IMPERFECTLY IMPERIAL:
NORTHERN TRAVEL WRITERS
IN A POSTBELLUM AMERICAN SOUTH,
1865-1880

by

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Abstract

Between the years 1865 and 1880, more travelers than in any period outside the Civil War streamed to an American South to write of the region. Through these writings, a literate Northern readership learned of a postwar South, a newly re-annexed territory of the United States. In this thesis, I argue that contextualizing these travel accounts and the region of the South itself as complicit with broader discourses of Western imperialism is a productive way to examine both the history and the places of Southern Reconstruction. Additionally, I contend that the tensions written through these travel narratives around the very ways travelers scripted Southern scenes are themselves constitutive elements of a Southern identity and history.

Moving through discussions of three particular themes found throughout these postbellum travel accounts - discourses of civilization, descriptions and representations of 'nature' and landscape, and encounters with rural white poverty, this thesis examines the ways Northern travelers grappled with the South's 'double placement' within an imperial framework. Simultaneously an occupied imperial territory of the United States and part of the United States itself, a postbellum South was paradoxically situated in reference to both 'the North' and 'the nation' at large, a tension found throughout these travel writings.

Through these discussions, this thesis endeavors to provide a critical engagement with textual representations of a postwar South, representations typically treated in a very superficial and quite straightforward manner. Arguing for a very different treatment of these texts, I attempt to show that situating them within an imperial framing provides a new look at old stories about Southern occupation and Reconstruction in the mid-nineteenth century.
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Thanks, finally, to my parents for never pointing out the complete irony of my traveling 2,500 miles across the continent to study a region that was actually right under my nose in the first place.
What began as a simple move to Vancouver for graduate school, in many ways, became the impetus for this thesis. Traveling almost 2,500 miles northwest from Kentucky, I suddenly became a spokesperson for a region with which I did not explicitly identify prior to arriving in British Columbia. So long as I lived in Kentucky, a presumably ‘Southern’ state (though that classification is open to debate), my sense of self was not openly connected to being ‘Southern.’ Certainly ‘Kentuckian,’ although even that rubric could be divided, I never acknowledged the broader category within which that label fell. My being ‘Southern’ was invisible, at least to me, until I left the region with which I was to become associated.

Once in Vancouver, I became a Southerner. Asked to speak as an expert on the South’s inner workings, its history, and its stereotypes, I, at times, scrambled to provide answers to questions that previously had seemed to me unnecessary even to ask. Through this process, I became more and more aware that many of the images and ‘facts’ associated with the South formed the foundation not only of popular stereotypes but also of many scholarly examinations of ‘Southern distinctiveness.’ Attributed to everything from climate, to race, to history, to economics, this ‘difference’ found within (or imposed onto?) ‘the South,’ whatever that term means, seemed to be the defining characteristic of the region. Positioned as ontologically distinct from either the ‘North’ or ‘nation,’ the ‘South,’ at least according to many historians, has stood, and still stands, alone. In this search for the South’s meaning, the distinct and diverse geography within the region has
often been lost, a point I felt palpably as I was discursively connected to places and things with which I had no personal experience.

This initial (re)discovery of my own Southern 'roots' led me to think more about the ways the South has been constructed and represented. With the help of a graduate course in travel writing, I began the process of examining how people traveling to what they envisioned as a place distinct from, but somehow connected to, the remainder of the United States textually represented their observations, observations that fed into and were fed by an ontological regional separation itself anterior to these descriptions. Given that travelers have ventured to, and written, the South since at least the late sixteenth century, a wide range of travel accounts was available. Thus, that I chose American travelers from Northeastern states and, more particularly, travelers who ventured southward in the fifteen years following the Civil War merits an explanation.

A driving factor in this thesis has been that travel accounts of the South are a crucial avenue through which to explore the seemingly paradoxical placement of the South in relation to the nation as a whole. Understood to be simultaneously separate from but within any conceptualization of the United States as a nation-state, the South, led by Southern historians, has danced along the boundary between being 'inside' and 'outside' a national framework. Clearly not Northern but not entirely unAmerican, describing this region has always been an act riddled with tensions stemming from this ambiguous 'place' of the South. Oddly enough, however, these tensions, which to me seem germane to any investigation of things Southern, often become simply another

1Numerous Southern historians continue to argue the South's regional distinctiveness. This debate, however, is beyond the boundary of this thesis. For now, it will suffice to say that in a nineteenth-century context, the South was constantly tugged across the division between that which was 'American' and that which was something else.
aspect of South distinctiveness in academic texts. Building on the premise that the South is distinctly different, many historians accept this position and move on. In this thesis, I wanted to move not on but within these tensions around the South’s ‘place’; for they are, in fact, key to any examination that surpasses a superficial treatment of the region.

To place these tensions in greatest relief, I have focused on travel accounts that grappled directly with the South’s paradoxical placement. Travelers from Northeastern states, as part of a broader nineteenth-century United States ‘community,’ traveled southward with an a priori assumption of Southern distinctiveness gleaned from writings, factual and fictional, of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Although regional distinctions permeated American writings even in an early colonial period (Greeson 1999), these differences became much more pronounced through the mid-nineteenth-century acts of Southern secession and eventual defeat. Having failed to preserve the Confederacy, a post-Civil-War South was brought back to the Union and, simultaneously, banished from most Northern or national frameworks. Treated as a conquered territory that was concurrently part of the conquering territory, the South, through its discursive renderings in travel accounts, displayed this double placement. Northern travelers, moving through lands recently (re)annexed into a national framework, wrote through this paradoxical Southern place, in both senses of the phrase. Envisioning the places they visited and subsequently wrote to be parts of the nation’s new imperial holding (Meinig 1998), these men and women filtered Southern scenes through, and focused on those differences ‘explainable’ by recourse to, this imperial relationship. The particular ways travelers wrote an imperial South, however, took distinctly different forms in different contexts, as I will argue throughout this thesis.
It is important to note even at this early stage, however, that although an imperial framing of a postbellum South is a productive way to think about and contextualize these travel accounts, it potentially lulls us into seeing a one-way transfer of knowledge, money, and power onto a passive and captive 'colonial' South. While making a nice story that Northern travelers themselves liked to tell, things were not actually that simple.\(^2\) Equally important, engaging with the ways travelers produced a distinct South does not mean that material differences between North and South did not exist. Certainly in this time period, the North and South were different in terms of industrial activity, urban settlement, and agricultural practices. The particular ways travelers presented these and other regional differences, however, can provide insight into the ways the South has been understood more broadly. Although travelers at times wrote of a monolithic, uniform 'South,' these broad statements and generalizations could not be sustained through their travels or mapped smoothly onto the highly differentiated Southern landscapes through which they actually passed. Tacking between 'the South' to which they ventured and the South through which they actually passed – two framings never entirely separate, travelers scrambled to cover both their own tracks and those of an ill-fitted imperial lens.

This thesis attempts to explore and exploit those discursive stress marks buried within these postbellum writings, examining them through three particular contexts: discourses of civilization, representations of 'nature' and 'landscape,' and constructions of rural white poverty. Through these themes, the complex ways travelers labored to write an imperial South become manifest. Never quite imperial in the right way, a

\(^2\)See also Simpson (1996) for a discussion of the connections between American travel and imperial and capitalist enterprise.
postwar South came to display tensions surrounding this ill-fitted imperial framing through these three discourses. Within each discourse, importantly, a postwar South was rendered an imperial holding in a unique way, since the 'ill fit' of an imperial Southern framing took quite different forms within each topic.

Much of the effort required of travelers to script an imperial South stems from the complex relationship between the region and mid-nineteenth-century Western imperialism. While a postwar South writ large 'fit' within an imperial framework of occupier/occupied at least superficially, on closer investigation, travelers rapidly discerned that an imperial Southern framing was imperfect in many ways. The particular means through which travelers handled that ill fit, however, took very different forms in different contexts. While imperialism did not 'fit' a postwar South perfectly, that ill fit was worked out in quite distinct ways within different discourses. Travelers constantly shifted between a South thought to be a (not-so) newly acquired territory and, thus, part of the nation and a South viewed as exterior to constructions of an American identity and, thus, not part of the nation.

This thesis argues that conceptualizing these Northern travel accounts of a postbellum South as complicit with broader imperial projects is a productive way of analyzing them. A stance quite different from the approaches taken by most Southern historians, this framing allows discussions to move beyond recourse to the idiosyncrasies of the South as an explanation for its history. Despite the fact that most travelers to an immediate postwar South seem to have approached the region, either explicitly or obliquely, as a new imperial holding (see Meinig 1998), scholars, by and large, have avoided the imperialist discourse coursing through these travel accounts, focusing instead
on the 'factual' aspects of the writings. They have read the South's changing position in relation to both other subnational regions and the nation at large through these and other travel accounts in a very straightforward manner. By contrast, this thesis begins with an imperial framework and filters these writings through rather than around that lens.¹

With most accounts running far beyond five-hundred pages, these travel narratives provide a wealth of topics from which to choose. That I have chosen to focus strictly on discourses of civilization, constructions and representations of 'nature,' and encounters with white rural poverty reflects my desire both to approach these texts as part of broader imperial projects and to highlight those moments of textual difficulty. As the thesis progresses through these three themes, the distinct ways travelers handled an imperfect imperial fit within each discourse will emerge. In the process, however, the connections among discussions of civilization, 'nature,' and race will surface, since these travelers, like most others in imperial contexts, blended the three to script an imperial postwar South.

Before turning directly to those three discourses found throughout these travel accounts, Chapter 1 works to outline in broad terms the ways 'the South' as both a place and an object of knowledge has been envisioned. From there, it moves to look at the history of Southern Reconstruction and the place of mid-nineteenth-century travel writing. Chapter 2 explores the writings of three Northern travelers who ventured southward after the Civil War specifically to work in spaces of black self-rule. Highlighting the connections between their constructions and representations of Southern blacks and their own white identities, this chapter examines the changes these travelers

¹Treating a postbellum South as an imperial holding elides the fact that simultaneously, the American 'West' was conceptualized through a more extreme imperial framing, a point some Northern travelers
experienced through the act of living in the South and the ways they presented these alterations. Chapter 3 moves on to look at the various constructions of ‘nature’ in the South. Attempting to foreground the often-muted geography of the region, this chapter works to interrogate the means through which Northern travelers spatialized their conceptualizations of ‘nature.’ Ending with an examination of one travel account in particular, Chapter 3 begins the process of focusing simultaneously on what travelers viewed, how they represented those scenes, and how they represented themselves. Chapter 4 returns to racialized constructions, engaging with representations of Southern white rural poverty. Tracing this stereotype and the ways travelers worked to ‘explain away’ white poverty in the South, this chapter brings to light the concurrent revulsion and fascination experienced by Northern travelers encountering Southerners white in all the wrong ways. Finally, Chapter 5 returns to some of the themes outlined in this chapter concerning the implications for this way of approaching these travel accounts in ways quite different from their usual treatment. Bringing the thesis back to the point at which it began, the concluding chapter attempts to re-insert these very different readings into the field of Southern history and beyond.
Chapter 1
Southern Regionalism: The Paradox of the South

Why is the ‘South’ Southern?

(N)o one can be a student of the region without also being aware that differences between North and South are among the staples of our work. (Degler 1987, 3)

In the War Between the States, the South attempted to make itself into a foreign land. The North didn’t permit the South to do so. The North won the war. Ever since then, the North has made the South into a foreign land. (Goad 1997, 86)

While I cannot agree with the amiable gentleman in Savannah who one day assured me that the people of the North and South were two distinct nations, and that the time would come when they would separate, I still recognize essential differences between the inhabitants of the Northern and Southern States. These differences are not merely climatic; they were inbred by the system and tendencies which have been so lately done away with. Between the citizen of Massachusetts and the dweller in South Carolina a broad and deep gulf so long existed, that it is not strange that the habits, the customs, and the language of the people should differ in many particulars. (King 1875, 771)

These three passages – the first from a well-known Southern historian, the second from self-labeled ‘poor white trash,’ and the third from a popular postbellum travel writer – all revolve around the same ontological separation of an American South from an American North. What Carl Degler views as the basis of the subdiscipline of Southern history, Jim Goad attributes to Northern efforts to render the South different.1 Edward S. King pushed regional distinctiveness beyond any external factor and into the very essence

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1Cf. Radford (1992), who claims that the North attempted to squelch any sense of Southern national identity. While I find this supposition unlikely, particularly in reference to the travel accounts under discussion in this thesis, I should note that terms such as ‘nation’ and ‘region’ were highly contingent in a postwar time period. In addition, the very range of opinions and claims put forth through travel accounts and other writings of this time period makes any definite claim about what ‘the North’ did to ‘the South’ extremely tenuous.
of the South’s economic and social systems. Between North and South stood ‘a broad and deep gulf,’ a division that extended temporally as well as spatially.

As these three passages indicate, generations of historians and laypersons alike have envisioned a South different from, and at times more extreme than, a North. Basing this difference on factors ranging from climate to race and racism to collective experience, history, or guilt, historians, certainly since the Civil War, have sought the key to unlocking what could be called the paradox of the South. Ascribing Southern distinctiveness to a Cavalier legend, a Plantation legend, paternalism, and unity against Reconstruction, (Woodward 1968), Northerners and Southerners alike have sought ‘the source’ of what makes the South ‘Southern.’

Through this search for Southern history’s “central theme” (Joyner 1996), the South has been, in the words of Fred Hobson (1983), “an alien member of the national family” (9). Banished to some ‘other’ space separate from but connected to concepts such as ‘the nation’ and ‘the North,’ the South has remained the American anomaly which demands explanation. Despite this difficulty in attempting to describe the region in national terms, however, it has also been “the most frequently analyzed member” of the ‘national family’ (Hobson 1983, 9). Receiving more intense analysis and interpretation than any other American region (Griffin 1995, 10), the South has remained an ‘American problem,’ in large part of because of this failure of a nationally centered

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2For Southern distinctiveness based on climate and race, see Koeniger (1988). For Southern distinctiveness based on a collective Southern history, see Woodward (1968) and (1971), though he qualifies this argument somewhat in a 1993 article, in which he posits a Southern distinctiveness based on multiple Southern ‘ironies.’ For Southern distinctiveness based on physical features, see Chaplin (1995).

3See Radford (1992) for a discussion of Southern distinctiveness from a Southern perspective.

4In a very recent essay, James C. Cobb (2000) urges a move away from defining the South by negation, since the idea of a coherent ‘North,’ in his view, is waning. See also Donaldson 1999 and Jones 1999, who both call for a move away from such searches which they view as complicit with an overall focus almost exclusively on conservative white male writers in the South.
vocabulary. Thought to be undoubtedly “the most distinctive region in the nation” (Degler 1987, 5), it has been defined through the very inability to define it in terms used elsewhere in the United States. Concurrent with a situating of the South as an inappropriate object for any national writing or rhetoric, the region has been envisioned as internally homogeneous (Hobson 1983), a point to which I shall return throughout this thesis. Differences between North and South, differences integral to the ways Southern history has been perceived and performed, are mapped evenly across a uniform South. Nationally exterior and regionally homogeneous, the South has been rendered discursively and uniformly different in reference to a national framework.

Even when scholars have attempted to challenge what has become the generally accepted ‘external’ positioning of the South, they typically do so by pointing to the region’s strong influence on the nation as a whole (see, for instance, Degler 1987). Highlighting Southern Presidents, inventors, and politicians, this type of scholarship seeks to prove that the South ‘mattered’ and still does. More importantly for this discussion, however, even this strategy leaves the external positioning of the South intact. The South is different, and rightly so. In few instances has the possibility been raised that the South itself emerges from and within those searches for Southern distinctiveness. In most cases the South has simply remained “the most distinctive region of the country” (Woodward 1968, 16), and scholars have accepted this distinctiveness as historically eternal and empirically correct.

This type of scholarship, what Paul Carter (1987) has called “empirical history” (xvi), seeks not to understand or interpret but primarily to legitimate that which in large part stood as anterior assumptions about the history of a given place. More importantly
for this thesis, however, conceptualizing the South in this manner produces a 'mute
gEOGRAPHy,' as scholars smooth the contours and sharp corners of what were actually
extremely diverse political, social, and cultural landscapes agglomerated into that which
we have come to know as the 'South.' If we turn, instead, to what Carter calls a "spatial
history," a much more complex image emerges. If we attempt to look at the connections
(and ruptures) between the knowledges and images produced by travelers and the places
and spaces through which travelers moved, 'the South' becomes more than a uniformly
empty container into which meaning is poured.

The Birth of the South

Despite what has been perceived as an eternal presence of a distinctive region, the
very concept of 'the South' has changed over time. As Jennifer Rae Greeson (1999) has
argued, "'the South' — as a cohesive figure differentiated from the nation-at-large —
antedated not only sectionalism, but also even the founding of the federal states in the
U.S. national culture" (210). Exploring what she calls the "residual coloniality" of the
South through early U.S. literature, Greeson suggests that American nationalization was
founded, in large part, upon "an intra-national, regionally inflected symbolic geography,
in which the terms "South" and "U.S." formed an ideological juxtaposition" (1999, 210).
Building on Greeson's argument, it could be argued that if early versions of "the
nation/south imaginative construct" "facilitated the cultural passage of the United States

5 Thanks to Derek Gregory for this phrasing (and point).
6 This time line elides Native-American use and settlement of Southern lands long before European
exploration.
7 Cf. Chaplin (1995), who argues that a concept/place known as 'the South' did not exist in an American
colonial setting. For an argument closer to Greeson's but based on the United States at large, see Kolodny
1975.
from colony into nation” (1999, 210), mid-nineteenth-century versions of this same construct laid the groundwork for the move from nation to imperial nation. If “U.S. nationalization required... imaginative distinctions between past colonial status and modern nationhood” (Greeson 1999, 213), American forays into imperialism required a similar move accomplished, again, by (re)tracing the Mason-Dixon line.

Of course, this discursive Nation/South distinction was grafted onto what were viewed as natural regional differences. Well into the eighteenth century, physical, or more specifically, supposedly natural differences were incorporated into most Northern travel accounts as the defining features of the South. Whereas previously, Northern writers noted natural differences strictly as different and not explanatory, eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century writers utilized those same climatic differences to ‘explain’ Southern social features (Chaplin 1995). “(I)ndolent engulfment” in a lush land rich with natural resources rapidly became the justification for numerous aspects of Southern lifestyles (Kolodny 1975, 16). Southern lands and Southern ‘nature’ became the way to explain Southerners themselves, as land and people were shifted into one discursive framing. This explanation migrated into the South itself and ultimately became the rationale for slavery. An agriculturally-based South thought to be climatically unhealthy for white bodies ‘needed’ black bodies resistant to the dangers of a balmy climate, a justification that remained through the early years of the nineteenth century.

By the early 1800s, however, the actual importation of African slaves had all but ceased; and a new generation of slave owners not personally involved with this importation was assuming control. ‘Open’ in a limited way to various social movements emerging in the urbanizing and industrializing North, some white middle-class
Southerners in the early nineteenth century began to support, at least in theory, the gradual dissolving of slavery (Woodward 1968). Unsure how to ‘fix’ a situation into which they themselves had been born, a small group of nineteenth-century white, elite Southerners, through the 1830s, temporarily contemplated the claims of moderate Northern abolitionists.8

As abolitionism grew stronger in the North,9 however, this Southern position changed drastically. With the acquisition of new territories in 1848 from the war with Mexico, the threat that slavery would spread in these new lands made slavery a national problem affecting partisan balances and the national political climate.10 Thus, by the 1850s, advocates for the territorial containment of slavery and middle-class opponents of the brutal physical and sexual exploitation inherent in slavery had aligned and become synonymous with Northern anti-slavery rhetoric. This growing sentiment, coupled with Northern capitalist expansion and industrialization that far outpaced an agrarian South, precipitated a strong defensive stance in the South and an acute Southern self-awareness (Hobson 1983).11 Thus, on top of a much earlier line drawn between the South and the nation, Southerners themselves began erecting a wall of resistance built with rhetorical materials from both sides.

8This temporary alliance between some white Southerners and moderate Northern abolitionists in no way alleviated or even began to eliminate the dire situation for most blacks in the South. If anything, this ideological overlap operated almost solely in the realm of the theoretical, since few white slave-owning Southerners took any direct action to change their situations. Nonetheless, the existence of an amenability to abolitionist discourse in an antebellum South is an important point to note.

9This association between abolitionism and Northern states was not universal, as pro-slavery sentiment could be found across the North and across classes. See Roediger 1991 and Ignatiev 1995.

10Much of this discussion comes from Doyle 1995 and Woodward 1968.

11Richard Gray (1986) dates this Southern ‘self-awareness’ significantly earlier in the 1820s.
In this time period, white slave-owning Southerners became metonyms for the South as a whole.\footnote{This mapping of slavery onto all aspects of the South came both ‘externally’ from the North and various European countries and ‘internally’ from pro-slavery, pro-secession white Southerners (Griffin 1995).} Wrapped up in this emerging national image of the South, of course, was a simultaneous class distinction. As the archetypal upper-middle-class white (male) slave owner became the symbol of a mid-nineteenth-century South, other groups of Southerners disappeared. Thus, slavery, a national problem, developed a regional (and class-specific) solution: the moral conversion of the wayward, wealthy, and white Southerners (Doyle 1995). Interestingly, despite this seemingly unacknowledged discursive class distinction, both emancipated black Southerners and impoverished white Southerners were important Southern images, particularly through travel accounts,\footnote{Although not discussed in this thesis, antebellum travelers in the South dealt with similar topics but situated their writings in a distinctly different framework. Slavery and Southern lambasting, rather than the South’s paradoxical place within a national framework, dominated these texts. See, for instance, Frederick Law Olmsted’s extensive travel narrative (1861).} that circulated within the imaginations of Northern readerships, as we shall see in Chapters 2 and 4, respectively.

Why Was the South Made Southern?

This chronology of Southern distinctiveness, a timeline found in numerous studies of the region, is, of course, founded on the premise that people could, in fact, come to know the South. The possibility that within any of these regional distinctions lurked a conscious effort to produce Northern and Southern differences has rarely been explicitly discussed.\footnote{A clear exception is Greeson (1999).} One exception, however, can be found buried within Annette Kolodny’s 1975 work on ‘land-as-woman’ metaphors in descriptions of American lands. Kolodny observed that many late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth-century Northern, white, male
writers were loath to allow the North to follow “the easeful, self-indulgent capitulation before an overwhelming abundance” that many writers in this era associated with the South (1975, 20). According to Kolodny, writers of this era changed the strategies used to represent Northern lands textually and adopted a focus on human work rather than natural wealth. Thus was made what seems to be a conscious decision to shift from the bounties of New-England lands to the need for human labor as a central focus, a move that ultimately fed into the development of a Protestant work ethic later used to lambaste the South itself. This move is important to note, since the regional differences presented through various nineteenth-century writings have generally been treated as accurate reflections of ‘reality.’ The claim that these distinctions were initially a conscious construct calls into question such direct treatments of these writings.

This point raises the prospect of socially produced regional differences subsequently read onto the landscape. This is not to say that climatic, natural, and even social differences did not exist between the North and South. It does suggest, however, that the particular ways early writers and scholars came to view the two regions as distinctly different were, in fact, constructions deliberately imposed onto landscapes. What began, according to Kolodny, as a conscious choice to describe North and South in unequal terms was incorporated unproblematically as regional differences innocently observed by early settlers. Over time and, importantly, through an extensive citationary chain, this maneuver found its ways unacknowledged into subsequent versions of Southern historical narratives, narratives that ignore how (and why) the South was made ‘Southern.’ This specter of deliberately constructed regional differences makes any efforts to write about the South ‘as it was’ seemingly suspicious, a point which some
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scholars have noticed in Southern writings and descriptions. Calling into question the 'fact' of the South, these writers propose a slightly different take on the topic.

**Southern Ontology**

Anyone who chooses to write about the American South is almost immediately confronted with a problem. Is there such a thing as the South, a coherent region and an identifiable culture that can be sharply differentiated from the rest of the United States? (Gray 1986, xi)

Richard Gray, in his study of Southern writings, raises an important, though perplexing, question concerning the South's ontological status. Is, in fact, some thing there for people to study? What, for that matter, have generations of writers and travelers been writing about? Although not answering his own question directly, Gray enters this debate about Southern ontology by distinguishing between the untenable "fact of the South" and the more defensible "idea of the South" (1986, xii). Building on this distinction, Gray examines writings of Southerners who "engaged not so much in writing about the South as in writing the South" (1986, xii, my emphasis). Through a careful analysis of texts from various time periods, Gray highlights the tensions and discrepancies between what Southerners experienced and how they presented those experiences textually, examining the ways Southerners 'wrote' the South as they wished it to be. These textual constructions of a South, of course, became more than written ideas and carried material effects, as subsequent readers internalized and naturalized these Southern characteristics produced through writing.

I would argue, however, that this act of writing the South, of "reimagining and remaking... in the act of seeing and describing" (Gray 1986, xii), extended far beyond

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15Richard Gray, in a more recent essay (1996), makes a similar distinction between the 'fact' and 'idea' of
Southerners. Fiction writers, politicians, Northern and European journalists and travelers,\textsuperscript{16} and Federal and Confederate soldiers\textsuperscript{17} all engaged, through their writings and remembrances, in writing the South as both a place and an object of knowledge. All of these writings, like those discussed by Gray, provide important insight into the construction of the South as an idea. Visiting a place defined as different from the North and/or nation, nineteenth-century travelers always already had images of distinctively Southern scenes and scenarios which they subsequently sought through their travels.

I should note, however, that preconceived regional differences did not dictate entirely what and how travelers wrote. Exceptions do exist, as some travelers wrote explicitly against accepted Southern stereotypes and images. Even within what seems to be the repetition of various Southern stereotypes, slippage and transformation is present, as travel writers and other authors reproduced always incompletely and imperfectly previous images. Over time, scenes and stereotypes migrated and metamorphosed beneath the pens of various writers. Nonetheless, travelers to the South, like travelers to all places, anticipated experiences and images different from ‘home.’ In the case of Northern travelers to a postwar South, those differences became politically and emotionally charged, as travelers sought to ‘explain’ the South.

Fred Hobson (1983) has analyzed this need to ‘explain’ the South – endeavors he terms the Southern “rage to explain” – particularly in reference to Southerners who wrote of the South. Examining the apparent Southern obligation to explain the region, Hobson,

\textsuperscript{16}For a Northern account of the South at the turn of the century, see the 1896 travel account penned by professional traveler Julian Ralph. There are instances of Southern journalists traveling in the South, although I have not included these writings in this thesis. See, for instance, Hoge and Bayne, two Southern men who walked across Virginia in 1879. For European travel accounts of a postbellum South, see Hardy (1883) and Rose (1868). Karen Morin (1998) discusses Hardy, a well-known British traveler, and her travels in the American West.
like Gray, traces the strategies employed by particular Southerners, across numerous temporal contexts, to justify their ‘unique’ society. Positioning this ‘rage to explain’ as an intrinsic part of a Southern identity since the early 1800s, Hobson (1983) follows the changing strategies and methods used by both Southern apologists and Southern critics to justify the ‘peculiar institution’ and extreme guilt, respectively. To do so, Hobson, like many others, assumes a priori, and unproblematically, the South’s homogeneity and, thus, allows the writings he discusses to speak for a holistic South everywhere the same.

This homogenization of the South extended, and still extends, far beyond troubled Southerners and into other areas, such as academia. Like Hobson’s book, many academic studies make “leaps of faith regarding the existence of ‘one South’” (Carlton 1995, 33). In so doing, they address only indirectly, or often elide altogether, the contention that “the region is, at least on some levels, an intellectual construct” (Carlton 1995, 33). Accepted unproblematically as somehow different, and importantly, uniformly different, from the North and/or Nation, the South remains separately, and appropriately, the property of Southern history and studies.

That material differences between the two regions existed, particularly in a nineteenth-century context, is certainly true. These material differences, however, are not the distinctions often highlighted in studies of the region. Although noting tangible differences, scholars move quickly to focus on factors such as the Southern ‘experience’ or mindset. From this position of a South distinguished by its intangible differences, claims are made without any critical interrogation of the construction of an ontologically distinct North and South. Historical accounts skirt what David Carlton (1995) has called

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17 See, for instance, Cowan (1881) and Woodruff (1969).
18 See also Griffin (1995).
"the story of how the South became exiled to the American periphery" (45). How is it that we have come to recognize a South different from the North/nation becomes a process buried deep within and ultimately lost in a scramble for the root of Southern distinctiveness.

Not accepting regional differences at face value begins the act of rethinking a monolithic ‘South.’ Embracing the question of how the South and its ‘facts’ were understood necessitates a very different approach to studies of the region. Rather than highlighting once again that particular people understood the South to be different, we can begin to highlight how particular people came to understand the South as different. This epistemological shift, a move from declarative statements about what people wrote to interrogative questions about how people wrote, demands that any examination of textual accounts of the region be situated in much broader socio-historical contexts. Not existing in a vacuum, representations of the South must be conceptualized as complicit with other nineteenth-century discourses that greatly influenced what tropes of representation ‘fit’ with broader understandings of race, gender, nature, and so on and, thus, were available to writers.

**Southern Scenes, Northern Styles**

One such group of writers were Northern travel writers. Impacting national policy and opinion in key ways (Meinig 1998, Harris 1967), their works form an important aspect of the overall construction of the South as both a place and an object of knowledge. A critical reading of these writings of the South by Northern travelers can begin to move away from a reiteration of regional differences to an investigation of such

19 See, for instance, Woodward (1968) and (1971) and Degler (1987).
distinctions. As historian C. Vann Woodward (1971) has noted, "(t)here is a need for a history of North-South images and stereotypes, of when and how and why they were developed" (7). Examining postbellum travel writings of Northern men and women begins this process championed, strangely enough, by a historian who was one of the strongest supporters of an undeniable Southern distinctiveness.

The travel accounts under discussion in this thesis can be situated in the era of Reconstruction, the South’s political and social revamping, from roughly 1867 to 1877. In this time period, the South experienced drastic changes economically, politically, culturally, and socially, as everything from labor relations to cities and towns burned in Sherman’s march were quite literally reconstructed (Jackson 1972). Although lasting only a few years, Reconstruction, particularly the lingering memory of the South’s occupation and reorganization, was a crucial time period in the formation of Southern stereotypes and images.

**An Imperial Project: Southern Reconstruction**

Not only about foreign diplomacy or international relations, imperialism is also about consolidating domestic cultures and negotiating intranational relations. (Kaplan 1993b, 14)

While a detailed engagement with the large body of literature on Reconstruction and its politics is beyond the scope of this thesis, some aspects of a postwar South are important to provide for context. Meinig (1998), in his extensive historical geographical work on America, has positioned the South at the Civil War’s end as “a new imperial

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20Officially, the Reconstruction Act was passed in 1867; *de facto* reconstruction began, however, immediately after Lee’s surrender, as Northern investors and settlers streamed to the South, following Northern social reformers who had been in particular areas of the South since 1861. Woodward (1971) raises the possibility that much of the efforts devoted to political and social Reconstruction in the South were actually designed to contain blacks in the South rather than to provide them suffrage and civil rights.
holding” (189). While not the only (or the first) scholar to frame the South in such a way, Meinig succinctly outlines aspects of Reconstruction important for this thesis. A brief discussion of these points, then, will provide key elements of a South under Reconstruction.

First, however, it is important to note that this imperial framing imposed onto a postbellum South was not placed on a *tabula rasa*. A mid-nineteenth-century South was always already known through various images discussed earlier in this chapter. In addition, this ‘imperial framing’ did not emerge solely, or even primarily, from travel writers. By the end of the Civil War, the South was filled with soldiers, politicians, missionaries, doctors, nurses, war correspondents, and officers’ wives, many of whom kept both public and private diaries and journals of their experiences. Additionally, travel and fictional accounts, among other sources, of Southern lands and lifestyles had been in circulation since the inception of something called ‘the South.’ Coursing through many of these accounts from various time periods were characterizations and framings of a land thought to be distinctly different from and often inferior to a more powerful North. Thus, this imperial framing of a postwar South must be conceptualized within broader conversations concerning the status of the region, conversations that did not always include or privilege travel writings. Nonetheless, as one aspect of these circulating conversations, travel accounts did form a crucial avenue through which the literate portion of a Northeastern population learned of the South.

At the most basic level, a postbellum South was militarily occupied by large

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21 See the collection of essays edited by Kaplan and Pease (1993).
22 See also Meinig 1999.
Union armies. Concurrent with this military occupation, a postwar South was managed by imperial agents responsible for sociopolitical change. Labor relations between white land owners and black laborers were negotiated and governed by the Freedmen’s Bureau, whose agents typically were white Northern men. Equally important were schoolteachers who, in most cases, were Northern white women. Frequently working for freedmen’s schools, these teachers greatly influenced race relations in this time period. Economically, the South withstood the seizure and extraction of wealth, as moving Federal forces burned crops and houses, seized livestock and other valuables and precipitated, in some cases, the emancipation of slaves. This removal of material wealth, subsequently, facilitated the South’s positioning as a colony open for settlement and investment. Drained of resources by the Civil War, the South, for a short time period, rivaled the West as “a frontier of opportunity” (Meinig 1998, 191). Through this (re)opening, a postbellum South became an exotic province to be explored and described in an immediate postwar context.

Within this process of reconstructing the South, the region was doubly placed within an imperialist frontier framework as “colonial dependency” (Woodward 1971, 44) and, simultaneously, part of the colonizing country. Although the boundaries in any colonial or imperial relationship are never entirely clean (Stoler 1995), a postbellum South’s placement within a colony/occupier binary seems exceptionally problematic.

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23 The third plan for Reconstruction, passed in March 1867, divided the South into several military districts under a “conquered-province theory.” Imposing black suffrage, this act explicitly outlined steps required for Southern states to be readmitted to the Union in what became a piecemeal process. Beginning with Tennessee in 1866, readmission became a reality for Arkansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida in 1868. By 1870, Mississippi, Virginia, Georgia, and Texas had rejoined the Union. All of this, of course, changed by 1876, when most Southern states returned to white control. By 1877, Federal troops had been withdrawn (Williams et al. 1959). See also Woodward 1971 and Meinig 1998.
With both black and white, poor and wealthy inhabitants, the South was not ‘colonial’ or ‘imperial’ in the ‘normal’ way. Not all of the subordinated peoples in an imperial South fit the stereotypes of ‘natives’ found in other imperial contexts, nor did many of them accept their defeated status much beyond an immediate postwar time period. As Southern states were readmitted, white Southerners, particularly middle-class white Southerners, changed their tunes of acquiescence and acceptance. In addition, the tenuous binary of North/nation and South, although powerful in both an immediate post-Independence and post-Civil-War context, was “fraught with ambiguities and difficulties because it located a primary term of oppositional self-definition within the real political borders of the nation” (Greeson 1999, 230).

Even within a postwar context, any framing of a vanquished South, however seductive, must be qualified. As historian Gaines Foster (1987) has noted, the South’s apparent submissiveness was sorely overestimated by Civil-War contemporaries, evident by the fairly rapid white recovery of the region. Nonetheless, despite any ill fit of the ‘new’ imperial land, postbellum Northern travelers adopted this framework as best they could, journeying to what they understood to be their rightly (re)“conquered province.”

In an immediate post-war period, more travelers than in any period outside the Civil War itself swarmed to the South (Harris 1967), relaying scenes and stories to a nineteenth-century Northern readership hungry for news of the newly vanquished region (Franklin 1976).

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24This double placement within a nationalistic framework has always been part of a Southern identity (Griffin 1995). John Hope Franklin (1976) notes the South’s “colonial status” prior to the Civil War, though he bases his framing largely on unequal economic relations (260).

25A fair question would be what did Southerners traveling to the North have to say. In a postbellum context, this question is difficult to answer, since most Southerners were traveling only to secure loans or to take the oath of allegiance. For an examination of Southern travel accounts of primarily an antebellum North, however, see Franklin 1976.
These imperial framings of a postbellum South, framings held by Southerners as well (Franklin 1976, 260), discursively connect the South to broader processes of European and British imperialism (Doyle 1995, 114-5). If, as Anne McClintock (1995) has argued, imperialism was "not something that happened elsewhere" (5), it is also not something that emanated solely from Europe. The North, victor with the newly (re)acquired spoils of war, attempted to assume the role of imperial power, as the South was regrouped and reworked. Having lost both the foundation of its social relations through the abolition of slavery and the most recent structure of governance with the dissolution of the Confederacy (Hahn 1997, 125), the postbellum South was a space 'available' for (re)definition. With a population 'in' but not 'of' the United States, the South was positioned as a territory prime for (re)discovery and (re)exploration. Remaining "essentially a raw-material economy" (Woodward 1971, 44), the South became, in some senses, a ‘testing ground’ for future American imperialism. Becoming an ‘other’ space against which an eighteenth-century United States could shift from colony to nation (Greeson 1999), the South, in this era, again filled that role, enabling the United States to move from nation to an imperial nation.

That Northern travelers ‘practiced’ their imperial gaze and pens in a postbellum South is quite clear in the following passage from travel correspondent Sidney Andrews.

So far as any fear of that [another war] is concerned we may treat this State as we please, - hold it as a conquered province or restore it at once to full communion in the sisterhood of States. (Andrews 1866, 37)

\footnote{Most Southerners were technically ‘re-incorporated’ in a national framework with the end of the Civil War. Southern white men, however, did not become fully participating members of the nation-state until they took an oath of allegiance.}

\footnote{Amy Kaplan (1993a) argues that the Spanish-American War of 1898 can be viewed as a continuum of an imperial national discourse, begun intranationally, in an international context.}
Northern travelers, like Andrews, actively participated in an imperial framing that positioned Southern society favorably for "Northern conquest" (Harris 1967, 103). Venturing to see the devastation and destruction left by the Civil War, this "army of travelers" invaded the South during the era of Reconstruction (Harris 1967, 3). We can connect the writings of these solidly middle-class and usually well-educated travelers to other writings of the period. Sprinkling their travel accounts with well-known poetry and prose, these travelers undoubtedly were aware of travel writings of other places as well as fellow travelers in a postwar South. Thus, any reading of these Northern travel narratives must be placed within the broader field of mid-nineteenth-century travel accounts.

**Reading Travel Writing**

In recent years, a number of studies have engaged critically with travel writings. Works, such as Mary Louise Pratt’s examination of travel writing and transculturation (1992), have quite productively kept in tandem (and in tension) the ways travel and exploration writing produced both non-European ‘others’ and European conceptions of itself in relation to those ‘others.’ Pairing these two interconnected, though often separated, ideas allows Pratt and other writers to situate travel accounts in broader understandings of global expansion and conventions of representation through a framework that does not sever the connections between Europe and its colonies.

Within an American context, travel and travel writing have been almost exclusively associated with either westward movement and exploration or trans-Atlantic

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28See the edited collections of Robertson et al. (1994), Blunt and Rose (1994b), Duncan and Gregory (1999b), and Rojek and Urry (1997a).
Although travelers, from numerous places and in various time periods, crisscrossed the United States along a myriad of routes, travel within American landscapes is envisioned as a unidirectional line from Eastern cities across either a vast plain to a monolithic ‘West’ or a vast ocean to an already-familiar Europe. In few instances has the gaze moved from across the map to down the map, from West/East to North/South.

In one of the few studies of travelers to the South, Anne Harris (1967) focuses specifically on postbellum travelers. She notes that in addition to reflecting national attitudes toward a postwar South, “the travel literature of reconstruction contributed to the creation of a persistent historical image of the era” (1967, 21). In a reciprocal relationship, postbellum travel accounts were inserted into broader conversations concerning race, gender, nation, and other facets of identity (Domke 1996). Equally important for this thesis is Harris’s remark that these travel accounts directly influenced the attitudes of the scholars who read and relied on them for the first studies of the South’s reconstruction, studies founded on the assumption that these travel writings were empirically correct (1967, 84).

Making this examination of the construction of ‘self’ through the act of travel more explicit, numerous feminist scholars have interrogated the unspoken genderings of travel and of writing itself. See especially Blunt 1994a and 1994b and the collection of essays edited by Blunt and Rose (1994b).

For Western travelers, see Morin 1998 and 1999 and Kolodny 1984. Morin’s 1999 essay, though empirically rich, at times treats Western landscapes as a passive template on which women travelers played out their gendered and racialized subjectivities. For travel as exploration, see Kagle 1979, Brown 1993, and Altenbernd 1979. Both Altenbernd and Brown, unfortunately, fall into the trap of a quest for ‘the’ (implicitly masculine) American character through their readings of travel accounts. For trans-Atlantic travel, see Mulvey (1983) and Stowe (1994).

An exception is Anne Rowe (1978), though she focuses mainly on novelists. Rowe does, however, trace quite clearly the temporal changes in approaches to the South. In addition Christopher Mulvey (1983) looks at Southern lands but does so through the writings of British travelers. An extensive bibliography of postbellum travelers does exist (Clark 1962). Unfortunately, it is not entirely accurate, as many of the abstracts bear little relation to the actual travel accounts. Nonetheless, it at least provides a starting point. See Coulter 1948 for a bibliography of travel accounts of a Confederate South.

Harris’s study is connected to Clark’s 1962 bibliography. Her supervisor at the University of North
Best-sellers in the nineteenth century, American travel writings, according to Ahmed Metwalli (1979), filled a conscious need for both an historical and national identity (71-2). Showing American readers who a collective American ‘they’ were and were not, nineteenth-century travel accounts allowed a readership, in large part unable to experience travel personally, to do so vicariously. We can, thus, place travel accounts of the American South literally in the hands of a readership accustomed to reading about particular places and hungry for knowledge of its ‘new imperial holding.’

Apart from acknowledging the importance of these travel accounts in constructing historical narratives about both the South and the nation at large, however, the question remains what to do with them. Taking them from the laps of a nineteenth-century Northern readership and placing them under the gaze of twenty-first-century scholars is a move that requires great care. The threads that connect these travel accounts to broader nineteenth-century understandings and sensibilities are easily broken. How to read and write about travel accounts in a manner that moves beyond general summaries of travelers’ ‘findings’ and elides the trap of excising travel accounts from their broader social and epistemological contexts stands as a pressing question in this field of research.

Following Gregory (1999), I have envisioned both the act and ultimate product of travel as a move between representation of places and landscapes as texts and the production of travel as a scripting. This metaphor of ‘scripting’ the South allows both

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33William Stowe (1994) attributes the popularity of travel writing in the nineteenth century, in part, to a shift in the way writing itself was viewed. Through an association with the act of travel, writing, previously thought to be a frivolous activity, became a respectable form of labor. See also Melton 1999, who makes similar claims about the popularity of travel writing, though with little empirical support for his assertions.

34In his study of travel writings of Egypt, Gregory (1999) triangulates his argument among three ideas: “the construction of the Orient as a theatre; the representation of other place and landscapes as a text; and the production of travel and tourism as a scripting” (115). See also Gregory 1995.
the constructed nature of representation *and* the assumed invisibility of this construction to become apparent. In addition, envisioning the act of travel as a scripting highlights the performative nature of the activity, as travelers, through their actions and output, joined a much wider chain of movement, speaking to and against others involved in the same practice. Endeavoring to describe the South in such a way as to 'cover' their own tracks, travelers worked to hide the seams and stress marks in their renderings of the region, as they sought to smooth the wrinkles in both their travels and their writings. This thesis, conversely, attempts to focus on those very stresses and tensions travelers so assiduously tried to cover. Envisioning those moments of tension as *constitutive of* a postbellum South, I want to explore both how travelers sought ways around these textually difficult scenes and what those strategies have to say in reference to the overall way a postbellum South has come to be understood.

Thus, in reading these accounts, I have begun with textual 'moments' in which travelers' narratives or strategies of description seem to slip or, more accurately, 'stutter.' From these scenarios, I have sought not the underlying, all-encompassing 'source' of their difficulty but, rather, the ways travelers' *handlings* of these scenes (if they are even acknowledged) connect to broader (re)constructions of 'self,' 'other,' and a Southern 'place.' Beginning with passages that seem 'out of place,' I have worked my way back into the travel accounts, in some senses, to *re-place* these scenes cheek-by-jowl with that which seemed disrupted. Through this reading strategy, the ambivalence and anxieties

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35 This strategy of reading, in some senses, circumvents the prickly question raised by MacLaren (1992) and others concerning the connections between the traveler and the ultimate author of travel accounts. Since none of the travel writings under discussion in this thesis were ever 'exploration' journals, the connection between traveler and author is somewhat stronger. Nonetheless, that each travel account, especially those accounts published first as a serialized text (see Appendix), moved through numerous 'drafts' is certainly true and even evident in contemporary cross-referencing within some of the travel accounts.
built into traveling as an imperial Northerner through an occupied South emerge between the crevasses.

This thesis attempts to follow the thread of this imperial framing through three particular topics: discourses of civilization, constructions and representations of 'nature,' and encounters with poor white Southerners. These subjects circulate through discourses of imperialism that range far beyond the boundaries of either an American South or an American nation-state. Permeating nineteenth-century travel accounts of various other imperial contexts, these topics – civilization, nature, and race – form three crucial aspects to constructions of both 'self' and 'other' through the acts of travel and of writing that travel. Thus, the three main chapters of this thesis move from the contention that moments of textual tension were, in large part, constitutive of what has become known as Southern distinctiveness and attempt to approach these travel accounts as something more than 'proof' of various Southern theses.
Chapter 2
Bearing Pens, Plows, and Privilege:
Northern ‘Civilizers’ in a Reconstruction South

To bring here the conveniences and comforts of our Northern civilization... is the work ready for the hand of every New England man and woman who stands waiting. (Andrews 1866, 4)

Abolitionism began, and ended, with man. It began with a call for individual outrage and repentance and ended with the Yankee schoolmarm carrying civilization southward. (Walters 1973, 200)

These two passages signal a particular framing of an immediate postbellum American South. The first comes from the opening pages of Sidney Andrews’s 1866 travel account, *The South Since the War*; and the second comes from Ronald Walters’s 1973 essay on civilization, sexuality, and abolitionism. Although penned more than hundred years apart, they both imply a one-way transfer of ‘civilization’ from the North to the South, through the hands of Northern (white) men and women. If we turn to Walters’s passage, we can begin to see the especially important place of Northern women. If abolition, as a *discourse*, began and ended with ‘man,’ abolition, as an *act*, ultimately ended with Northern women ‘carrying civilization southward.’

If men sounded the call to civilize the South, women, in large part, answered it. Northern white women, positioned as the bearers of a Northern civilization, played key roles in Southern Reconstruction.

For nineteenth-century travelers and twentieth-century historians, the ten years

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1Vron Ware (1992) has noted that little work has examined the role of gender in abolitionist discourse (59). That oversight seems even more extreme when one considers the key ideological and material roles women, both black and white, played in struggles toward emancipation.
following the Civil War, a period of drastic Southern Reconstruction, was a time in which the North had an especially heavy-handed role in the South. Awaiting ‘the conveniences and comforts’ of Northern civilization, the South was ‘open’ for Northern civilizing hands, at least to some extent. The activity of these civilizing hands, however, followed particular geographic patterns. While the South at large was criticized by most Northern travelers for its backward lifestyles and barbaric social practices, actual Northern efforts to ‘civilize’ were spatially and racially specific. Focusing their attention onto recently emancipated black Southerners, Northerners venturing to uplift the fallen South migrated toward spaces of nascent black self-government: the Sea Islands and abandoned interior plantations. In their endeavors to civilize, these Northern white men and women walked a very fine line. Encouraged to be missionaries (un)abroad to the suffering dark masses, these Northerners had to erase the presences of white Southerners, rich and poor, to make the imperial mission plausible. This erasure, however, was always incomplete, as Southern whites hovered at the edge of the imperial lens through which Northern men and women viewed both themselves and the people they intended to help.

In this chapter, I want to explore some of these placements of Northern men and women within a Southern civilizing mission, primarily through three accounts of travelers who ventured southward to work with emancipated slaves. In contrast to most Northern travelers, who viewed their presence in the South as both transitory and

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2In general terms, Reconstruction refers to Northern efforts to reconstruct a defeated postbellum South socially, culturally, politically, and economically. Through both de facto legislation like the First Reconstruction Act (March 2, 1867) and de jour activities like the arrival of mission-minded Northerners, the South’s social terrain and material landscape were substantially altered. This ‘reconstruction’ indirectly ‘began’ even before the Civil War’s end, when, in 1863, Lincoln proposed unsuccessfully an oath of allegiance for most Southerners (Williams et al. 1959).

3The three accounts are Charles Stearns’s *The Black Man of the South, and the Rebels; or, The Characteristics of the Former, and the Recent Outrage of the Latter* (1872), Elizabeth Hyde Botume’s *First
detached, these civilizing Northerners came southward to stay for at least an extended period. Thus, their writings of a postwar South must be treated somewhat differently, since their connection to what they observed and experienced involved much more than passing reflections. Looking at how travelers endeavored both to bring a civilized lifestyle to racialized ‘others’ and to preserve their own connections to that civilized lifestyle, I want to highlight the particularly complicated placement of white Northern women in a postbellum South, a placement informing and informed by the overall ambiguous ‘place’ of a postwar South within the United States as a whole.

To begin this process, I will discuss briefly the general attributes of Northern travelers’ complicity with a civilizing mission and the places to which they ventured. From there, I will turn to the three accounts under discussion to highlight some of the strategies and frameworks through which travelers scripted this presence in a postwar South as part of broader nineteenth-century imperial projects. Finally, I will return to the connection mentioned previously between the ambiguous role for Northern white women and the overall equivocal place of a postbellum South within a national framework.

*Heading Southward*

If most antebellum travelers ventured to the South to see slavery and its horrors through ‘Northern eyes’ (Floan 1958), postbellum travelers, fast on the heels of a

\[ \text{Days Amongst the Contrabands} \ (1893), \text{ and Mary Ames’s From a New England Woman’s Diary in Dixie in 1865} \ (1906). \]

\[ \text{For a discussion of the very different placement of black Southern women in a Reconstruction South, see Clinton 1992. For a discussion of the role of white Southern women in the “performance of southern identity,” see Hall 1998.} \]

\[ \text{The complex placement of white women in various ‘imperial’ contexts has been explored by numerous scholars. See McEwan 1994, Mills 1991, 1994, and 1996, Morin 1998 and 1999, and Ware 1992.} \]
victorious Union army, journeyed in large part to see what was replacing the ‘peculiar institution.’ Although most travel writers journeyed through the South and subsequently wrote of this movement, some Northerners trekked to the South to establish residency for extended periods of time. Whereas most travel writers only described what could or should be done to change or civilize a vanquished South, these ‘long-term’ travelers, civil counterparts to a Northern military presence, actually participated in those civilizing efforts. Journeying specifically to bring a Northern sensibility and urbane civilization to the South, these travelers were complicit with broader efforts to render the region an imperial holding ripe for Northern redefinition and reinvestment.6

Endeavoring to script the South as a newly (re)discovered territory, travelers attempted, at times unsuccessfully, to adopt the role of imperial agents surveying newly conquered territories. Ready to view the South as a conquered territory and new imperial holding, Northern travelers were repeatedly confronted, and confounded, by white and black Southerners unwilling to play the role of compliant colonists. Perplexed by the ill-treatment exhibited particularly by white upper- and middle-class Southern women, these travelers faced a newly (re)annexed land inhabited by people, some of whom were less than convinced by a Northern imperial gaze. Nonetheless, even if a postwar South was not ‘imperially held’ in exactly the right manner, from a nineteenth-century perspective, someone still had to take the initiative to ‘uplift’ what abolitionist Charles Stearns (1872) called “this Sodom of America” (18). Following, then, a mid-nineteenth-century “correlation between color and civilization” (Stocking 1994, 14), this urge to uplift became spatially and racially specific. It was possible for Southern blacks, for whom

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6In some ways, this discourse of an uncivilized or primitive South did not really ‘emerge’ after the Civil War, since writers as early as the 1750s employed that trope (Hobson 1985).
imperialism’s ‘ill-fit’ seemed greatly attenuated, to be slipped more or less smoothly into
the discourse of a ‘white Northerner’s burden’ which travelers mapped neatly onto their
newly-freed black bodies.  

With an approach similar to late-eighteenth-century Europeans in Africa (Wheeler
1999), Northern travelers considered Southern blacks inappropriate ‘custodians’ of their
own labor and racial progress. Although these travelers made similar criticisms of white
Southern lifestyles, the ability to act on those comments was strongly influenced by the
color line, as Northern action could not sweep unencumbered across the South. Tapping
into almost universal assumptions about black bodies and minds, these travelers, as I will
subsequently discuss, entered the South with assumptions and images of Southern blacks
formed from readings and stories of places far beyond the American South. “Universal
children,” blacks, according to almost all travelers, desperately needed aid. Clearly
understood nineteenth-century racial hierarchies ensured that white Northern travelers
could assume, usually correctly, that their efforts to uplift Southern blacks would not be
rebuffed by the objects of their imperial gazes.

Thus, thousands of Northern men and women, with the financial support of
Northeastern religious and civic organizations, set off for the South to accept the (not-so)
new burden (Small 1979).  

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7 Although white Southerners, particularly poor white Southerners, in many ways, mirrored the social and
economic conditions of blacks in the South, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, Northern travelers felt less than
sympathetic toward white Southerners.

8 I borrow this phrase from Elizabeth Hyde Botume’s 1893 travel account. Although at times she (and
others) used this type of phrase to refer to what they saw as ‘childlike’ habits and characteristics of
Southern blacks, it was also used to indicate black stasis. From this perspective, older people were like
children; and children worked and acted like adults. Black children somehow did not mature, as did white
children.

9 As I will discuss toward the end of this chapter, this assumption had interesting gender implications.

10 Henry Swint (1967) estimates that five to six million dollars went to support Northern teachers between
1862 and 1872.
Georgia, across the interior South, and in areas with large black populations, Northern men and women marched to the South, pens, plows, and privilege in hand, to uplift and civilize the defeated region or, more specifically, emancipated slaves. Missionaries, teachers, and planters streamed from Boston and other Northern cities to participate in the South’s reconstruction atop the material and social ruins and rubble of the ancient regime.

South Carolina’s Sea Islands, the default home of thousands of emancipated slaves, came under an especially strong gaze. As coastal plantation owners fled approaching Union forces throughout the Civil War, thousands of slaves were left on the islands, free from white surveillance and support. Although Sherman’s Special Field Order No. 15 in January 1865 set aside coastal land from Charleston, South Carolina southward to northern Florida exclusively for newly emancipated slaves (Cimbala 1989), as early as 1861, Sea-Island blacks, somewhere between freedom and slavery, occupied the islands and, in many ways, acted as though free (Rose 1964, Magdol 1977). Eventually becoming spaces of black self-government and land ownership, the Islands were standard stopping points for travelers to contemplate the future of the black race.

This scrutinizing was heightened in part because of the islands’ perceived

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11The Sea Islands were not the only spaces for a civilizing mission. Across the South, the establishment of Freedmen’s Bureaus in March 1865 created a network of agencies designed to adjudicate among black Southerners and between black and white Southerners in labor and social relations and to advocate for freed people (Rapport 1989). Although the Bureau was often at odds with Northern teachers over the amount and types of aid to be given (Small 1979, 396-9), the two groups ultimately had overlapping goals of honing black bodies into solid laborers (Woodward 1971, 40-1) and black minds into solid, though maybe not equal, citizens.

12Although Paul Cimbala (1989) and other historians have characterized these lands as “free” from both old masters and new white bosses, in actuality, white Northern men and women were quick to ‘colonize’ these spaces and, thus, temper any sense of black self-government.

13For many travelers, part of a visit to the Sea Islands was a trip to black schools. In the schools, travelers observed and took notes on the students’ behavior and intellectual prowess, as if unseen by the students themselves. Mary Ames and Elizabeth Hyde Botume, Northern teachers in black schools, remarked, however, that students were very aware of these frequent visitors and altered their behavior accordingly.
connections with profound black degradation. In the eyes of traveler Whitelaw Reid (1866), some of “(t)he most degraded slaves in the South... were to be found in South Carolina” (94). Of South Carolina slaves, “the most ignorant and debased, beyond all question, were those on the sea islands about Port Royal” (Reid 1866, 94).  

Engaged in unhealthy work, to which none but the coarsest of fiber were likely to be subjected, and steeped in the normal ignorance of the rice swamp and the cotton field, they were likewise isolated on their islands, and shut out from that mysterious transmission of intelligence, concerning their own interests, which seemed to permeate, like a magnetic current, all large communities of negroes. (Reid 1866, 94)

Believing Sea Island blacks to be intellectually stifled by the mundane activities of rice and cotton cultivation, Reid voiced a popular sentiment that more able and more intelligent slaves were shipped elsewhere, leaving a ‘remnant’ population “as ignorant as when brought from the wilds of Africa” in the words of traveler John Trowbridge (1867, 533). These travelers connected the plight of this group of blacks, “the most degraded specimens of the race... anywhere found” according to Sidney Andrews (1866, 369), to their spatial isolation on the island plantations, a level of seclusion that precluded even the ‘mysterious’ lines of communication between and among black communities, lines integral to black resistance to complete white control (Hahn 1997). Spatially and socially sequestered on island plantations and caught in a system that made “brutish men more brutish” (Reid 1866, 95), South Carolina blacks were ideal ‘test cases’ for efforts to civilize and elevate the darkened race (Small 1979, 384). The acme of black degradation,

14 A similar argument could be made for isolated interior plantations.
15 Whitelaw Reid, well-known diplomat and politician, traveled through the South first in 1865 with Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase and, then, in 1866 alone. See Appendix.
16 See also travelers John Trowbridge (1867, 533) and Edward S. King (1875, 429-37), who echo Reid’s sentiment.
17 John Trowbridge traveled through the South in 1865 and 1866, primarily to see the damage and devastation in Southern cities and Civil-War battlefields. See Appendix.
18 Sidney Andrews journeyed through the South in 1865, visiting only the Carolinas and Georgia. See Appendix.
Sea-Island blacks held the potential to prove abolitionists' success or failure. As Reid succinctly stated,

The moral of what I have written is plain. If the "negro-elevation" effort of the Abolitionists is to fail anywhere, it would be likely to fail here. If it succeed among these degraded people, it would be likely to succeed anywhere.... The results, whatever they may be, are of the first importance. (Reid 1866, 95-6)

Given this positioning of the 'Sea Island question' as the ultimate abolitionist litmus test, descriptions and discussions of the Islands and their inhabitants become crucial to broader understandings of both Southern blacks and the future of race relations in the South. Descriptions of these 'key' sites of experimentation with black self-rule are key themselves to the ways travelers came to understand race relations and racialized identities. More importantly, however, travelers transferred these racialized images formed in part through their Southern travels to their Northern readership, a move which ultimately impacted future policies toward Southern blacks (Harris 1967, 200). As these travel accounts and other published and private accounts of post-slavery Southern blacks circulated through the literate North, representations of black bodies and minds fed into wide conceptualizations of racialized 'others' and into subsequent policies and attitudes toward blacks across the United States and abroad (see Kaplan 1993a).

Whereas travelers like Reid, Trowbridge, and Andrews made passing comments as they themselves passed through spaces of black self-government, some Northern men and women came to such places to stay, as part of a civilizing mission to elevate the dark masses. With watchful eyes and eager hands, these Northerners mediated any sense of black 'independence' in a postwar South, as they, following the tenets of nineteenth-century abolitionist discourse (Woodward 1971), endeavored to nurture and mold black
bodies, souls, and minds to white, middle-class standards. To different degrees, these civic-minded sojourners ceased to view themselves from the detached observation point sought by most travelers and began to connect their own identities to the places and peoples with whom they interacted. Travel accounts emerging from these Northern 'civilizers,' then, provide critical insight into the South's social and political restructuring, into its discursive and material reconstruction.

That these two processes - discursive and material reconstruction - are listed separately is, in fact, somewhat misleading, since they are always already intricately and intimately related (JanMohamed 1986). Within a postwar South, the writings of these Northern civilizers must be kept within the broader sociopolitical context of a postwar South. Following fast on the heels of the Civil War - a period of great social, political, and economic upheaval, these Northerners, shortly after their arrival, began to feel in very real ways a Southern white 'recovery' from the Civil War. As white Southerners returned to their land (and their 'rule'), Northern men and women were challenged physically and psychically for control of these spaces of black 'self-rule.' Traces of each of these processes, of war devastation and of white Southern regrouping, are visible in both the actions and representations found throughout these travel accounts. Frequently harangued and harassed by white Southerners, these civilizing Northerners, constantly tacking between being 'master' of and manipulated by their black charges, ultimately abandoned their dreams of a new imperial South, as the graphic reality of white Southern control crept into their mission. Importantly, however, the writings of these civilizing Northerners simultaneously must be contextualized as parts of much broader discursive...
practices which feed in numerous ways into the material practices wrought by these Northern civilizers without canonizing (or vilifying) individual travelers (see Blunt and Rose 1994a).

Before moving to a discussion of such travelers' civilizing efforts in the South, I want to examine briefly how they came to know and understand those persons understood to be the appropriate recipients of a Northern civilization. As Robert Young (1995) has argued, the states of 'civilization' and 'barbarism' are necessarily interdependent and entangled "in the mutually defining opposition that is supposed to set them apart" (32). An engagement, thus, with travelers' constructions and discussions of blackness begins to show how these civilizers placed black Southerners such that they 'needed' civilization and such that the travelers themselves remained a 'civil' counterpart.

Black (Un)like Me\textsuperscript{20} : Erasing Black Subjectivity

In her examination of Foucault's approach to the colonies and things colonial, Ann Stoler (1995) asks if racial configurations in the imperial world were constitutive of a nineteenth-century bourgeois self, a question which seems especially germane within the context of an imperial South.\textsuperscript{21} Entering the South to aid and abet Southern blacks thought to be struggling in the mire of slavery, Northerners travelers constructed concepts of blackness, concepts that acted in part to inform and bolster their own understandings of self. Working within an explicitly racialized and implicitly gendered dichotomy,

\textsuperscript{20}I borrow from this subheading from John Howard Griffin's 1961 book, Black Like Me. In this travel account of the South, Griffin, a white man, chemically darkened his features to 'experience' being a black man in the Deep South. See Lott (1993) for one of many analyses of this well-known travel narrative.

\textsuperscript{21}See also JanMohamed 1986.
Northern travelers came to know ‘self’ through an exploration of ‘other.’

From this premise, numerous lines of inquiry emerge. How did middle-class white Northerners, entering the South to participate in a civilizing mission, construct racialized identities of ‘others’ within the ‘imperial world’ of the South? In what ways did these racialized constructions subsequently feed into broader epistemologies of race, nation, and gender? An engagement with constructions of blackness begins to elucidate connections between racialized configurations of ‘others’ and bourgeois understandings of self. Seeing representations of blackness as more than reflections of ‘reality’ allows the underlying assumptions concerning both the ‘process’ and ‘fact’ of Reconstruction to be unpacked.

In the mid-nineteenth century, ‘blackness,’ as both an internal attribute possessed by people and an external marker read off bodies, had intimate associations with particular qualities and states of existence. Since prior to their travels southward, most middle-class white Northerners had very little personal contact with blacks in any context (Domke 1996, 244), these sojourners came with racialized images intrinsically

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22 That Northern ‘civilizers’ made a connection between their presence in the South and much broader civilizing missions is a point noted, almost without recognition, by Swint (1967), who remarked that in a postwar context, it was said that “(t)he missionary need not go to Africa” (36). This connection, however, between a religious and educational mission became contentious as time went on, ultimately dividing Northern ‘civilizers.’

23 Although race was not the only factor informing travelers’ constructions of ‘self’ and ‘other,’ as the articulation of gender, race, class, and other factors ultimately produced the images put forth, Stoler (1995) has noted that from a nineteenth-century perspective, race was “the organizing grammar of an imperial order in which modernity, the civilizing mission and the “measure of man” were formed” (27). Since Northern travelers were complicit with each of the processes outlined by Stoler - the emergence of a sense of modernity, a civilizing mission, and the process of ‘measuring man’ - we can position understandings and constructions of race as central to, although not the center of, perceptions of self and other for travelers. See also Dyer 1997, Stocking 1994, and Young 1995 for similar claims.

24 See Young (1995) for a thorough discussion of the intellectual history of ‘race’ as a concept.

25 Throughout this thesis, I have used the term ‘African American’ sparingly, since in a nineteenth-century sensibility, it carried little, if any, significance. I thank Derek Gregory for this point.
connected to liberal abolitionist discourse. As Elizabeth Hyde Botume, a Northern teacher who ventured to Beaufort, South Carolina, noted in 1893,

People at the North knew but little of slavery as it existed in the United States seventy-five or even fifty years ago. It was a *terra incognita* to them. When brought face to face with the slaves, as they were during the war, it was like the discovery of a new race. (Botume 1893, 4)

Writing specifically about the individuality of slaves, Botume references a crucial aspect of these mid-nineteenth-century travel accounts. Knowing little of slavery or of blacks at all, white Northerners, when brought *face to face* with black Southerners, did not always know how to proceed. This distinction between an abstract blackness associated with the tragedies of slavery and an embodied blackness met *face to face* emerges throughout these accounts, as travelers grappled with the realities of black uplift for both themselves and others. Able to empathize with a faceless ‘black man’ toiling under the weight of slavery, Northern travelers, for the most part, were not equipped to express the same sentiment for actual black bodies personally encountered in the South.

This division between an abstract and embodied blackness took an especially clear form in the writings of abolitionist Charles Stearns (1872), who ventured to the South to try his hand at co-operative labor management with black workers. One of tens of thousands of Northern men who streamed to an immediate postwar South to experiment with farming (Currie-McDaniel 1992), Stearns ultimately purchased a

26 Henry Swint (1967) has pointed out that a strong correlation exists between the ‘home cities’ of many Northern teachers in a postbellum South and sites along the Underground Railroad of an antebellum America (46-9).

27 Elizabeth Hyde Botume lived and worked near Beaufort, South Carolina from 1864 to 1869. Her travel account was published some years after she returned from the South. See Appendix.

28 Swint (1967) considered this distinction to be between “theoretical abolitionists” and those Northerners who had “continued contact” with Southern blacks (68-9). He interprets this division, however, as a reflection of ‘reality,’ rather than a coping strategy.

29 Charles Stearns, an avid abolitionist, purchased a farm in Georgia in 1866 to experiment with black free labor. Living on the plantation for almost six years, Stearns wrote extensively of his time in the South and of Southern race relations. See Appendix.
planted near Augusta, Georgia, where he endeavored to 'elevate the freedman.' Throughout his work, Stearns smoothed any contradiction between his overall altruistic intention in the South and his trying day-to-day experiences by tacking between two constructions of blackness, a strategy which allowed him to move freely between an anonymous 'black man' he discussed abstractly and a corporeal black body he physically encountered.  

Although believing that “the black man possesses all the natural powers that we [white Northern men] possess” (1872, 16), Stearns, early in his writings, differentiated between a racial difference and a racial hierarchy through an abstract/embodied distinction. Possessing ‘all the natural powers’ of the white man, ‘the black man,’ abstracted from both his context and any embodied presence, could follow the footsteps of his white counterpart. Stearns, like many nineteenth-century travelers and writers, positioned the ‘black race,’ at an aggregate level, not only as intellectual equal to the white race but also as part of ‘the great family of man.’

(There) black race... belongs to the great family of man, and the interests of that whole family must suffer, when the rights of any of its members are trampled under foot. (Stearns 1872, 138)

For Stearns, a racial difference, abstractly understood, did not connect to a racialized social hierarchy. Black men, with the same ‘natural powers’ and membership to the ‘great family of man,’ were not dissimilar from the white (male) race.

With this sense of equality abstract, however, Stearns paired an embodied understanding of blackness solidly grounded in a racial hierarchy.

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30 Sara Mills (1991) considers this trait of speaking abstractly about ‘the race’ to be a particularly masculine trait not often found in women’s colonial travel writings (3).

31 Cf. Freedmen’s Bureau Agent John William De Forest (1968), who felt that Southern blacks and whites were not intellectual equals and never would be (117). See also Whitelaw Reid (1866), who initially wrote of racial intellectual inequality but changed his opinion through the act of traveling across the South.
In the slave’s case, but few of his faculties were ever exercised. He was a living skeleton, a walking frame of bones and ligaments, wholly destitute of blood or flesh; a corpse without vitality enough to remind the beholder of its former life; a mass of inorganic matter, loosely thrown into one heterogeneous compound resembling a human being. (Stearns 1872, 17)

In this passage, Stearns renders slaves as bodies without souls, ‘bones and ligaments’ able to move (and thus labor) but ultimately lacking vitality or thought. Although ‘the black man’ possessed the same intellectual attributes as Stearns and others like him, ‘the slave,’ presumably also a black man, was nothing more than a ‘living skeleton.’ Throughout this description, ‘the slave’s’ active subjectivity is no where to be found. With faculties somehow ‘unexercised,’ ‘the slave’ comes to be known by what he lacks (blood or flesh, vitality, exercised faculties). Corpse-like and only ‘resembling a human being,’ slaves, for Stearns, were intellectually and socially void. In theory, ‘the black man’ possessed the same natural attributes as a white man. In practice, however, this equality ‘failed.’ The reader comes to know the slave and his body not through the slave’s own choice of exercising versus not exercising his faculties but through an unseen force, which determined that the slave’s ‘faculties’ were not to be exercised. Lacking ‘vitality enough to remind the beholder of its former life,’ the slave’s body, unable to dictate its own action or development, ceases to signal any life force, becoming little more than an empty vessel.

Just as he could not attribute humanity to an embodied slave, Stearns remained unable to attribute humanness or humanity to the post-slavery black bodies he actually encountered on his plantation. On the first day of Sunday School, Stearns remarked,

As I saw them, and gazed upon their almost idiotic faces, I said to myself, “Is it

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32Stearns is not alone in this framing. Traveler John Paterson Green (1880), when describing the horrors of slavery, repeatedly called slaves “the real bone and sinews of the land” (97, 119).

33This strategy is not strictly Northern. Lady Duffus Hardy (1883), a British traveler to the South, wrote of Southern blacks as “mere machines to be set in motion by the master hand” (52).
possible that God can have created them, as well as us?” I did not at all wonder that some persons had been disposed to deny their humanity: they looked so destitute of all intelligence. (Stearns 1872, 60)

Although ‘the black man’ was a full-fledged member of ‘the great family of man,’ the ‘almost idiotic’ black faces Stearns physically encountered were ejected from this familial framework. Looking ‘destitute of all intelligence,’ these black Southerners were far from the abstract ‘black man’ who possessed all the natural powers of the white race. “(W)ith all his exterior appendages perfect, but his mind an utter blank” (1872, 60), the black man, as encountered by Stearns, was anything but his equal.

Possibly to explain this seeming contradiction in his discussions of Southern blacks, Stearns noted early in his travel account that all he said “concerning the demerits of the freedmen,” referred only to the “effects of slavery” (1872, 17, my emphasis). In his criticisms, Stearns erased any black subjectivity, speaking only about effects that black bodies mutely expressed. In this move, he propelled an embodied black subject into some ‘other’ space separate from his own godly creation and distinct from his own humanity. While this disclaimer, in some senses, attempted to soften the blows of harsh comments made by a self-proclaimed abolitionist, in a broader sense, it feeds directly into Stearns’s methodical emptying of any black subjectivity. A ‘corpse without vitality’ prior to emancipation and ‘destitute of all intelligence’ after emancipation, black Southerners were subjectively void vessels filled only with slavery’s vile input.

If Southern blacks potentially lacked connections to a white humanity, they also

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34 This ‘arrival’ scene, common to imperial travel accounts, is not really an ‘arrival’ scene for Stearns. By this point, Stearns had already spent time with blacks on his plantation and had previously toured an antebellum South. Thus, this scene is not his first encounter with black bodies. It is, however, his first confrontation with black faces in the classroom, “that sure indication of modern civilization” (Andrews 1866, 227).

35 This strategy of displacing blame is prevalent in these mid-nineteenth-century accounts (Day 1988). See also Reid 1866, 129-30.
wanted appropriate types of knowledge. When Stearns could not ascertain from a group of blacks whether yellow cotton blossoms fell from the plant or turned red, this situation became 'proof' of the 'intellectual degradation' of the universal (and subjectively void) black man.36

This fact [of not knowing about cotton blossoms] speaks volumes in reference to the depth of the intellectual degradation of the black man. During his whole life, he had witnessed the blossoming of this cotton, and had worked among it, but had never noticed whether a cotton blossom fell upon the ground, or turned into another color. (Stearns 1872, 94)

Failure to heed the types of knowledge privileged by Stearns was indicative not of individual failures to be observant but of slavery's deprivation and degradation of black minds.37 Black subjects faded, as Stearns launched into the signs of slavery, in this case, read through 'voids' in black knowledge.38

Elizabeth Hyde Botume (1893) also understood blackness initially in abstract terms. Early in her travel account,39 she noted that "(t)he negro mind had never been cultivated; it was like an empty reservoir, waiting to be filled [by white Northern men and women]" (1893, 6). Like Stearns, Botume imagined a black subjectivity devoid of its own 'content' and awareness. Envisioning Southern blacks to be awaiting the (imperial) input of Northern civilizers prior to her arrival in the South, Botume, upon actually encountering Southern blacks on her first day in Beaufort, focused not on the empty

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36Stearns (1872) made a similar point about what he saw as black ignorance about Independence Day (101), without recognizing the irony of what he wrote.
37This scene, most likely, also exhibits strategic claims of ignorance among Southern blacks. See the edited collection of Goings and Mohl (1996) for essays that foreground such strategies of resistance.
38Paul Carter (1987), writing of the treatment of convicts in early historical narratives of Australia, notes that "(r)idicule of the convicts' ignorance went hand in hand with the appropriation of their knowledge" (315). The same can be said, to an extent, for Stearns, who obviously depended greatly on the blacks with whom he worked for knowledge of Southern farming techniques.
39Chronologically, this description fell prior to her arrival in Beaufort. Using this positioning, however, is somewhat problematic. Although sequentially positioned in the published narrative before Botume's arrival in the South, this passage was written well after Botume had been to and returned from Beaufort. This claim, of course, could be applied to any time line outlined in travel accounts compiled when the
'negro mind' waiting to be filled but on overwhelming, undifferentiated 'negro bodies' hovering everywhere.\(^{40}\)

Negroes, negroes, negroes. They hovered around like bees in a swarm.... Every doorstep, box, or barrel was covered with them.... Words fail to describe their grotesque appearance. Fortunately, they were oblivious to all this incongruity. They had not yet attained distinct personality; they were only parts of a whole; once "massa's niggers," now refugees and contrabands. (Botume 1893, 31-2)

Indescribably 'grotesque,' black bodies, not constituting individual beings, lacked distinct personalities and became nothing more than 'parts of a whole.' If the 'negro mind' awaited Northern white input, this need was effaced by Botume's inability to come to grips with ubiquitous black bodies.

This initial inability to differentiate among the black faces she encountered remained an issue for Botume through her first day of school.

When I first came in sight of this building, the piazza was crowded with children, all screaming and chattering like a flock of jays and blackbirds in a quarrel.... All these children were black as ink and as shy as wild animals. I had seen some of them before, and the brightest among them had been pointed out; but they all looked alike to me now. (Botume 1893, 41-3)

In this initial description, Botume likened the children to a flock of 'chattering' birds.\(^{41}\) 'Shy as wild animals,' the black children were a homogenous mass of undifferentiated faces. Echoing Stearns's dismay, Botume struggled to make sense of a sea of black faces in the classroom, just as she struggled at the Beaufort dock. In trying to order this chaos, she "thought of Adam's naming the animals, and wondered if he had been as much puzzled as I" (1893, 46). To bring order to what she saw, Botume recreated an Edenic travel is complete; but it merits noting, nonetheless.

\(^{40}\)Botume's description of ubiquitous black bodies is not unusual. Whitelaw Reid (1866) made a similar statement when, arriving in Norfolk, he noted "(e)verywhere were negroes - on the sidewalks - driving the wagons - in the huts that lined the road" (13). See Morin (1998) for a discussion of encounters between white women and racialized 'others.'

\(^{41}\)This association between black children (or adults) and chattering birds is fairly common. Reid, while in a black church on St. Helena Island, compared singing black children to "so many parrots" (1866, 108).
'discovery' scene. She, a maternal Adam, approached her flock of chattering black children and bestowed each child with a new name and, thus, new (true) identity. This act of naming and renaming the 'indistinguishable' black children began the process of reconciling the clash between Botume's ability to grasp an abstract (and empty) 'negro mind' and her inability to handle black bodies. Bringing order to 'parts of a whole,' she, not without difficulty, assumed a masterful role of namer and creator. Whereas Stearns kept the two conceptualizations of blackness separate and in tandem, Botume, through adopting the role of (maternal) namer, began the process of unifying the frameworks. As we shall soon see, however, she did so, in large part, through a shift in her own subject position.

In her initial visit to the children's living quarters, Botume retained the animalistic framework she initially laid out, entering and examining what seemed to her to be "the poorest and most meagre animal existence" (1893, 51). At this stage and in this place, however, Botume began to change her attitude and understanding of blackness. Although finding the dwellings fit for animals, Botume asks, "Was I repelled by these conditions?" (1893, 51), anticipating the reader's reaction to her descriptions of the cabins. To her own question, she replies, "On the contrary, my whole heart went out in pity for them" (1893, 51). Botume, "the sensitive northern teacher" (Hahn 1997, 135), 

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42 Both Pratt (1992) and Carter (1987) have stressed the importance of naming in eighteenth-century exploration of 'unknown' lands. In some senses, then, Botume's (re)naming of black children can be situated within the strategy of gaining knowledge/power through an externally imposed meaning. The children resisted, though, and gave Botume a different name every day when she attempted to call role.

43 That this change in attitude comes about in the black cabins is not incidental. If we compare Botume's reaction to the children's home to her reaction to the children's presence in the schoolhouse, the importance of spatial context becomes clear. In the schoolhouse, Botume's 'domain,' she becomes a female Adam, ordering and naming the undifferentiated wild children. When she enters their domain, however, the children become objects of pity rather than repulsion. See Duncan and Gregory (1999a) for a discussion of the spatiality of representation.

44 Magdol (1977, 107) makes an identical claim.
thus, established very early that her reactions to and interactions with the former slaves were to focus not on her revulsion at their conditions but on her attempts to understand and improve their lot.  

Mary Ames (1906), a Northern school teacher on Edisto Island off the coast of South Carolina, approached constructions of blackness in ways quite similar to Botume. Ames, like Botume, was initially overwhelmed by the black bodies she encountered, finding her first priority to be instilling the former slaves with an appreciation of cleanliness. In her first days of teaching, she wrote that a student “was nearly naked, and so filthy that I did not think I could have him near me, and advised him to go into the creek to bathe” (1906, 25). This initial revulsion at naked black bodies and dirt waned, however, as Ames spent time on Edisto Island. Within a few months, she, like Botume, visited black cabins and remained unaffected by what she saw.

From a row of cabins that we passed many of our scholars ran out to meet us; their nakedness was barely covered, but we are used to that. They asked us to go into their homes, which were miserable, dark, and dirty. (Ames 1906, 74, my emphasis)

Although still considering their habitations and nakedness notable, Ames had become ‘used to that.’ Rather than placing the onus for change entirely on black shoulders as did Stearns, she willingly acknowledged her own adjustment. This situation, in some ways, speaks to implicit efforts to be seen as a ‘good’ traveler able to adapt to new environments and contexts. On another level, however, this moment points to Ames’s, like Botume’s, disposition to concede shifts in her own understandings.

46Mary Ames traveled to Edisto Island to work as a teacher in 1865. Her journal was published in 1906 after her death in 1903. See Appendix.
47This focus on cleanliness as a sign of civilization can be situated within Reconstruction’s broader temporal context that coincided with the end of the European hygienic movement (Kopf 1997, 148).
48Her zeal to enforce cleanliness took a tragic turn, however, as this child drowned while bathing in the
Through various strategies, then, Stearns, Botume, and Ames – all of whom viewed their presence in the South as complicit with broader intranational imperial efforts – positioned black Southerners in such a way as to be appropriate objects of a Northern civilizing mission. Discursively emptying Southern blacks of any subjectivity or claims to knowledge, these travelers constructed a relatively clear racial hierarchy within a more opaque regional hierarchy. From an initial positioning of blacks as subjectively empty, however, Ames and Botume took a decidedly different approach to their interactions with black Southerners, a point to which I shall return.

Although able, at least from their own perspectives, to dominate, to some extent, the black men and women in their charge, these Northern civilizers did so fully cognizant that the color line marked quite clearly the spatial and social lines of their influence. Constricted almost entirely to black contexts, these Northerners faced what was to them an unsavory separation from a white identity, both physically and socially. In response to this ‘isolation,’ Stearns, Botume, and Ames, to varying degrees, endeavored to retain some contact with the ‘sources’ of their own (un)racialized Northern identity. Often quite alone in an all-black context, they went to great lengths to ensure their material and ideological associations with a white urban North.

**White Like Them: The Perpetuation of White Privilege/Identity**

Although these Northern travelers came to the South specifically to uplift newly freed blacks, many of their concerns about blackness and black bodies ultimately returned to their own identities and places in the South. Stearns, for example, with “no society except that of the blacks,” felt only someone who had been in a similarly trying

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creek.
situation could understand “the deficiency in one’s life thus occasioned, or the absolute solitude of our situation” (1872, 171).

We saw faces it is true, but they were not those bearing the stamp of a well-trained intellect. We heard voices, but they were not those used in tones calculated to regale the intellectual or moral ears; but those used in every variety of harsh and discordant sounds. (Stearns 1872, 171)

Black faces without ‘well-trained intellect’ and black voices without appropriate ‘tones’ may have constituted physical bodies, but they did not equal social bodies appropriate for communion with Stearns. Faces without thoughtful brains and voices without reason, black visages and voices, like the ‘walking frame of bones and ligaments’ Stearns described in his discussion of ‘the slave,’ provided physical contact but nothing more. Failing to provide Stearns with meaningful intellectual or social engagement, the blacks with whom he interacted, because of their absent subjectivity, threatened Stearns’s own connection to a white Northern identity. The ‘emptiness’ of black bodies, as Stoler (1995) suspected, ultimately fed not only into Stearns’s understanding of a racialized ‘other’ but also into Stearns’s construction of a white self. In ‘absolute solitude,’ Stearns and his family were quite alone in what he saw as a sea of black faces filled with no meaning.

Worse than Stearns’s own limited contact with white society, however, was the racial isolation of his children. Like the black universal children with whom he worked, Stearns’s own children ‘progressed’ by mimicking what they observed. Watching his children grow up in an almost all-black context, Stearns lamented that

it was not long before we found our children undergoing a rapid transformation, from white to black children. Often have I been compelled to say to my little one, “Why, Bell, all you need to make you a perfect black child, is to paint your face black.” (Stearns 1872, 173)

Whereas Stearns endeavored to push Southern blacks up a racialized social hierarchy
toward standards of whiteness, his white daughter, Bell, seemed to travel down the same trail. Needing only to paint her face black, Bell moved toward blackness through an altered internal subject. As this scene from Stearns's travel account begins to signal, conceptualizations of blackness bled into understandings of whiteness. Bell could rapidly move toward blackness simply through being surrounded by and interacting with the black children she herself began to resemble internally. Growing up in a social context that lacked situations through which she 'learned' how to be white, Bell, by her movement toward black behavior, placed in stark relief both the constructed nature of a white sensibility and the lengths to which travelers went to perpetuate that sensibility in the South (see Dyer 1988).

These efforts, in large part, were hindered by the social and spatial isolation of life on the Sea Islands and on Northern-owned interior plantations. Whether physically isolated in remote, small Sea-Island towns or socially constrained by adjacent, unfriendly white Southerners, these Northern civilizers were limited almost entirely to contact with black Southerners and the infrequent encounters with fellow white Northern men and women. Thus, their efforts to maintain ties to a white collective identity came primarily through means other than face-to-face contact. Imbuing material objects with the agency both to civilize their black charges and to reinforce their own connection to a white civilized existence, these Northern travelers, like white travelers in other imperial settings, became dependent on material, particularly domestic, goods to signal 'the civil' in themselves and others.
Signs of the Civil: Material Goods and Constructions of Whiteness

For Stearns, Botume, and Ames, the acquisition of material objects of civilization were intimately associated with both social and racial elevation of black Southerners and maintenance of their own senses of whiteness. For both these processes, however, white Northern women played a crucial role. Stearns, for instance, to describe black movement toward white material standards, turned not to his own observations but to his sister’s diary of her time spent as a schoolteacher with him. When distributing new clothes to children on his farm, she noted a change in black conceptions of self, a change she, and Stearns, attributed to the Northern material goods the black children newly possessed.

How very different they looked in their ‘North clothes!’ Oh, how they gazed at each other, and turned round and round, and admired themselves in the glass! And with what contempt they looked at the dirty rags lying on the floor—which they wished they need never use again. (Stearns 1872, 199)

Once wearing ‘North clothes,’ material traces of a white civilized society, the black children could partake in the Stearnses’ revulsion at a black lifestyle. Gazing at their new threads in the glass and looking ‘with contempt’ at their old ‘dirty rags,’ the black children were drawn into the arena of material civilization as a process. Triangulating among a civilized Ms. Stearns outfitted with appropriately civil clothes, their own newly civilized images in the glass, and the remnants of their former state lying in a pile on the floor, they were caught, momentarily, in the process of racial progress. This scene captures four ‘recurring fetishes’ Anne McClintock (1994) has noted in imperial soap advertisements: soap, white clothing, mirrors, and monkeys (or black bodies). The combination of a pile of ‘dirty rags,’ new ‘North clothes,’ a looking glass, and excited black bodies signaled the process of bringing civilization, through clean, white clothes, to
the dirty masses. Like the soap advertisements McClintock analyzes, this scene “offers an allegory of imperial ‘progress’ as spectacle” (1994, 138). Able to watch their efforts to civilize Southern blacks actually progress, Stearns, through his Northern white sister, vicariously consumed the spectacle of his (her) work.

Like Stearns, Botume and Ames both read civilization, or signs of a more civilized state, through material objects. In contrast to Stearns, who restricted himself to the role of vicarious observer, however, they participated fully in the material acquisition of civilization by Southern blacks. Endeavoring to add items like table cloths and napkins to both her own and the former slaves’ daily lives (1893, 131), Botume imbued these domestic objects with social value. Possessing them and, more importantly, possessing the knowledge to use them, was a sure sign of progress. In Botume’s own words, “needles and thread and soap and decent clothing were the best educators, and would civilize sooner than book knowledge” (1893, 236), a sentiment Ames expressed as well. Giving thread, needles, and pieces of cloth to the children, Ames ‘civilized’ through the distribution of material objects. Carriers of civilization, these goods, through black ownership and consumption, made manifest signs of black improvement. In this way, they became vectors of a white Northern civilization and enabled blacks to hop onto the trajectory toward a higher rung on the social and racial ladder, through white Northern women.

For Northern travelers, however, whiteness was both an entity and a process.\footnote{Stearns and other ‘civilizing travelers’ are not alone in making a connection between cleanliness and civilization, nor were black bodies the only Southern bodies thought to need the ‘improvement’ of soap and water. Andrews (1866) thought that if white South Carolinians “could be thoroughly washed at least once a week, a year would show a very material advance toward civilization” (222). This endeavor, according to Andrews, would bring “the material prosperity of Massachusetts.”}

\footnote{The same argument can be, and has been, made for ‘civilization.’ See Young 1995.}
Although always already bodily marked as possessors of a white privilege, they diligently endeavored to reinforce their own racial privilege, since time spent in a black imperial South jeopardized their own connection to whiteness and civility. As we saw with Stearns's daughter Bell, living in an all-black Southern context jeopardized a solidly white identity, particularly for those persons, like Bell, who had not internalized the behaviors and attitudes necessary for a white subjectivity. Bell's performance of a white identity was unconvincing and, subsequently, endangered her connection to white privilege and racial superiority. Bell, through her inability to be white in all the right ways, exposed the uneasy and ever-shifting foundation upon which Stearns, and others, built their imperial castles.

In sharp contrast to Bell's dubious whiteness, Stearns's Northern white wife, Etta, stood as the keeper and bearer of a Northern whiteness. Just as Botume and other white women brought a Northern sense of civilization to the dark masses, Etta, who moved between the North and South, brought the light of the North to Stearns through various domestic goods. As McClintock (1994) has pointed out, domestic commodities, more than "merely ... symbols of imperial progress," actually become agents of history itself, doing "the civilizing work of empire" (144). Thus, when Etta returned from an extended stay in the Northeast and brought Stearns numerous articles of food and household objects, Stearns claimed that "we began to live like 'white folks' again" (1872, 144). For

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51 See Bhabha (1986) and (1990) for a discussion of this insecurity and ambivalence in colonial contexts and texts.
52 White Northern women, themselves the bearers of civilization to both black and white bodies alike, also needed periodic 'restocking' of their own racial privilege. A white woman herself, Botume noted upon her arrival at Beaufort's wharf that "(n)ot a white woman [was] to be seen, excepting some officers' wives and a few teachers expecting friends, and who only appeared in public under good escort" (1893, 31). This lack of white interaction made her limited contact with other whites at Beaufort headquarters "golden days in our busy and anxious lives" (Botume 1893, 181-2). To Botume, "it was like another world to see the faces of white friends around us" (1893, 182).
Stearns, the consumption of Northern domestic commodities brought to him by his white Northern wife re-established his racial position of privilege. Just as the ‘North clothes’ brought to the South by Stearns’s sister ‘civilized’ black children, domestic goods brought from the North by Etta reestablished Stearns’s own civilized, white existence.

Whiteness, in this situation, came through a white woman bearing Northern material goods. Viewed by Vron Ware (1992) as guardians of the race through their reproductive capacity (38), white women, at least in this situation, ‘protected’ the white race through a different ‘carrying’ capacity. Restocking Stearns’s shelves with articles of food, Etta also restocked his connection to a Northern urbanity and, thus, a privileged whiteness. Bearing civilization southward in preserved form, Etta brought Stearns squarely back to the center of an American empire of Northern urbanity and decorum. With his racial identity under threat from an overwhelming black presence, with his masculinity challenged by belligerent and aggressive white Southerners, and his regional affiliation weakened by his virtual isolation, Stearns turned to his wife and her domestic goods to live like the ‘white folks’ up North. The articulation of commodified domesticity and a white woman symbolically re-established his ‘place’ among a Northern white collective from which he was spatially, and socially for the time being, separate.

This spatial and social isolation from most aspects of a collective racial and regional identity left these travelers seemingly vulnerable in various ways. Requiring frequent reinforcements for their own investment in whiteness, they dealt, on a daily basis, with an ever-dynamic social and political landscape. As politicians debated the status of both Southern states as a whole and abandoned Southern land claims in particular, these Northern travelers grappled with such conflicts in palpable ways. On top
of this always-shifting foundation, they attempted to come to grips with changes and alterations they themselves encountered through the very experience of being in the South. These two factors, of a changing South and of change in the South, were handled by these Northerners in ways not unrelated to their own subject positions.

*Change in/Changing the South: (Re)Constructions of Self in Reconstruction*

As we have seen, these Northern sojourners strategically positioned Southern blacks to be both in need of and amenable to Northern white input, through the effacement of black subjectivity. In addition, they, through their efforts to civilize and uplift their black subjects, sought to maintain their own racial and regional identity and privilege. Within these concurrent processes of black uplift and white maintenance, however, the seemingly steadfast subject position of the Northern imperial agents at times slipped. An engagement with these dynamic moments begins to foreground the tensions between that which these Northerners endeavored to do and the actual efforts required (and at times cloaked) for their missions to be ‘successful.’

Stearns, for example, entered the South with definite understandings of North-South and black-white distinctions. These constructions, however, cracked when placed on an actual social and material landscape. Stearns, noting these alterations, typically displaced the need to change from his own subjectivity to that of an unseen but always-addressed reader. Thus, when exasperated with what he viewed as Southern ‘shiftlessness,’ Stearns exclaimed,

*It is of no use to war with these angry elements of carelessness and stupidity, you exclaim, and you soon become metamorphosed into a careless, ease-loving Southerner.* (Stearns 1872, 82, my emphasis)

To mark frustration at his own move toward the ways of ‘careless, ease-loving’
Southerners, Stearns constructed and spoke for an unknown 'you.' 'You,' simultaneously the reader and the written, changed; Stearns, the invisible writer, retained a static self. The South may have caused others, including the reader, to become 'Southern like;' but Stearns, though frustrated and irritated at what he saw, remained ultimately unchanged.

In another passage, Stearns lamented the absence of order in Southern homes, citing "the entire and overwhelming destruction of all of his ideas of order in the house" as "the one grand and everlasting source of misery to every Yankee resident of the South" (1872, 85). Although obviously including himself in the broad-brush group of 'every Yankee resident of the South,' Stearns avoided positioning himself as the subject under change. Since 'every' Yankee resident watched the destruction of his ideas of 'order in the house,' Stearns hid his own changing subjectivity in the shadows of group transformation.

This strategy of maintaining a static self resonates with what Abdul JanMohamed (1986), in his examination of racial representations in colonialist literature, has called "imaginary" accounts (84-5). 'Imaginary,' as opposed to 'symbolic,' accounts work with fixed binaries and never allow identities, especially those of 'natives,' to move beyond rigid stereotypes. Symbolic accounts, on the other hand, while maintaining a dualistic framework, structure dichotomies malleable in various contexts. This distinction revolves around an "adamant refusal [on the part of imaginary accounts] to admit the possibility of syncretism, of a rapprochement between self and Other" (JanMohamed 1986, 92). Stearns's reluctance to acknowledge shifting positions within and between the self and other, a strategy wrapped up in nineteenth-century gender constructions, can be
situated within what Alison Blunt (1994b) has called “the gendered nature of ambivalent representation” of imperial travel writings (28). Gender, as both an aspect of identity read off the body by those persons with whom travelers interacted and a set of behaviors internalized by travelers themselves, strongly informed the dealings and expressions of change in self and others through the act of traveling (Blunt 1999).

These acts of displacement, present throughout Stearns’s account, failed in a particular moment, a moment intimately linked to the articulation of civilization, whiteness, and a Northern white woman. Etta, Stearns’s vector of Northern civility and white privilege, unexpectedly died while in Georgia. Her relatively sudden death severed Stearns’s connection to both a Northern civilization and whiteness. In this moment, his own rational place in the South, a stance he assiduously endeavored to keep intact, suddenly ‘cracked.’ Without Etta, Stearns despaired of his work and place in the South. Alone on an empty road, he exclaimed,

O God, have mercy on me, and save me from losing my reason. (Stearns 1872, 184)

We can read this act of begging not to lose his ‘reason’ in numerous ways. Joining his ‘reason’ for being in the South to the physical presence of his wife, Stearns begged not to lose his motivation, now that he had lost his wife. This reading maps neatly onto connections Ware (1992) has noted between white women and “the idea of moral strength that bound the great imperial family together” (162). With Etta gone, Stearns potentially lost his momentum, his ‘reason,’ in the sense of ultimate goal.

From a different perspective, however, the loss of his wife left Stearns quite alone

53: This highlighting of gendered differences in preservation and understanding of self contradicts Laura Day’s conclusion (1988) that “while gender sometimes played a role in influencing travel writers’ descriptions of America, any differences of viewpoint are more often than not differences of emphasis, not
in an almost exclusively black context, a context that had already pushed his young
daughter toward blackness. This isolation from whiteness and simultaneous submersion
in blackness threatened Stearns's 'reason,' his ability to preserve an intact self - a task to
which he was wholeheartedly committed. If Stearns hoped to impart his black charges
with 'reasoning' capabilities, he himself needed to be reasonable and rational, a point he
himself made indirectly in another context. In a heated discussion with white
Southerners in Apling, Georgia, Stearns remarked,

> While they raved, I tried to reason. While they cursed, I strove to pray inwardly.
> While they sought to irritate me, I endeavored to soothe their excited feelings.
> (Stearns 1872, 218)

Understanding his role as the reasoning, civilized counterpart to raving, irate Southerners,
Stearns, when faced with the loss of his 'reason,' potentially faced the loss of self as well
(see Kearns 1997).

Already having watched his daughter slip toward blackness through *internal*
changes, Stearns, now unable to 'refill' his white privilege through the physical presence
of his wife and the consumption of material goods she brought, despaired the potential
loss of his reason, a crucial internal 'base' for his connection to whiteness and white
privilege. The loss of Etta stripped Stearns of his rationality, precipitating a downward
move along the "family Tree of Man" (McClintock 1995, 39). Unable to preserve his
intellect on his own, he, if Etta could not restock his material and psychical whiteness,
faced a dire situation of isolation. Residing in a place that demanded continual
reaffirmation of his own sense of whiteness, Stearns was lost without his direct line of
communication with Northern civilization. With Etta gone, he, like his daughter Bell,

_of basic belief’ (vi)._
needed only to paint his face black.\textsuperscript{54}

Thus, for Stearns, white Northern women became what Richard Dyer (1996) has called “carriers of the values of whiteness” (172). Endowing their black charges with material objects of civilization and restocking their fellow countrymen’s racialized privilege, white Northern women, as Walters aptly put it, ‘carried civilization southward.’

This process, however, was not always smooth. If we turn to examine the ways white Northern women envisioned themselves in the South, a much more complicated picture emerges. We can raise the question, if white Northern women carried civilization southward, a civilization that placed women generally in subservient roles, how did they, as women, participate in this civilizing mission and yet maintain their own racial privilege?

‘There was no place for us…’

More so than white men, white Northern women, like Ames and Botume, walked a tenuous line in their attempts to ‘uplift’ the black race. Casting doubt on their own femininity through their involvement with black men and women and challenging their own racial privilege through virtual white isolation in remote Southern locations, these women, like white women in numerous imperial contexts,\textsuperscript{55} played roles that were precarious but yet fundamental to the overall imperial project. In contrast to many other imperial settings, however, these white Northern women palpably encountered, in

\textsuperscript{54}This type of reading seems to be what Toni Morrison (1992) called for when she noted the need for “a serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behavior of masters” (12). Although Stearns was not a ‘master’ in the typical sense, he was, in fact, a self-positioned white male figure of authority in an all-black context. Thus, his reaction to this context is connected obliquely to a ‘master’ role.

addition to gender constraints, the hard corners and jagged edges of what always was an ill-fitted imperial framing. Because of their particular placements in a postwar South, these female civilizers, when the road to Southern salvation became bumpy, were often tossed from their positions altogether.

As these women endeavored to take an active role in the racial and regional uplift of black Southerners, they had to negotiate an ever-changing political and social landscape that constantly migrated among black self-rule, Northern (white) control and returned Southern white control. Scrutinized by political leaders from both sides, required to justify their work to both their Northern benefactors and a Northern audience at large, these female civilizers staked their imperial subjectivities in a dynamic base that concurrently supported and abandoned their authority in a postwar South. This placement, however, differs little from that of Northern white men. Equally forced to grapple with drastic and rapid changes in the social and political climate, male travelers faced similar, although not identical, dilemmas. As Sara Mills (1994) has argued, men’s and women’s writings are not always different, but gender always makes a difference (see also Domosh 1991). This difference, at least in these travel accounts, is inextricably bound to the ways these white Northerners positioned themselves and their actions in reference to an ever-shifting South.

In endeavoring to bring former slaves to white standards of social and economic behavior, Northern white women at times wrote themselves out of privileged positions. As black men (and women) adopted white habits and attitudes, white Northern women’s social position became somewhat unclear. Initially occupying a position of authority

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56 This is a point that Mills leaves somewhat unclear in her 1991 book, *Discourses of Difference.*
based on their racial and regional identity, these women, like Northern men, found themselves challenged in ways subtle and direct by their black charges. For Botume, ambiguity concerning her position, however, came as much from her as from those persons with whom she interacted. Again and again, Botume wrote her inner conflict over her authority in the black community. Although complaining, for instance, that the people with whom she worked “had no possible conception of time, or the fitness of things” and “hurried to the schoolhouse at all hours… “to catch a lesson”,” she remarked that “I soon began to feel that it was I who was under supervision and kept to my duty, and not my poor neighbors” (1893, 68). Whereas Stearns, as we have seen, encountered similar resistance but displaced the need to adapt onto a faceless ‘every Yankee,’ Botume kept the struggle interior, in her own need to adapt her schedule to that of the blacks she taught. Although making efforts to standardize black behavior, Botume internalized the need to change herself as much as she attempted to change those persons she strove to civilize.

Constantly approached for advice, Botume openly doubted her role as knowledge provider. In times of trouble the contrabands always came to their teachers for help and advice. Sometimes we were much embarrassed to know what to say or do. When I saw their implicit confidence in our knowledge and sympathy, I found it very hard to tell them I could do nothing. (Botume 1893, 88)

In this passage, Botume contrasts the image the ‘contrabands’ held of her and the other teachers with the image she herself held of both her place as a source of knowledge and

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57 Within the context of poor black communities, their class standing also bolstered their position. Outside this context, they, like various other imperial men and women, retained only a weak connection to middle-class social and economic privilege.

58 Benedicte Monicat (1994) considers this moment when women no longer know what identity they must assume to be directly linked to a gendered identity (68). In making this claim, however, she fixes male
her place of authority within the black community. Despite revealing her important position in the community, she very quickly undermined that authorial placement by highlighting her inability to provide useful help. In another situation, Botume reiterated this reluctance to become a fixed knowledge source, when asked to make moral judgments. Faced with an unmarried black girl and new baby, Botume initially refused to help. When another black woman referenced Botume’s position within the community as a source of authority and knowledge, a position which Botume herself had previously noted and refuted, Botume, chagrined about her decision, changed her mind.

All day her words were in my mind. “You mus’ know best.” What did I know, that I should sit in judgment? Absolutely nothing. (Botume 1893, 127)

Unwilling to become a fixed power figure, Botume once again undermined her own authority.

Finding herself “often sorely perplexed,” Botume, like others, understood the South to be a space in which “(a)ll our preconceived ideas of propriety and the fitness of things were set at naught” (1893, 160). Speaking particularly in reference to black marriage relationships, Botume, through this story, points to the difficult place of white Northern women and men in a postwar South. Whereas Stearns, encountering similarly ‘trying’ situations, displaced any altered self to an unseen ‘every Yankee,’ Botume travelers as unable to assume multiple voices. As the earlier passage from Stearns’s travel account shows, even if they did not want to do so, male travelers could (and did) shift voices and subject positions.

This focus on ‘woman-to-woman’ interactions in a colonial context is a strategy for which Griselda Pollock (1994) has called as a way to challenge masculinist narratives. Sandra Small (1979, 393) notes this scene in her examination of Northern female teachers. She stops short, however, of including Botume’s ‘change of heart.’ This type of factual reading is representative of the general way these texts have been handled.

This scene is also indicative of a strategic signaling on the part of the black woman. Aware of Botume’s privileged racial position in the community, the woman referenced Botume’s ‘superior’ role in such a way as to cast doubt on Botume’s actual moral superiority. This type of ‘alternative’ reading, only obliquely noted in this thesis, is a much-needed approach to these and other travel accounts. Numerous scholars have adopted this strategy in other contexts. See Abrahams 1992, Hunter 1997, and Goings and Mohl’s 1996 edited collection.
internalized the acts of change experienced through the acts of travel. Walking into a situation in which she represented a clear connection to Northern (white) political power and influence to Southern blacks, Botume was limited, to some extent, by her reluctance to retain an unchanged self. The tensions between these two positions she seems unwilling to occupy simultaneously are written through her travel account. Although retaining a clear, if unspoken, racialized and regional superiority in her own mind, Botume relinquished the unmoving subject position Stearns diligently tried (but failed) to preserve.

If Botume’s ‘authority’ in the South was unraveled by her own doings, Ames’s sense of authority seemed to be undone by those persons with whom she came into contact. Although entering Edisto Island as a racially and regionally privileged woman who intended to civilize and educate darkened, dirty masses, Ames, toward the end of her stay, encountered an abruptly attenuated social position. When, in a heated meeting focused on white reappropriation of island property, Ames spoke out, Ishmael, the black community’s leader, quickly rebuked her.62

Meeting after meeting was held to reconcile them [blacks] to the changed and difficult conditions. On one occasion, when explanations only seemed to create greater antagonism, I ventured a remark, and was quickly told by Ishmael, their leader, that I had “Better go into the house and attend to study,” thus showing early in his life as freedman, that he had learned the proper sphere of woman. (Ames 1906, 121)

Basing her ‘place’ of authority in a postbellum South on her association with whiteness and Northern white privilege, Ames had little remaining when that racial authority no longer was acknowledged. Ishmael, in the public meeting, challenged the foundation

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62Black homesteading on sea-island plantations was, from the beginning, intentionally limited (Cimbala 1989, 599). Despite what black Southerners initially thought, white plantation owners began almost immediately after the war’s end to take steps to retake their properties. Through what became a policy of white restoration rather than reconstruction, these white Southerners were often successful.
upon which Ames had constructed her authority, as his own claim to power was threatened by the looming policy of white restoration.

Ames’s open acknowledgement of her effaced authority feeds into the ways she framed her entry to and exit from the South. On her sea journey from New York, Ames echoed a concern of many single women traveling during and after the Civil War, noting “(t)here was no place for us” on the ship (1906, 3). This sense of finding ‘no place’ for herself on the journey south, in some senses, acted as a common strategy of stressing travel difficulties and challenges to bolster her own authenticity and validity as an author. Having passed “the long night... on a bench with no back, surrounded by soldiers smoking, playing cards, and telling stories,” Ames became a more ‘reliable’ and weather-tested traveler.

On another level, however, this sense of having ‘no place’ signals the particularly difficult position of Northern white women’s involvement in the South’s ‘civilizing.’ Finding ‘no place’ among the men leading the abolitionist charge on an antebellum South, Northern white women, though symbolically central to the process of civilization, occupied a compromised position in the material process, a position Ames herself signaled toward the end of her account. As white Southern plantation owners returned to Edisto Island to reclaim their homes and restart their lives, Ames found herself, again, out

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63 For a more general discussion of black leadership in Reconstruction, see Lowe 1993.
64 Botume, however, positioned her experience in direct contrast to that of which Ames is representative. Noting the typical ill-treatment women received on ships, Botume stressed that she was treated extremely well (1893, 24-5).
65 Ames’s seeming helplessness in this scene stands out in her travel account. In Mary-Kingsley style, she seemed quite blasé about many other tense situations. She related that upon arriving at her new home, “sleep was impossible..., [for] we did not know what might happen in a strange land among strange people” (1906, 13). To protect herself and the other woman with whom she traveled, Ames “got out the hammer we had brought in our box and kept it in my hand all night, ready to beat out the brains of any one attacking us” (1906, 13). Despite having ‘no place’ on the ship, Ames was prepared to defend physically her ‘place’ in her new home.
of place.\textsuperscript{66}

The houses all about us were occupied by Edisto families, who had taken possession of their own.... There was no place for us, and in the last week of September, 1866, we said good-by to Edisto and our negro friends. (Ames 1906, 125, my emphasis)

Initially finding ‘no place’ on the ship filled with white soldiers and ultimately finding ‘no place’ among the Edisto homes suddenly filled with white Southerners, Ames found a place only among the former slaves she intended to uplift. In that context, gender constraints seemed overruled, at least initially, by her racial privilege: being white mattered more than being female. Even this ‘place,’ however, became constricted. Understood to be a white woman ‘out of place’ on a male-dominated ship, viewed by black men as woman ‘out of place’ in a public meeting, and ultimately seen as a non-Southern white woman ‘out of place’ on a re-appropriated Edisto Island, Ames, through the articulation of her racial, gender, and regional identity, was left placeless.\textsuperscript{67}

Up to this point in her travel experiences, Ames, in large part, could approach her work as part of a much broader imperial project to uplift suffering masses across the globe. In the end, however, she palpably reached the limits of this fragile imperial framing in the South. Caught in what was already becoming unsuccessful attempts to concretize black self-rule, Ames, like many white Northern men and women, observed her imperial domain unraveled from both above and below. As Northern philanthropist became dismayed at the Herculean task of erasing slavery’s influence and political corruption became a standard aspect of Reconstruction policies and practices, white Southerners began to slip quietly back into their roles, replacing chattel slavery with the

\textsuperscript{66}Botume also personally experienced Southern white property reclamation. She, however, moved into the town of Beaufort, South Carolina and continued to teach for several years.
economic bonds of share-cropping.

Through Ames’s account, particulars of the South’s mis-placement in an imperial framework become clear. For each of these three Northerners, the specter of white Southern control always hovered at the margins of their imperial worlds. Within the all-black contexts in which they worked, their imperial authority, though certainly challenged in ways already discussed, remained relatively clear. As time went on, however, these civilizers, particularly Ames and Botume, found their authority within these settings sorely tried. Whereas Stearns at least owned the land on which he lived and worked, Ames and Botume, like most Northern women in a postwar South, were literally at the mercy of white Southerners returning to reclaim their homes. In the end, the ‘unraveling’ of the imperial blanket thrown across the Sea Islands and interior plantations, as we have seen, came not only from within but also from without, as white Southerners returned and white Northerners retreated physically and financially.

This shift, from a South void of civilization to a South filled with white Southerners, left Ames with ‘no place’ and many others with only tenuous authority and reasons to be in the South. As I will discuss in the next chapter, this tension between the South as a tabula rasa which Northern travelers could treat as they wished and the South as a land already settled crept into almost all Northern attempts to write the South. As always, the foundations upon which travelers constructed concepts of self and ‘others’ in a postbellum South were actually foundations of sands ever shifting and constantly requiring reworking.

This chapter begins the process of exploring the tensions between a colonial or

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67 This focus on the articulated (as opposed to additive) nature of identity is often missing in what seem to be smooth narratives of women travelers and the ease with which they move between their roles in the
imperial South understood to be a conquered province and a newly emerging South controlled by white Southerners and opportunistic Northerners. Fitting neatly in places but also, as I have shown, creating a spatial and social mismatch at times, an imperial framing of the South, though contradictory in places, provides a new take on old stories. In the process, it allows us to interrogate how these travel writings were complicit with broader understanding of race, gender, and nation within what was, if ultimately ephemeral, a crucial period in American history (Rose 1964).

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metropole and the colonies. See, for instance, Domosh 1991.
Chapter 3
Denaturing the Natural:
Constructions and Representations of ‘Nature’
in a Postbellum South

In Chapter 2, I examined travel accounts which focused almost solely on a Northern civilizing mission directed at black Southerners. With relatively distinct social and spatial boundaries, these efforts, though certainly complex and even contradictory in places, were, at least from a general perspective, clearly connected to imperial missions and imperatives across the globe.\(^1\) If an imperial lens more or less worked for Northern travelers venturing to places associated with black self-rule, other areas and aspects of a postbellum South challenged that way of viewing in more direct fashions. Southern ‘nature’ was one such aspect. This chapter, continuing the strategy of approaching these travel accounts as complicit with wider discourses of Western imperialism, shifts focus to look at the various constructions and conceptualizations of ‘nature’ and landscape in a postbellum South.

A far more opaque aspect of these Northern travel writings, ‘nature,’ as both a general counterpart to ‘man’ and particular features found across the South, came to display quite clearly the tensions raised at the end of Chapter 2 between the South as an ‘empty’ frontier for Northern investment and the South as a land always already settled. As travelers wrestled with these contradicting but connected imaginative geographies of a postbellum South, they came to use the very geography of the South as a means of

\(^1\)Of course, as I discussed in the previous chapter, this imperial approach seemed convincing only when the wide sociopolitical milieu of a postwar South was elided.
handling this dilemma. When writing of ‘nature’ and things ‘natural,’ travelers spatially separated their conceptualizations of ‘nature,’ mapping different ‘natures’ in different places.

In this chapter, I explore that geography of Southern ‘nature’ found throughout postbellum Northern travel accounts. Working in three parts, the chapter first outlines the general ways travelers approached and textually represented Southern places and landscapes. From there, I turn to the complex geographies of various definitions of ‘nature’ and their connections to broader efforts to position the South such that it was amenable to Northern input and investment. Finally, the chapter ends with an examination of Florida and its framing as a ‘female frontier’ in a postbellum South.

The Nature of the South

As Annette Kolodny (1975) has argued, the struggle to establish the meaning of landscape “characterizes the writings of nineteenth-century Americans” (71). Northern travelers to a postbellum South wrestled with such representations of landscape and nature, seeking ways to come to grips with Southern lands and scenes. In the process, they grappled, not always successfully, with what were often unwieldy constructions and representations of both the lands through which they traveled and their own positions relative to those lands.

As the supposedly ‘natural’ counterpart to an industrialized North that had distanced itself from domesticated ‘nature,’ the South was understood to be closer to a ‘nature kind in her gifts.’ Known for both lush, untamed landscapes and bountiful green

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2 For a consideration of the social construction of ‘Nature’ in geography, see FitzSimmons (1989).
3 See also Kolodny 1984 for a discussion of women’s perceptions of ‘wilderness’ and ‘nature’ in the American West.
agricultural scenes, the South as a whole was envisioned to be an almost-idyllic place with abundant resources and climatic attributes. Concurrent with these scenes of abundance and luxury, however, the region was associated with the brutal and exploitative agricultural practices of a slave-based monoculture. Finding the farming habits of almost all Southerners white and black to be both unproductive and technologically outdated, most Northern travelers oscillated between praise for nature in a postbellum South and stark criticism of the use of those natural resources. In the process, Southern peoples were characterized as entirely unable to manage, or husband, the South’s lands in a properly productive manner. Southern ‘nature,’ caught in an unhappy and unproductive marriage with slothful Southerners, needed new suitors to take proper charge of its rich and fertile ground.4

While the general effort to render a postbellum South both inferior to and in need of a stronger North coursed through almost all descriptions of the South’s natural and human landscapes, the actual form that criticism took depended greatly on the places from which travelers wrote. In urban areas, ‘nature’ became the one redeeming factor in otherwise degraded cities.5 Finding fault with most Southern cities and city dwellers, Northern travelers turned to the natural features of these cities as a way of distinguishing Southern cities from their Northern counterparts and of criticizing the human features of Southern cities. In rural areas, travelers focused on ‘unharnessed’ natural resources mismanaged by Southerners. Discursively erasing traces of human interaction with these

4Woodward (1971) considers this seeming contraction between a lush and lazy South to be a “fundamental aspect of Southern distinctiveness” and typical of “Janus-faced” myths that present both an attractive and unattractive countenance (13-4). This ‘Janus-faced’ South, however, as I hope to show, took on a particular geography that made it somewhat less contradictory.

5An exception would be Atlanta, Georgia. Generally considered not to have been blessed with abundant natural gifts, Atlanta, according to most, grew because of hard work and was, therefore, highly praised by Northern travelers.
spaces, Northern travelers, like imperial travelers elsewhere (Pratt 1992), envisioned a near future when Northern men (and women) would work these wasted lands. Within ‘marginal’ Southern lands, a very different approach to ‘nature’ emerged. In sparsely populated areas such as Texas and Florida, Southern lands were presented as ‘virgin’ territory yet unwritten and unclaimed. With ever-waning Native-American populations, these areas were slipped into an imperial discourse of exploration and discovery. Viewed as ‘open’ for Northern investment, these marginal Southern lands became prime spaces through which travelers practiced their imperial gazes.6

Movement between these three framings was not always smooth, as travelers had to labor quite industriously to transition from physical place to place and conceptual framing to conceptual framing. Part of this difficulty is wrapped up with the ways these travelers actually experienced a postbellum South. Typically traveling from city to city, they spent only limited time away from urban settings. Although certainly making forays into the ‘wilds’ of Southern lands, they, with the exception of Edward S. King,7 avoided extensive interactions outside cities and towns. Nonetheless, they traveled to and through a region always already thought to be natural by nature. Thus, concepts of ‘nature,’ and the South’s relationships to those concepts, lurked throughout the lines of these writers, in spite of their general avoidance of extensive contact with Southern ‘nature.’

An important feature in these landscape descriptions is the feminization of Southern lands.8 This gendering, part of a wider discourse that sought to know and

6I thank Gerry Pratt and Derek Gregory both for helping me articulate the geography of these descriptions. 7Edward S. King, best known of all postbellum Northern travel writers in the South, toured the region in the 1870s. Initially serializing his account in *Scribner's Monthly*, King published his eight-hundred-page tome in both the United States and Britain. See Appendix. 8Cf. Gray (1986), who discusses Southern politicians’ feminization of the North (60). A feminization of landscape and ‘nature,’ as numerous scholars have shown, was neither spatially nor temporally specific to a postbellum South. See Kolodny 1975, Rose 1993, and McEwan 1994.
subsequently conquer a feminized Nature and landscape (Kolodny 1975, Rose 1993), was both anterior to and complicit with a more general effort to position a postwar South as an imperial territory ripe for Northern investment and investigation. As Carolyn Merchant (1995) has noted, "(t)he rhetoric of American settlement [in the West] is filled with language that casts nature as female object to be transformed and men as the agents of change" (145). In a postbellum South, a (not-so) new frontier, feminizing the region 'opened' it materially for (white) Northern (male) 'agents of change.'  

While Merchant's words seem to fit postbellum writings of the South, it is, as always, an imperfect match. Although treated as such by many postwar writers, a postbellum South was not really a 'frontier' in the sense of land uninhabited by white settlers and unexplored by white adventurers. Already inhabited, already settled, and already having (mis)harnessed 'nature,' the region, by the 1860s, left little discursive or material space on which Northern travelers could write their imperial travels. In addition, the region was typically excluded from nineteenth-century reverence for 'wilderness' (see Towner 1996). Scenes of Southern wilderness were written not as awe-inspiring scenes to be savored but as instances of Southern mismanagement. A postwar South, though thought to be inherently natural, did not fit the existing frameworks for viewing or describing natural scenes. An ill-fitted Southern nature, thus, made the already imperfectly imperial South even more so.  

In spite of this situation, a postbellum South was approached by most travelers, as though it were a new frontier open to Northern investigation and investment. As such, the (neither blank nor entirely open) tabula rasa of a postbellum South became a space

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9 As I will discuss, this discourse was open to female travelers as well but took a decidedly different path.  
10 An exception would be the mountains of North Carolina and Georgia. See King 1875.
through which to ponder and exploit various meanings of ‘nature.’ Travelers’ ability to participate in the (re)exploration and (re)development of Southern ‘nature,’ however, depended in large part on the ways they understood their own relationship to things and spaces thought to be ‘natural.’ As James Duncan (1990) has noted, “(d)escriptions are not mirror reflections... [and] are of necessity constructed within the limits of the language and the intellectual framework of those who describe” (12). Thus, like the conceptualizations of blackness and whiteness discussed in Chapter 2, representations of nature and landscape become meaningful not solely for what travelers said but also for the ways in which what they said connected to broader nineteenth-century frameworks.

One such broader framework within which travelers wrote was an overall feminization of places. Anterior to any description of ‘nature’ or things natural in a postbellum South, and to the very emergence of a postwar South, was a complex gendering of Southern places. Southern states and cities, throughout these travel accounts, were spoken of in explicitly feminine terms, a common practice of the time period. The deployment of this trope, however, was in no way innocent, as travelers explicitly feminized particular places associated with an imagined Southern collective identity and in very particular (and strategic) ways.

What a ‘Haughty Little’ South!: Feminization Of Southern Spaces

For Sidney Andrews (1866), South Carolina, with its “pride and beauty thereof... laid in ruins,” was a “haughty little state” that got just what it deserved from Sherman’s Federal army (111). Although Andrews did not openly acknowledge the gendering of this metaphor, doing so was not necessary. Any reader would have understood the
unspoken connection between a ‘haughty little’ South Carolina who had been defeated and a haughty little girl who had been naughty. John Trowbridge made the same connection in a different place. Comparing Virginia to a school girl, he characterized the state’s fall from grace as the inevitable outcome for a ‘proud and indolent’ little girl.

This halo about her [Virginia’s] name has been slow to fade; although, like a proud and indolent school-girl, once at the head of her class, she has been making steady progress towards the foot. (Trowbridge 1867, 224)

Virginia, a young school girl once at the head of her class, steadily slumped because of her pride and indolence. Whereas Andrews left ‘haughty little’ South Carolina in a fallen state, Trowbridge left space for Virginia’s redemption. Importantly, however, the fallen angel/girl of Virginia regained her status only when connected to Northern ideas. Rising up as a “beautiful torpid body,” Virginia, though still lazy, ultimately would become “a glory to herself and to the Union” through Northern input (Trowbridge 1867, 235). With emigration, education, and ‘progressive ideas’ presumably Northern in origin, (not-so) young Virginia would ‘rise up’ to make herself and the Union proud.

These genderings can be situated within a broader political history. South Carolina, and more specifically the city of Charleston, was the site of the Civil War’s first battle at Fort Sumter and a key Confederate symbol throughout the Civil War. Feminizing Charleston, then, “the haughty and defiant little city that inaugurated treason” (Trowbridge 1867, 512) sent a clear message concerning the South’s overall place within a nationalistic framework. A naughty and haughty little girl who began a conflict she could not manage, the South, when properly chastised by the North, had learned her

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11 As will become clear in Chapter 4, this is not surprising for Andrews, who had virtually nothing positive to say about the South. 
12 The same can be said of its inhabitants, whom Whitelaw Reid (1866) called those “haughty South Carolinians” (73).
lesson. Through this framing, the power lines are distinct. Equated with a difficult and spoiled child, South Carolina became the prodigal daughter brought back into the national family.

The feminization of Virginia as well, when placed in a broader historical context, can be viewed as more than a general trope of description. Virginia, through the mid-nineteenth century, was "the ideal to which the deep South aspired, the image from which the rest of Dixie sprang" (Hobson 1983, 63). If the South’s ‘role model’ could be rendered a stubborn, lazy school girl or torpid female body in need of Northern aid, the region, as a whole, became more manageable. In contrast to South Carolina, who was punished for her sins by a more powerful North, Virginia turned to the North for aid. While this very different treatment of the two states is certainly connected to Andrews’s and Trowbridge’s very different attitudes toward the region, it is also intrinsically related to the states’ different placements within a collective memory of the Civil War.

A feminization of Southern places worked in other ways as well. Trowbridge, for instance, made the connection between a Virginia town and a female body to highlight the vulnerability and submission of a particular city.

The town [of Charlestown] resembled to my eye some unprotected female sitting sorrowful on the wayside, in tattered and faded apparel, with unkempt tresses fallen negligently about features which might once have been attractive. (Trowbridge 1867, 70, my emphasis)

In this passage, what seems most revealing revolves around two aspects: Trowbridge’s position as detached observer and his cloaked critique of Southern leadership. From the safe distance of an adjacent train station, Charlestown, like Virginia, could be slotted into common tropes of description. Too far away to complicate his framing within the actual

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13 See also Gray 1986.
details of Charlestown’s urban and social landscapes, Trowbridge could pass an unencumbered value judgment expressed through a gendered metaphor. Additionally, characterizing Charlestown as an unprotected female immediately called into question the South’s ability to protect and provide for its ‘women,’ a point which will re-emerge in Chapter 4. Trowbridge indirectly raised the specter of unmanly Southern behavior by framing the city as a fallen woman seemingly abandoned by her unchivalrous Southern suitors.

Trowbridge himself, however, refuted any cleanly gendered regional binary. In his travel account’s concluding chapter written from New England, he compared the South to “a man recovering from a dangerous malady” (1867, 583). The South, although feminized through individual places and “drained... of its young men” (1867, 583), was gendered male in Trowbridge’s final framing, a position which seems at first incongruous with his characterizations of Virginia and Charlestown as fallen women. Trowbridge’s analogy, though, moved between a postbellum South and a physically weakened male body in need of ‘supplies’ from a healthy North. If not entirely feminine, a postbellum South was not solidly masculine either. Whether analogous to an ill man or a haughty school girl, the South was always weaker than its Northern counterpart.

As this last framing shows, the feminization of Southern spaces did not always emerge uncomplicated. Stumbling between and across states, cities, and landscapes analogous to young girls, grown women, and sick men, travelers constantly repositioned their own nominally masculine gaze and voice in opposition to ever-changing scenes. Although this movement was at times difficult, Northern travelers were generally able to describe Southern scenes in terms sufficiently clear and expressive for their Northern
readerships. To do so, they tapped into discourses of description found throughout eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel literature. Despite the generic aspect of these tropes of descriptions, a brief discussion of them will provide a general context into which to situate subsequent sections of this chapter.

**Making Southern Nature Imperial/ Making Southern Empire Natural: Strategies of Landscape Description**

As Richard Schein (1997) has noted, ‘landscape,’ as “discourse materialized,” is both a material entity and epistemological framework (663). Although Schein writes in reference to cultural landscapes, the same dual meaning can be found in postbellum descriptions of natural landscapes. Travelers approached scenes and vistas encountered through their travels in ways intimately connected to wider conceptualizations of how ‘natural’ scenes were to be framed and represented textually. Permeated, not surprisingly, with the trope of the visual, these texts, like others from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were based on the premise that what could be seen could be known (Rose 1993; Rojek and Urry 1997b). A key aspect of what Christopher Mulvey (1983) has called “the general visual syntax of Romantic sensibility” (253), the sovereignty of the ‘eye’ in views of nature and landscape, of course, feeds into wider understandings of how landscapes were to be conceived and consumed (Duncan 1990). As Denis Cosgrove (1985) has argued, within these vision-centered framings, space became the property of the external observer, who chose how and for whom the landscape was to be constructed.

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14 Various scholars (Franklin 1976, Domke 1996, Melton 1997) have noted that the readerships of these travel accounts and the magazines and periodicals through which some of them were serialized were predominantly Northern.

15 See Bredeson 1968 for an early, though quite engaged, examination of descriptions of landscape in American travel literature.
and viewed. Reordering and repositioning the scenes they observed relative to their own (invisible) placement in the landscape, travelers, as Paul Carter (1987) has pointed out in reference to early white explorers of Australia, manipulated the composition of scenes to conform to widely held notions of a postbellum South’s ‘place’ in the social and material landscape of the United States.

For some travelers, places through which they journeyed became what King (1875) called “but a succession of grand panoramic views of gorge and height” (485).

The grandeur of the sentinel mountain, standing alone at the end of the chasm; the reflections of high rocks and mighty tree-trunks in the far-away stream; the dizzy precipices which overhung the rarely frequented valley, lent a charm which carried its terror with it. (King 1875, 485)

Tapping into a discourse of the picturesque which he used throughout his travel account, King pulled out particular features to orient the reader and allow him/her to occupy the exterior ‘center’ of this framed image. In a similar move, John Paterson Green, travelling around the Carolinas in 1872, made an explicit connection between the textual construction of a landscape and the act of drawing that scene, when he described a particular view as “a scene... spread out around and before us,... such as no pen can depict or pencil sketch” (1880, 21). In this passage, Green, like King, positioned the landscape around him as a painting or sketch designed for visual pleasure and consumption, again deploying a strategy common in writings of this period.17

In the process, however, Green inadvertently signaled one of the difficulties of textually representing a scene viewed through a framework of aesthetic visual

16John Paterson Green travel in 1872 through South Carolina and North Carolina. Although Green described himself as a black native of North Carolina, Green’s account, at least according to Clark (1962), may actually have been Republican propaganda. See Appendix.
consumption. That he could not describe what he saw with either pen or brush merited mention because landscape and natural sights existed, for Green and others, to be described, to be transferred from the visual to the textual. In its failure to make this transformation successfully, this scene painted in sharp relief a problematic boundary for travel writers. Landscape vistas, framed by travelers situated firmly within a mid-nineteenth-century ‘visual syntax,’ at times were lost in the move from the aesthetic to the textual, as travelers found it “impossible to paint in words” that which they saw (King 1875, 155).

For both King and Green, then, landscape was as much about a particular way of viewing as about the view itself. Implicit in this viewing was a sense that the viewer discursively ‘owned’ that which he, in most cases, observed. Free to order and reorder the sights, both writers symbolically appropriated what they saw. King made that claim of ownership explicit near Mobile, Alabama, where he fantasized about becoming ‘master-of-all-he-surveyed.’

I could almost fancy that the coast was mine, the islands and the light-houses were mine, and that the two negro hunters, loitering by with guns on their shoulders, were my gamekeepers, come to attend me to the chase. (King 1875, 321, my emphasis)

Adopting a proprietary view as he surveyed Mobile Bay and its surrounding lands from a promenade along the shore, King placed himself physically exterior, but symbolically central, to the scenes described. In organizing visual images such that he became imaginary master of what he saw, King joined the land’s physical and racialized human features into one category of objects of which he, as master subject, could claim
ownership.\textsuperscript{18}

As will become clear later in this chapter, King was able to adopt this strategy in large part because of the articulations between his gender, race, and class.\textsuperscript{19} The power relations are striking, as King, without blinking an eye, fantasized about total mastery of what he surveyed. Indirectly referencing widely known, and historically deep, associations between an imperial gaze and discursive ownership, King had the freedom to reorder and appropriate that which he consumed visually, since, as a white, middle-class Northern man, his fantasy could, in fact, become reality (see Kolodny 1975 and Rose 1993). Southern lands, at least from the distance of an elevated prospect, seemed both materially and symbolically ‘open’ for Northern appropriation.

Consumption of the South’s landscapes, while aesthetic at one level, moved beyond a simple search for beauty and the picturesque. In virtually every case, the ‘eye’ surveying the land ultimately was looking for more than attractive views or breathtaking vistas. A postwar South possessed natural wealth, both present and potential, that, for many travelers, demanded exposure and exploitation. Like imperial travelers in other contexts (Mulvey 1983 and Pratt 1992), postbellum Northern travelers gazed with a eye in search of the economic. To make their imperial efforts work more smoothly, however, most travelers directed their eyes toward open rural areas amenable to an imperial gaze.

King (1875) made this framing crystal clear, when he remarked that the traveler, with “his commercial eye,” wondered at potential uses for mosses found in Texas trees (100). Scanning with this ‘commercial eye,’ he saw in the natural features surrounding

\textsuperscript{18}Gregory (1995) notes a similar elision between black bodies and other features of the landscape in his discussion of nineteenth-century European travelers in Egypt (49).
him future economic value. Whitelaw Reid, who traveled through the South in 1865 and 1866, also noted an ‘eye’ attuned to nature’s commercial uses. Traveling by train through Alabama, Reid (1866) wrote that little land along the tracks appeared “at all inviting to Northern eyes” (400, my emphasis). Together, Reid’s and King’s adjectives reveal the type of ‘eye’ gazing upon Southern scenes: clearly Northern and clearly commercial. That the ‘Northern eye’ saw rural Southern lands in a distinctly economic way – a point made explicit by Trowbridge, who claimed, “where Southern State pride sees prosperous settlements, the travelling Yankee discovers little more than uncultivated wastes” (1867, 143) – highlights once again the imperial lens through which Northern travelers, along with Northern investors, politicians, and officers, envisioned a postbellum South. Denigrating both local agricultural practices and, more importantly, the very ways Southerners themselves viewed their lands, ‘the travelling Yankee’ found what he sought: ‘proof’ of the need for the North (and Northerners) in the South.

Despite the shrewdness of a Northern ‘eye,’ however, some scenes simply became too much for travelers, who, unable to fathom the natural wealth of Southern lands, reached the limits of description.20 In these moments of textual paralysis frequently found in travel writings, travelers sought ways to signal their difficulties without intimating that they themselves had failed as writers. One strategy used by travelers to handle such inexpressibility was to list, rather than describe, what they observed and, thus, provide a skeleton catalogue of sorts, a maneuver which ‘domesticated’ details and gave “an order... both linguistic and more broadly

19Cheryl McEwan (1996) notes that British traveler Constance Larymore, writing of West Africa in the early twentieth century, adopted a similar strategy of discursive ownership, which McEwan attributes to her complicity in an imperial project through Larymore’s husband’s military connection.
20See also Mulvey (1983) for a discussion of a similar dilemma for travelers to Niagara Falls.
intellectual” (Franklin 1979, 27).

King, for instance, finding Texas’s La Bahia prairie too extreme, painstakingly recorded what he observed and, then, washed his hands of any failure to describe the prairie effectively.

The beauty of the famous La Bahia prairie has not been exaggerated; I saw its fertile lands where the great oaks stood up like mammoth sentinels; where the pecan-tree... spread his broad boughs; where the cotton-wood, the red cedar, and the ash shot up their noble stems; where the magnolia and the holly swore friendship; where the tangled canebrake usurped the soil, and where upon the live oak the grapevine hung lovingly encircling it with delicate leaves and daintiest tendrils. How far, too, were the carefully cultivated lands, hedged in with the Osage orange and the rose, the vineyards and the pleasant timber lines along the creeks! What beautiful retreats by the Brazos!... Tobacco, rye hops, hemp, indigo, flax, cotton, corn wheat and barley, as well as richest grapes, can be profitably grown; deer bound through the forests, wild turkeys stalk in the thickets, and grouse and quails hide in the bosquets.... One’s senses, [however], are soon dulled by *satiety*. At first it intoxicates the senses, but, as familiarity grows, it ceases to attract attention. Even absence will not restore its sweetness and subtlety. (King 1875, 136)

What began as relatively detailed clauses became simply a list of natural features that ended with King’s recourse to the satiety of experience. Exhausted by the prairie’s richness, King, like travelers in many places, claimed excessive exposure and absolved himself of the responsibility of representation. If the land, with familiarity, ceased to attract attention, King could not be expected to do so accurately. What King made indirect in his description of the La Bahia prairie, he noted explicitly in a later passage.

The beauty of the fair Southern land is but faintly shadowed in these pages. It is too intense to admit of transfer. But no visitor will ever forget the magic of the climate.... (O)ne cannot forget the attractive wildness of the great western plains, nor the tropic luxuriance of the southern shore. (King 1875, 184)

Recognizing the limits of his textual descriptions which ‘but faintly shadowed’ the beauty he actually observed, King highlighted the difficult transformation of a visual aesthetic to
a textual description with which Green grappled as well.\textsuperscript{21}

In their efforts to render Southern scenes exotic and mundane 'knowable' to a Northern urban readership, these travelers at times brought 'home' into the South. An act of "translation" (Duncan 1999, 155), this strategy of conjuring an 'elsewhere' served an important purpose: referencing well-known places provided relief against which readers could place Southern scenes.\textsuperscript{22} Comparing a distant South to a very close 'home,'\textsuperscript{23} Northern travel writers described Southern scenes through familiar images from New-England landscapes. Since most travelers scripted an inherently different and likely inferior postwar South, however, making complimentary regional comparisons was a dangerous endeavor. Allowing the South to be too similar to the North left open the possibility that quills aimed solely southward might migrate to the North (see Kolodny 1975). Thus, in invoking New-England images to describe Southern scenes, these writers were careful to point out the ways in which similarities failed.\textsuperscript{24}

Sidney Andrews, for instance, atop a hill near Milledgeville, Georgia, praised the glimmering river, woody hills, and rolling land, scenes he found to be

a luxury to eyes and heart aweary of the dull, leaden, eternal monotony of Carolina pine-swamps and Carolina pine-barrens. It was almost a New England scene. (Andrews 1866, 235)

\textsuperscript{21}That King explicitly cited the western plains of Texas and the southern shores of Florida is anything but incidental. As I will subsequently argue, these two places became key sites through which King and others scripted an imperial South. The 'intensity' of these natural sites, when coupled with the faintness of their human features, made them prime, though not unproblematic, spaces for imperial pens.

\textsuperscript{22}As John Hope Franklin (1976) points out, the reverse of this statement is true as well. Southerners traveling to the North evoked Southern scenes for comparison in their journals and diaries. See Stowe (1994) for a discussion of this strategy of comparison for American travelers abroad (92).

\textsuperscript{23}See Caesar 1995 for a discussion of the connection between 'home' and 'abroad' in American travel outside the United States. See Blunt (1994a and 1994b), however, for a more nuanced argument.

\textsuperscript{24}This strategy of summoning images of 'home,' according to Mulvey (1983), emerged in English travel accounts of the United States as well. English travelers, however, when happening upon scenes reminiscent of England, usually praised those American landscapes. Sara Mills (1991), however, notes a different trend, claiming that travelers to colonial contexts denigrated that which resembled Britain (86), in a manner similar to Northern travelers in the South.
Almost New England, Milledgeville became simultaneously familiar and different. Readers could envision a city which strongly resembled New England, with which they were familiar; at the same time, however, their sense of Northern superiority and uniqueness was secure in this comparison. Milledgeville, not quite a New-England town, would never be completely (or correctly) Northern. Later in Georgia, Andrews made a similar comparison, again conjuring a familiar Northern landscape only to note a regional difference.

Very much of Georgia reminds one of Central New York. Not that there are pretty villages and prosperous towns, nor that there are churches and schoolhouses and multiple evidences of thrift and industry and intelligence; but that Nature has been very kind in her gifts of soil and surface....(E)ven the New England farmer could easily find a home within Georgia. (Andrews 1866, 374, my emphasis)

Although evoking New York, Andrews did so in large part to note differences, rather than resemblances, between Georgia and the Northern state. Georgia, lacking prosperity, thrift, industry, and intelligence, was similar to New York only because ‘Nature’ had been ‘kind with her gifts.’

Despite Andrews’s use of ‘Nature’ to erase regional differences at least initially, ‘Nature,’ in most cases, ultimately separated rather than bridged North and South. King, in an inversion of Andrews’s ‘kind Nature,’ allowed natural features to distinguish between Southern and Northern cities that were similar in other respects.

(T)he North has swept in on such a resistless current that, so far as its artificial features are concerned, the city [of Jacksonville, Florida] has grown up according to the New England pattern, though foliage, climate, sun - all these are the antipodes of those of the North! (King 1875, 382, my emphasis)

In this passage, King mapped a human/natural binary onto regional differences as a means to explain. Although the North ‘swept in on a resistless current’ that built

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25 King (1875) also noted similarities between Georgia and New York and, like Andrews, immediately
Jacksonville’s artificial features according to a New-England pattern, the city remained the North’s ‘antipode’ because of its natural features. Southern foliage, climate, and sun ultimately kept Jacksonville from following in the North’s footsteps.

As we can begin to see in King’s discussion of Jacksonville, Southern scenes, through their textual renderings, became ways for travelers to ‘speak’ far beyond the boundaries of any straightforward landscape description. Though Jacksonville resembled New-England cities, it could never do so completely, since Southern ‘nature’ remained distinct. Textual representations of Southern ‘nature’ reinforced the region’s difference from and inequality with the North. The particular ways travelers were able to accomplish this distinction, however, depended greatly on their ability or willingness to position themselves as imperial agents within the ‘new’ South. As we saw in Chapter 2, travelers’ representations of Southern processes and places cannot be examined without a simultaneous interrogation of their own placements within their travels and the broader field of imperial travel itself. The remainder of this chapter, then, examines constructions of nature in a postbellum South in tandem with travelers’ self-placement in reference to what they saw.

**Unmapping and Remapping the South: Making Space for Northern Efforts**

Ideologically, the [implicitly male capitalist] vanguard’s task is to reinvent America as backward and neglected, to encode its noncapitalist landscapes and societies as manifestly in need of the rationalized exploitation the Europeans bring. (Pratt 1992, 152)

Mary Louise Pratt, in this passage, refers to early nineteenth-century South America and the lengths to which European explorers physically and metaphorically ensured the ‘ill fit’ of his analogy (371).
traveled to render those spaces 'in need' of European leadership and involvement. While the colonial or imperial relationship between Europe and South America was much clearer than the shaky imperial connection within the United States, the ideological approach Pratt outlines seems equally applicable to a nineteenth-century American South as it is to a nineteenth-century South America. Through various strategies, Northern travelers scripted Southern lands such that they needed 'the rationalized exploitation' Northern men and women could bring. Envisioning a defeated South to be open literally and symbolically to Northern investors/explorers, these travelers worked to translate the South's natural features, 'unappreciated' by Southerners themselves, into useful material resources. To make this translation seem both natural and effortless, Northern travelers focused their energy and pens primarily on rural Southern lands. Before resources in these spaces could be 'harnessed,' however, they, like the America of which Pratt writes, had to be discursively placed in such a manner as to make that harnessing feasible.

Associated with such efforts to harness the South were a priori attempts to empty Southern landscapes, what Pratt (1992) has called "textual apartheid" (61). Feeding directly into a desire to script a postbellum South as a land and people open for (re)discovery, (re)investment, and (re)definition, this way of viewing connects Pratt's "European improving eye" (1992, 61) with the Northern 'commercial' eye of which King and Reid wrote. Traveling through Alabama and Mississippi, states with a combined population of almost two million persons at the time, King claimed that they seemed "to an European or Northern visitor, almost uninhabited" (1875, 311).26 King followed this

26Ralph Brown (1948) notes that in South Carolina, the physical placement of roads along higher ground made the land seem thinly populated to visitors unfamiliar with the country (140), thus raising the possibility, at least in South Carolina, that in addition to being strategic, these descriptions could simply be inaccurate.
statement with a discussion of the immense tracts of native forests remaining in each state. Contrasting the absent human presence with an abundant natural presence, King scripted the two states as almost virgin territories awaiting Northern exploration. Moving the Northern visitor to occupy the same seat of authority as a European traveler, King distanced Southern lands from both an industrial, urban North and a cultured Europe. Alabama and Mississippi, ‘almost uninhabited,’ could be treated as a pseudo-\textit{tabula rasa}, since King had written them as such.

Trowbridge adopted a similar strategy but extended the South’s ‘vacancy’ temporally as well. On a train from Fredericksburg to Richmond, he mused about the empty landscape, past and present, through which he passed.\textsuperscript{28}

We passed amid the same desolate scenes which I had everywhere observed since I set foot upon the soil of Virginia..., with signs of human life so feeble and so few, that one began to wonder where the country population of the Old Dominion was to be found. All the region between Fredericksburg and Richmond seems not only almost uninhabited now, but always to have been so, at least to the eye familiar with New-England farms and village. (Trowbridge 1867, 143, my emphasis)

Passing ‘amid the same desolate scenes,’ Trowbridge rendered Virginia eternally ‘uninhabited.’\textsuperscript{29} In situating his gaze as specifically Northern, Trowbridge, like King, encouraged his readers to accept his claim. If Trowbridge, a New Engander himself, noted these attributes, any Northern reader who was solidly ‘Northern’ would find the same thing.

Where travelers could not completely empty Southern landscapes of a human presence, they could denigrate what remained. Southerners who somehow slipped

\textsuperscript{27}Jennifer Rae Greeson (1999) found a similar strategy in Crevecoeur’s early travel writings of America (217).

\textsuperscript{28}George Rose (Arthur Sketchley) (1868), a British traveler in the South, made almost identical statements about the stretch of land between Fredericksburg and Richmond (146).
through the cracks of efforts to clear Southern lands became inappropriate ‘husbands’ of the land.\textsuperscript{30} To many travelers, the South needed but “the magic wand of the capitalist waved over it” (King 1875, 488). This wand, of course, was held firmly in Northern hands, since Southern ‘nature,’ though bountifully endowed, could not uplift the South on its own. In the words of Reid, “in most places in the South, everything has stopped where nature stopped” (1866, 139).

For Northern travelers, the South’s neglected potential was the direct fault of mismanaging Southern peoples. Green, noting inefficient cultivation and farming techniques in the Carolinas, blamed farmers, who did “not seem to appreciate the value of the land... or the hidden treasures contained therein” (1880, 164). In this phrasing, Green masked a gendered view of Southern lands. Southern farmers, not appreciating their lands or the ‘hidden treasures contained therein,’ did not probe those spaces, as proper ‘husbands’ of the land should. Turning to the connection (soon to be discussed) between a feminized and secretive ‘nature,’ this statement can be read, like Trowbridge’s description of Charlestown, as a muffled critique of Southern masculinity. ‘Possessing’ extreme natural riches, Southern peoples were somehow not men enough to master a natural South.\textsuperscript{31}

Northern observers, seemingly covetous of what they saw as rich lands sorely mismanaged, longed to see Northern hands in the South. King, wondering, “Alas! who can compute the sum of the lost opportunities of the Southern States?” (1875, 344),

\textsuperscript{29} Trowbridge, in portraying an empty Virginia, is tapping into a trope of description travelers used throughout the nineteenth century (Brown 1948).

\textsuperscript{30} This strategy of blaming the locals was nothing new. Kolodny (1975) notes the same tendency in sixteenth-century descriptions of a virgin New World somehow mismanaged by its inhabitants (12-4).

\textsuperscript{31} In almost all these framings, the possibility that Southern lands were ever ‘touched’ by female hands is virtually non-existent, an ironic positioning given the high number of black female field laborers.
positioned the Northern investor as the answer to his own question. “Yankee capital and enterprise” held the key to the South’s problems and would change Southern ‘wilderness’ into “a blushing garden” (Green 1880, 91). Outlined by Merchant (1995) as the “controlling image of Enlightenment” (137), this shift from wilderness to garden was feasible in the South only through Northern effort and investment.

One way travelers were able to make this framing work involved constructing a view centered not on what actually was seen but what would be seen after Northern investors altered the landscape. Like the efforts to empty Southern lands of any a priori meaning, this strategy depended on travelers’ ability to see beyond, if they saw at all, current Southern landscapes. Reid, for instance, on a train to Newbern, North Carolina, saw not the swamps that lined the rail tracks but, instead, the ‘splendid corn land’ that ‘Yankee drainage’ would bring about.

Here and there were swamps which Yankee drainage would soon convert into splendid corn land; and it is possible that Yankee skill might make the exhausted pineries very profitable. (Reid 1866, 28)

Gazing out the train’s window, Reid observed an alternate geography focused on a Northern presence. Near Knoxville, Tennessee, he made a similar observation, contrasting a ‘lovely little’ South of the present with a ‘powerful’ South of the future.

Lovely little valleys peeped out among the hills, pretty well cultivated, and dotted with houses that show comparatively little signs of destitution within.... Some day Yankee enterprise will utilize the magnificent water power, convert the forest into gold mines, and find real gold mines in the mountain chasms. (Reid 1866, 340, my emphasis)

Implicit in this passage filled with images of changes wrought by Northern hands was the notion that white Southern land owners, if not discursively erased from the landscape

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32Pratt (1992) writes of the same strategy in nineteenth-century European writings of South Africa (61).
altogether, were incapable of ‘utilizing’ their lands to maximum potential. Left to its (or her?) own accord, the South, although ‘lovely,’ was inherently weak. With Northern input, however, the region held the potential to become powerful. Within this transformation, Southerners, and their signs in the landscape, fade from view. The houses dotting the ‘lovely little valley’ disappear, as Northern industrialization invades through Reid’s fantasy.

These efforts to open Southern lands rich in natural resources to Northern ‘input’ hit snags, however, in particular places. Although discursively approached as an imperial territory, a postbellum South was not a *tabula rasa*, no matter how much travelers endeavored to erase what they saw. While the relatively ‘empty’ rural interiors of most states seemed to be prime sites for future Northern investment, that prospect did not work in all places, particularly urban areas. In Southern cities, Northern travelers encountered scenes of commerce and activity not entirely unlike Northern urban centers. Trying to be imperial subjects in a (not) newly discovered land, Northern travelers had to grapple with unclear lines between rural and urban spaces, between human and natural features, and between past and present landscapes, all of which were filtered through broader efforts to script the South in particular ways.

To perpetuate their overall ontology of a separate (and unequal) South, Northern travelers turned to that which was one of the clearest regional distinctions: natural features. Thus, although travelers could not treat Southern cities as spaces easily open for Northern investors/settlers, they were able to use the natural features found in urban settings to call into question the ‘ugly efforts of [Southern] man.’ For the next part of this

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33 Black Southerners, although also seen to be ineffective husbands to Southern lands, were less problematic in their *presence*, as we saw in King’s fantasy, since travelers wrote within a framework that connected
chapter, I want to look at some of these complex entanglements travelers encountered in trying to describe urban places simultaneously 'natural' and 'human.'

Tangled Binaries: Natural Cities, Unnatural Settlement

The South, as the travelers described it, was a land of contrasts. Its cities were seared by the flames of war; its cities were beautiful and picturesque reminders of the gracious past; its cities were modern and throbbing with trade and industry. The rural South was a desolate land of weed-choked, eroded, worn-out fields, sagging fences, dilapidated houses, deserted plantations; it was a land of peaceful green hills and valleys whose fertile soil beckoned the immigrant, and whose forest, water, and mineral resources held out the promise of untold wealth to the businessman and industrialist who would develop them. (Harris 1967, 259-60)

The South was 'a land of contrasts.' Idyllically rural but simultaneously urban, associated with an anachronistic chivalrous past but lambasted for its backward society, richly picturesque yet abjectly poor, the South understandably made description somewhat problematic. Particularly in urban settings, travelers juggled numerous tropes through which they endeavored to come to understand Southern lands and landscapes. Generally traveling from city to city, travelers exhibited an uneasy attitude toward Southern towns. Devastated by the Civil War but supposedly beautiful in an antebellum context, these urban landscapes did not map neatly onto travelers’ efforts to conceptualize that which was human and that which was natural. Obviously 'human' by design, these cities, nonetheless, incorporated many 'natural' features in ways not found in Northern urban settings. In their movement between past and present cities and between natural and human features within cities, travelers tangled the various dualistic frameworks through which they viewed the South.

black bodies and physical labor.
Andrews, for instance, in South Carolina, distinguished between a past and present Columbia through a natural/human binary.\(^{34}\)

Columbia was doubtless once the gem of the State. What with its broad streets, beautiful shade trees, handsome lawns, extensive gardens, luxuriant shrubbery, and wealth of flowers, I can easily see that it must have been a delightful place of residence. It is now a wilderness of ruins. Its heart is but a mass of blackened chimneys and crumbling walls. (Andrews 1866, 32-3)

In this passage, Andrews presented Columbia through a temporal natural/human distinction. Past Columbia was green and lush, a place filled with 'luxuriant shrubbery and a wealth of flowers.' Present Columbia was a scene of destruction noted by damage to human features not listed in Columbia of the past. Whereas 'Yankee enterprise,' as we have seen, would transform the South from a wilderness to garden, Southerners, left on their own, allowed Columbia, the 'gem of the State,' to slide down the same path the other way, from garden to 'wilderness of ruins.'\(^{35}\)

Traveler and author Mary Abigail Dodge\(^{36}\) (1867) made a similar distinction while in Nashville, Tennessee. Noting that the "lovely groves, the old oaks, [and] the wooded hills, that made the suburbs of Nashville famous have disappeared," she described the "bare and dreary pasture, rough with earth-works, bristling with forts" that had replaced the antebellum idyllic scenes (1867, 201). For Reid (1866), 'Nature,' though attempting to cast "gracious concealments" over the war scars in Charleston, South Carolina (57-8), ultimately was unsuccessful. Nonetheless, 'Nature,' or rather the presence of things 'natural,' became a way for all three travelers both to drive home the

\(^{34}\)This temporal distinction emerged in discussions of battlefields as well. Trowbridge (1867, 322), Reid (1866, 311), and Dodge (1867, 324) distinguished between present sounds (birds chirping, sounds of thrift and industry) and past sounds (whizzing bullets) on various battlefields, thus defining a natural/human dichotomy through a present/past distinction.

\(^{35}\)See Hobson (1985), who explained, "the slothful, irreligious, and dissolute Southern colonies began as a Southern Eden – a garden which, because improperly tended, proved to be more curse than blessing" (383).
devastation of the Civil War and the openness of Southern cities to Northern efforts. Through their involvement with the Civil War, these cities were stripped of their natural features, their defining characteristics, and, thus, opened for Northern (re)definition.

Toward the end of his travel account, Andrews, with his usual flair for sarcasm, made this nature/human division crystal clear. In an extended passage, he ontologically split Newnan, Georgia into a natural city he found beautiful and a manmade city he found unacceptable. Removing any temporal or spatial separation of ‘nature’ and ‘human,’ Andrews put the two forces together to place in stark relief an undeserving South.

As I looked up the street of Newnan..., it seemed a charming place, - a gentle slope toward the east, three or four white stores, the corner of the courthouse with its surroundings of luxuriant China trees, the hotel with its broad and high piazzas, a wealth of trees and shrubbery everywhere, on all sides handsome cottage houses embowered in greenness and rose blossoms, to the right and left numberless oaks with their crimson and golden frost-touched leaves, and then in the dim background the dreamy and uncertain outline of wooded hills with their blue beauty shimmering in the low sun of a glorious Indian summer afternoon!

Yet Newnan is just like every other Southern town, - streets full of mud-holes and wallowing swine, fences in every stage of tumble-down ruin, sidewalks in every condition of break-neck disorder, yards full of sticks and stone and bits of every conceivable rubbish, - everywhere a grand carnival of sloth and unthrift and untidiness and slovenliness, - everywhere that apathy of shiftlessness so pitiful to the soul of a New-Englander!

'T isn't Nature's fault. She is infinitely more bountiful than under our Northern skies. Wild-flowers beautifying every grove and creek-side, and roses and half a dozen strange blossoms tempting into every garden, - and snow on our Massachusetts hillsides! (Andrews 1866, 331-2)

Within the paragraphs of this passage emerge three themes central to understandings and descriptions of Southern landscapes. Newnan, seen through its natural attributes, 'seemed a charming place.' The city's natural features, however, hid its 'true' features, which Andrews recounted in the second paragraph. 'Like every other Southern town,' Newnan, through its human features, was actually 'a grand carnival of sloth and unthrift.

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36 Mary Abigail Dodge, writing under the pseudonym Gail Hamilton, was a well-known author and journalist. She traveled through the South as part of wider American travels in 1867. See Appendix.
37 Andrews made a similar distinction in Albany, Georgia (1866, 288-9).
and untidiness and slovenliness.' Despite Nature's active efforts to cover the scars and
defaults, both past and present, in Southern lands, 'she' could only do so much. Ultimately,
as we have seen time and again, 'Nature' alone could not 'fix' the South.

Although positioning 'nature' in different ways, these travelers all scripted a
nature active and distinct from human activities and structures. 'Nature,' whether in the
city or the woods, whether in the past or present, was a positive force in a Southern
landscape filled with 'men making cities ugly.' In the words of Dodge,

> Man has indeed marked the earth with ruin. Devastation and desolation are his
> contribution to the scene whereto Nature has brought her rare beauty, her best
> uses, her fertility and her sublimity. (Dodge 1867, 207)

Explicitly gendering this confrontation, Dodge minced no words in contrasting a
blameless Nature, who 'brought her rare beauty,' and a shameful 'man,' who 'marked the
earth with ruin.' As this passage shows, Dodge, a Northern white woman touring a
postwar South, participated fully in the feminization of 'Nature.'

Although this trope of
description was available for men and women, the particular ways travelers presented
'nature,' however, was informed by internalized gender roles. As Sara Mills (1994) has
pointed out, "gender shapes the parameters of the possible textual structures within which
writers construct their work" (30). In an imperial context, then, knowledges produced
were "profoundly gendered, not only in terms of the way that they [travel accounts] were
written but also in the way that they were judged" (Mills 1994, 29-30). For the remainder
of this chapter, I want to examine both aspects of this process – a gendered production of
knowledge and gendered reception of that production – through two particular travel
accounts which focus on descriptions of 'marginal' Southern lands. In these spaces,

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38 This participation stands in direct contrast to that of which Kolodny (1984) writes in reference to English-
speaking white women's experiences with Western American landscapes.
travelers textually presented an explicitly feminized and sexualized Southern ‘nature.’ The particularities of these presentations of Southern ‘nature,’ however, place in sharp relief both the gendered production and reception of knowledge within these travel accounts.

**Deflowering the South at Its Margins: Tropical Florida and Northern Travel Writers**

Since most Northern travelers, as I discussed earlier, went from Southern town to Southern town, with an occasional jaunt to plantations and other sites of agricultural production, descriptions of ‘nature’ and things natural typically concerned either human manipulation/mismanagement of natural resources or scenes of desolate Southern landscapes. Within Southern cities, as we saw through Andrews’s account, ‘nature’ became a way to distinguish Southern cities and to criticize them in their failure to meet the high standards set by Southern ‘nature.’ At the margins of the South, however, travelers wrote of ‘nature’ with greater freedom. In places, such as Florida and Texas, that seemed to have the sparsely populated and naturally abundant landscapes amenable to an imperial gaze, travelers shifted drastically both the voice and view through which they represented ‘nature’ in the South. Still ‘frontiers’ in at least some senses of the word, these areas, like the Sea Islands and Northern-owned plantations, became sites at which Northern travelers exercised their new imperial personas with less interference from Southern peoples or settlement.

Edward S. King was one such traveler well practiced in using his imperial pen. Traveling extensively across a postbellum South with his artist companion J. Wells Champney, King spent extended periods in both Florida and Texas in the 1870s. Well
schooled in the arts of travel writing, King moved smoothly from place to place through his physical movement and his textual renderings of his travels. By far the most widely read travel account of this period (Meinig 1998), King’s *The Great South* (1875) clearly connects descriptions of these marginal Southern lands to broader imperial projects and gazes around the globe. To King (1875), Florida “ha[d] the charm of wildness, of mystery; it [wa]s untamed; civilization ha[d] not stained it” (379). Describing scenes of “nature run riot” (1875, 384), King, through his travels in Florida, scripted an explicitly feminized and sexualized landscape.

King, traipsing around the Ocklawaha River in Florida, wrote explicitly of a Northern element that demanded full access to Southern lands.

> The tales of floating islands, of the grandeur and almost frightful calm of the mighty swamps - of the curious colonies of birds and animals - the superb lakes, and the lucent waters, had thrilled many a brain; but only a few had penetrated these watery, sylvan retreats until the prying Northern element demanded to be shown all. (King 1875, 409, my emphasis)

Watery retreats ‘penetrated’ by only a few, these mysterious spaces filled with exotic images attracted the attention of the ‘prying Northern element.’ Subtly gendered, this passage danced around the assumed femininity of nature and masculinity of the ‘prying Northern element.’ Through a sexualized metaphor of penetration, the (masculine) Northern force demanded the unveiling and opening up of ‘almost frightful’ (feminized) retreats, thus exposing and exploiting the riches which ‘had thrilled many a [Northern, white, male] brain.’ King, while in Texas, indirectly signaled the same connection between access to a feminized material land and acquisition of knowledge, noting that “(o)ne longs to leave the railroad, and plunge into the inviting recesses which he imagines must lie within reach” (King 1875, 123, my emphasis). Desiring ‘to course at free will’ over these marginal lands, King became the imperial white explorer. He could
treat these places as he chose, since the always-difficult problem of previous settlement and definition was all but absent in these areas.

This positioning certainly signaled a shift in approach to nature. Whereas ‘nature’ in cities was to be praised and ‘nature’ within the rural South was to be harnessed, ‘nature’ in these marginal lands was to be ravished. In these writings of sexualized and feminized Southern lands, ‘nature’ held some secret to be divulged by a probing Northern hand or gaze. The longings of travelers like King to penetrate the dark recesses of the Ocklawaha River in Florida or the ‘aching’ of white citizens to ‘course at free will’ over Native-American territories in Texas were based on widely circulating images of a cloistered ‘nature’ to be explored and exploited by white men. Associated with a female body, ‘nature,’ in this framing, awaited a masculine hand to ‘unveil’ her hidden treasures.

This association between a feminized and secretive ‘nature’ was made quite clear by travel writer Sylvia Sunshine\(^{39}\) in her writings along the Ocklawaha River in Florida.

> The swaying of this pendant growth [along the banks] appears like the movements of magic, preparing a revelation from the secret abodes of wood-nymphs, or a debut from the weird form of some dark-eyed Indian maid. (Sunshine 1880, 55, my emphasis)

For Sunshine the natural scenes along the riverbank awaited the debut of nature’s mysteries through the exoticized and gendered bodies of wood-nymphs and dark-eyed Indian maids. Importantly, however, whereas King positioned a ‘prying Northern element’ that demanded knowledge of the Ocklawaha’s watery retreats, Sunshine, in the same place, scripted an active ‘nature’ that prepared to reveal itself. In sharp contrast to King’s renderings of a passive natural landscape, Sunshine’s construction of nature’s unveiling is informed by choice. Nature, for her, ‘debuts’ of its own accord.
In this scene, Sunshine’s somewhat different relationship to ‘nature’ becomes clear. If we follow Susan Eacker’s argument that postwar Florida was a “frontier, untamed by civilization and thus a space where gender conventions had yet to be fully inscribed” (1998, 496), we can examine Sunshine’s account as both challenging accepted genderings within travel writing and constituting very different subject positions for female travelers. This difference, however, in the production of knowledge must be paired with a discussion of a gendered reception of knowledge, an element missing from Eacker’s analysis. Thus, in examining Sunshine’s 1880 travel account, *Petals Plucked from a Sunny Clime*, I want to focus on Sunshine’s representation of ‘nature’ and self through her writing and on her travel account’s (dis)placement within the historical record.

*Petals Plucked Because They Chose to Be*

Anonymity seems to have been almost a fetish with Abbie M. Brooks, alias Silvia Sunshine.... So complete is the mystery of her background and the incidents of her life, that Richard A. Martin, who has written the introduction to this facsimile edition, after much diligent research was able to find almost nothing at all about Abbie M. Brooks.

Samuel Proctor, in Preface to *Petals Plucked from a Sunny Clime*

Some time in the 1870s, Abbie M. Brooks, writing as Sylvia Sunshine, traveled throughout Florida and Cuba as a “self-proclaimed health seeker” (Eacker 1998, 499). Although considered to be “a pioneer of notable achievement in the field of Florida historiography” (Martin 1976, xiii), Sunshine penned a postbellum travel account that has fallen into almost complete obscurity. In print for only two editions, *Petals Plucked from a Sunny Clime* (1880) disappeared from the laps of a mid-nineteenth-century readership.

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39Sylvia Sunshine, the pseudonym of Abbie M. Brooks, traveled through Florida and Cuba in the 1870s.
and the desks of subsequent historians. In spite this scholarly (and popular) invisibility, however, Sunshine wrote a travel account historically and descriptively rich. Fascinated by Florida past and present, she went to great lengths, as a travel writer and historian, to uncover the state’s elusive history, particularly that involving Native Americans. Eventually traveling to Spain to translate original historical documents concerning Florida’s history, Sunshine published *The Unwritten History of St. Augustine* some time around 1900 (Martin 1976). Although endeavoring to reveal the mysteries of Florida’s past, Sunshine diligently cloaked her own identity. The few scholars who have examined this text have been unable to track down any information about either the pseudonym Sylvia Sunshine or Abbie M. Brooks. Aside from *The Unwritten History* and the travel account under discussion here, she left precious few traces.

Sunshine, a zealous booster of Florida’s natural beauty and resources, clearly envisioned a gendered landscape. Somewhat secretive, the ‘distant landscape’ gained its beauty and charm from being mysterious. Writing along the upper St. Johns River, she noted,

> It is now February, and a soft, blue mist frequently fringes the distant landscape, diffusing itself through the atmosphere... when the sky and water appear to blend in one grand archway, *like a half-veiled beauty whose charms are then most lovely*. (Sunshine 1880, 122, my emphasis)

In this passage, landscape is simultaneously knowable and unknowable. ‘Charming’ because ‘half veiled,’ the landscape seems ‘most lovely’ when it cannot be accessed

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See Appendix.

40 Thomas D. Clark, in his 1962 bibliography of postbellum Southern travels, considered her historical work to be “little more than a superficial text” (25-6).

41 Ruth Currie-McDaniel (1992) makes this claims for all travel accounts penned by women.

42 One exception is Sunshine’s travel diary, which, unfortunately, did not arrive in time to be included in this thesis.
completely, a point Sunshine made even more explicit while in Mantanzas, Cuba. Nature had veiled her face, like the Cuban beauties, with a tissue so transparent that, instead of concealing her charms, they were only increased. (Sunshine 1880, 415)

Nature, blatantly feminine, increased her ‘charms’ through an ineffective veil. Of course, the unspoken in both framings seems to be that beauty comes not entirely from the veil but also from the implied unveiling, from the mystery cloaked incompletely behind the veil. That unveiling, however, is accomplished in a manner distinctly different from that presented by most other travelers.

Not willing to ‘unveil’ a feminized landscape with her own gaze or pen, Sunshine, instead, imbued Nature itself with agency to come forth. Nature poured forth her beauties in solitude, and from the dark recesses of the primitive forest-wilderness were echoed and reechoed the war-whoop of the Indian, the howl of the jaguar, the scream of the catamount, and the threatening growl of old bruin. (Sunshine 1880, 298, my emphasis)

In noting the ‘dark recesses’ of the ‘primitive forest-wilderness,’ Sunshine was complicit with widely held associations between dark, unknown recesses and exoticized scenes. Importantly, however, she did not position herself as possessor of these lands, as one who exposed or unveiled Nature’s beauty. Rather, Sunshine gave ‘Nature’ the ability to ‘pour forth in solitude,’ thus ‘unveiling’ without an active (male) hand to move the veil. In a discussion of Tampa’s history, Sunshine made this connection between Southern lands and an active ability to determine how and when they were ‘revealed’ crystal clear.

The geography of the country [around Tampa] fought against those who tried to penetrate its recesses - passing through morasses below sea-level was

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43 Mantanzas, obviously, is not in the American South. Sunshine and other travelers, however, incorporated a visit to Cuba into a Southern tour. Thus, I am including her visit to Cuba in my discussion.

44 This approach to ‘nature’ has less to do with Sunshine’s regional affiliation and more, I would argue, with internalized gendered subjectivities. Lady Duffus Hardy (1883), a British traveler in the South in the 1880s, for instance, scripted Florida lands in a manner quite similar to Sunshine’s depiction, writing “(w)e feel we are on the threshold of a tropical land, and wait eagerly for its wonder to unfold itself” (125).
accompanied with greater difficulties than they had imagined before trying the experiment. (Sunshine 1880, 286)

Against those early, presumably white male explorers, Sunshine positioned a ‘geography’ actively challenging any efforts to ‘penetrate its recesses.’ Although writing within a nineteenth-century sensibility that connected a supple, open female body and landscape, Sunshine strongly, and directly, critiqued that framing through an inversion of agency. Early explorers were rendered impotent through the active resistance of Tampa’s natural geography.

This scripting of an active geography becomes even more distinct, if we compare Sunshine’s writings to Green’s description of a ‘resistant’ nature in the Great Dismal Swamp of the Carolinas.

(N)o man has yet fathomed all the mysteries of its dark and forbidding fastnesses, which are said to be the haunts of all that is vile and hurtful either of beasts, birds, reptiles, or even humanity, peculiar to that part of the South. Within its recesses the wild boar and black bear fraternize with each other; the moccasin and the poisonous rattlesnake intertwine in deadly embrace; while the highway robber and libertine, secure within it haunts, hold high carnival together. (Green 1880, 67, my emphasis)

‘Unfathomed’ by man, the Swamp retained ‘its dark and forbidding fastnesses.’ Not yet penetrated by ‘man,’ it was a container for ‘all that is vile and hurtful’ to animals and human alike. As Gillian Rose (1993) has noted, landscape, when unknown, can be “not the welcoming topography of nurturing mother but terrifying maternal swamps, mountains, seas, inhabited by sphinxes and gorgons” (106). The unpenetrated Swamp was a space of ‘unnatural’ sexual encounters, of fraternizing bears and boars and poisonous snakes in ‘deadly embraces.’ Whereas Sunshine gave Florida’s countryside, through its geography, the agency to resist penetration by explorers, Green made the

45That Green, a black man, scripted the Great Dismal Swamp as an almost-deviant space is interesting, since, as he himself noted, the swamp was a space of potential liberation for runaway slaves.
Carolina swamps somehow deviant and 'unnatural' because not penetrated. Unexplored and unknown by 'man,' the swamp became 'the haunt of all that is vile.' Without the full access demanded by a Northern imperial gaze, the swamp, by default, was dangerous. That 'nature' could 'pour forth her beauties in solitude' was not even a possibility for Green, or most other travelers, since 'nature,' for them, existed primarily to be explored and exploited.

Sunshine, throughout her travel account, connected a 'veiled' mystery to much more than feminized lands. Her deployment of a veil metaphor speaks as much to Sunshine's own production of knowledge and self as to her construction of 'nature.' When discussing Native-American burial grounds in Florida, for example, she claimed,

> We may continue to question, but the locked secrets of by-gone deeds will be borne on no zephyr, however soft, to gratify the longings of those who try to lift the misty veil of obscurity. (Sunshine 1880, 107)

In this passage, Sunshine deployed a 'misty veil of obscurity' to hinder those persons actively seeking the 'locked secrets' of the past. Like the explorers whose efforts were spoiled by Tampa's resistant geography, those 'who try to lift the veil' encountered a recalcitrant history unwilling to gratify any longings. On the same topic, she later noted that

> (H)owever great the effort made by those who have desired to penetrate their unyielding secrets, the key to open these hidden mysteries has never been found. (Sunshine 1880, 120)

Again making the connection between an active knowledge seeker and 'unyielding secrets,' Sunshine again critiqued masculinist assumptions of free access to nature's and history's secrets, an assumption upon which travelers like King based their own positions as travelers.
While in St. Augustine, a city with whose history she was extremely familiar, Sunshine employed the metaphor of the veil to indicate her own encounter with a reluctant history.

We feel as though, in trying to describe this place, we were hovering on the brink of uncertainty, and drifting along its shores, not knowing where to land, that we might find the stand-point to commence our task. It is here we realize a kind of traditional flickering between the forgotten and neglected past, shrouded in awful obscurity, with an intervening veil of myth and mystery... (Sunshine 1880, 159-60)

Noting the ‘intervening veil of myth and mystery,’ Sunshine openly acknowledged the difficulty of representing with complete accuracy that which she saw. Like the white Northern women discussed in Chapter 2, Sunshine claimed ownership of her difficulty without seeking an external source to blame. Whereas King and others tapped into various strategies through which to signal their inability to describe effectively without jeopardizing their own authority as travel writers, Sunshine wrote of, rather than around, this situation.

This analogy of an ‘intervening veil’ around Florida’s lands and history also feeds into her efforts to mask her own identity throughout her travel account. Unlike most travel writers, who went to great lengths to validate and verify their positions as trustworthy travelers, Sunshine seems to have gone to great lengths to avoid ‘proving’ her place among travelers. This last point brings Sunshine’s travel account full circle. Unwilling to render ‘nature’ a passive vessel awaiting ‘penetration,’ Sunshine concurrently seemed unwilling to expose herself personally for scholarly scrutiny and penetration. Highly critical of those travelers who claimed perfect knowledge through their writings and travels, Sunshine openly acknowledged an inability to know or own ‘nature,’ Florida’s history, and even herself completely. Playfully cloaking her own
identity throughout her travel account, Sunshine and her work subsequently have become quite invisible in the historical record. In failing to conform to what were accepted ways to script both 'nature' and an authorial position as a travel writer, Sunshine has been pushed beyond the 'veil of obscurity' she herself deployed.

In sum, Florida held out the possibility of being a female frontier – a borderland separating the staid gender conventions of the North from a New South that permitted the reconstruction of new female identity. (Eacker 1998, 503)

This conclusion, based primarily on Eacker's reading of Harriet Beecher Stowe's postwar accounts of her Florida home, seems, on one level, applicable to Sunshine's writings. Treating Floridian landscapes of the past and present in a manner distinctly different from their handlings by most Northern male travel writers of this era, Sunshine did, in fact, use these images to construct what Eacker views as an "alternate gendered space" (1998, 511). Against that claim, however, we must place the gendered reception of knowledge discussed by Sara Mills. Florida may have been a 'frontier of freedom' through which Sunshine challenged accepted gender roles and gendered ways of producing knowledge; but, as we have seen, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century invisibility of both her writings and her very identity somewhat temper Florida's 'freedom frontier.'

**Conclusion: De-Naturing Southern Natures**

As Sara Mills (1996) has pointed out, examining texts that do not 'fit,' texts that do not reproduce dominant norms, can open "the possibility for beginning to articulate a multiplicity of spatial frameworks" (128). Evident throughout this chapter, Southern 'nature,' in all its various forms, was articulated through such a multiplicity of spatial
frameworks. Writing a postbellum South through movement between and among very different places, travelers created a geography of 'nature' through their very travels. In urban centers, rural areas, and marginal Southern frontiers, travelers constructed different meanings for the generic rubric 'nature.' Within those very distinct deployments of 'nature,' however, were buried important assumptions about connections between what was seen, how travelers saw, and who travelers were. These connections, seen clearest through Sunshine's travel account, were present in all postbellum accounts. Beginning to make those connections explicit highlights the constructed nature of Southern 'nature' and starts the process of de-naturing 'the natural' in the South.

That 'nature' in a postbellum South cannot be conceptualized through a single framework or within neatly demarcated geographical boundaries highlights once again a postbellum South's complex relationship to discourses of Western imperialism. As we saw in Chapter 2's discussion of discourses of civilization in a postwar South, in particular places, a Northern imperial gaze seemed to 'work' with relative ease. If Southern cities had only an indirect connection to 'nature' as it was typically understood in nineteenth-century imperial contexts, rural areas in the South came somewhat closer to the images and scenes of empty lands for which Northern travelers seemed to be looking. In those areas at the social and spatial periphery of a postwar South, however, 'nature' aligned quite closely with the imaginative geographies built on writings of other global imperial contexts. The tropics of Florida and the wilds of Texas provided travelers with 'open' spaces in which to write their imperial personas. As we saw through Sunshine's account, though, the seeming 'fit' of Florida's land into an imperial discourse of virgin lands and feminized spaces depended on an unspoken masculine subject position which
Sunshine openly refuted. Her doing so, however, compromised her place among other Northern travel writers of this era, highlighting once again the intricate connection between a gendered production of knowledge and a gendered reception of that knowledge.
As we have seen through Chapters 2 and 3, a postwar South had an uneasy but undoubtedly imperial relationship to a postwar North. Where Northern travelers were discursively able to erase or elide the presence of white Southerners, an imperial gaze was directed relatively uninhibited onto Southern scenes. This erasure, however, as we saw especially in Chapter 2, was always incomplete, as white Southerners constantly intruded on the imperial dreams of these travelers. As we shall see in this chapter, that intrusion was especially unpleasant for Northern travelers, when associated with one particular group of Southern whites: the rural poor.

(The South seems to be the myth that both most consciously asserts whiteness and most devastatingly undermines it... (Dyer 1997, 36)

This passage from the opening chapter of Richard Dyer’s book, *White*, follows a discussion of cinematic representations of whiteness in the American West and American South. Dyer, contrasting the representations of these two regions through the medium of film, notes that the former is typically associated with a ‘pure’ whiteness while the latter is often connected to dubious whiteness. Looking particularly at the place of white women in the South, Dyer notes the paradoxical relationship of the region to constructions and representations of whiteness, a relationship he attributes to its intimate association with the economic and sexual reproduction of slavery as both a system of labor and a group of people. The paradoxical ‘myth’ of whiteness in the South can also be elaborated, however, in reference to representations of white rural *poverty*. An
element missing from Dyer’s consideration of whiteness in an American South revolves around this class distinction. Implicitly associating all white Southerners with elite white Southerners, Dyer erases an entire group of white Southerners, who, though economically weak, actually outnumbered the upper-class whites whom Dyer allows to stand for the entire white South.

Moving from this premise that the South has a paradoxical relationship to constructions of whiteness, I want to examine how that paradox functioned for a particular group of white Southerners who were white in all the wrong ways and in the wrong places, at least according to Northern postwar travelers. To do so, I first discuss briefly the emerging literatures on ‘whiteness’ and, more specifically, ‘white trash.’ From there I turn to travel accounts to look at some of the ways Northern postwar travelers scripted white rural poverty, particularly in reference to women. After describing how travelers wrote of white rural Southern poverty, I want to outline their explanations for what they observed. These explanations lead into a subsequent discussion of strategies to place both spatial and ontological distance between travelers’ own sense of whiteness and white privilege and the problematic poor white bodies they encountered in a postbellum South. I end the chapter with a return to this idea, outlined indirectly by Dyer, of whiteness in the South as paradoxical.

**Whiteness**

In the last ten years, scholars have turned critical eyes toward whiteness. Interrogating the ways whiteness functions through its assumed invisibility, scholars have examined (non)racialized constructions and representations of whiteness particularly in
literature, labor history, and film studies. These studies have attempted to unpack crude understandings of whiteness as the unspoken center against which all other racialized bodies and groups are compared. In the majority of these studies, however, whiteness is unproblematically associated with privilege and dominance in social, political, and economic contexts. Although this connection between a white identity and participation in hegemonic discourses is certainly present in some settings, it is by no means universal. Assuming that whiteness automatically equals privilege dulls the important critique that emerges from these studies, a critique that places in stark relief the artifice required to maintain a hegemonic white privilege.

One way around this artificial connection between whiteness and privilege is to look at a group certainly thought to be white but in all the wrong ways. The existence of white poverty directly, and quite visibly, challenges the myth of universal white privilege and reveals, in no uncertain terms, that the implicit connections between color and class on the upper and lower ends of the scale are not always the case. ‘Poor white trash,’ simultaneously a stereotype and a body of persons, has become a way for scholars to address this myth of privileged whiteness.

**Poor White Trash**

“White trash” is, in many ways, the white Other. (Newitz and Wray 1997b, 168)

The presence of impoverished rural white people, a group often labeled “poor...
white trash," has become, in recent years, a ‘new’ object of examination (see, for instance, the collections of essays in Wray and Newitz 1997). Exposing both their own and others’ connections to a ‘white-trash’ identity (Dunbar 1997, Berube 1997, and Kipnis 1997), scholars have interrogated what it means to be white and poor in a world that implicitly rejects that pairing. Through literary, historical, and cultural studies in particular, ‘white trash’ has become a prime way to deconstruct a monolithic whiteness through the differences within whiteness. ‘(E)xternalized by class difference but made the same through racial difference’ (Newitz and Wray 1997b, 170), ‘white trash,’ as both a cultural phenomenon and a particular group of individuals, seems to allow engagement with racialized identities beyond a black-white binary (see Friedman 1995). In numerous contexts, then, ‘white trash’ is being used to challenge monolithic representations of whiteness that dominate academic texts.

Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray (1997a and 1997b), for instance, connect the term to contemporary debates about multiculturalism and multicultural diversity. They stress that a ‘critical multiculturalism’ should reexamine the unspoken image of ‘whiteness-as-power.’ While complicating this assumed connection between whiteness and privilege is clearly a much-needed endeavor, Newitz and Wray’s connection between ‘white trash’ and multiculturalism seems less clear. Slipping between ‘white trash’ as a stereotype and ‘white victim’ as an outcome of contemporary society, they smooth what are in reality quite complex relationships within ‘white trash’ as a group of people and between groups labeled as ‘white trash’ and wider concepts such as ‘nation’ and ‘race.’ Newitz and Wray

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3See McClintock (1995) for a discussion of this elision in Victorian Britain.
4For studies of ‘white trash’ in literature, see Paige 1997. For historical examinations of ‘white trash,’ see Ash 1991. In cultural studies, see Wray and Newitz 1997.
5Taking a very different approach, Jim Goad (1997), in his somewhat questionable Redneck Manifesto,
accomplish this, in large part, through an assumption about how ‘white trash,’ presumably as both a group identity and individuals, envisions itself. Speaking for the ways a group labeled ‘white trash’ sees itself, or does not see itself, in relation to broader categories of ‘race and ‘nation,’ they can, thus, position the group, in some senses, as they please.

Newitz and Wray are not alone in this slippage between speaking about and speaking for a ‘white-trash’ identity. Throughout the emerging literature on the subject, scholars move between discussions of ‘white trash’ as a self-imposed label, ‘white trash’ as a label imposed by authors, an ‘underclass’ label, and at times a working-class white identity. Each of these aspects of a white identity have particular facets that distinguish them from one another; and when scholars use them interchangeably, intricate interactions among and between ‘marginalized’ constructions of whiteness become smooth narratives of ‘middle-class’ whites and whiteness versus all other whites and all other constructions of whiteness. It seems to me that a more productive way of examining constructions of whiteness beyond a white-as-power framework begins with a clear understanding of which particular aspect of whiteness is under consideration.

Complicit with an amalgamation of white identities is a removal of ‘white trash,’ as both a group of persons and an object of study, from its historical context (see Bonnett 1996). Not emerging from thin air onto a group of poor whites already known to be ‘trashy,’ the term ‘white trash’ originated in labels early-nineteenth-century slaves used

described multiculturalism as “a country club that excludes white trash” (22).
6See Hartigan (1997) for a more nuanced argument.
to designate particular groups of Southern whites (Newitz and Wray 1997a, 2). From this beginning, the stereotype was strategically and consciously deployed in tandem with much broader efforts to cast the South in particular ways. Thus, any engagement with stereotypes of white rural poverty, “a destitution that the logic of racial thinking could not excuse or explain” (Hall 1998, 116), must reckon with these historical constructions. In many ways, then, ‘white trash’ has re-emerged as an object of examination, since writers have noted and written about this group at least since the early-nineteenth century and scholars themselves have studied ‘white trash’ as a phenomenon since the early-twentieth century (Ash 1991).

Despite the fact that by the mid-nineteenth century, white rural poverty in the South was certainly nothing new, Northern travelers remained fascinated, and simultaneously repulsed, by what or rather, whom they saw particularly in a rural postwar South. As traveler and author Mary Abigail Dodge put it,

I wish the train would run off the track here, - gently, just enough to give us two or three hours of waiting, - so that we could walk back along the roadside, and have a rambling talk with these people. I should like to know how life looks to them. I wonder what they think of social science, and glaciers, and reconstruction, and the origin of species, and sewing-machines, and washing powders. (Dodge 1867, 213)

Although travelers took divergent approaches to most things Southern, they came to consensus on at least one topic. Representations of white rural poverty in the South, in almost all cases, were interchangeable. Relying on similar metaphors and strategies of description, referencing one another’s writings about white poverty, and passing almost identical judgment, travelers, despite journeying at different times and with very different understandings of their ‘places’ as travel writers in a postwar South, reached agreement

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7This ‘origin’ of a white trash stereotype again points to the fact that ‘marginalized’ groups, such as black
about poor white trash. Simultaneously repulsive, disturbing, and fascinating, rural white poverty in the South became, at least on one level, a clear way for travelers to establish an unchallenged Northern (white) superiority.

This chapter works to unpack some of these descriptions and representations of white rural poverty. Attempting to move beyond presenting these (non)racialized descriptions, I want to look at why rural white poverty was so especially troubling for travelers. To do so, I keep these representations within the broader travel accounts from which they emerged.

The ‘Low-Down’ Whites

SPLINDING of legs, round of shoulders, sunken of chest, lank of body, stooping of posture, narrow of face, retreating of forehead, thin of nose, small of chin, large of mouth, - this is the native North-Carolinian as one sees him outside the cities and large towns. There is insipidity in his face, indecision in his step, and inefficiency in his whole bearing. His house has two rooms and a loft, and is meanly furnished, - one, and possibly two, beds, three or four chairs, half a dozen stools, a cheap pine table, an old spinning-wheel, a water-bucket and drinking gourd, two tin washbasins, half a dozen tin platters, a few cooking utensils, and a dozen odd pieces of crockery. Paint and whitewash and wall-paper and window-curtains are to him needless luxuries. His wife is leaner, more round-shouldered, more sunken of chest, and more pinched of face than her husband. He “chaws” and she “dips.” The children of these two are large-eyed, tow-headed urchins, alike ignorant of the decencies and the possibilities of life. In this house there is often neither book nor newspaper; and, what is infinitely worse, no longing for either. The day begins at sunrise and ends at dark; its duties are alike devoid of

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8Toni Morrison (1992) has pointed out that investigations into things ‘American’ are really incomplete without a simultaneous engagement with what she calls an “Africanism” of American literature (65). This chapter, to an extent, falls among those works she critiques. Nonetheless, I have chosen to excise constructions of particular whiteness within this chapter strategically. In Chapter 2, by comparison, I kept the two racialized constructions in tandem.

9I should note that I am discussing a particular group of poor white Southerners in the rural South. Travelers usually drew quite clear lines between what they considered ‘poor white trash’ and poor white mountain residents. This latter group was almost revered (as opposed to ridiculed) by travelers who associated mountaineers with “native purity” from years of isolation (Klotter 1980). “(A) race by themselves” (King 1875, 466), this group of Southerners, though in some ways resembling poor whites elsewhere, were poor but graceful. Because of their isolation, white mountain residents of Virginia resembled “England two centuries ago” (King 1875, 558). See also De Forest 1968.
In this extended passage, one of many in his travel account, Sidney Andrews (1866) captures a myriad of images and objects associated with white rural poverty in the South. Noting in detail the physical features of ‘the native North-Carolinian’ found outside cities and towns, Andrews goes on to describe extensively the house, the wife, the children, and the day’s labor(less) activities. In relatively few lines, Andrews managed to signal almost all the popular stereotypes associated with ‘white trash.’ Degenerate bodies possibly connected to inbreeding or other “bestial instincts” (Andrews 1866, 335), rural settings, filthy houses, a lecherous wife with a large brood of sickly children, and ultimate sloth are all images revolving around and through constructions and representations of rural white poverty. Finding no human beings “more wretched... than the ‘crackers’” (1866, 338), Andrews, throughout his travels, kept his pen and tongue razor sharp for white rural poverty.

Travelers, in addition to finding fault with the appearance of poor rural whites in the South, often criticized their habits as well. Thus, John Paterson Green (1880), traveling through the Carolinas, found “that unfortunate class of people who inhabit every portion of the South” (150) to have the “peculiar habits... of clay eating, rubbing

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10 Andrews prefaced these lines with an almost-identical passage about the North Carolina “clay-eater” (1866, 177). In this passage, however, Andrews noted the superiority of the “average negro.”

11 References to inbreeding were actually quite rare in these travel accounts. Aside from one mention by Andrews (1866, 215), most travelers refrained from making such observations explicit, a strategy presumably in deference to a mid-nineteenth-century ‘morality.’ In their descriptions of poor white Southerners, however, travelers at times left little doubt that they might be viewing the signs of incest, particularly through their representations of lecherous poor white women.

12 Andrews’s representations of white rural poverty are potentially a bit extreme. Nonetheless, his descriptions of white trash in the South were incorporated into subsequent accounts unproblematically (Reid 1866, 348-9), thus revealing the power behind his words. Although writing concurrently with...
snuff and chewing tobacco by the women” (159). Along the same lines, Andrews (1866)
found the act of chewing tobacco a sign of “barbaric life” with no “filthier and more
disgusting custom than this” (183). Edward King (1875), although finding some beauty
in white rural poverty, used their ‘barbaric habits’ to qualify his praise of ‘some lovely
creature.’ He wrote,

one even now and then sees among the degraded poor whites, who “dip snuff”
and talk the most outrageous dialect, some lovely creature, who looks as poetic
as a heathen goddess, until one hears her speak, or she pulls from her pocket a
pine stick, with an old rag saturated in snuff wrapped around it, and inserts it
between her dainty lips. (King 1875, 340)

Finding, among ‘the degraded poor whites,’ a girl ‘as poetic as a heathen goddess,’ King
could make what seems to be a complimentary statement about rural white poverty
because he followed it with a critique of a well-known habit among ‘lowly whites.’ This
strategy of qualifying any praising comment with an immediate critique of poor white
habits was a common strategy, particularly in descriptions of women. White male
travelers, noting beauty in the faces of young ‘cracker girls,’ were quick to temper their
gaze with a simultaneous critique, again revealing the co-existence of attraction and
repulsion in encounters with white rural poverty in the South.

Freedmen’s Bureau agent John William De Forest (1968), although working
primarily with black Southerners, wrote extensively of the South’s white rural poor and
their behavior. Finding many of them “ungrateful recipients,” De Forest (1968)
claimed that “(t)here surely never was a more dissatisfied, crabbed, growling,
unappeased, unconverted set of poor folks than the “low-down people”” (63-4). His

Andrews, Reid was able to quote Andrews because Andrews’s travel account was first serialized in the
Boston Advertiser.

De Forest, in later years, became a novelist. This interest is extremely evident in his travel account,
where he frequently described characteristics he found ideal for a ‘novelist.’ See Rowe 1978, Hedges
1997, and Caesar 1995 for discussions of his novels.
experiences and observations led him to believe “it... useless to encourage the low-down people to industry and forethought” (1968, 140).

Andrews, with his usual flair, topped even De Forest’s claim that the ‘low-down people’ would never be industrious. After comparing recently emancipated black Southerners and poor white Southerners, Andrews noted that

Time and effort will lead the negro up to intelligent manhood; but I almost doubt if they will be able to lead this “white trash” even up to respectability. (Andrews 1866, 334-5)

Finding the “real question at issue in the South” to be “What shall be done with the whites?” (1866, 224), Andrews, and other travelers, positioned these Southerners as ideal scapegoats for many complaints about the region. Lambasting what they found to be a faulty Southern work ethic especially problematic when associated with the poor, attacking poor white rural residents for living off but failing to ‘husband’ Southern lands properly, and criticizing white Southerners for being poor white Southerners, travelers, almost without fail, treated white rural poverty in the South with extreme disdain. Within that treatment, however, some poor whites fell beneath an even harsher gaze. As in many other instances, this distinction within representations of rural white poverty was anything but arbitrary. Drawing a line between repulsive poverty and even more repulsive poverty, Northern travelers created a white-trash hierarchy clearly informed by gender.

\[14\text{Southern planters found fault with poor white Southerners less for their absent work ethic than for their illicit interactions with black Southerners. See, for instance, Trowbridge’s 1867 travel account (574). See also Lockley 2000.}\]
Even Lower-Down (White) Women

In many postbellum travel accounts, white poverty, when in the form of white women, was especially troubling. Making implicit, and at times explicit, connections between lack and lechery, Northern travelers, particularly men, went to great lengths to discuss poor white women in the South, women from whom they simultaneously went to great lengths to separate themselves. This focus on poor white women, when juxtaposed against the connection between white Northern middle-class women and civilization in the South, puts Southern poor white women at the opposite pole of the same spectrum. Connecting poor white Southern women and a seeming 'absence' of civilization, these descriptions, once again, reified the position of an inferior South. If middle-class white Northern women bore civilization southward, poor white Southern women were bearers of a degenerate Southern (anti)civilization.

Whereas Andrews spent most of his time in Southern cities and, in spite of his biting prose, claimed to focus primarily on the South's political situation, De Forest, a Freedmen's Bureau agent in South Carolina, claimed to have almost daily contact with poor white women. Actively involved with the government distribution of rations to white and black Southerners, De Forest devoted much time and ink to descriptions of poverty in a postbellum South. Thus, while Andrews made strong comments about white poverty and women whom he considered “slatternly and utterly without any idea of decency or propriety” (1866, 177), De Forest devoted even more time and space to these

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15 As Timothy Lockley (1997) has noted, the lives of persons actually described as 'poor white trash,' especially in the nineteenth century, are extremely difficult to 'tap' through any contemporary account. With little contact with 'the outside world,' few historical or legal documents, and very few family letters, their textual presence in any historical record is almost entirely second hand. See Jones (1992) for an attempt to locate that presence in reference to contact between poor white and black women in a postbellum South.
types of description than the ever-caustic Andrews. In these descriptions, De Forest
moved, not always comfortably, between almost absent signs of femininity and an
excessive feminine sexuality.

Women of the low-down breed, in the coarsest and dirtiest of homespun
clothing, and smoking pipes with reed stems and clay bowls straddled by with so
mannish a gait that one doubted whether they could be hipped after the feminine
model. (De Forest 1968, 45)

With a ‘mannish’ gaits, these women ‘straddled by’ De Forest, who doubted their
connection to ‘the feminine model,’ a wariness raised by other travelers as well. A few
pages later, however, De Forest positioned a young woman who had come with her
mother for rations as almost excessively feminine.

Next came a mother and daughter.... The daughter, fifteen years old,
with a white, freckled face and yellow hair, had but one garment, a ragged frock
of cotton homespun, unbleached, uncolored, and foul with long wearing. Not
large enough to meet in front, it was tied with twine in a loose fashion, exposing
entirely one of her breasts. This child had in her arms another child, a wretched-
looking baby..., tied up in an old rag of carpet, her own illegitimate offspring.
(De Forest 1968, 50)

With exposed breast and a ‘wretched-looking baby,’ this woman, in contrast to the
‘mannish women of the low-down breed,’ literally showed the very objects by which
women were known to be feminine. Bearing her breast to De Forest and bearing the
child she illegitimately bore, this girl fit the more typical image of female white rural
poverty in the South.

This presence of illegitimate children became a theme for De Forest. Searching
for an explanation of what he saw as female lechery, De Forest attributed this debauchery
to “so many wives without husbands and so many girls without the chance for marriage”
(1968, 137). A lack of Southern white men, according to De Forest, led “mothers to

16This framing feeds directly into what Newitz (1997) has noted as a strategy among middle-class whites to
express class difference as the “difference between civilized folks and primitive ones” (134).
connive at the illicit *liaisons* of their daughter and even to endeavor to bring about such arrangements" (1968, 138). This justification for lustful poor white women, a justification dependent on the *absence* of Southern men, is also the rationale Andrews used to describe the city of Charleston. Considering it “a city of... widowed women” (1866, 1), Andrews contrasted a past Charleston full of men with a present Charleston filled with abandoned women. In some senses, then, De Forest’s recourse to a lack of Southern white men can be read as signaling the same overall discursive feminization of a postbellum South. Southern cities and Southern poor white women alike were equally left alone by the irrational actions of their men.\(^{18}\)

Although De Forest’s descriptions of female white poverty in the South dovetail with broader strategies and tropes of description around this topic, a close reading of his text points to the constructed nature of what he had to say. Describing the physical features of Southern white women in detail, De Forest inadvertently acknowledged the intricate structuring of what he presented as unbiased prose. In a short description of a young woman, De Forest presented two pictures of the same person.

The daughter, twenty years old, had regular and delicate features, a complexion which, though sunburnt, was of a fine blonde, and long golden hair which would have been beautiful but for neglect. On the other hand, her feet were bare, her lips stained with tobacco juice, and her expression as wild as that of a mustang. (De Forest 1968, 142)

In this passage, De Forest described *initially* what seemed to be an attractive woman with ‘delicate features’ and ‘long golden hair.’ This representation, not fitting broader images and stereotypes of white rural poverty, is immediately followed, however, with more

\(^{17}\) Dodge (1867) in Tennessee, noted “female figures that have no vestige of female comeliness” (264).

\(^{18}\) Although in an entirely different context, King too deployed the plight of poor white women to speak to morals of a particular group. Writing of the attention black men lavished “upon abandoned white women,” King used this instance to highlight Louisiana’s “entire absence of the intelligent and well-to-do negroes from politics” (1875, 97).
appropriate descriptions. She, ‘on the other hand,’ had bare feet, tobacco-stained lips, and an expression like a ‘mustang’\(^\text{19}\) and, thus, was reined back into an acceptable image.

Although De Forest found poor white women to be as wild as mustangs, he, along with most travelers, ironically concluded that “there was [not] much vitality” in poor white Southerners and “cheerfully” left them “to the operation of the great law of natural selection” (1968, 158). Despite these ‘wild’ women, poor white Southerners as a group were intimately associated with images of death and death-like features.

**Discourses of Death**

If you say that half the men and nearly all the women are very pale, you strike at the matter, but fail to fairly hit it. Their whiteness of skin is simply the whiteness of ordinary tallow. It is sallowness, with a suggestion of clayeyness. Unquestionably soap and water and crash towels would improve the appearance, but I doubt if they would give any bloom to the cheek. The skin seems utterly without vitality, and beyond the action of any restorative stimulants: it has a pitiful and repulsive death-in-life appearance. I am told the climate is in fault, but my judgment says the root of the matter is in the diet of the people.... The whole economy of life seems radically wrong, and there is no inherent energy which promises reformation. (Andrews 1866, 182)

Comparing their skin to white tallow, Andrews mused about the excessive whiteness of these impoverished Southerners. With no ‘bloom to the cheek,’ their skin was ‘without vitality’ and beyond the help of any ‘restorative stimulants.’ Dodge framed white poverty in a similar manner, noting that “(t)he whites... have a gray, earthy look, as if the Lord God had formed them of the dust of the ground, particularly of Tennessee clay, but had hardly yet breathed into their nostrils the breath of life” (1867, 210). Without the ‘breath of life,’ these Southerners with “pallid dull faces” (Dodge 1867,

\(^{19}\)De Forest used this comparison in another passage to refer to supposedly wild women (1968, 50). He described a young woman “superb in bearing, despite her miserable poverty of life and raiment.” With a face “almost handsome,” the girl, nonetheless, had “broad cheek-bones, narrow forehead, and mustang-like wildness of expression” (1968, 50).
210), were, for Green, “inanimate specimens of humanity” (1880, 152). “(C)adaverous-looking” (Green 1880, 155), these poor white Southerners bore little resemblance, according to most travelers, to any life-like (normal) white American.

King, by far the most extensive traveler under discussion, claimed at the end of his eight-hundred-page tome,

Out of ten thousand people of this class, not one had in his face a particle of color; all had the same dead, pallid complexion. (King 1875, 774)

Even Angelina Sargent,20 who in all other respects penned a benign travel account, contrasted the “luxurious surroundings of flowers, orange trees, and other rich vegetable growth” near Florida’s Lake Harris with the “human vegetation” she found “less picturesque” and “somewhat cadaverous” (1894, 31). Sylvia Sunshine (1880), the only defender of white rural poverty in the South, turned to the same metaphor to introduce her writings on Florida ‘crackers.’ On the Ocklawaha River, “the home of the genuine crackers,” she characterized them as “standing specimens of humanity so thin a musquito [sic] would be doing a bad business in trying to obtain sustenance from their bloodless bodies” (58).

Beyond describing this discourse of death pulsing through descriptions of rural white poverty in the South, however, the question remains why this connection between abject white poverty and images of death seemed appropriate to these travelers. Interestingly, throughout these and other travel accounts, Southern blacks are often described, both by travelers themselves and by white Southerners with whom they spoke, as dancing on the brink of extinction. Thought to be unable to care for themselves or provide for their families’ needs, black Southerners, it was widely held in this time
period, would die out before the winter of 1866. Despite this impending extermination, black bodies were described in a decidedly different manner. Focusing in almost all cases on detailed descriptions of black bodies alive with animation and action, Northern travelers often contrasted a disembodied *middle-class* whiteness known only through words with an embodied blackness seen primarily through exaggerated facial expression and constant movement.\(^{21}\) While this aspect of racialized representations deviates somewhat from the focus of this chapter, one example will suffice to show the very different approaches to a middle-class whiteness and embodied blackness in travelers' prose and, most importantly, will place in even greater relief the discourse of death circulating through representation of white rural poverty in a postwar South.

King (1875), spending an evening with a cotton planter in Louisiana, described a scene in which several black laborers came to visit the ‘Cunnel’ to have letters read aloud (300-1). Through his prose, King presented the white planter as ‘reposing,’ listening, reading, and speaking. In no moment through the passage, however, is the ‘Cunnel’ seen. By contrast, however, the black bodies awaiting the planters’ thoughts ooze movement. ‘Huddling,’ bowing ‘as if ready to run,’ ‘bursting into laughter,’ and hovering near doorways, Southern blacks, through this scene, are positioned as active bodies literally hovering around their static (and invisible) white head. Black Southerners, thought by many to be remnants of a dying race, were known through textual description ‘alive’ with movement and vibrancy, while middle-class white Southerners, not yet thought to be a disappearing legacy, were in many cases disembodied descriptively.

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\(^{20}\)Angelina Sargent traveled in the South in 1864 and again in 1873. Although considered by Clark (1962) to have written as a child, she gives no indication of being anything other than an adult. See Appendix.

\(^{21}\)See Dyer 1988 for a similar discussion in reference to the 1938 film *Jezebel.*
If we turn, once again, to the work of Dyer (1997), we can begin to understand the disembodied white representations he attributes to whiteness's "immateriality (pure spirit) or else just nothing at all" (207). Tracing images of death through various films in several genres, Dyer ultimately concludes that "the extreme, very white white image is functional in relation to the ordinary, is even perhaps a condition of establishing whiteness as ordinary" (1997, 222). In other words, "(w)hites can thus believe that they are nothing in particular, because the white particularities on offer are so obviously not them" (Dyer 1997, 223). Here again, however, we can insert an element of class to sharpen Dyer's claims about this discourse of a disembodied whiteness. At the upper end of a white class spectrum, a disembodied, static whiteness seems excessively white and, thus, sufficiently different from a middle-class whiteness situated as the 'norm.' At the opposite end of this same transect, however, abjectly poor whites are associated with a discourse of death as another way to create a class difference without exposing the fallacy of white privilege written onto their deathly faces.22

Thus, in a postwar South, poor Southern whites were scripted as excessively white, white to the point of resembling death, in large part, to place in greater relief, and simultaneous invisibility, travelers' own sense of whiteness as ordinary. Although both groups were white, poor white trash were so white as to be almost racially different from the white 'norm' of Northern travelers. As I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, however, this framing worked on the assumption that 'ordinary' whites were able to establish a critical distance between their own identities and those of people thought to be white in the extreme. While possible, that separation may have happened 'only in the movies.'

22I thank Gerry Pratt for raising this point.
Just as travelers found poor whites in the rural South “cadaverous looking,” the houses inhabited by these Southerners were described in similar ways. Near Savannah, Georgia, Reid remarked that:

The few houses to be seen were forlorn-looking shanties, belonging to the poor white trash, with rotten steps and doors awry, and foul passages and oozy backyards. (Reid 1866, 138)

With ‘rotten’ steps and ‘oozy’ backyards, the homes of ‘the poor white trash’ seemed to ‘fit’ their corpse-like inhabitants. Andrews, in a move that simultaneously boosted a Northern image and lowered that of poor white Southerners, lambasted what he saw as a “general negligence and slovenliness” without comparison in the North.

I am too much a traveler - not in foreign lands, but in my own country - to be upset in my equanimity by even a wide departure from the average cleanliness of New England housewives, and I very readily make allowances for difference of custom; but, after all this, I cannot help remarking what general negligence and slovenliness there is in the houses of the poorer and so-called lower class of inhabitants, and how easily people accommodate themselves to conditions that could not exist a week in any Northern community. (Andrews 1866, 222-3)

Returning to a criticism directed particularly at poor white Southern women, Andrews drew an unspoken connection between disorderly houses and inappropriate poor Southern white housewives. ‘New England housewives,’ presumably Northern white women, were the bearers of order and keepers of civilization, as we saw in Chapter 2. Andrews, finding the apparent ‘negligence and slovenliness’ of poor Southern houses problematic, encrypted a criticism of poor white Southern womanhood through indirect praise of Northern white women.

In a similar but more explicit move, Stearns, on his plantation in Georgia, used black habits to make a white Southern woman seem even dirtier and more inappropriate. Having hired a poor white Southern woman as cook, Stearns, in keeping with his usual strategy, displaced revulsion at her ‘filth’ to a second party. That black Southerners,
already discursively associated by Stearns and others with filth, found her repulsive only
reinforced his description of the woman.

Her presence at the breakfast table, was enough to considerably lessen
the cost of feeding one's family, so uncouth and uncleanly was she in her
appearance. I am not quite certain, whether her face was ever washed or not, but
her hair was uncombed, and its tangled folds swung loosely around her stained
neck, and over her broad shoulders.... She was so dirty in her household
arrangements, that the blacks would refuse to eat food which she had cooked and
offered to them. (Stearns 1872, 191-2)

With ‘broad shoulders’ and a seeming inability to do the domestic as a woman should,
this poor white Southern woman was so inappropriately feminine (and white) that even
the blacks, already scripted by Stearns as both uncivilized and not especially observant,
refused to eat with her.

As these passages reveal, travelers harbored quite strong feelings about white
rural poverty in the South. Going to extreme measures to find metaphors and
descriptions appropriate for what they found to be completely inappropriate, travelers
sought various lines of explanation for what they observed. To an extent, Northern
middle-class travelers, in their bitter writings of white rural poverty in the South, were
simply reacting within a nineteenth-century framework that lambasted sloth and abject
poverty. Finding the seeming absence of order and ‘reason’ in the homes of poor whites
disturbing, particularly in comparison to ‘orderly’ New-England houses, and finding the
general state of existence for poor white Southerners repulsive in its difference from
Northern habitats, Northern travelers devoted quite extensive time and space to writing of
and about these problematic white Southerners.

Nonetheless, these ‘explanations’ of a Northern knee-jerk reaction to Southern
white poverty are not especially helpful in moving beyond a declarative statement that
Northern travelers did not like poor white Southerners. Unpacking vitriolic descriptions
of white rural poverty requires a more engaged reading of these travel accounts. Before attempting to move ‘beyond’ straightforward explanations offered through the travel account, however, I want to move quickly through those explanations themselves, to see how travelers superficially justified their own feelings toward Southern rural white poverty. As Newitz and Wray (1997b) have urged, “we need to ask where its [white trash’s] representations and stereotypes come from, what motivates them, how they are produced and taken up, and by whom” (171). While answering all of these questions is too great a project for this chapter, addressing some, particularly those questions connected to motivations behind these stereotypes, begins the process of moving beyond descriptive statements about white rural poverty and toward a clearer understandings of these stereotypes and what informed them.

How can they be white and lazy?

One explanation for travelers’ aversion to white rural poverty in the South revolves around the place of labor and a Protestant work ethic. Finding the absence of steady labor among white Southerners, rich and poor, abominable, these travelers praised bodies at work and punished bodies at rest. For some travelers, race relations could be distilled to simple issues of “one [black] party having work to do” and “the other [white] needing work” (Andrews 1866, 96). In this framing, poor whites, by virtue of being poor, fell among the ‘party having work to do.’ By virtue of being white, however, poor whites could not be grouped with black bodies seeking labor among their former owners.

23This explanation is consistent with Newitz and Wray’s view that ‘white trash’ was deployed “to describe the existence of class antagonism in the United States” (1997a, 8). As I subsequently discuss in this chapter, however, this labor-centered explanation leaves much to be desired (and explained). See Roediger
Falling somewhere between but not within either of the two categories laid out by Andrews, poor white Southerners disrupted this simplistic, but popular, understanding of labor relations in the South. In "the true relations of employer and employed" (Andrews 1866, 190), poor white rural Southerners seemed to slip through the cracks. Andrews posited that more than anything, the South need a "respect for labor as labor,... respect for it as a branch of Divine economy, respect for it as a means of human elevation" (1866, 348) and, thus, made crystal clear that those Southerners who did not worship a work ethic in this manner were somehow beyond 'human elevation'.

Although extremely critical of white Southerners at rest, travelers did acknowledge that many whites in the South simply had the "misfortune" of not knowing how to work (Andrews 1866, 225). Reid, for instance, found no Georgian who, now that his slaves can no longer be made to work for him, expects to work for himself. In fact, working for themselves does not seem to be, in any event, of success or of failure, of loyalty or of rebellion, a part of their philosophy of life. *Work is for "niggers" - not for white men.* (Reid 1866, 151, my emphasis)

While in Mobile, Alabama, Reid remarked that "a stranger might have concluded that it was the white race that was going to prove unable to take care of itself" (1866, 221). His explanation for this situation was simple.

The negroes had gone to work: it was the only way they knew for getting bread.... The whites had nobody left to go to work for them, and that was the only way to get bread *they* knew. (Reid 1866, 221)

(1991) for a more convincing discussion of connections between whiteness and the formation of the working class in the United States. See also Woodward (1971).

24 Andrews's failure to account for rural white poor Southerners in his labor-centered framework, in some ways, foreshadowed what was to become a popular approach. David Roediger (1991), in his examination of whiteness and working-class formation, left little room for poor white Southerners, despite discussing labor relations in the South.

25 Andrews directed this comment particularly at Southern women, who needed to learn "that labor is not degrading" (1866, 348). His solution was to "let them [women] begin as children, and learn to do housework" (1866, 348).
John Trowbridge (1867) made a similar observation in Mississippi, where he found it “impossible for the people of Mississippi... to understand the first principle of the free-labor system” (369). His explanation of this reluctance to work, however, brings the discussion back to rural white poverty in the South. Southerners’ ‘notions’ of labor derived “from what they had seen of the shiftless poor whites about them, demoralized by an institution that rendered labor disreputable” (Trowbridge 1867, 369). Not present among those Southerners who owned land and hired workers, not found among the primarily black workers hired to work the land, poor white Southerners initially seemed absent from a Southern labor perspective. As Trowbridge showed, however, while not present in labor relations, poor white Southerners were positioned at the margin of the labor market, throwing wrenches into the system and generally demoralizing the ‘easily influenced’ black workers.

What makes this framing especially important is the very different treatment of poor white Southerners and recently freed Southern blacks. Despite the fact that both groups had been held under the heavy heel of slavery and were often explicitly compared and spoken of concurrently (Ash 1991), poor whites somehow received little sympathy from Northern travelers. Although black Southerners exhibited seemingly similar habits, lived in seemingly similar houses, and had seemingly similar levels of education, this group was discursively positioned without blame. As I discussed in Chapter 2, blacks in the South were absolved to some extent of blame for their habits and actions. Mere reflections of the brutal system of slavery, black Southerners simply mirrored the only behavior they could be expected to exhibit. Poor white Southerners, however, existing beneath the same system, though most certainly not to the same extent, received almost

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26 De Forest made the same connection between the “breed of parasite poor-whites” and slavery (1968, 63).
no sympathy for their condition. Poor because they chose to be, dirty because they wanted to be, and degenerate by their own fault, poor white Southerners, unfortunate possessors of an assumed white privilege, selected their sorry lives of their own accord. To make this distinction unambiguously clear, travelers often turned specifically to black/poor white comparisons.

**White by Luck, Poor by Choice**

As David Roediger (1991) has pointed out, poor whites and blacks through the late-eighteenth century were, in terms of their labor, "virtually interchangeable" (25). By the mid-nineteenth century, however, labor relations, at least in theory, were defined along racial lines: blacks toiled, whites did not. Within this racially defined labor milieu was an unspoken association between race, particularly blackness, and poverty. Although hard workers, blacks, through no fault of their own but certainly through something ‘natural’ in their being, were destined to be poor. Thought by most travelers to be unable to handle themselves financially, black Southerners, although they could move toward white standards of civilization, could never wash away their ‘color’ or poverty, since the two were intimately connected. The presence of rural white poverty, however, challenged this connection between not being white and not being financially sound. As Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (1998) has noted in her discussion of the early sociologist Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin, “if white skin was no defense against immiseration, then the poverty of black people could not be blamed on the racial inferiority of the poor” (116).
De Forest (1968), working with both groups through ration distribution in South Carolina, found “little social distance at any time between the low-downer and the black” (72). Citing instances of miscegenation and general similarities between poor whites and Southern blacks, De Forest went on to note, however, that “able-bodied Negroes were much less apt to apply for rations than able-bodied “low-downers”” (1968, 80). Reid, in Richmond, Virginia, made a similar observation that “(n)o man could fail to observe that the poor negroes were making much more earnest efforts to rise than the poor whites” (1866, 325).

Andrews, ever an enemy of rural white poverty, placed poor whites and blacks in the same general framework but made a key differentiation between the two groups, a distinction implicit in almost all postbellum travel accounts.

The city negro and the country negro are as much unlike as two races. So, too, the city white man from the country white man differ much from each other. The latter, however, is just what he chooses to be, while the country negro is just what slavery and his late owners have made him. (Andrews 1866, 21-2)

In this passage, Andrews spatially distinguished between ‘city’ and ‘country’ whites and ‘negroes,’ a distinction found throughout these travel accounts. His explanation for these differences, however, was racially determined. ‘The country negro’ was nothing more than a product of slavery and slave owners. The country white - though, as we have seen, equally a product of slavery - was ‘what he chose to be.’ Instilled with a dormant agency, these poor white Southerners in the country were poor by choice. Rural black Southerners, on the other hand, were poor by default.

27Jim Goad (1997), in his ‘redneck manifesto,’ eerily echoed this same attitude, noting that “(b)eing white trash... is thought to be a choice rather than a predicament” (38). See Newitz and Wray (1997a) for a similar claim.
In a later passage, Andrews made the same claim. In reference to what he saw as black laziness, he explained that "(i)t would seem that negroes are natural slovens, or that the relation of master and slave has ruined them in this regard" (1866, 223, my emphasis). The key word in this sentence, 'or,' left a potential 'out' for black behavior. Whereas poor whites were poor because they chose that lifestyle, blacks were poor because of slavery. Andrews ended this comparison, while he was in the South, with a prediction.

Time and effort will lead the negro up to intelligent manhood; but I almost doubt if they will be able to lead this "white trash" even up to respectability. (Andrews 1866, 334-5)

As we saw in Chapter 2, black Southerners had the potential to rise - through various means and, of course, with Northern help - to higher levels of 'civilization' toward intelligent manhood. 'This white trash,' however, was forever stuck on the lowest rung on 'the scale of human existence,' a point to which I shall return.

Establishing that Southern blacks were better workers and less to blame for their actions, however, was not sufficient for most Northern travelers. Simply distinguishing between two groups racially different but socio-economically very similar did not remove the "epidermal fact" (Dyer 1997, 62) written on the faces of poor white Southerners. Thus, seeking a better explanation, Northern travelers sought recourse through other avenues.

*There must be an(other) explanation...*

Through their at-times biting tirades, most travelers hunted for an explanation of sorts for what they saw. Whereas other devastated aspects of the South, such as bombed cities and destroyed crops, could be and were explained through reference to recent Civil-
War battles, poor white Southerners, though equally degraded to most travelers, were in fact anterior to any war struggles. As Dodge noted,

> However wasted the land may be by the tramp of armies, it is not four years' war that has spread the dull pallor over the faces I have seen.... It is habit, not a sudden absence of occupation, that fills the rickety stoops of rickety taverns with unclean, idle men, and sets in every door-way female figures that have no vestige of female comeliness. (Dodge 1867, 264)

In this manner, Dodge, and other travelers, withdrew the crutch of war-time devastation from poor Southern whites, for whom 'habit' and time, not the war, explained poverty.

Green, in a somewhat antiquated move, attributed white rural poverty to the South's climate.\(^{28}\) Although climatic explanations had been quite popular through the eighteenth century, by the mid-nineteenth century, this rationalization had fallen from grace (Chaplin 1995). Turning from external explanations in climate, land, and 'nature' to internal attributes of Southern peoples, most writers, certainly by the 1860s, found justifications for the South in other areas. Nonetheless, Green saw poor white Southerners' "emaciated bodies and sallow complexions... as [what] one would naturally expect to encounter under the debilitating influences of a semi-tropical clime" (1880, 151). According to this framing, wealthier white Southerners outwitted the lethargic climate by either not working at all or traveling to higher latitudes in the summer. Black Southerners, because constituted differently and acclimatized through their ancestry to hot weather, escaped the dangers of a dulling climate altogether (Green 1880, 153-4).

For other travelers, particularly De Forest, an explanation for rural white poverty came through a trans-Atlantic history of lazy whites. Connecting "the destitute class of the South" to "the dull, unlettered hopeless English farm laborer grown wild, indolent,

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\(^{28}\)British traveler, George Rose (1868), made the same association between white poverty and Southern climates.
and nomadic on new land and under the discouraging competition of slavery” (1968, 52), De Forest traced the history – and, thus, explanation for – “that tenth of humanity which the severe law of natural selection is perpetually punishing for the sin of shiftlessness” (1968, 52). “Partly from glimpses of history, partly from the reminiscences of old citizens, and partly from my own observations” (1968, 154), De Forest reconstructed the histories of white rural poverty in the South to explain their anomalous existence. Obviously not a product of American soil, poor whites, through this strategy, became someone, and somewhere, else’s problem: King deployed a historical explanation as well but did so through a reverse strategy. He used ‘history’ to erase, rather than explain, the presence of rural white poverty in the South. Chronicling the storied history of settlement in the Carolinas, King discursively wrote poor white Southerners out of this narrative, positioning them as “hardly the stuff out of which the old heroes were made” (1875, 515).

While these efforts to explain white rural poverty through recourse to factors such as climate and history do, to some extent, hint at the underlying motivations behind Northern revulsion at white poverty in the South, they are not entirely convincing. Characterized as succumbing to “culture shock” (Ash 1991, 56), Northern postbellum travelers have been treated as though simply unable to deal with the tangible signs of poverty and ‘sloth’ they observed. That poor white Southerners did not labor was certainly problematic for Northern travelers, but it alone does not account for the extreme language and attitude exhibited in reference to poor whites. By the same token, climatic and historical explanations, while revealing a discursive connection between white poverty and nature and an effort to place the ‘root’ of white rural poverty in a spatially
and temporally separate ‘elsewhere,’ do not really get at ultimately what about rural white poverty in the South got under the skin of Northern travelers. Something else is at work, and that ‘something else’ is connected to both the ‘somewhere’ of white Southern poverty and the very ‘thing’ of poverty itself.

This would never happen in the North...

For many Northern travelers, white rural poverty, unsettling in the extreme, became slightly less disturbing when they assured themselves and readers alike that it could never happen in the North. Andrews, while in South Carolina, lamented the poor service and filthy accommodations provided by the tall and sallow “Missus,” with lifeless eyes and unkempt hair, “a type of women [sic], thank God, without counterpart in the North” (1866, 18). These types of houses, filthy to the extreme, could not, according to Andrews, “exist a week in any Northern community” (1866, 223). King, writing from South Carolina as well, echoed Andrews’s banishment of white poverty from the North. After examining “lean and scrawny women” and “lank and hungry men,” King proclaimed that they had “their counterparts nowhere among native Americans at the North; it is incapable of producing such a peasantry” (1875, 346). Not found in the North because not possible there, white rural poverty, thus, was confined safely to the South.

Trowbridge, usually more reserved in his criticisms, claimed that “for dirt, and for utter ignorance of all the decencies of civilized life, no people in America, of any color can compare with them [poor whites of the South]” (1867, 348). Living in structures with “filthy interiors that not even negro cabins could equal,” these poor whites were uncivilized and, more importantly for the well being of Northern white travelers,
‘unNorthern.’ Trowbridge made this geographical separation intellectual as well. While riding to the Spotsylvania battlefield in Pennsylvania, Trowbridge expressed spatially the intellectual distance between himself and his illiterate white driver.

What a gulf betwixt his mind and mine! Sitting side by side there, we were yet as far apart as the great globe’s poles. (Trowbridge 1867, 131)

‘As far apart as the great globe’s poles,’ Northern white travelers and Southern white poor, at least from the accounts of most travelers, seemed to have almost no connection. With no Northern counterparts, poor white Southerners were both spatially and socially separate from Northern travel writers and readers as well. This separation, gleaned from these travel accounts, became accepted ‘fact’ in subsequent histories. That white rural poverty was inherently Southern came to stand ‘without saying.’

If we turn, however, to a travel account rarely, if ever, cited, the constructedness nature of this association becomes clear. Sylvia Sunshine, as I discussed in Chapter 3, traveled extensively through Florida in the 1870s. In her writings about the state, she directly challenged the spatial banishment of white rural poverty to the South.

Hoping that the mind of the public may be relieved of the impression that a kind of hybrid biped circulate through the South entirely unknown in other localities, called crackers, I herewith append a description of the Northern crackers, in connection with our Southern product, taken from my own observation. (Sunshine 1880, 59, my emphasis)

From this initial comment, Sunshine extended the geographical range of ‘crackers’ well into Northern territory. “From the Alleghany [sic] Mountains of Pennsylvania to the sands of Florida,” she traced that “certain class of the genus homo” (1880, 59-60). To describe this group of poor whites now ubiquitous across South and North, she turned to well-known images of Southern white poverty, noting a lack of education, an absence of steady work, and a plethora of hogs (1880, 62). Importantly, though, Sunshine openly
acknowledged that she penned these descriptions in direct opposition to travel writers of her time.

The above is a correct description of the Northern crackers, of which some scribblers seem to have lost sight in their unfeeling efforts to abuse the South, and impress the world with the idea that crackers and poor whites are entirely of Southern origin, and only found in that locality, they being the outgrowth of a slave oligarchy. (Sunshine 1880, 62)

Criticizing travelers who possessed both a much wider readership and certainly a greater authorial position than did she, Sunshine attacked the very basis upon which Northern travelers had established their racial (and national) superiority. If ‘crackers’ were to be found in the North, the diligently policed line between predominantly white, middle-class Northern travelers and the unacceptable white ‘other’ began to waver.

Get out of my space...

Travelling can... turn out to be a process whereby the self loses its fixed boundaries – a disturbing yet potentially empowering practice of difference. (Minh-ha 1994, 23)

Northern travelers found the boundaries of ‘self’ severely challenged in physically and psychically moving through a postbellum South. Spatially sequestering rural white poverty in the South itself, a region from which Northern travelers could distance themselves through their own regional affiliation, did not create a sufficient buffer zone between travelers and the ‘white trash’ they found so repulsive yet fascinating. Unable to police all the boundaries of self through their journeys, travelers felt white rural poverty creeping ever closer and almost imperceptibly toward their own racial privilege.

In addition to making a regional distinction, then, most Northern travelers endeavored to draw even more fine-grained lines around ‘cracker culture.’ Andrews, for instance, made abundantly clear that his criticisms were directed not at “the white
resident of the cities or of the ‘poor whites,’ technically so named, but of the common inhabitant of the country” (1866, 181). In urban settings, places associated with poverty in the North as well, poor Southern whites were not problematic. Although not ideal, white poverty in Southern cities somehow seemed less troubling. In the ‘country,’ however, white poverty, for Andrews and most other travelers, was simply unacceptable and equally unexplainable.

This problematic rural location of white poverty in the South can be situated within the broader positionings of ‘nature’ discussed in Chapter 3. If Southern ‘nature’ was something ‘awaiting’ either Northern penetration and input or Northern praise for its beauty, the Southern bodies found on those lands, if the framing were to work, needed to fit as either a usable resource or an idyllic feature of the landscape. Black bodies, though no longer associated with enforced labor, were discursively positioned as amenable to labor relations, particularly with Northern investors. Poor white Southerners, however, did not fit this framing. Entering as ‘imperial agents,’ Northern investors and ‘explorers’ in a postwar South could not, within a nineteenth-century epistemology of race, treat poor white Southerners entirely as ‘natives’ in this imperfect imperial framing. That black bodies somehow ‘matched’ a civilizing mission was certainly true. That Southern ‘nature,’ at least in places and for particular people, ‘matched’ an imperial context was equally true, if not unproblematic. Impoverished white Southerners, however, did not work in this framing. Not appropriately colored to be ‘natives,’ not appropriately classed to be imperial agents, poor white trash were just enough to disrupt an imperial framing Northern travelers so desperately wanted to place on a postbellum South.

In addition, as we saw in Chapter 3, Northern travelers grappled with extremely
diverse Southern landscapes by spatializing their conceptualizations of ‘nature.’ Within that varied Southern geography, travelers noted equally varied Southern peoples. In the words of Edward King (1875), “(t)he social condition of the people varies with the location” (547). This statement, however, made in different ways by most travelers, did not apply to poor white Southerners. As King himself noted, white Southerners in rural areas seemed everywhere the same. Thus, impoverished Southern whites not only were mis-placed within Southern ‘nature’ but also failed to be spatially contained in particular areas. Everywhere the same and seemingly everywhere in a predominantly rural South, poor white trash were incorrectly white in all the wrong places.

Seemingly in an effort to ‘fix’ this problem, De Forest endeavored to push poor white Southerners off the land altogether. Considering them ‘squatters,’ De Forest removed any legitimate connection to Southern spaces.

> Without property, mere squatters on the land of others, destitute of character to inspire respect, prostitutes, beggars, and perhaps thieves, they are chased from neighborhood to neighborhood, the sport of rowdies little better than themselves. (De Forest 1968, 144)

Technically belonging nowhere, these nomadic white Southerners became placeless in the South itself. If nomadic and, therefore, not associated with any particular space, poor white Southerners could be shuttled about, allowing imperial frameworks to work at least temporarily.

Any spatial ‘fix,’ however, was only a superficial solution. Pushing problematic poor Southern whites to the rural South may have allowed some spatial distance between travelers’ own understandings of and connections to whiteness and these white Southerners, but it was not sufficient distance for most travelers. The South, certainly in this time period, was understood to be almost entirely (and appropriately) natural and
rural. Thus, expunging ‘white trash’ to the country did not really solve anything, since rural spaces dominated Southern landscapes. As Dodge pointed out in moving from Tennessee to Alabama to Georgia along the Tennessee River,

> though we change the place, we keep the pain, pain of poverty in its naked repulsiveness, without concealment, without hope, and without shame. (Dodge 1867, 213)

Despite her physical movement across the South, Dodge continued to see the same abject white poverty. Unable to escape these scenes she found ‘repulsive,’ Dodge, in an earlier passage, implicitly revealed what about white rural poverty was so especially troubling.

> One would not mind a group or two here and there, but a country peopled by such beings, a country dotted with such dwellings, leaves a hopelessness on the soul. To ride hour after hour past these dreary, despairing habitations, to see swarm after swarm of these pallid, dull faces,… O the sudden sadness of it! (Dodge 1867, 210)

Through these lines, Dodge spoke directly what other travelers only implied. White rural poverty stared forcefully into the eyes of American prosperity. Through the Civil War, the North had liberated slaves and defeated a ‘haughty’ little South. Beginning a period of national expansion and Northern industrialization/urbanization, the United States, aside from the ever-problematic South, was endeavoring to view itself through a lens of national progress and success. Riding through a ‘country peopled by such beings,’ however, openly challenged what was becoming the myth of American progress. ‘These pallid, dull faces’ seen ‘hour after hour’ did not fit. According to Dodge, these scenes made “(i)t seem… as if in some sort one’s country had suffered change. You thought all was prosperity and progress…. But here are silence, submission, and degradation” (1867, 210, my emphasis). Rural white poverty, thus, affected not only the South but the nation as a whole.
Dodge made that connection explicit in a subsequent passage, where she explained,

We are one country, and whatever keeps the South down keeps the North down too. (Dodge 1867, 265)

'White trash,' obviously keeping the South down because of both their location and their numbers, impaired the North as well. Unwilling to maintain the boundary between North and South so actively policed by other travelers, Dodge acknowledged the connection between the two regions. In doing so, Dodge, like Sunshine, poked a hole in the presumably impervious barrier between North and South, a barrier impermeable only to those persons poor and white.

Of course, geographical separation was not the only, or the main, strategy used by Northern travelers. In addition to efforts to fix white rural poverty spatially as a Southern problem, travelers endeavored to place intellectual distance between themselves and rural poor whites. Relying on a widely understood metaphor of the great 'chain of being,' travelers climbed as high as they could on this racialized and classed ladder and simultaneously pushed poor Southern whites as far down as possible.

Get off my ladder...

Turning to discourses of Social Darwinism circulating throughout a Reconstruction era, travelers constructed a racialized and class-defined social ladder that they themselves climbed. When certain they were at the top rung, travelers subsequently endeavored, if not to knock poor white Southerners off the ladder

29Dodge's 'solution' for white rural poverty was to take poor Southern whites on a tour of New England, where they would obviously see the errors of their ways.  
altogether, at least to push them to the bottom. Northern travelers pulled Southern blacks closer to their own sense of whiteness, in part to push the poor white Southerners, epidermally too close, away.31

Although certain in October 1865 that “there can be no lower class of people than the North Carolina “clay-eaters” (1866, 177), by November, Andrews wondered about his former claim.

Whether the North Carolina “dirt-eater,” or the South Carolina “sand-hiller,” or the Georgia “cracker,” is lowest in the scale of human existence would be difficult to say. The ordinary plantation negro seemed to me, when I first saw him in any numbers, at the very bottom of not only probabilities, but also possibilities, so far as they affect human relations; but these specimens of the white race must be credited with having reached a yet lower depth of squalid and beastly wretchedness. (Andrews 1866, 334, my emphasis)

More important than Andrews’s attempt to discern the lowest of the low among ‘dirt-eaters,’ ‘sand-hillers,’ and ‘crackers’ - a desire to categorize and classify that Roediger (1997) considers “characteristic of imperial gazers” (38) - is his reliance on a ‘scale of human existence.’ Although not certain which particular type of ‘these specimens of the white race’ was ‘lowest,’32 Andrews was clear that these whites, sinking to ‘beastly wretchedness,’ were far below black Southerners, which were obviously far below Andrews’s own rung on the scale.33

bell hooks (1991) has noted that “(s)tereotypes abound when there is distance” (341). Viewing them as “an invention, a pretense that one knows when the steps that would make real knowing possible cannot be taken,” hooks presents stereotypes as an alterative of sorts for actual contact (1991, 341). In a postbellum South, stereotypes

32Andrews is not alone in this framing. Trowbridge (1867) placed the “plantation negro” and the poor whites around them at approximately the same level on the “scale of being” (532).
abounded in large part because of face-to-face contact, which was not followed by face-to-face interaction. Not unable but unwilling to know in depth white rural poverty that looked all too familiar, travelers went to great lengths to get away from those 'cadaverous' faces. Although attempting to place as much distance between himself and white rural poverty as possible, Andrews could not remove the fact that these whites were 'specimens' of the white race, the race of which Andrews counted himself a member. This connection, seen face to face in the South, made white rural poverty all the more unsettling. Although wanting to knock these poor white Southerners out of his own racial privilege, Andrews could not do so.34 For him, "(t)he poor white, the "cracker," is certainly as low in the scale of human existence as anything can be in this country" (Andrews 1866, 376, my emphasis). Unable to push poor whites entirely out of a national framework, Andrews, like other Northern travelers, was stuck with them.

This seeming inability to distance themselves entirely from white rural poverty, present in numerous travel accounts, contradicts Newitz's positioning of 'white trash' as "the position of 'bad' Other," a position that offers "a perspective from which 'good' whites can see themselves as a racial and classed group" (1997, 136). At least in these postwar travel accounts, 'good' whites certainly tried to see themselves as somehow separate from the 'bad' whites but could never do so successfully. Unable to push poor whites entirely out of a white American framework, unable to separate completely North and South, and unable to ignore the presence of 'trashy' whites in the North, travelers

33De Forest (1968) was unwilling to place poor white Southerners as even a separate class, writing that "crackers are not a caste, but only the dregs of society" (158).
34Poor white Southerners were more than aware of their racial privilege. Although abjectly poor, from their perspective, at least they were white (Jones 1992).
ultimately were left wringing their hands and shaking their fists in the cadaverous faces of white rural poverty.

**Walking Paradoxes**

As Linda Paige (1997) has noted, author Flannery O'Connor characterized poor white Southerners as “walking paradoxes” (325). This characterization, however, seems useful for other reasons. Poor white Southerners directly challenged, through their mere existence, unspoken connections between a white identity and economic privilege. That a body could be both white and impoverished, both white and uneducated, threw into stark relief the reality “that whiteness per se was not a ticket to the life of leisure” (Lockley 1997, 59). ‘Walking paradoxes,’ poor white trash in the South stood for a myriad of things Northern travelers found inconceivable and certainly inappropriate. As Jim Goad (1997) has noted about late-twentieth-century images of ‘white trash,’ “white trash must seem like a disease in remission inside all whites, one that might flare up again given the right circumstances” (100). Like Stearns’s paralyzing fear of ‘remission’ to blackness on his plantation in Georgia, the presence of abject white poverty graphically presented the specter of white failure in all whites, North or South.

As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the South, according to Dyer, “seems to be the myth that both most consciously asserts whiteness and most devastatingly undermines it” (1997, 36). While this claim seems likely, it speaks to much more than constructions of whiteness and constructions of the South. The paradox of whiteness in the South, which I have shown through the ‘walking paradoxes’ of poor

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35 O’Connor used this term in her novel, *Wise Blood*, to denote the seemingly supernatural power of her ‘low-class’ white characters as ‘seers.’
white Southerners, can really be positioned as an important part, but part nonetheless, of a wider paradox of the South as a whole.

Simultaneously an imperial holding and part of the imperial nation, concurrently 'natural' and developed and settled, and possessing 'natives' appropriately and inappropriately colored, a postwar South, through its relation to 'civilization,' its associations with 'nature,' and its intimate connection to rural white poverty, was a paradoxical space made even more so by Northern travelers seemingly unsure about how to write an imperial territory that was not imperial in the right way. 'Uncivilized' in a manner that complicated the place of white Northern women in the South, 'natural' in ways that challenged a masculinist gaze, and white in all the wrong places, the South, through a period of Reconstruction, was nothing, if not paradoxical.
Chapter 5:  
Conclusion: A Postbellum Paradox

I am not the first to note tensions in writings and representations of a postbellum South. From the first travel account penned after the Civil War to many of the most recent investigations of this time period, people have pondered the seemingly contradictory nature of the South. This thesis, however, has attempted not to move beyond these tensions but within them. Working to push statements about the “cultural baggage” Northern women in an antebellum and postbellum South brought with them (Currie-McDaniel 1992) or the “Janus-faced” nature of the South (Woodward 1971) beyond declarative statements of how things really were, this thesis has argued that a paradoxical South, as the adjective points out, was not something to be read in a straightforward manner. A contradictory space, a postwar South demands an approach quite different from most attempts to smooth or explain away the wrinkles in its histories. Those wrinkles are in large part constitutive of Southern history.

Southern historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (1998) has critiqued ‘accepted’ versions of Southern history, versions focused on racism, ugly electoral politics, and white male perspectives, as allowing “us to externalize and thus to expunge conditions that were American in scope without forfeiting our belief in America as a land of equality, innocence, and success” (121). Becoming almost a space for abjection (Sibley 1995, 1999), the South, through historians’ efforts to make what was often a blurry boundary between North and South distinct, has stood as America’s ‘other.’ In a pre-Vietnam era, the only part of the United States to experience military defeat and occupation
(Woodward 1968), extreme poverty and socio-economic restructuring, the region has been known through its difference. This thesis has endeavored to raise at least the possibility that those differences were, to an extent, socially produced and, more importantly, to look at the spoken and unspoken motivations behind this construction of difference. As we have seen throughout this thesis, the line drawn by travelers and others between North and South was unable to contain all things Southern and unpleasant. Despite their efforts, travelers dragged more than their notebooks and suitcases across the Mason-Dixon line, as images and instances of rural white poverty, for instance, followed all too close on their heels.

An interrogation into how postwar Northern travelers came to know a South separate from a North begins the process of rethinking monolithic representations of 'the South' and opens the door for more critical readings of Southern texts, such as travel accounts. This type of critical reading, however, cannot treat these writings as static instances of knowledge production. As we saw throughout the chapters of this thesis, travelers’ writings of the South, to borrow Richard Gray’s phrase, took distinctly different forms in different places. Whether confining their imperial mission to Northern-owned interior plantations or the Sea Islands, whether spatializing their conceptualizations of Southern ‘natures,’ or whether attempting to contain white rural poverty, travelers constructed an intricate geography to their descriptions. Adopting different voices in different places, they constantly reworked their own relationships to that which they saw and that which they wrote. Wrapped up with this ever-dynamic interaction with the lands through which they passed, travelers also negotiated their own subject positions that shifted as they physically and psychically experienced the act of
being in an immediate postwar South. A time period of drastic social, political, economic, and cultural reworkings, Reconstruction and its associated practices made the complex movement across a highly differentiated Southern region even more so.

Foregrounding the dynamic nature of knowledge production through these postbellum travel accounts demands a very different reading of these writings, a reading this thesis has attempted to begin. Given only very superficial readings in the past, these travel accounts must be approached as much more than flat descriptions of a postbellum South. Though certainly reflecting material conditions of a land recently devastated by a long and costly war, these travel accounts, as I have tried to show, ‘speak’ far beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of a postwar American South. Clearly connected to past framings and conceptualizations of ‘the South’ as a place and object of knowledge, these texts simultaneously capture the difficult process of reconfiguring the very ‘place’ of a region concurrently ‘in’ and ‘out’ of a national framework. In the process, the language through which nineteenth-century Americans and beyond learned to speak of concepts like race and nation were being written through the travels of these Northern men and women.

Although Southern Reconstruction occupied only a brief time period in the history of both the region and the nation and was rapidly effaced by Southern white restoration and a subsequent Jim-Crow South, the 1860s and 1870s were crucial decades in United States history. Reformulating what the ‘American citizen’ entailed, reconfiguring the status of blacks across the United States, and renegotiating the ‘place’ of a postwar South, Reconstruction was a dynamic era in a part of the United States conceptualized as anything but dynamic. These postwar travel accounts, written through
both the temporal and spatial context of Southern Reconstruction, must be approached as equally dynamic texts.

Robert Young (1995) has raised the question, “Can we assume that colonial discourse operates identically not only across all space but also through it?” (164). As we have seen through the progression of this thesis, an imperial relationship between North and South superficially seemed viable. In particular contexts, such as spaces of black ‘self-rule’ and ‘marginal’ Southern lands in Florida and Texas, Northern travelers occupied imperial roles relatively smoothly, although their actions, as always, were greatly influenced by various aspects of their own identities. This imperial relationship, however, by the very nature of its own dialectical construction, ultimately was ambivalent. In these spaces, the authorial positions travelers sought to gain became elusive, particularly for female travelers, who grappled with their own gendered subjectivities and a much broader gendered reception of knowledge. The paradoxical place of a postwar South – concurrently part of the colonizing nation by virtue of re-annexation and itself the very colonized space by virtue of that same re-annexing – made an imperial South practically (im)perfect in every way. The particular ways that imperfect ‘fit’ was handled, so to speak, through these travel accounts too, as we have seen, distinctly different forms for each imperial discourse discussed.

Despite the imperfectly imperial relationship in which a postwar South was caught, viewing the region through this relationship is a productive way to think critically about both this place and this time period. While this strategy of reading these travel accounts did not ‘solve’ the paradox of a postbellum South, it did lay the groundwork for engagements with these writings that do more than prove, once again, that the South is
different. Taking these travel accounts from their usual home in the footnotes and endnotes of historical examinations of the South, this thesis, in foregrounding these writings, has re-placed the wrinkles and stutters that constitute a crucial aspect of the geography, social and material, of a postwar South into historical discussions that assiduously avoid those rough spots of imperial imperfection. In doing so, it has at least raised the possibility that a paradoxical South is not necessarily a problem that must be solved completely; for that paradoxical problem is constitutive of the very space of the South itself.
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Appendix:
Biographical Information About Travelers

Ames, Mary (1831-1903)

Little is known of Mary Ames’s life outside her travel account. Apparently never having married, Ames, after hearing a woman speak about her work with blacks in the South, left her home in Springfield, Massachusetts in May of 1865 for Edisto Island, South Carolina. Ames, traveling with her friend and co-worker Emily Bliss, worked as a teacher in the black communities on Edisto Island. She remained on the island until September 1866, with the exception of a month-long trip home in the spring of 1866. Highly critical of the government’s treatment of black Southerners, Ames eventually was dismissed in June 1866, when the Freedmen’s Bureau with which she was associated closed.

Thomas D. Clark (1962) lists Mary Ames as Mary Clemmer Ames, a well-known journalist and author of the time period. This connection is dubious, however, since Mary Clemmer Ames retook her maiden name after divorcing her husband, Daniel Ames, in 1874. In addition, Mary Clemmer (Ames) died in 1884; and the Mary Ames under discussion in this thesis apparently participated in the preparation of this diary for publication in 1906. Mary Clemmer Ames did publish a type of travel guide to Washington, DC; but her connection to A New England Woman’s Diary in Dixie in 1865 (1906) is extremely tenuous.

Andrews, Sidney (1837-1880)

Sidney Andrews, writing for the Chicago Tribune and the Boston Advertiser, traveled through North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia from September to November in 1865. After serializing his accounts, Andrews published his travels in book form in 1866. By his own admittance, Andrews focused primarily on the political activities of black and white Southerners at the state level. Despite this claim, however, Andrews wrote extensively of numerous aspects of Southern societies, focusing particularly on the presence of a white middle-class and white underclass he found extremely unsettling. Andrews held an especially negative view of a postwar South, writing bitterly of ‘Southern barbarism.’ He did make exceptions, however, for the Georgia cities of Greensboro and Atlanta. For Andrews, the South’s hope for the future lay in Northern investment and energy. Little else is known of Andrews.

1For extended biographies of some of these travelers, see Thomas Clark’s 1962 bibliography and American National Biography Online http://www.anb.org. I have drawn from both sources.
Botume, Elizabeth Hyde (????-????)

Elizabeth Hyde Botume, born in Wyoming, Massachusetts, taught for the New England Freedmen's Aid Society from 1864 to 1869. A secretary of the Boston Religious Union of Associationists some time in the late 1840s, Botume may have been affiliated with the Brook Farm utopian community. She has been listed with John Franklin Botume (1855-1907) also associated with Brook Farm, although the connection between the two is unclear. Leaving New York in October 1864, Botume took a teaching appointment in Beaufort, South Carolina and worked with various other white Northern teachers throughout her tenure. Although returning to the North in the summer of 1865 and for part of 1868, Botume remained in South Carolina as a teacher until 1869, despite having to vacate the Southern plantation she occupied at the end of the Civil War and move into Beaufort. Although considered by Clark to be less than reliable as a source for reasons he does not discuss explicitly, Botume, according to most other scholars, was a 'highly sensitive' Northern teacher. Of her life apart from her time in Beaufort, very few facts remain.

De Forest, John William (1826-1906)

John William De Forest, born in Seymour, Connecticut, was a moderately successful writer. Spending his early adulthood in travel through Europe and the Near East, De Forest penned two travel books, among other works, before heading south. Doubting his ability to be 'manly' and a writer, De Forest found salvation through an army position. Ultimately becoming a brevet major, De Forest participated in numerous Civil-War battles and transferred to Greenville, South Carolina as a Freedmen's Bureau agent. For fifteen months in 1866 and 1867, De Forest lived in Greenville and worked with newly emancipated blacks and white Southerners of all classes. Intending from the beginning to write his travels, De Forest serialized his travel account in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Atlantic Monthly, and Putnam's Magazine. Although he put his articles in book form some time in the 1880s, he never published the account. Best known for his book Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty (1867), which has received recent critical attention, De Forest wrote his travel account as a series of adventure stories for the most part. Never especially successful as a writer, De Forest was embittered by his failure which he blamed on the reading public and eventually stopped writing. His travel account was published for the first time in its entirety in 1948.

Dodge, Mary Abigail (Gail Hamilton) (1833-1896)

Mary Abigail Dodge, born in Hamilton, Massachusetts, wrote mainly under the pseudonym Gail Hamilton. A relatively well-known author and journalist, Dodge was born into a well-to-do family and educated very briefly at Cambridge. Working as both a
teacher and governess, Dodge contributed to journals such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Congregationalist*. An avid supporter of 'New England reform,' Dodge was highly critical of domestic work and advocated reform for married women's lives. In 1867, Dodge traveled across the United States to collect money from her sheep farm in Wisconsin. Journeying through various Northern cities to Chicago, Dodge entered the South and ventured only as far south as Chattanooga. Although Clark (1962) found her to be highly biased toward New England in her writings of the South, her writings actually seem as disparaging of Northern lifestyles as of that which she observed in the South. Finding fault with both overly harsh Northern travelers and overly zealous civic and religious 'civilizers' in the South, Dodge called for sympathy for the defeated region.

**Green, John Paterson (1845-????)**

John Paterson Green is the only black travel writer found for this thesis. Although born in North Carolina, Green moved at an early age to Ohio. In 1870, he returned to the South and settled in South Carolina. Traveling in the summer of 1872 through South Carolina and North Carolina, Green journeyed with three black families, one of which was his own. Green wrote much of Southern black lore of the areas but very little of the actual places through which he traveled. Highly critical of Southern treatment of blacks, Green supported black migration to Northern and Western states, advice he himself took when he returned to the North at the end of his travel account. Giving different names to the Carolinian cities through which he passed, Green, according to Clark (1962), may not have actually written this travel narrative. Based on a letter found in one of the few remaining copies of this book, Clark considers it an example of Republican propaganda.

**King, Edward Smith (1848-1896)**

Edward S. King, born in Middlefield, Massachusetts, was a well-known war correspondent and prolific author. In 1873 and parts of 1874, King toured with artist J. Wells Champney and at times, other travelers through the postwar South, covering all Southern states as far north as Kentucky and as far west as Texas and Oklahoma. Traveling more than 25,000 miles through the South, King serialized his writings in *Scribner's Monthly* and ultimately published what has become the most widely read travel account of that era. King wrote primarily for tourists and settlers to the region, listing sights and scenes in each Southern town through which he passed. King saw the future of the 'New South' through the introduction of extensive railroads and immigration from both the North and Europe. After completing his Southern travels, he moved to Europe, where he continued to write for the *Boston Morning Journal* as a war correspondent, until 1888. King never married and continued to publish well into the 1890s.
Reid, Whitelaw (1837-1912)

Whitelaw Reid, born near Xenia, Ohio, was a well-known journalist and even more famous Republican politician and diplomat. Writing for the Cleveland Herald and Cincinnati Gazette, he gained wide acclaim for his coverage of the Civil War under the pseudonym “Agate.” Reid toured a postwar South on three separate occasions. In April 1865, he traveled for two months with Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase and other dignitaries with a presidential pass and ship. Returning in the fall of 1865, Reid traveled into the South’s interior alone, although he had important letters of introduction. For his final trip, Reid journeyed by land from Washington, DC to New Orleans, beginning in January 1866. As he spent more time in the South and experimented personally with free black labor, Reid became a significantly less arduous supporter of black rights. In addition to changing his own views of the South through his travels, Reid observed crucial changes in the political climate of the region. After his travels, Reid assumed the editorship of the New York Tribune, a position which he held for numerous years. In 1889, he became US minister to France. Reid eventually returned to the United States to accept the vice-presidential nomination on the Republican Harrison ticket, though he lost that race. In 1905, Reid was named ambassador to Great Britain, where he remained until he died. Reid’s travel account of a postbellum South has been fairly widely cited, though he is mainly known for his political affiliations.

Sargent, Angelina M. (????-????)

In 1864, Angelina M. Sargent sailed from New York to New Orleans by way of Cuba. Thought by Clark (1962) to be the writings of a “precious girl,” Sargent’s early travel account chronicles her six-month stay in New Orleans, where she taught black children for a short time. In no place, however, does it indicate that she was anything other than an adult. In February 1873, Sargent embarked on a two-month tour of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida with a Mr. Sargent, presumably her husband, and various other party members. Sargent penned her narratives of traveling through the South as part of a much broader collection of travel letters and poetry from various places. Little is known about Sargent’s life.

Stearns, Charles (1818-1887)

Charles Stearns, an avid abolitionist and publisher, was born in Massachusetts. According to John Foster Kirk (1891), Charles Woodward Stearns was a doctor who graduated from Yale in 1837 and worked in the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania in 1840. Entering the army as a surgeon, Stearns apparently wrote The Constitution of the United States: with Concordance, Index and Questions in 1872, as well as publishing his travel account in the same year. Although Kirk lists both works for Stearns, Stearns himself gives no indication of this training or occupation through his
travel narrative. Determining the accuracy of this connection is extremely difficult, since nothing seems to have been written about Stearns aside from this cursory information.

From his travel account, we know that Stearns, having served under John Brown, lived in Kansas during its 1856-7 conflict and, then, moved to Colorado for the duration of the Civil War. Deciding with his wife, who subsequently died, to serve the newly emancipated blacks in the South, Stearns, in May 1866, purchased a plantation in the South to experiment with black free labor. Remarrying, Stearns, his new wife, and his daughter eventually settled in Columbia County, Georgia. From the beginning, Stearns experienced great difficulty in ‘managing’ his black laborers to his liking. His new wife, Etta, left after the first month but returned in October 1866. Threatened anonymously by white Southerners for his work with Southern blacks, Stearns also had repeated confrontations that at times became physical with local white Southerners in Apling, Georgia. In September 1867, Etta fell ill and died. Stearns almost immediately asked his sister to come to Georgia, and she arrived by the end of 1867. In 1868, she and Stearns’s daughter returned to the North for several months.

Elected “Judge of Ordinary,” Stearns, in 1868, was forced from office by angry Southern whites and subsequently fell ill for two months. In early 1869, Stearns and his family returned to the North, where he intended to secure financial aid and found a new wife. Five months later, Stearns returned to Georgia with his sister, daughter, and eighty-four-year-old mother. His new wife and step-son followed shortly in April 1870. In August 1870, a month after Georgia was readmitted to the Union and its military presence was removed, Stearns decided to leave the South. In early 1871, his mother died; and within a year, Stearns left the South permanently, selling his property to settling Northerners.

For Stearns, the solution to the South’s problem lay, initially, in black ownership of land and ‘proper’ laws, though he tempered that feeling by the time he left the South. Writing extensively of farming practices and quoting liberally from published letters of the time period, Stearns ended his account with a drawn-out discussion of black characteristics, the Ku-Klux Klan, and solutions for the future.

Sunshine, Sylvia (Abbie M. Brooks) (????-????)

Sylvia Sunshine, the pseudonym of Abbie M. Brooks, remains a mystery. Traveling to Florida some time between 1874 and 1878, Sunshine gives little indication of her identity. Considered by Clark to be “one of those sickly lasses who hurried away to Florida… in search of health and history,” Sunshine actually was a pioneer in Florida historiography. Beyond that information, however, little exists about her identity. Extremely critical of other travelers and tourists who regurgitated scathing comments about the South, Sunshine gave advice to both health-seeking travelers and tourists in general concerning what to see and how to act. Possibly a journalist (Martin 1976, xxv), Sunshine used sketches from King’s 1875 travel account to illustrate her own writings, though without acknowledging their source. She filled her travel account with extended quotes from earlier travelers to Florida and various historians, attaching an extensive gazetteer and guide-book to the end of her travel narrative. Sunshine traveled throughout parts of Georgia, Florida, and into Cuba, where she criticized quite strongly Cuban
blacks.

**Trowbridge, John Townsend (1827-1916)**

John T. Trowbridge, born in Ogden, New York, was a fairly prolific writer best known for his friendship with Walt Whitman. Self-educated and working briefly as a teacher, Trowbridge lived in both New York and Boston, where he worked as a writer. Despite his career as a prose writer, Trowbridge viewed himself first as a poet, a connection evident in the flowery passages of his travel account. Publishing various novels that showed his anti-slavery conviction, Trowbridge traveled through the South for four months in 1865 and 1866 and wrote an account which has subsequently become an important text for historians. Trowbridge journeyed explicitly to see the desolation on Civil-War battlefields and across the South in general. Through his travels, Trowbridge focused on the ‘healing hands’ of Nature seen in these sites of destruction. He put all faith in manufacturing and Northern capital to uplift the defeated region. Particularly in the second part of his travels, Trowbridge relied quite heavily on conversations with people he encountered to support his claims about the South. Because he wrote for the Stebbin’s Publishing House, his travel account was initially sold only by subscription (Carroll 1956). Later editing a children’s magazine, Trowbridge remained a productive author, publishing several novels and an autobiography before his death. According to Gordon Carroll, who edited a 1956 edition of Trowbridge’s travel account, Trowbridge wrote under the pseudonym Paul Creyton, although I found no texts attributed to that name.