole were not dedicated to abolition and enfranchisement.²¹ Tunnell established that not all northern settlers were Republicans devoted to the Reconstruction cause. Even among the Radical Republicans in Congress, “(their) major concern was equality before the law, not black suffrage...”²² Thus, generalizing the Republican Party and northern settlers as staunch abolitionists is incorrect. In fact, the main northern

¹⁷ Theodore Tunnell, “Creating ‘The Propaganda of History’: Southern Editors and the Origins of ‘Carpetbagger’ and ‘Scalawag,’” *The Journal of Southern History* 72, no. 4 (2006): 793.

¹⁸ Dominic Candeloro, “Louis Post as a Carpetbagger in South Carolina: Reconstruction as a Forerunner of the Progressive Movement,” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 34, no. 4 (1975): 424.

¹⁹ Richardson, Heather Cox, *The Death of Reconstruction*, 25.

²⁰ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 155.

²¹ The primary purpose of the Freedmen’s Bureau was to reconfigure the South into a wage labor economy by resettling the formerly enslaved population. It was not committed to the prosperity of African-Americans beyond their placement into wage labor, and in fact did not provide paths education (an endeavor picked up by private charities). See Richardson, Heather Cox, *The Death of Reconstruction*, 14.

²² Foner, *Reconstruction*, 60.

Republican argument against the South was that free labor economics was the divine system that should unite the country, not that slavery was a moral evil.²³ Many northern settlers did not participate in politics at all or assimilated into the southern Democratic culture.²⁴ The ones who did end up in politics, though, were significantly influential. Like Warren, they participated in the drafting of new constitutions, and were imperative in the early success of Reconstruction legislation, such as the anti-Ku Klux Klan Enforcement Act of 1871 and the passage of the 15th Amendment.²⁵ Constitutional conventions were certainly radical changes for southern states; Eric Foner describes one as having “ratified the overthrow of Louisiana’s old order.”²⁶ The presence of northern settlers in southern politics was essential for the early success of Reconstruction. The southern response to northern political activity, though, was that participation by settlers and African-Americans resulted in a disenfranchisement of white southerners.²⁷ The term “carpetbagger” grew primarily out of northern settlers’ political involvement. Tunnell claims it “was a figurative counter-Reconstruction epithet created out of white southerners’ desire to combat Radical Reconstruction”.²⁸

The third theme discussed in historical literature is that of northern settlers’ interactions with and support of African-Americans. Henry Warren’s autobiography gives a specific anecdote of a physical defense of a black man, but northern settlers also supported African-Americans in other ways, such as promoting suffrage. The notorious settler Albion Tourgée, a lawyer from Ohio, moved to North Carolina to work on cases involving African-American suffrage rights and to establish himself politically (and for his own financial gain).²⁹ Candeloro writes that Louis

²³ Richardson, Heather Cox, *The Death of Reconstruction*, 6-7.

²⁴ Theodore Tunnell, “Propaganda of History,” 793.

²⁵ C. Mildred Thompson, “Carpet-Baggers,” 168.

²⁶ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 49.

²⁷ Warren, *Reminiscences*, 64.

²⁸ Theodore Tunnell, “Propaganda of History,” 794.

²⁹ Theodore L. Gross, *Albion W. Tourgée*, (New York: Twayne, 1963), 21.

Post, the aforementioned South Carolina settler who was also a lawyer, took special care to protect his “naïve” African-American colleagues in politics, and was a prominent supporter of anti-Ku Klux Klan legislation.³⁰ Historical literature also establishes that involvement in Republican politics was essentially analogous to support of African-American suffrage, and southern democratic media certainly made no distinction between the two.³¹

Tunnell and Prince dig deeply into the creation and use of the term carpetbagger. Prince extensively discusses how both Democratic and Republican newspapers portrayed settlers as greedy, blood-sucking vultures,³² while Tunnell’s earlier paper focuses on the popularization of epithets against settlers. While Tunnell touches on it,³³ both neglect to some extent, the significance of the use of racially charged language against settlers in the media. It is well-established that southern Democratic media manipulated the image of northern settlers to spread resistance against Reconstruction, but the application of racial epithets to discredit them has yet to be examined.

This paper will attempt to prove that Democratic newspapers in the South created and employed racial epithets to undermine white Republican politicians’ credibility and spread anti-interventionism. Analyzing the use of the terms “black-and-tan”, “piebald”, “menagerie”, and “mongrel” in southern Democratic newspapers will elucidate their deeper meanings in southern culture and their use as weapons against white northern settlers. First, this paper will build background context by examining the experiences of northern settlers, focusing on their activities, political involvement, and relationships with African-Americans. The state of the media at the time will be examined to provide context for primary sources. Next, the paper will

³⁰ Dominic Candeloro, “Louis Post,” 428.

³¹ Theodore Tunnell, “Propaganda of History,” 793.

³² K. Stephen Prince, “Legitimacy and Interventionism,” 541.

³³ Theodore Tunnel, “Propaganda of History,” 794.

discuss the major themes evident in the derogatory racial terms used by southern Democratic media against northern settlers, using primary sources for support. Investigation into northern Republican media portrayals of northern settlers to the South and how these changed over time will be included as well. This comparison of southern and northern depictions of northern settlers will show how southern Democratic media was more consequential to southern readers and twisted existing southern perceptions about morality and race into slurs against white northern settlers. Finally, the paper will situate its research findings in the context of existing scholarly literature.

Settler activity

Until the revisionist movement of the 1960s, northern settlers were regarded in academia and the general public as greedy, opportunity-seeking interlopers who came to the South with carpet-bag in hand and without any respect for the southern way of life.³⁴ Historical literature during the revisionist period achieved a reexamination of northern settler motives, activities, and influences. Revisionist analyses are much more sympathetic to settlers, tending to support the claims that settlers made in their own writings. Similar to Henry Warren's account of his settlement, Louis Post wrote that his initial move to South Carolina had no political motivation, but he moved to take a specific job as a law stenographer.³⁵ Both Warren³⁶ and Post³⁷ acknowledge the existence of more dubious settlers, who can be summarized in the self-serving savior complex of Albion Tourgée, a man who moved to the South because he thought it was his calling to help African-Americans with legal issues and to make a fortune for himself.³⁸ It is

³⁴ Thompson, "Carpet-Baggers," 161.

³⁵ Louis Post, "A Carpet-Bagger in South Carolina," *Journal of Negro History* 10, no. 1 (1925): 13.

³⁶ Warren, "Reminiscences," 33.

³⁷ Post, "Carpet-Bagger in S.C.," 10.

³⁸ Theodore L. Gross, *Albion W. Tourgée*, New York: Twayne, 1963.

agreed upon, though, in writings by settlers and in academic works, that northerners moved South for a variety of reasons, and that gaining political clout was not the primary one.³⁹ Virtually all Reconstruction-era news articles, then, are incorrect in their portrayals of northern settlers as exploitative, greedy opportunists (this portrayal is present in both Democratic and Republican media, as established by Prince).⁴⁰ Whether involvement in politics was intentional or not, it was the damning activity that pinned the term “carpetbagger” on an individual.⁴¹ As politicians, northern settlers worked for (at least what they believed to be) the best interests of the communities they served, contributing to infrastructure and education.⁴² Their perceptions of the necessary role of the federal government and belief in suffrage and rights for African-American men were where southern Democrats believed they were wrong. Some of the loudest voices in the Federal Government, such as Pennsylvania Representative Thaddeus Stevens, took an aggressively federalist approach to the rebuilding of the South. Stevens regarded the southern states as having given up their right to influence in Congress by seceding.⁴³ Indeed, some Radical Republicans “hoped to reshape southern society in the image of the small-scale competitive capitalism of the North,⁴⁴ to some extent validating the panic that northerners wished to destroy the southern way of life. The argument that northern settlers did not have the best interest of the South in mind and were instead working in their own selfish interests was sustained largely by the hyper-visible northerner ideologies in Congress and fact that these settlers were not originally from the South.

³⁹ Candeloro, “Louis Post,” 423.

⁴⁰ Prince, “Legitimacy and Interventionism,” 543.

⁴¹ Post, “Carpet-Bagger in S.C.,” 10-11.

⁴² Post, “Carpet-Bagger in S.C.,” 15.

⁴³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 232.

⁴⁴ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 235.

The media

During the Civil War and Reconstruction periods, newspapers did not subscribe to the modern code of journalistic ethics, which demands to a certain extent neutrality in reporting. Instead, newspapers reported from explicitly Democratic, Republican, or other political or religious perspectives. While most large cities had papers from multiple political viewpoints, newspapers in smaller towns tended to be the only local news outlet and usually represented the town's political majority. The *Rowell and Ayer Newspaper Directory* for 1869 shows a dominance of Democratic newspapers in states like Alabama, Arkansas, and Georgia. Only in large cities like Montgomery and Atlanta were Republican and independent newspapers circulated.⁴⁵ In addition, the southern Democratic press made no attempt to be subtle with its political messages. Louisiana journalist Hodding Carter, who himself had a career in the southern press, partially attributes the sectional crisis and escalation to the Civil War to the aggression of southern papers.⁴⁶ The combination of limited access to non-Democratic news for most Southerners and the viciousness of papers' attacks on perceived anti-southern threats made the Democratic media the most significant tool for creating political opinion in the South. Southern Democratic newspapers portrayed the influence of non-southern born politicians as another form of Yankee invasion and an overreach of the federal government under President Grant. Carter summarizes the state of postwar southern Democratic newspapers as "bombastic organs dominated by men who tried to justify their region and its recent defeat. Caring little for factual reporting, they fulminated against the carpet-bagger, the Negro, and the Yankee soldier of military Reconstruction."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ "Rowell's & Ayer's American Newspaper Directory," Library of Congress, 1869.

⁴⁶ Hodding Carter, *Their Words Were Like Bullets: The Southern Press in War, Reconstruction, and Peace*, University of Georgia Press: Athens, 1969. 7-8.

⁴⁷ Carter, *Words Like Bullets*, 45.

Analysis of racial epithets against white settlers

Questioning whiteness

The southern Democratic media created “Carpetbagger” specifically for white northern settlers, but many other derogatory terms were reappropriated for them.⁴⁸ Henry Warren notes being referred to as a “member of the black-and-tan convention”,⁴⁹ a term that refers to the mixed skin colors of white and African-American politicians working together (a political group of whites alone was referred to as “lily-whites”).⁵⁰ Tunnell notes that this term is probably the least offensive of those directed at white northern settlers. “Black-and-tan”, however, has other meanings. The black-and-tan coonhound was a dog breed that emerged during the 19th century. While not yet recognized by the American Kennel Club, the dog became popular for hunting and safety among rural residents of the South and the West.⁵¹ “Black and tan” also referred to coloring of other dogs, as seen in a 1865 newspaper article.⁵² Whether the use of “black-and-tan” and its relation to animals was conscious or not, it has the effect of associating both white Republican northern settlers and African-American Republicans with dogs.

There is some uncertainty as to how offensive southerners thought “black-and-tan” was and how it was viewed by northern settlers as opposed to southern Democrats. Warren is not the only settler to use the term self-referentially; Albion Tourgée⁵³ and Louis Post⁵⁴ do as well.

These settlers seem to be using the term as a popular name for the racially mixed state

⁴⁸ Tunnell, “Propaganda of History,” 794.

⁴⁹ Warren, *Reminiscences*, 64.

⁵⁰ Boris Heersink and Jeffrey A. Jenkins, “Black-and-Tans vs Lily-Whites: Race and Republican Party Organization in the South after Reconstruction, 1868-1952,” presented at the 2016 American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA. 3.

⁵¹ “Black and Tan Coonhound Dog Breed Information,” *American Kennel Club*, accessed 9 March 2019. <https://www.akc.org/dog-breeds/black-and-tan-coonhound/>

⁵² Oskaloosa, KS *Daily Independent*, June 3, 1865. Chronicling America, Library of Congress.

⁵³ Gross, *Tourgée*, 58.

⁵⁴ Post, “Carpet-Bagger in S.C.,” 17.

legislations and constitutional conventions across the South. Prince argued that the northern Republican press had a significant responsibility in the discreditation of northern settlers, but he cites examples of settlers being labeled as predatory scoundrels and thieves.⁵⁵ The term “black-and-tan” is not prominently found in many northern Republican newspapers, and even Democratic papers like the New York *Herald* seem to approach the settler issue like Republican papers, rather than southern Democratic ones.⁵⁶ “Black-and-tan”, then, is a primarily southern term, and northern settlers likely use it to describe their own activities to fit in with the popular language around them in the South.

Closely related to “black-and-tan”, and in the literature clearly a more offensive epithet, is the term “piebald”. It refers to a mixed pattern of black and white fur on a horse, and Democratic papers used it to describe the mixing of white and African-American politicians. The use of “piebald”, then, was essentially in the same fashion as “black-and-tan”. “The piebald convention proposes a tax upon papers... The best newspaper for these ‘scallywags’⁵⁷ is ‘waste’ paper,” laments a Louisiana publication.⁵⁸

The comparisons drawn between northern settler politicians and animals is certainly insulting, but “black-and-tan” and “piebald” can be examined as negative on a semantic level as well. The terms “black-and-tan” and “piebald” cause insult by pointing out the physical proximity of northern settler politicians with African-American ones. While southern Democrats, especially wealthy ones, would have lived side-by-side with African-Americans in antebellum times, the two groups were never equals, in a situation better described as “black below white”

⁵⁵ Prince, “Legitimacy and Interventionism,” 545.

⁵⁶ New York *Herald*, February 16, 1872.

⁵⁷ “Scallywag” was the complementary term to “carpetbagger” for Southerners who eschewed Democratic politics and supported Reconstruction.

⁵⁸ West Baton Rouge *Sugar Planter*, January 11, 1868.

rather than “black and white”. Settler politicians were seen by southern Democrats as working to reorder the status of African-Americans from the bottom of society, to a juxtaposition with white men, just like patches of color next to each other on a dog. The anger towards this juxtaposition also highlights the southern belief of a racial hierarchy, in which whites were on top and African-Americans on the bottom. Northern settler politician actions that disrupted this hierarchy effectively disrupted the southern way of life.

These epithets also challenged the “whiteness” of white northern settlers. The aforementioned term “lily-white,” referring to a coalition of solely white politicians, was surprisingly not a product of the Democratic Party. “Lily-whites” (a term they themselves created) were Republicans who wanted to distance the party from Reconstruction, beginning with the Hayes presidency. This “New Departure” rebranding of the Republican Party sought to erase the southern view that Republicans were the party of African-Americans and bring in the support of southern whites. The “lily-white” movement began officially in 1886, as a direct counter to the “black-and-tan” phrase common in the South.⁵⁹ The intra-party conflict that the “lily-white” rebranding movement created was effective at pushing northern settler politicians out of the party by essentially questioning their whiteness and purity. If the “lily-whites” were the purest white group, any other Republicans, and especially the “black-and-tans”, must have been something less than white. By working with African-American politicians, white northern settler politicians gave up their identity as truly white men in the eyes of southern Democrats, the “lily-white” Republicans, and their electoral base.

⁵⁹ Heersink, “Black-and-Tans vs. Lily-Whites,” 6-10.

Mixed-race animals

There is no shortage of much more offensive epithets to be found in articles about settlers in politics, especially news regarding constitutional conventions.⁶⁰ “Menagerie” was another favorite term of the southern Democratic press, and they often used it as a replacement for “convention.” Tunnell notes that Georgia and Alabama newspapers often wrote direct comparisons between constitutional conventions and whatever traveling circus was in town.⁶¹ A July 1876 issue of the *Louisiana Democrat* employs the word 13 separate times in one article.⁶² Menagerie, originally meaning in French “a place where animals are tended to”⁶³ became popular in the U.S. to describe traveling circuses.⁶⁴ The use of this term with its animalistic connotations was no accident. “That menagerie called Congress,” as the *Weekly Louisianan* calls it,⁶⁵ was actively discredited by the media. The animals of a traveling 19th-century menagerie were loosely assembled, poorly cared for, and useful only as entertainment to the masses. The *Bossier Banner* reported on a spectacle made by a northern settler in the Alabama legislature when he allegedly took off his boots in the middle of the “Congressional menagerie,” asking for a shoeshine, and revealing his dirty feet.⁶⁶ Whether or not this man really displayed such an uncivilized and animalistic act as taking off his shoes on the constitutional convention floor, the way the southern Democratic media reported it is effective in portraying the Republicans of Alabama as untrained animals in a loose collection.

“Menagerie” can also be interpreted as another reference to the juxtaposition and close contact of white politicians and African-American ones. In the “menageries” of state legislative

⁶⁰ Tunnell, “Propaganda of History,” 794.

⁶¹ Tunnell, “Propaganda of History,” 794.

⁶² *Louisiana Democrat*, July 5, 1876.

⁶³ “Menagerie,” Cambridge English Dictionary.

⁶⁴ Tunnell, “Propaganda of History,” 794.

⁶⁵ New Orleans *Weekly Louisianan*, December 13, 1879, Chronicling America, Library of Congress.

⁶⁶ Bellevue, LA *Bossier Banner*, September 26, 1868, Chronicling America, Library of Congress.

bodies and constitutional conventions, the different species gathered together can be interpreted as the different races.⁶⁷ For many whites, both in the South and North, the concept of whites and African-Americans working together, on the same level of status, was far-fetched enough to be a spectacle à la a traveling circus of animals. The media described actual menageries as being full of “wild beasts” from “faraway, exotic jungles”,⁶⁸ phrases that proclaimed the savagery and foreign qualities of the circuses’ animals. Many whites, especially in the South, thought of African-American men as savage beasts who retained their ancestral nature from the jungles of Africa.⁶⁹ While it was nothing new to claim that African-Americans were something less than human in a savage, animalistic way, the inclusion of white men in the “menagerie” was novel. Most northern settlers involved in southern politics were middle or upper class and had some kind of formal education. Instead of being separated from the African-American politicians in news articles, the media wrote about them as equals, as if the white northern settlers were losing their civilization and whiteness by working with African-Americans. “Menagerie” highlighted the supposed incompetence, disorganization, and savagery of northern settler and African-American politicians and claimed they behaved in animalistic ways, which made them no different than a wild tiger in a cage which could be seen at a real menagerie for five cents. A legislature that operated in this way was certainly not credible to southern Democrats.

⁶⁷ In the 19th century, theories of racial anthropology were based in finding physiological differences between races and attributing differences in culture, intelligence, and other qualities to them. To many, it would not seem extreme to make the comparison between species and races, and some would go as far as to claim that those of African descent were in fact not the same species as whites.

⁶⁸ New Orleans *Republican*, April 15, 1868, *Chronicling America*, Library of Congress.

⁶⁹ This concept was especially prominent in cases of sexual assault by African-American men against white women. Their supposed “savagery” was an argument that they were unable to control sexual desire (like an animal) and therefore were a threat to white women.

Miscegenation in politics

Miscegenation, a term created in 1863 specifically to describe breeding between the races, enjoyed a moment of fame during the Reconstruction era, both in northern and southern politics. Racial mixing, as a topic of debate, had been established earlier in the century, in part due to an article that appeared in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* in 1842. This article, “Vital Statistics of Negroes and Mulattoes,” came to the conclusion that those of mixed black and white descent had the shortest lifespan by far when compared to those of only black or only white descent.⁷⁰ Southern physician Dr. Josiah Nott, in his own findings, interpreted this article to mean that if race mixing was allowed to proceed, it would result in a probable extermination of humanity due to shortened lifespans and inability to combat disease.⁷¹ These findings also rested on the idea that mixed-race children were technically hybrids of two different species, and that they would have trouble reproducing themselves. Prior to the emergence of “miscegenation,” race mixing was referred to as “amalgamation,” a word from earlier in the 19th century that compared the combining of racial characteristics to the smelting of metals.⁷² The idea that race mixing was biologically detrimental to humanity was widespread in both the North and South prior to the Civil War.

However, a proportion of northern abolitionists took a pro-interracial relation stance. In 1864, Moncure Daniel Conway declared that African individuals have qualities lacking from the European race, such as “simple godliness, kindness, and affectionateness.”⁷³ These abolitionists, often described as “amalgamationists” due to their support for interracial marriage,

⁷⁰ Robert A. Smith, "Types of mankind: polygenism and scientific racism in the nineteenth century United States scientific community." (2014). *Electronic Thesis Collection*, 41.

⁷¹ Smith, “Types of mankind,” 43-44.

⁷² Lemire, Elise, *Miscegenation: Making Race in America*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009. 3-4.

⁷³ Lemire, Elise, *Miscegenation*, 115-116.

were not the majority.⁷⁴ Distaste for, and the debate on miscegenation was an issue of similar importance in the North as it was in the South. In late 1863, northern Democrats published a popular pamphlet intending to discredit the Republican Party nationwide, framing it as the party of “miscegenation,” a term they coined to characterize the mixing of the white and African races.⁷⁵ Building on the prevalence of “race science” and phrenology⁷⁶ from earlier in the century, the authors began the pamphlet with a discussion of the supposed physiological differences in the races.⁷⁷ While the authors, David Crowley and George Wakeman, did not legitimately believe race mixing would be a problem for society,⁷⁸ the message was heard by politicians. Their arguments were reprinted and paraphrased in other Democratic publications, cementing miscegenation as a moral political issue within the Party.⁷⁹

Southern Democratic media did not limit itself to using popular southern opinions about race order to discredit northern settler politicians- it incorporated the newly popular political issue of miscegenation, which was both clearly socially unacceptable as well as criminalized in many southern states (which would not be undone until the mid-twentieth century).⁸⁰ The most suggestive of the Democratic newspapers’ commonly used terms is “mongrel,” which is defined as a dog of mixed breed. The *Daily Clarion* out of Jackson, Mississippi, advises readers to “defeat the Mongrel Constitution” and resist the “scheme of mongrel despotism.”⁸¹ “Mongrel” raises the stakes of “menagerie,” “black-and-tan,” and “piebald.” Common threads between the

⁷⁴ Lemire, Elise, *Miscegenation*, 4.

⁷⁵ Lemire, *Miscegenation*, 116.

⁷⁶ The study of the size and shape of the human skull, as an indicator of temperament and cognitive ability.

⁷⁷ Croley, David, and George Wakeman, “Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro,” New York: Hamilton & Co. (1864). 6.

⁷⁸ Lemire, Elise, *Miscegenation*, 118-121.

⁷⁹ Lemire, Elise, *Miscegenation*, 118.

⁸⁰ Pascoe, Peggy, “Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of “Race” in Twentieth-Century America,” *The Journal of American History*, 83, no. 1 (1996). 47.

⁸¹ Jackson *Daily Clarion*, May 13, 1868.

previously discussed terms are the implied connection to animals, the intimate pairing of black and white skin colors, the loss of whiteness for northern settlers, and the savage incompetence of politicians of both races. “Mongrel,” however, moves beyond the implications of other terms by moving from a close juxtaposition of African-Americans and whites, and turning it into the most intimate relationship possible. Southern Democrats, especially those in the Ku Klux Klan, abhorred the idea of sexual relations between whites and African Americans (though, this position was not unique to southern Democrats). Northern settler politicians’ work was an essential part of federal legal response to the Klan, with their presence in southern governments critical for passing the Enforcement Act of 1871.⁸² The idea of preventing miscegenation was central to the doctrine of the Klan. Claims of rape by a black man against a white woman incited many lynchings. Klan extremists were not the only southerners to take part in lynchings or hold anti-miscegenation beliefs. Anti-miscegenation laws were present in many states, and still existed in 29 as late as 1951.⁸³ These laws prevented intermarriage of various races in order to restrict sexual relations (one of their goals being to prevent the births of mixed-race children). Southern state governments passed anti-miscegenation laws after the end of Reconstruction and northern settler political influence, showing the effort to officially prevent miscegenation was restricted by northern settlers.

Southern Democratic media most often applied “Mongrel” to individuals of mixed-race parentage, meaning “mongrels” were the direct and undeniable product of miscegenation. When newspapers called constitutional conventions and legislative assemblies “mongrel,” it implied that they were the children of the white and African-American politicians who made up the assemblages. The Lincoln County, MO *Herald*, described “mongrel rulership” as the bastard

⁸² Thompson, “Carpet-Baggers,” 168.

⁸³ James R. Browning, “Anti-miscegenation laws in the United States,” *Duke Bar Journal* 1, (1951): 31.

child⁸⁴ of the white and African-American politicians.⁸⁵ While Reconstruction constitutions and legislative assemblies were the metaphorical children of white and African-American politicians, the underlying meaning of “mongrel” implies that working together in politics was just as egregious as literal miscegenation. This was a powerful analogy to a southern Democrat to whom the worst crime imaginable was sexual relations between the races. Newspapers went further than just deeming organizations as “mongrels,” though. “Mongrel governors” and “mongrel carpet-baggers” are not uncommon terms to find used by the southern Democratic press. Through the use of “mongrel,” Democratic media conflated professional relationships with and political support of African-Americans by whites with the concept of (what they considered to be) racial interbreeding.⁸⁶ Explicit sexual terminology was also present in southern Democratic newspapers, with the *Mercury* of Meridian, Mississippi claiming “Let us have no fornicating with the Radical party, under the idea of begetting a ‘new South’, but let us nail our colors to the mast, and stand by them like men.”⁸⁷ The word “begetting”, meaning conceiving children, continues the analogy between Radical Republican politics and sexual activity, and indicates that while the Republicans would “beget” (or try to) a “new South” with the African-American politicians, the southern Democrats would stay out of this sexual-political activity altogether and hold fast to their values.

The application of sexually charged terminology to white northern settlers did more than destroy their credibility- it demonized and dehumanized them with a similar vigor as was directed at African-Americans. It was not enough to simply question a settler’s motives or

⁸⁴ Any child of mixed race during the Reconstruction era was certainly born out of wedlock.

⁸⁵ Lincoln County, MO *Herald*, May 21, 1868, Chronicling America, Library of Congress.

⁸⁶ The term “promiscuous” was also commonly applied to white Republican politicians who worked with and supported the rights of African-Americans, but the direct sexual connotation was not as present as it is today.

⁸⁷ Carter, *Words Like Bullets*, 43-44.

credentials or argue on with them on a policy level. The southern press used “mongrel” as a reference to miscegenation, one of the worst crimes imaginable, to wage an all-out war of dehumanization on the settlers. While northern settler politicians were the typical targets, newspapers attacked their supporters with the same epithets. The *Daily Phoenix* of Columbia, South Carolina discusses a mongrel politician and the mongrels who voted for him.⁸⁸ This collection of “mongrels” implies that Reconstruction constitutions, legislative assemblies, politicians, and supporters were all products of illegitimate and immoral unions, and therefore had neither the ethos or the basic humanity needed to survive in the South.

Northern reactions

While southern Democrats waged a media war on the northern settlers, northern journalists responded to these attacks from a distance.⁸⁹ It is apparent that the construction of the “carpetbagger” was a southern phenomenon by the way in which northern newspapers described the term to their unfamiliar readers. In September 1868, the Republican *Jeffersonian* of Pennsylvania ran an article defining the term “carpetbagger” for its northern audience and taking a decidedly defensive stance. The editors claimed that “Andrew Jackson, of Tennessee, was a carpet-bagger from South Carolina. Henry Clay, of Kentucky (sp.), and William H. Harrison, of Ohio, were carpet-baggers from Virginia”.⁹⁰ By assigning the nomenclature of “carpetbagger” to these American politicians, well-known and well-respected at the time, the *Jeffersonian* instructed its readers to see northern settlers as men of action and power rather than opportunists moving around to spread their political agendas. Defenses of the northern settlers like this one were not limited to newspapers; politicians used the same rhetoric as well. Gen. Daniel Sickles,

⁸⁸ Columbia *Daily Phoenix*, September 13, 1868.

⁸⁹ Secondary source material on the issue of northern perceptions of settlers is extremely limited, so this section extracts what can be found about the issue from primary sources alone.

⁹⁰ Stroudsburg, PA *Jeffersonian*, September 10, 1868, Chronicling America, Library of Congress.

Union General and New York Representative, gave a speech printed in the Dodgeville, Wisconsin *Chronicle* which poked fun at the southern dramatization of the “carpetbagger” and compared them to migrants who moved west. Gen. Sickles stated that the ancestors of all Americans who came to the new world were once “carpet-baggers” and that “Our carpet-baggers carry intelligence and civilization and enterprise wherever they go, and they are not to be barred out or excluded from the South at rebel dictation.”⁹¹ Sickles took a stronger stance on the issue than the *Jeffersonian*, praising northern settlers for spreading Republican ideology to the South. However, this evangelized Republican ideology was not necessarily one of abolition, suffrage or civil rights.

Slavery was not an experience unique to the South. While a rarity in the abolitionist base of New England, a less-organized slave economy was present in regions such as the Upper Midwest. Territories considered “northern” such as Iowa had significant, unregulated slave economies.⁹² Indeed, some of the northern settlers who were perceived as harbingers of Radical Republican abolitionism had no relation to the abolition movement and may have lived by and participated in northern territorial slave economies. Whatever the northern settlers were levying on the South, it was not a prepackaged Radical dogma of equal rights for all men. Northern settler influence, then, was oriented much more towards federalism and the northern perception of progress.

By the latter part of Reconstruction, however, the tide of northern political support seems to have turned against the northern settlers. The 1868 national Republican platform attempted to portray the party as one of “stability, peace, and sectional concord” rather than the party of

⁹¹ Dodgeville, WI *Chronicle*, October 9, 1868, *Chronicling America*, Library of Congress.

⁹² Schwalm, Leslie A, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. 5.

Radical Reconstruction.⁹³ In Republican primary elections, more radical politicians, including some settlers, began to lose support from northern newspapers in favor of more moderate, hands-off candidates. Given that the northern settlers were supposedly ambassadors of federalist control, their backing in media waned with that of politicians. In August 1872, the Republican *Findlay Jeffersonian* of Ohio ran an article on a recent primary election in its district which described the radical candidate as “nothing less than a genuine soreheaded carpet-bagger in search of an office,” a marked departure from the northern support for settler candidates just three years before.⁹⁴ Illinois Senator Lyman Trumbull, the coauthor of the Thirteenth Amendment, was quoted in a July 1872 issue of the Manitowoc, Wisconsin *Pilot* as supporting Horace Greeley over the reelection of President Grant in order to make the political environment less radical and remove settler politicians’ influence in the southern states.⁹⁵ It seems that as northern Republicans’ passion for Radical Reconstruction died out, so did their support of the settler politicians who had moved south.

Conclusion

In a time without standards or ethics for journalism, it was effective and necessary to stray from facts and discourse to accomplish political goals. In just nine years from the time Henry Warren found himself being publicly resisted for the first time, Reconstruction had failed and Republican governance in the South was largely obliterated. Reconstruction efforts faced such resistance that it was no longer a realistic part of Republican politics.⁹⁶ Part of this resistance was accomplished by the unrelenting media attack on the agents of southern

⁹³ Perman, Michael, *The Road to Redemption*, 3.

⁹⁴ Findlay, OH *Findlay Jeffersonian*, August 23, 1872, *Chronicling America*, Library of Congress.

⁹⁵ Manitowoc, WI *Pilot*, July 3, 1872, *Chronicling America*, Library of Congress.

⁹⁶ Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879*. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1984. 149.

Republican success, the northern settlers who ended up by chance or by choice as politicians. The existing scholarly framework for the language of reconstruction, created by Tunnell and Prince, establishes how critical the participation of southern Democratic media was in the end of Reconstruction. Tunnell builds on this to include some of the slurs hurled at northern settlers,⁹⁷ and Prince finds some of the same attacks on settlers used by their fellow Republicans in northern papers.⁹⁸ Neither examine specifically the context and meaning behind some of the terms created for northern settlers by southern Democrats.

Examining the terms “black-and-tan”, “piebald”, “menagerie”, and “mongrel”, elucidates the cultural context behind resistance to northern settler involvement in politics. “Black-and-tan” and “piebald” compared the composition of legislative assemblies to the coats of animals, highlighted the equal status of whites and African-Americans, and contrasted settlers with the completely white “lily-white” Republican faction. The term “menagerie” brought to mind an animalistic, untrained, and unorganized nature of both northern settler and African-American politicians. Finally, “mongrel” indicated immoral, often sexualized, relations between settlers and African-Americans and questioned the legitimacy of anything they produced. Through the use of these terms, southern Democratic media accomplished a questioning of northern settler whiteness, an association of settlers with animals, an implication of settlers’ incompetence and lack of civilization, and a suggestion that settlers’ activity with African-Americans was not unlike the egregious crime of miscegenation. The southern Democratic media worked through existing fears and prejudices of its readers to accomplish its political goal: discreditation of northern Republican settlers, and rejection and failure of the Reconstruction agenda. The reappropriation and creation of terms “black-and-tan,” “piebald,” “menagerie,” and “mongrel”

⁹⁷ Tunnell, “Propaganda of History,” 749.

⁹⁸ Prince, “Legitimacy and Interventionism,”

was an essential part in appealing to southern perceptions and destroying any political credit and potential Republicans once had.

Northerners who moved South after the Civil War for the most part did not intend to become so deeply involved in the brief success of Reconstruction and its failure. While they arrived with optimism and full carpet-bags, many, like Henry Warren, left the South with a deeply bruised reputation. Most acted in the best interest of their new communities, but the southern Democratic mission to rid the South of all “mongrel rule” proved too effective. The ingenious and relentless bashing of northern settlers in the media led many to agree that their residence in the South was truly a fool’s errand.

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