



Britishness, Identity and Citizenship

The View From Abroad

C. McGlynn, A. Mycock
and J. W. McAuley (eds)

Peter Lang

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BRITISH IDENTITIES SINCE 1707

This volume is an exciting contribution to debates about identity and citizenship both in the UK and elsewhere. By examining the view from abroad, through popular cultural transmission, education, and travel and migration, the transnational nature of Britishness and the political and cultural dynamism of the concept and its contemporary relevance becomes apparent. The multi-layered relationships uncovered in this work have historically shaped both the transmission and reception of Britishness and continue to do so. The international group of contributors, from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, synthesise contemporary and historical debates about Britishness to offer a vital breadth to a debate that is becoming increasingly narrow and introspective in the UK.



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BRITISH IDENTITIES SINCE 1707

Vol. 2

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Contents

CATHERINE MCGLYNN, ANDREW MYCOCK AND JAMES W. MCAULEY

- 1 Introduction – Britishness, Identity and Citizenship:
The View from Abroad I

SECTION ONE The Empire: Constructions of Britishness 9

CHARLES V. REED

- 1 Respectable Subjects of the Queen: The Royal Tour of 1901
and Imperial Citizenship in South Africa II

ANTOINE MIOCHE

- 2 Britishness: The Imperial Vision of William Knox (1732–1810) 31

ANGELA MCCARTHY

- 3 Scottishness and Britishness among New Zealand's
Scots Since 1840 55

DAVID LEVEY

- 4 National Identity and Allegiance in Gibraltar 73

ELLEKE BOEHMER AND SUMITA MUKHERJEE

- 5 Re-making Britishness: Indian Contributions to
Oxford University, c. 1860–1930 95

SECTION TWO Representing Britishness: Culture and Identity 113

MEENAKSHI SHARMA

- 6 The Empire of English and Its Legacy:
A Citizenship of the Mind 115

FRANCOISE UGOCHUKWU

- 7 From Nwana to Adichie: Britishness goes Full Circle
in Nigerian Literature 135

KARINE TOURNIER-SOL

- 8 Britishness and European Integration since 1997
in the French Press 151

KATH WOODWARD, DAVID GOLDBLATT AND JAMES WYLLIE

- 9 British Fair Play: Sport across Diasporas
at the BBC World Service 171

AMY VON HEYKING

- 10 'Proud to call themselves Englishmen': Representations of
Britishness in Twentieth Century English-Canadian Schools 191

SECTION THREE Brits Abroad: Travel and Migration 213

THOMAS THURNELL-READ

- 11 'Here Comes the Drunken Cavalry': Managing and Negotiating
the Britishness of All-Male Stag Tours in Eastern Europe 215

A. JAMES HAMMERTON

- 12 'Thatcher's Refugees': Shifting Identities among
Late Twentieth Century British Emigrants 233

BEN WELLINGS

- 13 The English in Australia:
A Non-Nation in Search of an Ethnicity? 249

TAMARA VAN KESSEL

- 14 'Britishness' as promoted by the British Council
in the 1930s and 1940s 267

- SECTION FOUR Post Imperial Citizenship:
Homecoming and Identity 289

ALAN SEARS, IAN DAVIES AND ALAN REID

- 15 From Britishness to Nothingness and Back Again:
Looking for a Way Forward in Citizenship Education 291

ANDREW MYCOCK, CATHERINE MCGLYNN AND RHYS ANDREWS

- 16 Understanding the 'History Wars' in Australia and the UK 313

- Select Bibliography 335

- Notes on Contributors 347

- Index 353

CATHERINE MCGLYNN, ANDREW MYCOCK AND
JAMES W. MCAULEY

Introduction – Britishness, Identity and Citizenship: The View from Abroad¹

Recent years have witnessed an increase in the profile of debates about national identity and citizenship (two separate but often conflated concepts) in the UK. A palpable sense of a crisis of Britishness can be discerned within this debate, which has been conducted in academic, media and political circles. The former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown clearly hoped that one of the key achievements of his time in office would be the successful re-shaping of British identity to underpin a strongly articulated sense of belonging based on nationally-located values such as fair play, tolerance and liberty, which he saw as a ‘golden thread’ running through British history.² These values together with enduring British institutions such as Westminster, the BBC and the NHS would form the basis of an inclusive civic citizenship that could accommodate an increasingly diverse population.

In the end this project was not the hallmark of Brown’s tenure, as the sharp recession engendered by the international banking crisis became the focal point of political discourse and action. However, while the economy may now dominate British political debate, the fashioning of a ‘national’ narrative that can bind citizens together is still a much sought-after, if

- 1 As organisers of the conference *Britishness, Identity and Citizenship: The View From Abroad*, we were grateful to receive financial and administrative support from our institution the University of Huddersfield which played host to the conference in June 2008. We would also like to acknowledge the support of the British Academy through the provision of conference grant BCG-48407.
- 2 See, for example, Brown’s speech to the Fabian Society on 14 January 2006 or his article, ‘The golden thread that runs through our history’, *The Guardian* (8 July 2004).

inherently contentious, goal. At first sight it would appear that Brown's successor Prime Minister David Cameron's understanding of Britishness and UK citizenship is informed by a similar set of institutions and values. But Cameron prioritises a more organic and emotional sense of national identity that seeks to prioritise 'forgotten' institutions such as the monarchy and the armed forces combined with, as we note in our own contribution to this volume, an innate faith in the potential for school history to 'teach the nation' – though he appears less sure which nation that is.³

One of the most notable aspects of this debate has for us been the astonishing amount of introspection on display. On the surface, discussions about defining the legal and cultural bonds between citizens in the twenty-first century United Kingdom are inherently enmeshed within international forces, as globalization has through the increased movement of information, capital and people, challenged the sovereignty of states and offered ways of creating and sustaining community memberships that stretch mentally and physically beyond borders. In addition, one of the most divisive issues for commentators has been how to acknowledge and interpret an imperial past. However, the resonance of the legacy of empire and the ongoing significance of constitutional and emotional ties is overlooked for the most part, meaning that even migrants from the Commonwealth are seen as outsiders requiring tutoring in the values of Britishness before they can successfully attain citizenship.⁴

This myopic focus on what Kumar terms the 'inner Empire' of Great Britain has, in our opinion, truncated contemporary understandings of Britishness as an identity.⁵ To act as if Britishness has been shorn of any transnational dynamic beyond that of the potential for social, economic and cultural forces to penetrate the UK from outside is to remove many potentially rich layers of connection that could create an understanding

3 D. Cameron, 'Proud to be British', *ConservativeHome* (10 July 2009) <http://conservativehome.blogs.com/platform/2009/07/david-cameron-proud-to-be-british.html>, accessed 6 August 2010.

4 A. Mycock, 'British citizenship and the legacy of empires', *Parliamentary Affairs* 63 (2) (2010), 339–55.

5 K. Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003).

of British community far beyond the limited formalities of legal citizenship. The interconnected relationships between national, multi-national and transnational constructions of citizenship and national identity ensure that debates about national and imperial Britishness cannot be confined within sovereign nation-state parameters. Moreover, the intersections between the post-imperial and the post-colonial mean that established and new conversations about Britishness must be recognised if we are to understand how old and new voices connect.

This was the guiding conviction that prompted the organisation of an inter-disciplinary conference, *Britishness: Identity and Citizenship: the View from Abroad*. The conference, held in June 2008 at the University of Huddersfield, brought together a range of international scholars who presented work that revealed the dynamism of contemporary and historical experiences of Britishness through popular cultural transmission, education, and travel and migration. The chapters in this volume have all been drawn from the conference and together they act as a challenge to the increasingly inward-looking popular, political and academic debate about identity and citizenship in the UK, asking commentators to acknowledge that the transnational nature of Britishness transcends a simple home/abroad dichotomy.

The View from Abroad

In some ways the work in this volume could suggest that Britishness appears as a more easily pinned-down phenomenon when viewed from abroad. Whether that view is a positive one, such as the admiration historically displayed with an element of deference in other educational systems for literature, the political system, military prowess and supposedly innately British values, or the less laudable figures of the drunken British stag or the aloof and superior colonial administrator, a defined picture of the British and a sense of assured self-confidence about the virtues of Britishness is projected. This perception is noticeably of an Anglo-Britishness. For

example, the historical enmity the French media detected in what was seen as Prime Minister Tony Blair's capitulation to a long-standing Euroscepticism has been presented as an element of the 'forging' of Britishness in the eighteenth century.⁶ However, this was built on a much older antagonism between the English and the French and the contemporary Eurosceptic position is deeply imbued with an Anglo-British identity.⁷ In addition, the canon of literature exported as the hallmark of British civilization and its physical geography (From Wordsworth's Lake District to Shakespeare's Stratford) overlaps with the borders of England and Englishness, cementing the conflation of Englishness and Britishness.

It could be easy to assume, in such a light, that the projection of Britishness abroad both during the era of empire and in the modern world has obscured the problems of promoting cohesion within a multi-national state, problems that have become increasingly apparent when the concept is discussed domestically.⁸ In fact, many of the contributions to this volume show how these problems are replicated in many ways in settings outside the UK, reflecting the struggle experienced by other core ethnic groups (such as the Russians) in a time of imperial disintegration.⁹ This replication can be detected both amongst those coming to Britain and those leaving it.

For many of those travelling outwards, it is apparent that their sense of Britishness did not – and does not – replace strong ethnic affiliations, even if like William Knox they consciously saw themselves as representing and furthering the interests of the empire. However, for the English the legacy of denying an institutional framework for their identity has played out in a similar manner across the former empire as it does within an increasingly constitutionally devolved UK. The work here on migration to Australia shows how the English Diaspora can struggle to define itself once legal and

6 L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1992).

7 C. Gifford, 'The UK and the European Union: Dimensions of British Sovereignty and the Problem of Eurosceptic Britishness', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 63 (2) (2010), 321–38.

8 For an excellent discussion of the multi-national nature of the UK state please see C. Bryant, *The Nations of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2005).

9 V. Tolz, *Russia: Inventing the Nation* (London: Arnold, 2001).

cultural ties to Britishness diminish in importance in post-independence Commonwealth states and how the long subsuming of Englishness within Britishness has eroded both a civic institutional and an ethno-cultural basis for a twenty-first century Englishness. The experience of those travelling to the UK further illuminates the tension between civic Britishness and the hidden ethnic base of Englishness from another perspective. For example, the experiences of the educated Indian middle class show how those who envisaged a sense of fraternity through the shared connection of literature and culture also had to struggle with the exclusion and derogation they experienced when they came to visit the origin of this community of which they saw themselves as full members.

In light of this it could be argued that the global ties established through migration, imperialism and cultural profile do not actually have much to offer to debates about defining an accommodating contemporary Britishness within the UK. If the transnational dynamics merely replicate the complications and tensions of the debate at home, what need is there for British citizens and policy-making elites to turn their gaze outwards? In addition, the broad popularity enjoyed currently by historians such as Niall Ferguson who attempt to present the imperial past as largely positive, not just for the UK but for the former empire (if not the entire world) suggests how deep-seated the resistance to learning about Britishness from those whose connection is not based on birth and citizenship could be.¹⁰ The strong unease stoked when modern politicians are called upon to apologise for past actions rests on anxiety about 'a broader decline in national self-belief and standards of behaviour, highlighting the seemingly limitless potential for British national history to be debunked', suggesting that this kind of confrontation with the legacy of Britishness abroad can only lead to negative consequences.¹¹

10 N. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane and Penguin, 2003).

11 A. Mycock, 'Sorry Seems to be an Easier Word: Brown and the Politics of Apology', *Open Democracy* (30 November 2009) <http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/andy-mycock/sorry-seems-to-be-easier-word-brown-and-politics-of-apology> accessed 20 August 2010.

It is also worth asking what value taking this transnational perspective would be to those with connections to Britishness abroad, especially in former colonies. Over the course of the twentieth century it was the case that the formal connections with the metropolis were severed in large part by immigration and nationality legislation passed at Westminster. However, states across the former empire were not passive recipients of such actions. They too were re-defining themselves and seemingly leaving Britishness behind, either through their own formulations of citizenship and right of entry or through cultural and educational exploration of their own developing national identity, marking a clean break from any sense of deference and cultural cringe. If these states are so positive about moving forward to a post-colonial sense of community and place in the world it would seem logical to ask what value their citizens would find in exploring the legacy of British connections, especially when more recent waves of immigration mean that for many residents and citizens there would be no personal element to that connection.

The Value of Transnational Dynamics

Whilst acknowledging that times have changed, we still contend that exploring these broader bonds is an exercise that does have much to reveal about 'national' stories as they are re-interpreted for modern communities. In fact, it is precisely the way in which many of these contributions reveal that identifications with and understandings of Britishness do not mean that states make a choice between sticking with anachronistic imperial affiliations or removing these links entirely that tells us why these connections still have meaning and relevance. For example, in looking beyond the caricatured visual Britishness of Gibraltar, Levey presents us here with a 'far more complex community with a unique identity which has been forged, not only as the result of British and Spanish external influences, but also in spite of them'. British identity remains an important element of how

Gibraltarians see themselves but despite first appearances the British connection is not an atrophying agent that prevents development and change. The contributions on citizenship and civic education in this volume also show that whilst rejecting what in recent decades began to look like paying undue obeisance to Britain was a logical way of asserting a new post-colonial sense of communal pride, airbrushing historical connections removed important contextual understanding of the development of constitutional and cultural practices. In addition, it will never be less than vital to shine a light on the appalling treatment of peoples and the promotion of ethnic hierarchies and division in the imperial era, but to assign the blame to 'the Brits' and present these problems as an ages old story of historical injustice will not solve the current and keenly felt inequalities between groups in the modern day. A nuanced and rigorous exploration and understanding of Britishness in historical and contemporary settings does not have to be a revisionist apologia or a forcefully and artificially placed full stop on an era, rather it can promote a deeper awareness of the ethno-cultural basis of norms and practices which could aid many states in their anxieties over the promotion of social cohesion.

For the debate in the UK the potential consequences of acknowledging the transnational dynamics also means embracing difficult historical realities and examining their ongoing legacy. However, there are a number of obvious advantages to overcoming the current tunnel vision when it comes to exploring Britishness as a sense of belonging and community. Firstly, these contributions remind us that those travelling literally or figuratively under the Union Flag have often held and valued a number of identities and that rather than looking at sub-state nationalism or increasing cultural plurality within the UK as centrifugal forces, this multi-layered understanding of allegiance and connection should be acknowledged as something that has long been a feature for those who understand themselves to be shaped in some form by a connection to Britishness. Secondly, and again without having to retreat to a rose-tinted view of the past, the way in which British high and popular culture has engendered a sense of shared experience suggests that there remains a strong potential to foster horizontal bonds on such a basis if input and contribution from others to defining and understanding what Britishness is can supersede the current

emphasis on elite formulation and top-down instruction. Finally, in finding a way to acknowledge the enduring strength of constitutional ties, most notably the monarchy, the debate within the UK can start to deal with elements of Britishness that, if they are discussed at all, are dismissed out of hand as anachronistic. Bringing these broader transnational dynamics into debates about national identity will allow all of us to make use of the past in a positive but realistic way.

The volume is divided into four main sections, all comprising discussions of identity and citizenship in historical and contemporary settings. The ways in which the contributors explore the representation and interpretation of Britishness abroad supports our contention that from the imperial era onwards the construction of Britishness has not been a unidirectional journey from a metropolis to the periphery. Rather, understandings of the concept are contained in a number of culturally and politically dynamic relationships which affect both the development of identity and citizenship in the UK and elsewhere. Embracing this knowledge offers the potential to synthesise historical and contemporary debates about both identity and citizenship and offer a way out of what has become an introspective and un-necessarily narrow discussion.

SECTION ONE

The Empire: Constructions of Britishness

I Respectable Subjects of the Queen: The Royal Tour of 1901 and Imperial Citizenship in South Africa

Historian Vivian Bickford-Smith has recently characterized Britishness as South Africa's 'forgotten nationalism,' lost in a historiography that pays far more attention to African and Afrikaner nationalisms than to Britishness.¹ It has been remembered, we might suggest, in a flurry of recent scholarship on the subject. Historians of the 'British world,' for instance, have understood Britishness as a kind of trans-nationalism, born out of the diaspora of British ideas, institutions, and people throughout the world. At the same time, scholars of Britishness have been apt to stress that it was not some pre-packaged set of ideas or identities, but the product of complex historical discourses and processes mediated and remade by local perceptions and encounters. This chapter explores the reception of the 1901 royal tour to South Africa by the independent African press, the editors of which imagined the British Empire to be their political and cultural universes.

Scholars, however, have rarely presented Western-educated people of colour in such a light. Post-colonial and other area studies scholars have treated the historical actors presented here in skilful and sophisticated ways but struggle perhaps too diligently to excise them from the spectre of collaboration, to really see them as sly subverters of the colonial order or to understand 'mimicry' as a form of anti-colonial resistance.² On the

- 1 V. Bickford-Smith, 'Writing About Englishness: South Africa's Forgotten Nationalism,' in G. MacPhee and P. Poddar, eds, *Empire and After: Englishness in Postcolonial Perspective* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), 57–72.
- 2 L. de Kock, *Civilizing Barbarians: Missionary Narrative and African Textual Response in Nineteenth-century South Africa* (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1996); H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

other hand, scholars of British history and British imperial history fail to see them as relevant to their political discourses. With these historical traditions in mind, Saul Dubow has proposed a revised understanding of Britishness, as a global cultural space open to borrowing, appropriation, and redefinition, arguing for the usefulness of:

a concept of Britishness that dispenses, as far as is possible, with connotations of racial or ethnic ancestry and which decouples the idea of Britishness from a British state or the 'ethnological unity' of Greater Britain hankered after by J. R. Seeley. It does so by challenging the unstated assumption that the British Empire refers to territories and peoples which were somehow *owned* or collectively possessed by the United Kingdom and proposes instead a more capacious category capable of including elective, hyphenated forms of belonging... Britishness, in this sense, is better seen as a field of cultural, political, and symbolic attachments which includes the rights, claims, and aspirations of subject-citizens as well as citizen-subjects – 'non-Britons' as well as 'neo-Britons' in today's parlance.³

This chapter aims to explore the responses of pro-empire, 'respectable' people of colour in the British Cape Colony – specifically, a comparatively small group of cosmopolitan newspaper writers who claimed British rights and imperial citizenship derived from their loyalty to the empire and the monarchy. It may be easy, with the benefit of hindsight, for us to condemn these historical actors as out of touch with the zeitgeist of history, but they did not have the luxury of knowing what was to come. The newspaper editors of this analysis were advocates of a non-racial respectable status and identity, who saw themselves as imperial citizens and as the more authentic heirs of British constitutionalism.

The royal tours offer a fascinating lens through which to write a global history of loyalism and Britishness in the British Empire. These respectable people of colour in the Cape Colony shared a basic worldview with a global class of respectable subjects across the British Empire, all of whom commented on and responded to the royal tours in comparable, if different languages of loyalty. This global history of Britishness and imperial citizenship serves to provincialize the British Isles in rather profound ways, to

3 S. Dubow, 'How British Was the British World? The Case of South Africa,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37 (March 2007), 2–3.

demonstrate that many people of colour could and did embrace an imperial identity despite the racial determinism, violence, and dispossession that came to dominate the colonial experience during the nineteenth century. Like so many other products of trans-cultural contact, they were *bricoleurs*, using the cultural building blocks of a larger world to make sense of their lives. During the royal tour of 1901, they appealed to the liberal-humanitarian rhetoric of empire, which cloaked the more brutal reality that often lay beneath the surface, to demand their rights as imperial citizens and loyal subjects of the Queen. The history of British imperial citizenship is relevant and important not only to the history of Britain and its colonies but also to the narratives of world and transnational histories. The work of Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds traces the development of a 'global colour line' and the transnational counter-discourses that emerged to challenge the dominance of the white, the male, the European.⁴ They reconceptualize the Eurocentric narrative of human rights, from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While European constructions of human rights often 'rested on and reinforced imperial distinctions between so-called civilized and uncivilized peoples,' men and women of colour across the colonized world constructed alternative discourses of rights that transcended national and racial communities. While the historical actors of this chapter imagined a non-racial political and cultural community that was uniquely imperial and framed their rights in the language of British traditions, they undoubtedly participated in a larger struggle against a 'global colour bar,' the results of which could not have been predicted at the time.

During the nineteenth century, Britishness and respectability became increasingly associated with 'white skins, English tongues, and bourgeois values.'⁵ The Western-educated native came to represent, among other caricatures, 'the Dangerous Native,' 'a misadjusted, urbanized, male agitator,

4 M. Lake and H. Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

5 V. Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 39.

his lips dripping with wild and imperfectly understood rhetoric about rights'.⁶ Simultaneously, men and women of colour throughout the British Empire, who had not been born in or (in most cases) had never seen the British Isles and who had no *ethnic* claim to 'being' British, imagined themselves to be British people. While definitions of citizenship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century British world were increasingly defined along ethnic and racial lines, there also persisted more open-ended and universalist discourses of imperial citizenship. They centred, in particular, on a mythologized image of Victoria the Good, the maternal, justice-giving queen. While the African intellectuals of this chapter were fundamentally social conservatives, interested in protecting and enhancing their own power and status, they also demanded a radical transformation of imperial culture by demanding, as respectable subjects of the queen, the rights and responsibilities of imperial citizenship.

The Independent Press in South Africa

John Tengo Jabavu, editor of *Imvo Zabantsundu*, Francis Z. S. Peregrino, of the *South African Spectator*, and Alan Kirkland Soga, editor of *Izwi Labantu*, differed in their political allegiances and in their opinions on the war, but all celebrated and promoted the importance of formal politics within the bounds of the British constitution. In South Africa, independent African newspapers were the products and by-products of missionary schools. In fact, the editors of *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the *South African Spectator*, and *Izwi Labantu* were all Christian mission students; two were the sons of prominent African clergymen. They were excluded from service in colonial or local governments yet actively participated in the local and imperial politics of South Africa.⁷ As missionary students, they expressed a

6 M. O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 14.

7 R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750–1870: A Tragedy of Manners* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 174.

brand of sub-imperialism centred on a civilizing mission for those socially beneath them. Through education, they argued, all people of colour might achieve civilization and citizenship and they looked toward hereditary and colonial-appointed chiefs with scorn, as atavisms in a modern age. During the royal tour, they all appealed to *British* constitutionalism and justice, investing their status as African *respectables* in promoting the vote, education, and empire loyalism.

This brand of respectable politics became acutely pronounced, and challenged, during the South African War (1899–1902), an imperial war fought between the British Empire, including thousands of African and Coloured subjects, and the Afrikaner republics. The propaganda of the war was cast in language that contrasted British liberty with Afrikaner tyranny. The Prime Minister Lord Salisbury appealed to the mythology of the Great Queen when he told the House of Lords in October 1899 that:

the moment has arrived for deciding whether the future of South Africa is to be a growing and increasing Dutch supremacy or a safe, perfectly established supremacy of the English Queen.... With regard to the future there must be no doubt that the Sovereign of England is paramount; there must be no doubt that the white races will be put upon an equality, and that due precaution will be taken for the philanthropic and kindly and improving treatment of those countless indigenous races of whose destiny, I fear, we have been too forgetful.⁸

People of colour overwhelming recognized this difference and served the imperial war effort in great numbers, through ‘irregular armed service, scouting, spying and intelligence, supplying crop, livestock, and other goods, and in providing remount, transport riding, and other labour for logistical services.’⁹ While local *respectables* challenged the practices of British rule, they broadly attested to the centrality of the British constitution and their great patron the Great Queen as bulwarks against colonial and Afrikaner abuse: ‘for them, Britain and its Empire stood for justice, fairness and equality before the law, which meant above all non-racialism in the sense of

8 *HL Deb 17 October 1899 vol. 77 cc 21–2.*

9 B. Nasson, *The South African War, 1899–1902* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

“equal rights for all civilized men”.¹⁰ The royal tour of 1901 was designed to reinforce this propaganda and to thank colonial subjects across the world for their service to the empire. The year 1901 also marked the first negotiations aimed at ending the war. When the Boer general Louis Botha tried to negotiate the non-racial franchise out of the war settlement, he posed a threat not only to the franchise, but to respectable status itself, serving to crystallize the difference between British liberty and Afrikaner tyranny. The Cape’s non-racial franchise was one of the most prized possessions of African *respectables*. It was remarkably democratic for the nineteenth century: the 1853 constitution required property worth £25 or a salary of £50 in order to vote.¹¹ The non-racial franchise was slowly eroded through a series of registration and voting acts (1887, 1892, 1894), which purged many African and Coloured voters from the voting rolls.¹² Yet, even after 1892, nearly half the voters in the colony were people of colour.¹³

Imvo Zabantsundu (*Native or Black Opinion*) of King William’s Town was the first newspaper published independently by a person of colour in South Africa. It was a weekly newspaper published in English and Xhosa by a twenty-five year old Methodist lay preacher named John Tengo Jabavu starting in 1884, with around 10,0000 readers in the Cape, Natal, Basutoland, and the Afrikaner republics.¹⁴ Jabavu’s family identified themselves as Mfengu (‘Fingo’) people, but he was educated at the Methodist mission station at Healdtown and took up a teaching post at Somerset East. He was an avid student and teacher of languages, including English, Latin, and Greek, and wrote for the liberal settler newspaper *Cape Argus* under a nom-de-plume.¹⁵

10 C. Saunders, ‘African Attitudes Toward Britain and Its Empire,’ in D. Lowry, ed., *The South African War Reappraised* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2000), 141–3.

11 Ross, *Status and Respectability*, 174; Stanley Trapido, ‘The Origins of the Cape Franchise Qualifications of 1853,’ *Journal of African History* 5 (Winter 1964), 37.

12 Ross, *Status and Respectability*, 174.

13 Ibid.

14 L. Switzer, ‘The Beginnings of African Protest Journalism,’ in L. Switzer, ed., *South Africa’s Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance, 1880–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 60.

15 D. D. T. Jabavu, *The Life of John Tengo Jabavu, Editor of Imvo Zabantsundu, 1884–1921* (Lovedale: Lovedale Institution Press, 1922), 11–12.

Between 1881 and 1884, he had edited *Isigidimi Sama Xosa* (*Xhosa Messenger*) for the Scottish missionaries at Lovedale but was ousted for openly criticizing the Cape government one too many times.¹⁶ Jabavu became an important and active figure in Cape politics, campaigning for white politicians and advocating a brand of non-racial, respectable liberal politics. He was allied with a group of progressive Cape politicians, which included John X. Merriman, James-Rose Innes, Saul Solomon, and J. W. Sauer, and was a sought-after electioneer in districts where African votes affected election outcomes. His political allies also provided the funding for the newspaper, which was printed on the presses of the *Cape Mercury*.¹⁷

Framing South African politics as a struggle between British liberty and Afrikaner tyranny and republicanism, he was, until 1898, a staunch and vocal opponent of the Afrikaner Bond, the Cape political party that represented the interests of Dutch-speaking South Africans, and worked tirelessly to organize an English-speaking progressive coalition in order to defeat it.¹⁸ In 1897, his dream of a broad-church English party emerged in the form of the Progressive Party, led by Cecil Rhodes, with whom he briefly allied; political disagreements with the Progressives and the alliance of his friends John X. Merriman and J. W. Sauer with the Bond, however, pushed him toward a shift of allegiance.¹⁹ In March 1898, Jan Hofmeyer, the Bond leader, proclaimed that he was not and never had been hostile to African political rights, beginning his campaign to vie for African voters.²⁰ Jabavu declared Hofmeyer the new standard-bearer for 'true British principle' in South African politics, in opposition to Cecil Rhodes' 'equal

16 L. and D. Switzer. *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho: A Descriptive Bibliographic Guide to African, Coloured, and Indian newspapers, Newsletters, and Magazines 1836–1976* (G. K. Hall, 1979), 4; C. Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality: The Public Lives of D. D. T. Jabavu of South Africa, 1885–1959* (Cape Town and Johannesburg David Philip, 1997), 11.

17 Switzer, 'The Beginnings', 60–1.

18 Trapido, 'White Conflict and Non-White Participation', PhD Thesis University of London, 1970, 290, 304.

19 Trapido, 'White Conflict', 309; De Kock, 336–77.

20 Trapido, 'White Conflict', 331.

rights for white men only'.²¹ His allegiance to the Bond, combined with his pacifism during the South African War would make him a lightening rod of political controversy, to the point that his voice, *Imvo Zabantsundu*, was silenced in August 1901 by the military government of the Cape.

Francis Z. S. Peregrino, editor of the Cape Town English-language newspaper *The South African Spectator*, came to South Africa only in 1900 because, he said, 'at the outbreak of war... [he] turned his thoughts to South Africa and anticipating that when peace had been proclaimed and the whole country is under the British flag, progress and prosperity are bound to follow, [and] he made up his mind to come here to devote his pen and brain to the service of the native people'.²² He had been born in Accra in Gold Coast to a family involved with local Wesleyan missionaries (his uncle was an African missionary in the Wesleyan Church).²³ He was educated in England and lived there until c. 1890, when he moved to the United States.²⁴ He demonstrated particular interest in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, an evangelical missionary organization founded by African Americans in Philadelphia, and pan-Africanist ideology. He often deferred to his colleagues at *Izwi Labantu* on local matters he considered controversial, but always stressed the need for cooperation among people of colour. Despite only coming to South Africa a year before the royal tour, he was chosen by a committee of other respectable men of colour to present the 'native address' to the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall. Having widely travelled the British world, Peregrino articulated his belief in British citizenship through education, the ballot box, and empire loyalism.

Within fifteen months of the paper's founding in 1897, Alan Kirkland Soga became editor of *Izwi Labantu* (*Voice of the People*), founded by Walter Benson Rubusana and published in Xhosa and English from East London.

21 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (31 March, 1898), cited in De Kock, *Civilizing Barbarians* 336–77.

22 *South African Spectator* (7 September 1901).

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

Soga's mother was Scottish, and he was educated in Scotland.²⁵ His father Tiyo Soga, an important advisor to the Xhosa chief Sandile, was trained at the University of Edinburgh and became the first African Presbyterian minister.²⁶ Alan Soga was apparently a clerk in Tembuland as late as 1897 when he resigned, according to the *Cape Argus*, because he could not:

consistently with the position he occupied in the service, render the Natives the assistance which is desirable in the present crisis... He charges that his action, which has been taken on his own initiative, will act as an incentive to Native and Coloured friends to vote solidly for the British party and the maintenance of that supremacy which is necessary for their welfare in the future.²⁷

Izwi Labantu was founded, in a very real sense, to counter the dominance of Jabavu and his paper, which was by then seen by many of his opponents as an organ of the Afrikaner Bond.²⁸ Soga apparently had distaste for Jabavu, as a Mfengu, but this ethnic rivalry was a minor sub-plot to a far more vibrant political one. While subsidized by the arch-imperialist Cecil Rhodes and his Progressive Party, Soga's paper maintained a stridently independent editorial perspective.²⁹ He loudly supported the British cause in the war against his nemesis Jabavu, who also claimed to be pro-British, and could hardly contain his satisfaction when *Imvo* was banned.

The cosmopolitan publishers of independent African newspapers were bi- or multi-lingual men, who were well-versed in the political discourses of the larger British world, and beyond. *The South African Spectator* boasted on its masthead to be 'positively cosmopolitan. We know a man and not colour: principles, and not creed'.³⁰ Jabavu, for instance, was a founder of Imbumba Yama Nyama (South African Aborigines Association) and was in contact with the Aborigines' Protection Society in Britain, which included Charles Dilke and Thomas Fowell Buxton among its members,

25 G. M. Fredrickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 41.

26 S. Trapido, 'White Conflict', 333.

27 *Cape Argus*, July 23 1898, cited in Stanley Trapido, 'White Conflict', 333.

28 Switzer, 'Beginnings', 65.

29 Ibid.

30 *South African Spectator* (August 23 1902).

and frequently wrote letters to their newspaper *The Aborigines' Friend*.³¹ He was a leader of a 'Native Combination' in 1885 that agreed, unsuccessfully, to form a branch of the Empire League, and considered himself a proud 'Gladstonian Liberal'.³² He petitioned and corresponded with government officials in Britain, mailing copies of *Imvo* to British MPs.³³ Yet, as Peregrino's life story demonstrates, South African culture was not only shaped by Britain and the British Empire but by the United States pan-Africanism, and other transnational currents.

These men did not desire to be white, or to be ethnically British, but imagined themselves to be, in a very real sense, British people. These African intellectuals were creating and participating in an imperial political culture that was often communicated in both the vernacular (Xhosa or Tswana, for instance) and the lingua franca of empire (English). Their message was accessible to the imperial, to colonial administrators and sympathetic parties in Britain and the empire, and to the local, to literate and non-literate people in their local communities. During the royal tours, they negotiated, contested, and re-made the national, or transnational, 'imagined community' of empire in print.

Colonial officials were deeply concerned by the politicization of Africans in the empire. While their politics of the independent African press were often radical, particularly in challenging the dominant racial discourses of imperial culture, they always framed their notions of citizenship in loyalty to the monarchy and the British Empire. Importantly, the South African Native National Congress, founded in 1912, seen as one of the foremost anti-colonial and nationalist political organizations of the twentieth century, swore allegiance to the British monarch. Colonial officials, however, conflated politicization with disloyalty. Officials also worried that the dissemination of news and information from the newspapers, through the gossip of the local bazaar or 'the Native school master who read it to them,' would inevitably lead to the politicization of non-literate people of colour.³⁴

31 Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality*, 12; *Imvo Zabantsundu* (April 30 1901), 3; Trapido, 'White Conflict', 290, 297.

32 Trapido, 'White Conflict', 291–2.

33 Ibid. 290, 297.

34 H. S. Caldecott to Gordon Sprigg, February 11, 1896, Rhodes Papers, vol. 6.2, No. 96, cited in Trapido, 'White Conflict', 321.

Respectable Subjects, Imperial Citizens

The non-racial politics of the South African newspapermen – Jabavu, Soga, and Peregrino – demonstrate that this modern racial order was not a foregone conclusion. While they and their progressive settler allies were characterized by what might be described as imperialist tendencies, to transform others in their own image, the notions of citizenship they articulated cannot be conflated with the more racist and exclusionary politics of imperial culture. They invested their notion of imperial citizenship in the politics of respectability and in the medium of an independent print culture. They imagined a future in the empire, where all respectable citizen-subjects of the queen shared the same rights and privileges.

The most prized possession of their respectability – the ‘liberal’ Cape franchise – came under attack during the late nineteenth century. In this context, these *respectables* understood the South African War to be a defining moment in the future social and political order of southern Africa. They feared, rightfully so, that the post-war settlement would solidify white dominance, a union of British and Boer, over the non-white populations of southern Africa. And, the Cape franchise was one of the earliest and most controversial impasses during the negotiations to end the war. Jabavu foresaw, appealing to the language of *The Aborigine’s Friend*, that *white* settlers would ‘come together... over the body of “the nigger”’.³⁵ Jabavu, Soga, and Peregrino sought to avert this fate and to make a new future for South Africa by claiming their rights as British subjects. Alan Soga fiercely disagreed with John Tengo Jabavu’s pacifism, and their fierce political rivalry only developed further over the course of the war. While they disagreed with each other over the politics of the war, they all interpreted its meaning through the lens of an imperial citizenship.

The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall – the future King George V and Queen Mary – visited South Africa in the summer of 1901, months after the death of George’s grandmother, Victoria. The tour itself was a by-product of the South African War, designed by Joseph Chamberlain the Colonial Secretary to convey thanks for imperial service in the war and to bolster

35 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (30 April 1901).

loyalty during troubled times for the empire. The death of the Great Queen and the on-going conflict profoundly informed the responses by people of colour to the royal tour. They had firmly stood by the empire in a time of war and appealed, as loyal subjects of the Great Queen and their new king, and future subjects of the Duke of Cornwall, for a post-war South Africa where all people shared the rights and responsibilities of imperial citizens.

In Victoria's death, these African intellectuals sought to redeem the promise of her rule by promoting a social order that did not deny any of her loyal subjects their rights. *Imvo Zabantsundu* expressed grief over the loss of this queen 'so precious to all of her subjects because of her transcendent virtues, and not less to her Native subjects in South Africa.'³⁶ Jabavu celebrated the Victorian era as an age of improvement, of 'increasing comfort and well-being for the masses,' liberty 'advancing in all directions,' new and improved technology, the advance of education and Christianity, and less crime.³⁷ Of course, her reign was also an era of violence, dispossession, and even disenfranchisement for people of colour in South Africa and the empire. But, Victoria the 'Mother, wife, and Queen' as a symbol represented progress toward justice and equality for *all* of her subjects, an unfulfilled promise.³⁸ *The Spectator* predicted, as a consequence of her death, 'the dawn of a new era, one of understanding and perfect concord between the races.'³⁹

In face of intense criticism, most notably from Soga, the 'pro-Boer' Jabavu sought to prove his loyalty to the empire through expressions of grief. In a letter to *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'N. S. B.' complimented Jabavu's impeccable loyalism and his deep, heartfelt articulation of grief (the author also noted that the paper's black border of mourning was much more pronounced than that of other King William's Town journals).⁴⁰ The South African War was a rather dark period in Jabavu's political career, and his need to express loyalty was particularly acute. The political discourses

36 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (28 January 1901).

37 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (28 January 1901; 18 March, 1901).

38 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (28 January 1901).

39 *South African Spectator* (23 February 1901).

40 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (11 February 1901).

over his loyalty in the days following Queen Victoria's death, particularly his very public disagreements with Soga, reflect on the complexities of 'native politics'.

Jabavu's 'support' for the Afrikaner Bond was framed without a discourse of British politics. While Soga identified him as a traitor, the real danger Jabavu represented to the wartime British government of the Cape was in demanding the rights of citizenship and in rejecting the jingoism of the war, arguing that, from the perspective of the colonized, there was *very* little difference between British and Boer settlers. Despite the intense criticism, *Imvo* claimed itself to be the most authentic voice of *British* political culture in South Africa and participated in a larger imperial political discourse about loyalty, jingoism, and the war.

Both Soga and Peregrino strongly supported the British war effort. The pacifism and pro-Boerism of *Imvo* was unacceptable to Soga, who belittled Jabavu's politics as treason in a time of war. He condemned those who, like Jabavu, dared to conflate Briton with Boer. Both of the pro-war papers (*Izwi Labantu* and *The South African Spectator*) advertised Boer atrocities and promoted African service to the empire. In this context, Peregrino confidently asserted that:

the loyalty of the coloured people during these troublons [sic] times has been spontaneous and unquestionable. From all parts of the Colony they appeal to be allowed to bear their share in the responsibilities, and to participate in the sacrifices necessary to the firm, and permanent establishment of His Majesty's beneficent rule under which the coloured people, are afforded full protection.⁴¹

As an advocate of the war, Soga was also a militant supporter of men such as Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Milner, the brand of arch-imperialist who represent the empire's most xenophobic and expansionist tendencies. Few histories of the British Empire account for such complexities – of pro-empire, pro-Boer, even pro-imperialist people of colour. They did not support British rule as the better of two evils, but as an investment in a just and more equitable future that lived up to the promises of Britishness.

41 *South African Spectator* (4 February 1901).

On the eve of the royal visit, Jabavu's *Imvo Zabantsundu* was suppressed by the military government of the Cape. Colonial officials kept a careful eye on independent African newspapers, and Jabavu's pacifism and 'pro-Boer' politics were deemed too dangerous for the royal visit and the war effort. Soga was elated by the silencing of Jabavu, even if they shared an enormous amount in common despite their differences. *Izwi* celebrated its rival's demise with the headline, 'IMVO R. I.P':

NEMESIS – which publishes arrogant and tyrannical abuse of prosperity, has found out our native contemporary at last.... Frankly, we have consistently opposed the pro-Boer policy of 'Imvo,' and its unfriendly attitude towards those friends of progress and good Government, who made it possible for that paper to establish itself... We feel deeply the humiliation cast upon the native press, just entering on the threshold of life. ... What an opportunity for our enemies to seize upon! ... The magnanimity of the British race is wonderful. Perhaps the moral lessons to be gained by this serious blow, will not be altogether lost, but will work out for the good to the future of the native press that has to be.⁴²

Soga, in haste to judge an old rival, unfairly concluded that Jabavu was disloyal, the same error that was often made by settlers and colonial officials about the African press as a whole. They confused independent political opinions with disloyalty.

In the context of this political crisis, the royal tour represented an important opportunity for the South African intelligentsia to mourn the loss of the Great Queen, to celebrate their new king, and to demonstrate loyalty to *their* empire. Peregrino looked forward to the 'spontaneous outbursts of loyalty' that would remind the king's subjects why they were fighting and inform the rebels as to the futility of their exercise.⁴³ These men were particularly heartened by the inclusion of notable *respectables* in the tour. *Imvo Zabantsundu* celebrated that loyal Africans would be recognized important members of the imperial community.⁴⁴ Despite this inclusion, the independent press came to question imperial dedication to

42 *Izwi Labantu* (27 August 1901).

43 *South African Spectator* (24 August 1901).

44 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (21 June 1901).

the king's loyal subjects of colour, in part because they were marginalized in royal ceremonies in favour of hereditary elites.

Peregrino, who had only arrived in South Africa a year earlier from the United States, was chosen by the community to deliver a 'native address' to the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall. He denied rumours that the Colonial Office had screened his address or that a 'white man' had presented it to the duke.⁴⁵ The address was overwhelmingly directed not at the duke's father, Edward VII, but to the memory of his grandmother, Victoria the Good, under whom 'the shackles of slavery were struck off our feet'.⁴⁶ Moved by the duke's response, Peregrino noted that he 'dwelt not on any distinctions of race and colour' and was 'deeply touched by the display of loyalty'.⁴⁷ Whether or not the duke was acting out a scripted performance, in a part that he had played dozens of times, is irrelevant. South African elites such as Peregrino invested, and found, in him the promise of imperial citizenship.

While encouraged by this encounter, all three men were concerned that the stagecraft of colonial officials would suppress demonstrations of spontaneous loyalty by common people and misrepresent the character of South Africa's native population.⁴⁸ Specifically, they were concerned that the people of South Africa would be represented by 'chiefs and headmen,' rather than 'the most enlightened of our people'.⁴⁹ To Soga, this exclusion would deny the duke and duchess a 'fair opportunity of gauging the true state of civilization and improvement arrived at by the natives'.⁵⁰ Much of their scorn was directed at 'tribal' rituals and war dances, and the hereditary elites who performed in them.

They argued that these rituals misrepresented the progress of South Africa during the reign of Queen Victoria and focused the duke's attention and a corrupt and dependent aristocracy. *The Spectator*, for instance,

45 *South African Spectator* (24 August 1901).

46 *South African Spectator* (24 August 1901).

47 *South African Spectator* (24 August 1901).

48 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (21 June 1901).

49 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (21 June 1901).

50 *Izwi Labantu* (27 August 1901).

mocked plans for the performance of a Zulu war dance as 'buffoonery', a cultural relic of an uncivilized past'.⁵¹ *Izwi Labantu* shared the 'amazement and feelings of disgust at the perpetuation of customs that are condemned by all civilized natives' and suggested that natives ought to sing the national anthem instead.⁵² They argued that the genuine loyalty of both the lower classes and of the enlightened, respectable classes was being suppressed by the colonial officials.⁵³ It was the African intelligentsia, who 'fully realise[d] the trend of British policy, and the advantage that loyalty offers'.⁵⁴

In the aftermath of the tour, Soga and Peregrino pressed for a war settlement that considered the service and loyalty of South Africa's non-white population. To use John Darwin's explanatory frame in a somewhat subversive way by applying it to 'the colonized', the intelligentsia of the independent South African press were articulating a brand of 'Britannic nationalism', of imperial citizenship and identity, even so far as to advocate imperial federation!⁵⁵ Loyalty to the monarchy was framed in a vision of British rights and respectable status. The editors of these papers were not only claiming Britishness but also arguing that their understanding of it was more authentic, closer to its *true* ideals, as clearly articulated in their debates over the terms of peace. In April 1901, *The Spectator* had argued that the settlement must be ended on 'amicable' terms but that:

it would be contrary to all precedent and altogether at variance with *British traditions* to surrender the rights and endanger the safety of the loyal native and coloured citizen even to that end. We believe that in view of all the circumstances precedent to the assumption of hostilities, that an unconditional surrender would have been in order, but failing that, we believe that the conclusion of peace on any basis other than that of equal rights to all His Majesty's *civilized subjects*, would be a retrogression.⁵⁶

51 *South African Spectator* (13 July 1901).

52 *Izwi Labantu* (2 July 1901).

53 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (21 June 1901).

54 *Izwi Labantu* (20 August 1901).

55 J. Darwin, 'A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics', in J. M. Brown and W. R. Louis, eds, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. IV *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64-87; *Imvo Zabantsundu* (9 April 1901).

56 *South African Spectator* (20 April 1901).

When the *Imvo Zabantsundu* returned to the presses in October 1902, over a year after being proscribed, Jabavu began not with a defence of his politics but with an ode to Queen Victoria and the profound progress accomplished during her reign.⁵⁷ He went on to imagine a post-war South African politics where 'Dutch, British, and Natives have a right to be' and all 'should be accorded the common rights of *citizenship*', of shared 'prosperity' and 'responsibility'.⁵⁸ This imperial political culture survived its betrayal during the South African War intact.

The alternative print culture of South Africa expanded rapidly in the decade following the war. No fewer than nine new African, Coloured, and Indian newspapers began publication between 1901 and 1910.⁵⁹ Jabavu and Soga remained fierce political rivals. When Soga helped found the Native Press Organization (NPA), Jabavu refused to participate.⁶⁰ They participated in separate political organizations and organized separate protests.⁶¹ In April 1901 *Izwi Labantu* closed.⁶² *Imvo Zabantsundu* survived, with the editorship succeeded by Jabavu's son Alexander in 1921, but Jabavu's consistently erratic politics and the emergence of a new generation of political leaders limited his influence. Peregrino continued to publish *The South African Spectator* until 1908, but he has left little in terms of a historical record.

The fate of African loyalism in the empire and its limits in the aftermath of the South African War are exemplified in the life of Sol Plaatje (1876–1932), a co-founder of the South African Native National Congress. The Tswana-speaking Plaatje was educated at the Berlin Missionary Society's station near Boshof in the Orange Free State, where his father was a deacon, but was by and large an auto-didactic, teaching himself English,

57 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (8 October 1902).

58 *Imvo Zabantsundu* (8 October 1902).

59 Switzer, *South Africa's Alternative Press*, 4–5.

60 Switzer, 'The Beginnings', 67.

61 *Ibid.* 68–9.

62 *Ibid.*